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THE USE OF BLOGGING IN NARRATIVE WRITING SKILLS

The Use of Blogging in Narrative Writing Skills

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Research Report submitted

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Directed by Professor Liliana Cuesta

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Abstract

This qualitative research study was carried out with a group of tenth grade students at San Martin de Tours, a public school in Sogamoso. The aims of this action research study were to determine the possible effect of blogging in students' narrative writing skill and to identify the impact of blogging in the development of autonomy. The research design was based on a literature review of writing, blogging, and autonomy constructs and the pedagogical implementation was mainly guided by the principles of blended and writing process approaches. Data was gathered through the implementation included interviews, questionnaires and students' blogs. Results indicated that the use of blogging had a positive impact on the participants because they essentially improved some aspects in their writings such as: mechanics and paragraphing. Additionally, findings reported that the use of blogs promoted the initiation of students' autonomy in learning. Learners were intrinsically motivated and developed a sense of responsibility for carrying out activities to learn English. Therefore, these results showed blogging as a stimulus to support learner's linguistic awareness and learners' autonomy in the English Foreign language learning process.

Keywords: Blogging, writing process approach, autonomy, feedback.

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Resumen

Este estudio cualitativo fue desarrollado con un grupo de grado décimo de la Institución Educativa pública San de Martin de Tours. El objetivo principal de este estudio era determinar el posible efecto del uso del blog en las habilidades escriturales narrativas y además identificar su impacto en el fomento de la autonomía. El diseño investigativo se llevó a cabo basado en el análisis de constructos tales como la escritura, el blog, tecnología y la autonomía. La información fue recolectada principalmente través de tres instrumentos: entrevistas, cuestionarios y blogs. Los resultados indicaron que los participantes mejoraron aspectos en su escritura como: el uso de oraciones gramaticales correctas, la construcción de párrafos y la conexión de ideas. El uso del blog tuvo un impacto positivo en los estudiantes porque ellos desarrollaron comportamientos y acciones propias de estudiantes autónomos como la responsabilidad, el aprovechamiento del tiempo, y además lograron una motivación intrínseca puesto que realizaron cada una de las actividades por gusto y por superación personal. En general, los resultados demostraron que el blog es una herramienta efectiva para estimular a los estudiantes a escribir y a ser cada día más autónomos y conscientes frente a su aprendizaje de lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: Blogging, proceso de la escritura, autonomía, retroalimentación.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Over the past few decades, English teaching methods have changed due to the technological tools that have become increasingly important in people's lives. Since the 1990s, with the popularization of the Internet, the use of computers in language teaching expanded by leaps and bounds. Today, the significance of computer-mediated communication in society and classroom is even greater (Warschauer, 2000).

With this in mind, it is evident that teachers should find ways to use technology in the classroom in order to capture students' attention to motivate and stimulate them to learn maintaining their interest. Cashman (2006) states that "Today's digital generation is profoundly different from previous generations and these differences need to be understood by teachers if they are to facilitate effective learning for today's digital students" (p.7). In this sense, the researcher considered that a group of students who were born in the digital age and who, to her view, were motivated to learn through technology.

Likewise, the use of technology in English classes helps students acquire computer skills (find, select, retrieve relevant information, analyze, create or store materials), improve their language skills (writing, speaking, listening, writing) and develop autonomy; skills that are required in the 21st century to become citizens in today's global world.

Sharma and Barrett (2007) suggest that the use of technology outside the classroom can make learners more autonomous and independent. This allows language practice and study away from the confines of the classroom. In this sense, if teachers want to help students become autonomous learners, then it is essential that they open up a space in the

classroom which encourages such engagement. For this reason, in the present study the researcher decided to use blogging as a technological tool to encourage students to become autonomous learners.

Furthermore, Sharma and Barrett (2007) claim that blogs offer many opportunities to language teachers because they are easy to set up and allow learners to do extra work, so the use of technology can consolidate and extend the classroom work. In this sense, the blog can establish good practices of learner autonomy. Students become proactive in accessing the information and following the links to online resources to work on their language skills.

Therefore, blogging plays an important role in language skills (reading, listening, writing, and speaking). Regarding writing skill, web based materials provided in the blog, facilitate students' writing activities. Writing has become essential for students entering universities and for students trying to compete in the job market. In the academic and social environments, writing is the main form of communication and competency; writing opens doors for students in almost any field they might choose in the future. Students may be required to write memos, reports, interviews and e-mails, as well as other types of professional writing. Sometimes, however, people write just for themselves to express their thoughts, to clarify ideas and feelings or to share meaningful experiences.

Considering the importance of technology and writing in the students' life, the researcher decided to use blogging as a tool to enhance autonomous behaviors (time

management, responsibility, independent learning) letting students to have an active role in their own learning in order to strengthen their writing skills.

The subjects of this research project were tenth grade students at San Martin de Tours public School, located in Sogamoso–Boyacá, who had some difficulties in their writing skills. They used incorrect grammar structures, had spelling mistakes as well as problems organizing and giving sequence to their ideas. Those aspects, which will be described in more detail in the students' needs analysis stage, motivated the researcher to develop this research study.

This research project is divided into six chapters. The first chapter includes the research statement of the problem, research questions, objectives and the rationale. The second chapter provides the literature review based on the constructs of writing as a process, blog, autonomy and state of the art. The third chapter includes the research design with information regarding to the action research, participants, setting, and instruments. Then, the instructional design with a description of activities to be developed is presented as the fourth chapter. The fifth chapter reveals the data analysis and the sixth chapter presents the conclusions and explains the pedagogical implications for this study. It also, explores its limitations and provides insights and recommendations for further research.

Statement of the problem

Considering the analysis done in the diagnosis stage in the tenth grade students' texts at San Martin de Tours School, the researcher observed that the students did not use sentences structure or word order when they were asked to write an assignment. Thus, before the researcher could begin this study, it was necessary to have solid data so that the precise situation with these students could be understood. Thus, a needs analysis was done through a written text in which the students could express an anecdote in their lives.

Before the students wrote the text, they participated in a warm-up activity that allowed them to read some anecdotes; this was done with the purpose of helping the students become familiarized with the vocabulary related to the topic. Then, the class shared some of these aspects and the students were asked to write a text about this topic with at least two paragraphs telling an anecdote they had had in their lives. (See Appendix A). The objective of this written text was to know how the students performed in written form. Each text was analyzed considering the tenth grade National standards for English (2006), and the categories for evaluating writing proposed by Brown (2001).

According to the National standards for writing¹, proposed by the Ministry of Education in Colombia (2006) the students of tenth grade should be able to:

1. Write narratives about preferences and decisions.
2. Produce simple written texts with different functions (describe, narrate or argue) about personal topics or information about other subjects.
3. Write summaries about different subjects and topics.

4. Organize coherent and short paragraphs considering the mechanics in writing.

Plan, revise and edit writings with my classmates' and teachers' help.

Write different types of texts such as: mails, letters, reflections or comments)

5. Organize coherent paragraphs demonstrating a good spelling and punctuation rules (p.27).

Those basic standards for competences in foreign languages (English) were published by the Ministry of Education of Colombia and their purpose is to provide the national standards for English teaching. This document helps teachers recognize the level and abilities that every student should have in each grade, in every place in the country without taking into account whether it is public or private, rural or urban school. Considering those standards, it was seen that students did not accomplish those requirements because they had different problems as it was formerly referenced.

Regarding the categories for evaluating writing described by Brown (2001) the researcher chose some of them in order to analyze the learners' written texts:

1. Content (development of ideas through personal experience and opinions).
2. Organization (logical sequence of ideas, introduction and conclusions).
3. Discourse (transitions, cohesion, topic sentences, and paragraph unity).
4. Vocabulary and mechanics (spelling and punctuation) (p.357).

Those categories helped the researcher to identify written students' problems easily, evaluating their ability to convey ideas using appropriate grammar structures and logical connections to make their ideas clear.

After reviewing the students' texts according to the standards and the categories, the researcher concluded that the students had a low written performance because they did not relate ideas or their feelings and opinions about a particular topic regarding their experiences. Their written texts did not have a good grammar structure and organization due to the fact that they did not present an introduction and conclusions and that some components of the texts such as: sentence structure, capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing, transitions, cohesion and spelling were not used properly. Those findings allowed the researcher to decide to work on writing skills with tenth grade students.

On the other hand, taking into consideration that students of tenth grade at San Martin School would take a virtual course at Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA)² in eleventh grade; they needed to acquire some autonomous behaviors before being immersed in a virtual program as such. They are required to manage tools and materials presented on the web independently through instructions given by the tutor asynchronously, make decisions, solve problems and demonstrate personal responsibility during the SENA course. In this sense, the researcher decided to implement this study through blogging in order to provide students with an online learning environment that could facilitate the development of those skills in order to train them to succeed in their future education. In this regard, Blackstone, Spiri and Naganuma (1999) highlight that blogs are interactive homepages that are easy to set up and manage, enable students to engage in online exchange, thereby

expanding their language study and learning community beyond the physical classrooms. Therefore, blogging also encourages more autonomous learning because this provides the opportunity to work independently.

The outcomes of the needs analysis demonstrated that the students were struggling with different aspects of writing; the researcher decided that it was fundamental to ensure that students work on their writing skills gaining autonomy in their learning process. Therefore, the following research questions were formulated to examine the possible effect of blogging in writing skills and learners' autonomy:

Research questions

- What effects does the implementation of blogging have in improving learners' narrative writing skills?
- To what extent can blogging develop learners' autonomy?

Research objectives

- To determine the possible effects of blogging on narrative writing skills.
- To identify the impact of blogging in the development of autonomy.

Rationale

Scharle and Szabò (2000) express that success in learning very much depends on learners having a responsible attitude. The changing needs of learners will require them to go back to learning several times in their lives: then again, they will need to be able to study on their own. The best way to prepare them for this type of behavior is to help them become more autonomous. In this sense, teachers should provide all the necessary opportunities for students to take responsibility for their learning because sometimes, even the best designed teaching approaches might fail if the students do not take an active role in their learning.

Due to the fact that students from the current generation are considered digital natives and enjoy working with technology, it is important to implement technological tools to aid learners in achieving a degree of autonomy and motivation in their learning.

Blogging is a technological tool that can be used in language learning and teaching that would help students improve their language skills. Regarding writing skills, students can develop a writing process approach because they can follow traditional writing stages (drafting, revising, correcting, editing, and publishing) through its use. According to Ngyyen (2006), blogs have numerous educational benefits. They are highly motivating to students, they offer excellent opportunities to read and write and offer effective forums for collaboration and discussion. Furthermore, blogs present, organize and protect student work as digital portfolios. As students realize their efforts will be published, they are typically more motivated to produce writing.

This research project was designed in order to generate learners' autonomy and improve writing skills through the use of blogging in tenth grade. This project contributes not only to the English teaching at San Martin de Tours School but the English teaching at other schools because the methodology and results of this study could be applied in other educational contexts.

This study is also an innovation at San Martin de Tours School due to the fact that in this institution there are not research projects in the English teaching and learning field and the existent technology is only used in computer class. Besides, the usage of technological tools has not been considered in other content subject areas.

Additionally, students might realize that writing narratives allow them to expose their points of view, beliefs and feelings while instilling values such as autonomy, tolerance, respect and responsibility towards themselves and other classmates.

Finally, regarding the researcher's professional development, conducting this study is viewed as a new opportunity to reflect about effective methodologies and/ or strategies that facilitate students' learning in this digital age. This study is also useful in order to enrich other teachers' pedagogical practices in the school and probably in other rural schools or different contexts.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

This chapter will provide a literature review under some constructs: writing skills, technology as a tool to learn a language, blogs and autonomy. In this way, theoretical perspectives from different authors and similar studies carried out in the area of blogging will be reviewed in order to justify the project development based on the research questions and objectives of this study.

Definition of writing

According to Brown (2001), “writing is a way to end up something you could not have started out thinking. Writing is, in fact, a transaction with words whereby you free yourself from what you presently think, feel, and perceive” (p.337). In other words, writing is a cognitive activity to represent language, thoughts or experiences. In this project, the students will represent their life experiences and realities using a writing process approach.

Writing process approach

Harmer (2001) argues that in the teaching of writing, some teachers can focus on the product of that writing or on the writing process itself. When concentrating on the product they are only interested in the aim of a task and in the end product. Those who advocate a process approach to writing, pay attention to the various stages that any piece of writing goes through. By spending time with learners on pre-writing phases, editing, redrafting, and finally publishing in their works, a process approach aims to get the heart of the skills that should be employed when writing.

In this way, this project is focused on the development of writing as a *process* in the acquisition of English because the students had the opportunity to recognize weaknesses and strengths in their writing productions and , they were able to look for solutions to the different problems that appear in the way as well. This approach is important because it allows teachers to give feedback and constructive comments to the writer-student and this feedback could help them to improve each time. This is just possible when the students focus their work on clarifying concepts, selecting and organizing ideas, planning for their compositions more than just focusing on mechanics and grammar.

Brown (2001) considers that the written process must be the development of thinking, drafting and revising procedures that required specialized skills. Skills where the students are creators of language, thinking on content and form, understanding their own composing process and building strategies for prewriting, drafting, and rewriting, which means time to carry out the process in a good way.

Complementing Brown's ideas, Hedge (2000) says that writing process is seen as thinking and discovery. It is the result of employing strategies to manage the composing process, which is gradually developing a text. It involves a number of activities: setting goals, generating ideas, organizing information, selecting appropriate language, making a draft, reading, then revising and editing. Considering this, the workshops developed in this project lead the learners to follow a process in writing in order to obtain better texts to be posted on the blogs. The teacher could propose opportunities and meaningful situations where learners improved their writing skills step by step.

This writing process allows teachers and learners to play different roles. Teachers guide and motivate the students creating the right conditions for the generation of ideas, persuading them of the usefulness of the activity and encouraging them to make as much effort as possible for maximum benefit. In other words, it implies teachers need to develop different roles in helping learners write.

In this view, Harmer (2001) argues that teachers can manage three types or roles into the classrooms: *motivator*, that is based on creating right conditions to work in writing tasks and to encourage the students to make as much effort as possible for maximum benefit; *resource*, the teachers must be ready to supply information and language when it is necessary. The teacher must be available to look at his or her students' work and their progress offering advice and suggestions in a constructive and tactful way. And finally, the teacher can be a *feedback provider* who responds positively and encouragingly to the content of what students have written, when offering correction teachers should choose what and how much to focus on based on what students need at this particular stage of their studies and on the tasks they have undertaken.

As well, the students' roles should be developed to assist students in being responsible of their own learning. Committed students are researchers and dynamic beings who might look for strategies to progress in their writing, so they can discover what they want to say as they write, and are able to produce and receive feedback throughout the writing process. This allows both teachers and students use a direct interaction to achieve successfully the final written product.

To support the previous construct about the writing process approach, it is important to have a more profound understanding of the stages developed in this process. Greenville (2001) points out some steps: getting ideas, choosing ideas, outlining, drafting revising and editing. The first one “getting ideas” is an essential step which allows students to activate the knowledge and it is based on the generation of ideas. Students can look for information, read about the topic they are going to write or they can make a brainstorming because it allows them to write many ideas without forgetting at the time of writing. The second step is “choosing ideas”, which is the first or preliminary form of any writing to review, analyze and correct by students and teachers. Making an outline is another step in which students design a list of ideas that they are going to use in the order they should go. From this step, students move on and they write a first draft which will be corrected and edited to obtain the final writing product.

Furthermore, teachers should consider grammar, spelling, punctuation, coherence and cohesion, but the most important is to pay attention to the message and the content of the writing. Sometimes, it is necessary that teachers give the students the opportunity to write about topics they like and make them happy and comfortable with their written products. In this way, students could write different kinds of texts such as: cards, stories, acrostics, anecdotes, using their own ideas and experiences.

In addition, Hedge (2000) states that it is important to bear in mind some characteristics to be a good and a successful writer. These must be often trained to ensure results. The first one is *planning*; a good writer concentrates on the overall meaning and organization of a text, and engages in planning activities. The amount of planning will vary,

therefore, in relation to the type of writing task, from relatively spontaneous writing based on a quick mental plan to something carefully worked out before handing in notes, and will also differ to the preferred style of the individual writer.

Revising: a good writer proceeds through alternative phases of writing and reflection. During reflection, writers may re-read the sentences on the page and look back at the original plan and think about how to express the next set of ideas. After writing part of a draft, they may review the text and ask themselves questions about if the words and the argument they are using are clear to express their ideas and so on. The extent and nature of revision depend not only on the writer's skill but also on the purpose of the writing, the genre, the level of formality required, and the degree of familiarity with the readers and the subject or the type of writing task.

Producing "reader-based" prose: successful writers think about what the reader needs to know, how to make information clear and accessible, and what an appropriate style is. In this sense, writing is social and interactive in nature as the writer conducts a dialogue with a putative reader, anticipating the responses and selecting appropriate information, ideas and expressions to influence those responses. Good writers are sensitive to the audience of their writings. In the development of the whole process, some implications could appear.

Writing narratives

According to Hollis (1999) a personal narrative is an opportunity to tell a story in the way that people remember it or the way people think it should be told. In all narrative

writings (including autobiographies) a little creativity and artistic license is allowed to be sure that your narrative is effective and meaningful. In this sense, students have the possibility to value their experiences and life stories through the use of narratives. This was a positive aspect for the participants of this project because those students had to realize that what they had lived was important for somebody else, communicating events from their past, present and their dreams for their future.

Blau, Elbow and Killgallon (1998) point out that “a personal narrative is the telling of a story of everyday life. To write students personal narratives, they must reflect on the meaning of their own experiences and tell their stories in a coherent fashion. When people write personal narratives, they want to make the experience meaningful to others” (p.86). In other words, students explore their lives and write about their experiences being more engaged to write because they make significant events come alive.

Complementarily, Blau, Elbow and Killgallon (1998) also express that “some students may complain that their experiences seem too insignificant to write about. It is important to point out that most personal narratives do not deal with major life or death issues but with quiet, telling moments that reveal some truth about a person, time, or place” (p. 90). In this way, students can express their life stories, explore and value different aspects of their lives and realize that their experiences can be significant for themselves and others.

Having considered that the writing process approach is an active process in which students need to be aware of stages to obtain a good product, it is also relevant to present the use of technology as a strategy that allow learners to develop that process.

Technology as a tool to learn a language

According to Beatty (2003), computer assisted-language learning (CALL) is any process in which a learner uses a computer and, as a result, improves his or her language. Some language labs integrate CALL and some teachers use CALL activities based on the email and the web-based activities to supplement students learning. This is related to the project because the use of computer technology assists learners in the process of learning to improve. In this study the use of the blog was chosen as a technological tool to support learner' written process.

Wutta and Festen, (2004) point out that educational technology holds significant potential for language instruction. If used properly, technology can interest and motivate learners, expand access to a greater number of learners, provide flexibility of instruction, and develop learners' competence and expertise in certain aspects of language. Using certain applications, current technology can to some extent promote communicative and meaningful language learning, assist in tailoring instruction to learners' cognitive styles, offer a balance of guided practice and free expression, and provide corrective feedback. In the future, more flexible and intelligent systems will be able to fulfill these functions much more effectively. However, technology is not a panacea or a «magic bullet» that suddenly transforms all learning. The effectiveness of educational technology depends on how it is

employed to meet educational goals for particular kinds of students in specific language learning environments.

Another researcher who studies technology is Mumtaz (2007), who says that teachers who successfully made use of information communication technologies had the following characteristics: A positive rather than negative attitude towards teachers who have positive attitude towards technology will be positively disposed towards using it in the classroom. Thus, the teachers who use technology into the classroom need to feel good using the tools in order to provide the best knowledge about it to the learners.

In this project, the students wrote their drafts and final writings through the use of computers and the Internet in order to publish them on the blogs, so it is useful to consider the importance of Internet for writing skills. The study developed by Windeatt, Hardisty and Eastment (2007) reveal that Internet resources enhance English Learning and teaching processes because it offers some tools that students should use in order to reinforce the process they develop. According to those authors the Internet

“...is beginning to transform language learning, first of all by making available to teachers and students an enormous range of information and resources. As a mean of communication, the Internet allows students around the world to interact with one another cheaply, quickly and reliability, opening up the classroom to the real world in a way which has never before been possible” (p. 95).

Additionally, Warschauer and Healey, (1998) point out that the writing process is another area that can be improved by using tools found in the Internet. Some programs,

such as *Idea Fisher Systems* and *Inspiration from Inspiration Software*, help students in the pre-writing stage to generate and outline ideas. Most word-processors now come with spelling checkers, giving weak spellers some help in finding their errors and recognizing the correct spelling from a list of options. Likewise, some online dictionaries incorporate some grammar help, and some, like the *Longman Multimedia Dictionary*, have sound and video clips to help learners recognize a word when it is spoken and put it into context. Considering this, computer assistants can help to develop students' writing process because learners can follow the steps and learn by themselves monitoring what they are doing and how they are working on writing.

The use of Internet motivates students to learn and recycle language they have learnt previously. Sharma and Barret (2007) state that:

“...using technology can be motivating. Playing language-learning games is one example of this, with learning enjoying tasks, and at the same time deriving learning benefits through recycling of language. Many learners simply like using the computer. Web based exercises are more interactive than paper-based exercises. This can appeal to many learners. Setting learners to work on an interactive exercise can add variety to the class” (p.2).

In this sense, the use of technology in English learning is a good tool that motivates students because they can find interactive activities in order to improve their language skills. Using technology enables learners to become active participants in their own

learning. Regarding writing, students can use different tools and editing resources to revise their own texts.

After having considered the importance that technology and Internet has on language learning, in which these tools provide authentic materials, activities, games and different sources for students to learn, it is necessary to further examine the usage of blogs, given that this technological tool was used in this study as a stimulus to promote autonomy and develop students' writing skills.

Blogs

Sharma and Barret (2007) explain that *blog* is short for *web log*; an online journal or diary. It consists of chronological entries or links where students can obtain other texts, information, photographs or other links to web pages. Language learners can use blogs to work on the different language skills. Blogs are easy to set up and operate and can be an effective way of communicating with learners outside the lesson time. In other words, blogs let the students the opportunity to do extra work, so the use of technology can consolidate and extend the classroom work, an ideal blended-learning approach. These important features suit the objective of this study because blogs were used to foster communication in a written form and linked to other web pages or information in order to guide the students in the process of writing.

Furthermore, Sharma and Barret (2007) point out some opportunities of using blogs in the classroom that are useful in the pedagogical intervention. Those opportunities are

pre-teaching, developing the language, giving feedback, promoting learner's autonomy and communication.

In pre-teaching, the teacher could present vocabulary and texts before the lesson, so the learners had this information available before the lesson. Likewise, in developing the language stage, teacher could attach links with other web pages where the students learned vocabulary and grammar structures through images or games.

Giving feedback is another important element of blogs, because sometimes the feedback is time consuming in large classes. Using a blog takes the pressure off you to finish the lesson with a detailed and legible feedback sheet, but also the feedback could be available to the learners before the start of the next lesson. Sharma and Barret (2007) also affirm that blogs are a way to promote learners autonomy and communication. In the former aspect, learners have to be proactive in accessing the information you have posted to the blog following the links to other online resources such as chat, audio, video, readings or images. Another aspect that is fostered through the uses of blog is "communication", students can express their own ideas or thoughts related to meaningful topics for them, as an example a dialogue can start between learners or teacher and learners.

Additionally, Huffaker (2005) reveals in one of his studies that blogs resemble personal journals or diaries and provide an online venue where self-expression and creativity is encouraged. In this way, participants were encouraged to express their own and authentic ideas using their creativity to show it to their classmates and teacher. The workshops developed in this project considered those elements, not only to help the

learners to develop writing skills but also to promote autonomy. Therefore, using blogs in English language teaching is a good path to initiate a process of acquiring a degree of autonomy.

One of those studies is reported in an article written by Huffaker (2005). He argues that one of the latest developments in computers mediated communication is that blogs promote literacy in the classroom. The features of a blog include instant publishing of text or graphics to the Web without sophisticated technical knowledge, ways for people to provide comments or feedback to each blog post, the opportunity to archive past blog posts by date, and hyperlinks to other bloggers. They provide new opportunities for people to present and express themselves online. Something to be considered in this project is that blogs do not require technical or advanced knowledge of how to use them and it is important for this research because the blogs could be used with students of high school education who had a low level understanding of computer systems.

Another conclusion given in the article by Huffaker (2005) is that blogs are both individualistic and collaborative. Blogs promote self- expression, a place where the author can develop highly personalized content. Yet blogs connect with an online community bloggers can comment and give feedback to other bloggers, and they can link to fellow bloggers, creating an interwoven, dynamic organization. Considering this, in the workshops, students can have a personal space to read and write and share ideas or questions to their classmates according to the assignments or written productions posted in the blog.

A research project carried out by Ackerman (2006) reports that blogs can provide one way to get students to understand that there is an audience for them, and that their communication through words needs to be effective because their peers and the world are reading. Communal web communities/blogs can remedy student disengagement with academic writing.

Similarly, Ackerman (2006) notes that if students can establish blogs in high school, creating an online portfolio that shows progression in writing, a writing teacher is given the opportunity to see the writers' strengths and weaknesses upon review. Subsequent teachers on any level have the opportunity to see a writing student's progression if blogs are established. In this way, teacher will be able to see students' progress in writing because they could create a portfolio where they store their writings productions. Technology, such as blogs, can provide one part of the answer, but educators should recognize that the key to conscientious writing among students is that the students need to be a more active part of the educational community.

Another study carried out by Blackstone, Spiri and Naganuma (2006) reveals that blogs, which are interactive homepages that are easy to set up and manage, enable students to engage in online exchanges, thereby expanding their language study and learning community beyond the physical classroom. Regular blogging also encourages more autonomous learning. Furthermore, they also found in surveys that most of the students have extremely positive attitudes toward blogging systems.

Furthermore, Yamashita and Miura (2007) state that one of the benefits of the blog is that when someone transmits information on their own blog, they create opportunities for others to participate in their behavior, for example by leaving comments. If readers exploit this opportunity, the blog author may create or maintain closer relationships with them.

In addition to basic positive effects that blogs have on students' learning, blogs have some disadvantages that should be considered before starting to work with this tool. One disadvantage of blogs is Internet connectivity, or the lack of good local area networks, in some places, especially rural areas. Tekinarslan (2008) states in one of his studies that the most common disadvantage of blogs was related to students' limited opportunities to access the Internet outside the campus. This study also revealed that that students disregard of copyright issues and their tendency to copy information from online sources and paste it into their blogs was a common problem.

It is recommended that teachers recognize the successes and hurdles of integrating blogs into the classroom in order to avoid problems. Hourigan and Murray (2010) suggest that teachers should consider some factors before working with blogs. This requires a great deal of groundwork beforehand in order to validate its inclusion in any type of academic course.

Technology and learners' autonomy

Regarding autonomy through the use of technology, Sharma and Barret (2007) say that the use of technology outside the language can make more autonomous learners. One key feature of using technology in learning is that it allows language practice and study away from the confines of the classroom. As learners become used to evaluating and selecting materials, they are able to plan out their own use of web-based materials in their own time. This helps the learners to become independent.

Another study that demonstrates the use of technology to promote autonomy was carried out by Warschauer (2003). He states that technology fosters autonomous learners because they are able to be responsible for their own learning through working on individual and collaborative projects that result in communication opportunities in the form of presentations, Web sites, and traditional publications accessible to local and global audiences. Language professionals who have access to an Internet computer classroom are in a position to teach students valuable lifelong learning skills and strategies for becoming autonomous learners.

The concept of autonomy must be extended beyond self-directed use of language and today's technology to the ability to develop, explore, evaluate, and adapt new technology as it evolves. This ability requires the development of meta-skills of critique and innovation beyond the skills of deploying any particular technology. Students not only should be able to use today's search engines but should also have the right analytic framework to select and make use of new search engines as they emerge and teachers

should also have successful strategies for evaluating and adapting the materials considering the students' English level and needs. Moreover, as a background to support this research study, it is important to consider some studies carried out in the field of blogging in language learning.

Serrano (2007) affirms that now it is clear that technology helps to meet students' interests, needs and styles and the students who work with technology have more chances to learn about language, culture and technology itself. In other words, students who use technology and mainly Internet tools are connected to more audiences and have more opportunities to learn English.

The constructs presented before were useful to design and implement the series of workshops aimed at fostering autonomy and helping students in their writing skills improvement through blogging.

Chapter Three: Research Design

This chapter presents the type of study conducted, the research questions and the objectives, a description of the participants and the setting where the research was developed. The researcher role, the instruments to collect data are presented and the ethical issues which are validity, reliability and triangulation are explained as well.

Type of study

This research used a qualitative approach because the data gathered is to be described and not counted. Considering Wallace's theory (1998) "qualitative is used to describe data which are not amenable to being counted or measured" (p.38). In this case, the data to be analyzed is not countable because it is based on feelings, attitudes and thoughts.

Complementarily, Corbin and Strauss (1990) describe qualitative research as "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It can refer to research about persons' lives, stories, and behavior, and also about organizational functioning, social movements, or interactional relationships" (p.17). In this sense, this study was not based on quantitative data because the researcher considered participants' perceptions in order to explore a situation producing outcomes. These authors also proposed that qualitative research consists of three major components. Firstly, data collection from various sources; secondly, analytic or interpretative procedures that are used to arrive at findings and theories and thirdly, written and verbal reports to let other people know about the study. Those components were

considered by the researcher in this study to contribute to the English teaching and learning process.

According to Merriam (2009) qualitative research method is important “to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved” (p.11). In this case, the researcher analyzed participants’ perceptions and data collected in order to provide new insights to contribute to a reality.

Moreover, this project was framed upon the action research methodology since it starts from a problem or situation from the professional practice. According to Wallace (1998) action research is “open-ended and relatively unfocused. It is problem-focused in its approach and it is practical in its intended outcomes” (p.15). Thus, this is action research because it is based on a problem found in the context where the researcher works.

Action research follows a process which begins from the reality and the actions or activities that the researcher does in order to reflect, analyze or discover aspects related to the problem stated. Wallace (1998) also states that action research involves the collection and analysis of data related to some aspects of teachers’ professional practice. This is done because teachers need to reflect on what they have discovered and applied to their professional practices. In addition, the researcher will gather data in order to see what the outcomes are and reflect about them. Action research is usually developed by means of stages, which include plan, action (implementation), observation (monitoring), and reflection.

The first stage was the needs analysis and this began with the identification of a problem in the real context of tenth graders at San Martin de Tours School. The data collected in the interpretation in this stage helped the *decision-making process stage* and allowed the researcher to describe what the problem was, stating the research question and the objectives to achieve during the project.

The second stage was *planning* and this consisted of designing seven workshops to focus on narrative writing skills through the use of a blog.

Furthermore, *the action-implementation* was the fourth stage and it consisted of the development of the action plan that had seven workshops. This implementation was carried out during the two hours of English synchronous and one asynchronous with tenth grade.

The next stage was called *observation (monitoring)* and held during the whole process providing data to explore, reflect and know how successful the action plan was done and if any changes were needed. Monitoring after the workshop was implemented when the researcher checked the process followed by the learners to produce their narratives through the use of the blog.

The last stage was *reflection* and it was developed during the entire development of the action research and looked for understanding the process, issues and constraints found during the research.

Considering Kemmis and McTaggart's model (1985), the researcher collected the data from the students' needs analysis applied. After this, the strategy and the plan were

designed, then the implementation was carried out and data collected from students' artifacts, interviews and questionnaires and finally the data was triangulated, analyzed and validated.

Setting

This research project was developed at San Martin de Tours School, which is located in Sogamoso (Boyacá). This is an urban public school that offers three levels: pre-school, primary and secondary. Nowadays, the school has girls and boys who have a low socio-economic background and most of the students have disabilities such as: blindness, deafness, paralysis, autism and cognitive disability. The mission of this school is to educate learners in a peaceful and supportive environment. This integral development is related to values, intellectual, moral and physical factors.

Regarding the English classes, this school offers two hours of English per week in each grade and there is only one teacher of English. The students do not have a course book due to economic factors. The general objective in the English classes is to help students to obtain a good level in the SABER exam².

Participants

The project was developed with tenth graders from San Martin de Tours School. The class had 10 students. Their ages were between 16 and 18 years. The learners' level of English in general was "A1" according to the Common European Framework (CEF); this was evidenced on the external tests such as the SABER pro-test. According to the analysis

from the students' profile sheet, it was concluded that most of them are in a low socio-economic level. Regarding the learners' families background, some of their parents are illiterate. So, students do not get any help or support from relatives at home.

Students' ages characterized them as adolescents and they were in a period of changing, discovering new things and they were really interesting in being with their friends sharing, listening to music and playing tennis. Their hobbies, interests, goals were widely reflected in their attitudes. It is necessary to highlight that those students were respectful and had a friendly attitude in the English class.

The learners presented difficulties in different skills. In writing, they were not able to write a simple structure and they did not know much vocabulary. Also, learners tended to copy their classmates texts because they did not like English at all. According to the reading skill, most of the time, they found difficult to skim and scan texts. They presented some problems at the moment in speaking in English because they pronounced words the way they were written.

Regarding affective needs, most of the learners of tenth grade were shy and they did not have confidence in themselves, they did not like to speak in front of the class because they felt ashamed or had a low self-esteem. This kind of behavior affected the communicative competence and speaking skills. Another characteristic is that the students were not autonomous or responsible doing extra-class work, so the most important aspect in this grade was to take advantage of the time assigned for English class which was two hours per week.

It is important to mention that the reasons for selecting these participants were the results of the needs analysis carried out previously. They had difficulties in every language skill but mainly in the writing one, and they were also chosen because all of them will study a virtual course at Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA) in eleventh grade. In this sense, they needed to demonstrate autonomy in their own learning.

Researcher's role

The researcher's role was of a participant observer during the process, she took an active role in the research context observing actions in the pedagogical intervention and analyzing them in order to do the appropriate adjustments in the workshops. According to Burns (2003) participant- observation is seen when the researcher is in a context observing herself and others in the same context. In this way, the researcher got involved in the process carried out in the class, collecting and analyzing data in order to produce some insights to contribute to the English language teaching.

Data collection instruments

The selection of data collection instruments was used in this study to provide a variety of sources that evidence the process and allow the researcher to collect the data to be analyzed. Questionnaires, interviews and blogs were used to compile information that appears during the development of the workshops.

Questionnaires

Santrock (2006) states the quickest and best way to get information about students is to ask them for it. Questionnaires find out students' experiences, beliefs and feelings. They are usually given to individuals in written form. Good questionnaires involve concrete, specific and unambiguous questions in order to help the respondents understand. The researcher considered necessary to apply a questionnaire three times during the implementation; at the beginning, in the middle and at the end in order to know students' perceptions to analyze if blogging had a possible impact on their writing skills and their autonomy. This information helped the researcher to answer the two research questions and it was an important path to compare data with the other instruments.

The questionnaire was chosen because it is an easy instrument for students to answer and for the researcher to analyze. The questionnaire presents open-ended questions. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) open-ended questions are an attractive device for smaller scale research or for those sections of a questionnaire that invite an honest, personal comment from respondents in addition to ticking numbers and boxes.(See Appendix B).

Interview

This instrument allowed the students to express if they became autonomous learners through the use of the blog or not and why. According to Merriam (1990) "the interview is the person-to-person encounter in which one person elicits information from another. We interview people to find out from those things we cannot observe" (p.71). In this case, the

autonomy of the students will be not observable; this is something that goes more outside the classroom. The type of interview applied was “semi-structured interview” because this uses open-ended questions and the answers provide complete information about the students’ opinions related to their autonomy. (See Appendix C).

Blogs

The blog recorded the students’ writings and provided a multidimensional perspective of students’ growth at different times of the project. Through the blog, students reflected on their work and analyzed their progress and the researcher could analyze students’ written progress because the blog contained students’ artifacts. The blogs contained the evidence of the process and product of writings and had the advantage of having the students’ final written productions during the development of the workshops organized with dates.

According to Saka (2008) blogs as a data collection tool helps the researcher to have the comments recorded, archived, titled and indexed. The blog can be used by the researcher to see the students’ writing because it keeps the drafts, the improvements and the final texts to be analyzed. Thus, the blog provides data related to the students’ narratives and this helps to gather information, synthesize, organize the categorization and finally to arrive at the results and conclusion of the research. (See Appendix D).

Ethical issues

The ethics in educational research required the researcher to develop the research and it provides confidentiality, credibility, anonymity and privacy rights. Informed consent is an essential ethical consideration because participants need to become aware of the risks or activities that they are going to be exposed to. This respects the right of self-determination and gives some responsibility to the participants as well. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) state that informed consent is important because the participants take responsibility and decide whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions. Considering this, the researcher designed a consent form as the initial stage of this study in order to obtain the permission from the school's director and tenth grade students as participants. (See Appendix E).

Data collection Procedures

The data collection procedures for this study were divided in three stages: pre-intervention, while-intervention, and post-intervention.

The pre-planning stage

The first step for the pre-intervention stage of this study was done when the researcher asked the permission to the schools' director, parents and students and then the researcher wrote an informed consent letters for the director and students informing the main objective of this study and the anonymity and confidentiality that was emphasized. As

a result of the information provided in the inform consent, ten tenth grade students took part of the project.

Therefore, the information gathered through the inform consent, tenth grade students decided to participate in this study. The researcher considered important to apply a students' questionnaire in order to know their knowledge about blogs to design the first lesson plan. (See Appendix F). The students' answers allowed the researcher to realize that the students did not know anything about blogs, so that it was necessary to include four hours into the action plan devoted to the explanation of creating and using the blog.

Additionally, it is important to clarify that the researcher piloted the instruments: questionnaires (See Appendix B), interviews (See Appendix C), and the main blog *havefunwriting* (See Appendix D) with a group of students of San Martin School and also experts check helped to improve those instruments before using them to obtain the data.

The while stage

The implementation started on February until the end of June. During this stage of the implementation, the researcher applied an interview and a questionnaire at the beginning, in the midterm and at the end of the pedagogical implementation. After this, the researcher started to collect data from the instruments and students' artifacts (written products posted in the blog), transcribed and organized it in digital files.

The post stage

This stage allowed the researcher to read and understand about grounded theory for the data analysis in order to explore the possible effect of blogging in students' narrative skills and autonomy.

Validity and triangulation

Validity and triangulation of data were addressed from the instruments such as student's narratives recorded in the blog, the questionnaires and the interviews. Those instruments helped the researcher to monitor the whole process providing a lot of data to answer the research questions.

According to Burns (2003) triangulation is one of the most commonly used and best-known ways of checking validity. The aim of the triangulation was to gather multiple perspectives on the situation being studied. This triangulation was done gathering the data from the interviews, questionnaires and students' writings in the blog and the information was compared and corroborated in order to develop research questions and find outcomes.

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

Chapter Four: Pedagogical Intervention and Implementation

This chapter presents the approach, instructional objectives, methodology, materials, timeline, activities and lesson plan followed during the whole process with tenth grade students at San Martin de Tours School. The proposal was developed between February 2012 and June 2012 in the English classes which meet regularly two hours per week and one hour as an extra-time session, planned for students to develop writing tasks independently. This research study also presents a meaningful and didactic proposal as an opportunity for learners to write narratives and publish them through the use of a blog.

Regarding the written production of narratives, this project intended to work on an innovative tool in which the learners developed their writing skills. This skill was practiced in order to communicate feelings, explore their life experiences and to represent their realities. In this way, blogging became a meaningful activity that provided collaborative learning, information exchange and the practice of asynchronous and synchronous communication into the classroom.

The activities were created in order to have students express their ideas and share them with their classmates. The contents covered aimed at personalizing language to students, and the tasks included readings, videos and games and were meaningful for them and they were able to arrange the vocabulary and the grammar structures in the best way because they did not have to express opinions about topics that were not related to their lives; they were guided to represent their realities in the best possible way.

Instructional design

This instructional design was developed under the principles of the writing process and a blended learning environment offered by using the blog.

Regarding the writing process approach, it can be said that it is a useful tool to apply in English teaching and learning. It has a positive effect on student's writing because students follow a process and they learn from the first step until the end. The writing process approach has three stages: prewriting, drafting and revising stages as presented by Brown (2001).

The first one, *prewriting*, was an essential step which allowed students to activate the knowledge and this stage was done through listening or reading activities posted on the main blog. This allowed the students to generate ideas. The second stage *drafting* was considered as the preliminary form of students' writing to be reviewed and corrected. After this step, the *revising* stage took place and it was developed after the writing of the narrative was checked and corrected to edit and produce the last stage *publishing*.

Considering the writing process approach of narratives and the use of the blog during the process, the researcher, first, designed and implemented workshops focused on narrative writing skills through the use of a blog, provided students with guidance on the use of the blog and then encouraged students to express their life experiences and memories.

On the other hand, given that the blog is an online tool available for the students all the time and its use can extend the classroom work, the researcher could set an ideal blended- learning approach. Sharma and Barret (2007) state that “Blending learning refers to a language course which combines a face-to-face (F2F) classroom component with an appropriate use of technology such as: chat, email, virtual learning environments, wikis or blogs” (p.7). In this sense, this approach was applied because the students met the teacher in two hours face-to-face and the course also included one hour for a self-study component per week using web-based activities through the blog *havefunwriting*. Those online activities included games, readings, grammar explanations and exercises, charts and worksheets created in Google-docs and uploaded on the blog for the students to download them, develop and send them to the teacher’s mail to be checked. (See Appendix G). Usually, some explanations and instructions were given in the face-to-face sessions and the students finished the activities through the use of the blog to activate knowledge before starting to write or sometimes, they wrote the texts as extra-class work and they uploaded them on the blog, so the teacher could review and provide positive and negative feedback before the next class began.

Furthermore, the course lasted twenty one weeks and the face-to-face sessions were held on two hours per week which are described in the action plan. (See Appendix H). The classes were planned considering the In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching (ICELT) lesson plan format, which includes a procedure composed of some stages such as a warming up activity, presentation of the topic, practice and closure. (See Appendix I).

Considering that the blog was used in the face-to-face classes for the presentation of the topics and the students used school computers, it was necessary to give clear rules about the use of the computers lab and the steps of how to create a blog. Each student learned how to create their own blog in order for the teacher to add their blogs addresses to the main blog “*havefunwriting*”.

After the aforementioned steps were done, the teacher posted the name of the activity, date, aim and procedures to be followed on the blog before the face to face class. The workshops developed through the process were: getting ready with the use of the blog, introducing yourself, my last vacations, my future plan, an unforgettable experience, my favorite celebration and the last one was my own story.

After having explained the procedure carried out, the next chapter will present the data analysis gathered during the pedagogical implementation.

Chapter Five: Results and Data Analysis

This chapter presents the analysis of the data gathered from the instruments to determine the possible effect of blogging in narrative writing skills and to identify the impact of blogging in the promotion of autonomy. Likewise, this chapter will explain the data analysis method based on the grounded approach and the procedure followed in order to identify findings and categories to produce theory based on the research questions.

Data analysis method

This qualitative action research considered in its data analysis the grounded theory approach which is “inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon.”(Corbin and Strauss, 1990, p.46). In other words, this method guided the researcher to read, analyze, articulated and verify the data, producing new insights and theory starting from the research questions and objectives.

Corbin and Strauss (1990) affirm three coding procedures in grounded theory approach: open, axial and selective coding. *Open coding* was the first stage when data was examined allowing the researcher to identify all the key statements and emerging patterns derived from the data collection instruments. In the second stage *Axial coding*, the data was re-read and analyzed in order to establish categories based on the patterns identified in open coding and finally the researcher identified a core category as a main unit that

answered the research questions in the *Selective* coding stage. Therefore, those procedures will be explained in detail in this chapter.

Procedures of data analysis

This analysis was based on data collected from the three interviews, three questionnaires and students' blogs as artifacts. The researcher gathered the data and started to explore important patterns and information provided by the participants in the instruments. The patterns were organized using color strategy and after, when the axial coding procedure was applied, the researcher read and analyzed the data again in order to identify categories with regard to the research questions. (See Appendix J).

Data management

During the pedagogical intervention, students participated in seven workshops presented on the blog *havefunwriting*. Each workshop was planned to improve students' writing skills. Likewise, the instruments (questionnaires and interviews) were applied after the implementation of workshops; the interviews were conducted after the third and sixth workshops and at the end of the pedagogical intervention. And the questionnaires were administered after the second and, fourth workshops, as well as at the end of each of them.

The researcher organized and stored the data systematically in order to manage all of the information and maintain anonymity among the participants. The students' answers from the interviews and questionnaires were transcribed, typed and stored into a Microsoft Word file in order to find and retrieve information easily. The data was organized

systematically by using a numerical code assigned to each student (e.g. Student N° 1), in order to guarantee the anonymity and privacy of the data gathered from the students. (See Appendix K). The physical copy of questionnaires was saved in a folder and the interviews were saved in two cassettes. Likewise, the blog *havefunwriting* and the students' blogs were hosted and backed up on a webserver in order to further retrieve examples of students' written productions and these artifacts were also numerically coded.

Data reduction

Working with data collected during a process is a challenging task because a lot of relevant information can be gathered. However, it is necessary to reduce the data selecting, extracting and summarizing the information that addresses the research questions. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe data reduction as part of the elements of qualitative data analysis, which consists of selecting, simplifying, and transforming data found to address the subject of study.

Coding procedures

Open coding

According to Cohen (2007) *open coding* involves exploring the data and identifying units of analysis to code for meanings, feelings, actions or events. In addition, Strauss and Corbin (1990) express that open coding is the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data. This categorization is done to identify patterns that occur within particular information.

The study followed the procedures for open coding by using the labeling technique through the identification of sentences, words and paragraphs that represented the same pattern related to each of the research questions. This open coding procedure also includes discovering and naming the categories, a stage in which the researcher grouped the labeled patterns into codes or concepts in order to reduce the number of units to be worked in the next steps of the data analysis.

Axial coding

The second procedure of data analysis in grounded theory is *axial coding*. Corbin and Straus (1990) refer to it as a set of procedures where data is put together in new ways making connection into categories considering the context, events and questions of the research project. In this axial coding stage, the researcher identified the common features among the three instruments and then started to organize them into categories and sub-categories, the two main categories that emerged were: *Development of learners' linguistic awareness and Initiation of learners' autonomous behaviors*. (See Appendix L).

The first category titled *development of learners' linguistic awareness* grouped the sub-categories of mechanics (grammar structures, capitalization and spelling) and organization of ideas through feedback provided in the blog. Those aspects emerged because they were seen repetitively in the instruments (questionnaires, interviews and students' blogs). The changes seen and analyzed in students' sentences and paragraphs demonstrated that blogging was an effective tool that aided learners to overcome their writings problems in order to produce accurate written texts

The second category *initiation of learners' autonomy behaviors* assembled the sub-categories of responsibility enhancement and increasing motivation. This category was built contrasting the students' insights expressed in the data collection instruments by the researcher during and after the implementation. Those insights demonstrated that students initiated some autonomous behaviors such as responsibility, independent learning and the ability to manage their time and learning.

In this stage, the researcher organized and named the categories and the corresponding sub-categories after the preliminary patterns were identified in order to answer the research questions proposed in the study.

| Research questions | Categories | Sub-categories |
|--|--|--|
| What is the possible effect of the implementation of blogging in student's narrative writing skills? | Development of learners' linguistic awareness. | Effective usage of mechanics: accurate use of grammar, capitalization and spelling |
| | | Gradual use of cohesive devices |
| To what extent could blogging develop autonomy? | Initiation of learners' autonomous behaviors. | Increase of Intrinsic motivation. |
| | | Development of a sense of responsibility through the blog as a self-access resource. |

Figure 1. Categories emerged in axial coding

Selective coding

In this last stage of coding proposed by grounded theory, the researcher established a core category and identified its relationship with the other categories order to explain a general theory that entails the main concepts being studied. The core category emerged from the constant comparative method of data gathered in the two categories and the sub-categories presented before. The following illustration shows the core category named *Blogging as a stimulus to support learners' linguistic awareness and learners' autonomy*.

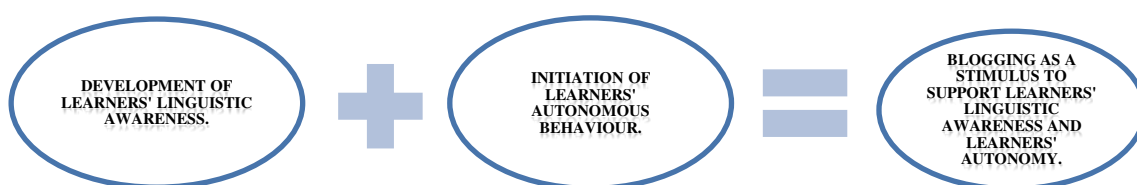


Figure 2. Final Categories

Core Category: Blogging as a stimulus to support learners' linguistic awareness and learners' autonomy.

The first starting point of the pedagogical intervention was raising awareness to encourage students to embark on writing actions. Data revealed the *development of learners' linguistic awareness and initiation of learners' autonomous behaviors*. It can be concluded that the use of the blog gradually helped learners to improve their writing skills

and increase the subjects' sense of self-responsibility and intrinsic motivation, thus, raising their level of learner autonomy.

The researcher proposed the use of the blog as a tool to improve writing fostering the development of autonomous learning actions in the students through the use of a technological tool. Students were aware of controlling their own learning and time management; they did not care if they had to study more in their free time. The experience fostered the use of the blog in order to promote the socialization of written texts because students showed that this tool served as a publishing program that allowed them to create their products creatively using images, choosing different fonts and designs for showing a clear product. The blog provided students with easy opportunities for drafting, revising, editing, and publishing their writing products accurately.

In the selective coding stage, the researcher validated the theory considering the findings and literature review in order to select a core category that composed of the sub-categories. The researcher examined how students become aware of various important linguistic aspects, improved some aspects of mechanics and also initiated autonomous behaviors such as: responsibility and intrinsic motivation through the use of blogging.

Data Display and verification

The researcher used some techniques in order to organize data for example; some charts were made in order to organize patterns in the open coding stage. Miles and Hubermans (1994) consider the data verification as the process of organized association of

information to provide conclusions effectively. The researcher verified the data gathered by checking and re-reading it, in order to see if it was valid and remained consistent.

Categories

The following are the categories and the subcategories that emerged as the result of the process of analyzing and triangulating the data. They are explained below.

Category 1: Development of learners' linguistic awareness

The data gathered from the blog, the recorded interviews and the questionnaires supported the fact that the students were aware of the importance of *mechanics* including spelling, capitalization and basic grammar structures. In addition, the students' writing showed a better organization in their structure; students were able to present their ideas in a more logical sequence and with thoughtful introductions and conclusions.

Subcategory: Effective usage of mechanics: accurate use of grammar,

Capitalization and spelling

Regarding the *mechanics*, it was evident that the learners improved grammar structures, spelling and capitalization features, aspects they did not care or knew how to handle before, as the needs analysis revealed it. Similarly, the participants were able to express their experiences in an understandable and clearer way.

Analyzing the written productions gathered in the diagnosis stage, students wrote a lot of unrelated words with an inaccurate grammar structure, vocabulary and spelling and is

was seen that learners translated word by word without expressing an understandable message. (See Appendix A). This can be seen in the following sample extracted from the texts produced by the students in the diagnosis analysis stage when they had to express an anecdote from their lives:

Colegio san Martin De tours

Anecdote in my life: an anecdote of my life I when bought to Strellita, my dog and the hid in a box and I'm enter to my homand the saw, I to be very happy, and my sister also.

(Excerpt 1. Participant 3. Needs analysis artifacts)

In the previous excerpt, it is observed that the student had serious problems in order to express his/her ideas accurately. It is difficult to understand what the student wanted to say. The verbs were not conjugated (red); the sentences structures were not accurate (green), there were spelling mistakes (blue) and the word order of the sentences was incorrect. Likewise, the use of capital letters was erroneous when the student wrote the name of his/ her school.

All these aspects were improved through the pedagogical intervention because students made fewer mistakes in terms of capitalization, grammar structures and spelling, which are important aspects in order to produce a text with clearer meaning.

The next excerpts are some examples taken from the students' artifacts that revealed the students' improvement in the aforementioned aspects.

Everything was fun and I shared with my uncles, cousins and neighbors. We went to "Laguna de la Copa" by boat. My cousin got scared and threw the boat and a man said that it was very dangerous, after lunch and minutes later we went to fish. When we went to the house, the car was damaged and at the end we had to walk two hours. This was my experience that i will never forget.

(Excerpt 2. Participant 4. Student's blog .Workshop 5: An unforgettable experience)

I will study medicine and I will be a sport player, I will be living in Bucaramanga. I won't live with my parents and I won't live in Sogamoso.

Likewise, I will have a big house and a red car. I will have a family and a son. In the future, I will also travel to Medellin, and I will travel U.S.A.

(Excerpt 3. Participant 1. Student's blog .Workshop 4: My future plans)

As it can be observed in the previous samples, students revealed their experiences and expressed clearer ideas about their last vacation and recorded their thoughts, feelings and ideas for their future, making fewer grammar mistakes and producing a more consistent text in order to communicate. Likewise, students were aware of writing using grammatically correct sentences that allowed them to express their ideas being understood by the readers.

According to Swanson (1999) grammar, style and usage are three terms that sum up the way to define the quality of writing. Grammar is a branch of linguistics that deals with the form and structure of words. When people want to improve the structure of the writing, they need to be interested in grammar. In other words, grammatical understanding was an

essential element for learners in order to obtain a better quality in their written productions. Similarly, the more knowledge students have about grammar, the easier it will be for them to write assignments for any specific purpose in their lives.

It is important to note that the students' written texts gathered after each workshop showed that they gradually improved mechanics in their writings; the verbs were conjugated, the sentences structures in present, past and future were recognized and they could express what they wanted to express. Likewise, students felt that English allowed them to express their experiences and ideas, just like in their native language.

It was seen that when the students understood clear and basic sentence structures, they were able to express what they wanted to say or mean easily. According to Brown (2001) at the simple, mechanical level, a text might be used to obtain at a certain verb tense or simply to illustrate a grammatical category. In this study, considering the level of the students, the grammatical categories that the students reached were simple; as it was formerly evidenced.

Complementarily, the students also perceived that they improved their writing skills through the use of the blog. The excerpts presented below were taken from the two instruments (questionnaires and interviews) that validate this category. These excerpts illustrate what students reported about their improvement in some aspects such as: vocabulary use, grammar structures in simple present, past or future tenses.

Gracias a esto, he mejorado un poco mi escritura en ingles pues no ha la perfeccion pero si un poco a saber utilizar el vocabulario aprendido, saber manejar verbos en diferentes formas. [sic] (Excerpt 4. Participant 9. Questionnaire 1)

E mejorado mi gramatica en la utilización del futuro simple y el pasado además del uso del verbo have y like. [sic] (Excerpt 5. Participant 3. Questionnaire 2)

He aprendido a manejar los verbos en forma correcta, el deletreo de las palabras y la escritura de oraciones [sic] (Excerpt 6. Participant 4. Interview 1)

Hemos mejoramos nuestra gramática por medio de ejercicios videos y juegos y esto sirve para la escritura. [sic] (Excerpt 7. Participant 5. Interview 2)

(Excerpts from questionnaires and interviews and translated by the researcher in Appendix M)

Even though the main focus of this research study was not to teach grammar structures, the students considered that they improved grammar sentences in various tenses and this was achieved thanks to the activities and materials posted on the blog such as: games, slides, videos, and worksheets. Those materials helped learners gained knowledge about sentences structures in order to produce a legible text that could be read smoothly by readers. In short, the materials offered guidance to the students and as a whole followed a coherent path providing many opportunities for students to choose.

In addition, when analyzing the students' blogs, it was possible to observe that students improved mechanics elements through the written process approach developed through the blog. Students had the opportunity to have a record of drafts, comments, revisions and final works and those contents in their blogs helped them to become aware of their weakness and strengths in their compositions.

The next subcategory will describe the learners' improvement in the organization of ideas in their texts as a component of the writing improvement category.

Subcategory: Gradual use of cohesive devices

This sub-category has to do with the sequencing of ideas, organization of sentences and connectors. Hedge (2000), proposes that it is necessary to build awareness in student writers that the organization of a piece of writing should be appropriate for readers and the information must be clear. The excerpts below show how the students started to organize their text through the process. The first sample is an evidence of how the students started to write isolated and disorganized sentences, while the second excerpt shows how the students began to organize their ideas to obtain a better cohesive text as the intervention developed.

My future

I will study occupational health, I will buy a car

I will live in Sogamoso and Bogotá

I will work at a company, I will be happy
 I will have a family, I will travel to Cartagena
 I will have two sons, I will visit Santa Marta
 I won't be a lawyer; I won't live in Buenos Aires
 I won't live with my aunt.

(Excerpt 8. Participant 4. Student's blog .Workshop 4: My future plans)

In this excerpt the student used grammar sentences correctly, however the sentences were not organized, for example the student expressed sentences related to his family and a few lines after that, this student started talking about trips. The student realized the importance of using transition devices in order to connect ideas and provide a text smoothly. Greenville (2001) says that “in order to make ideas fit in a text it is necessary to check the text because the ideas are not haphazardly phrased. Some will turn out to be about the same thing, some can be put into a sequence and some might pair off into opposing groups” (p.69). In other words, it was necessary that students apply an organizational strategy which was to begin using transitional words and phrases to show relationships among ideas, reorganize ideas trying to link them in order to produce a logical and clear organization of sentence of in the texts. As it is observed in the following sample:

My future
 Dear teacher and classmates, I will share my future plans:
 In my future plans, I will study occupational health and I will work at a company.

I will have a family and two sons and we will be living in Sogamoso and Bogota and I won't live with my aunt. Besides, I will travel to Cartagena and also visit Santa Marta by car because I will buy a luxurious car. On my vacations, I would like to visit New York. The most important thing is that I will live happy.

(Excerpt 9. Participant 4. Student's blog .Workshop 4: My future plans)

According to Greenville (2001) "sometimes individual sentences are good, but the joins between them need smoothing out with connecting words or phrases" (p.113). Undoubtedly, this was evident in the excerpt mentioned before, because once the students began to produce accurate sentences, they saw the necessity of paragraphing in their texts ; it was easier for them to write sentences rather than complete paragraphs; however, students made the best effort to produce a text with ideas presented smoothly.

Organization is an important aspect in writing because a good sequence of ideas through the use of connectors and paragraph construction keep a logical flow. Learners tried to express their ideas in the best possible way using connectors and writing paragraphs presenting a better sequence of ideas. Some of the connectors used were: but, however, after that, later, the next day, likewise, however, among others. Those linking words helped students organize their ideas better and produce good transitions making their texts more logically as they did not before the implementation. With regard to this aspect, the following excerpts show some students' written productions when they started to use connectors.

MY EXPERIENCE WAS ABOUT A TRIP TO YOPAL BECAUSE I SHARED WITH MY BROTHER FOR A MONTH. BESIDES, I SWAM IN THE RIVER AND I WENT THERE AND IT WAS A FUNNY TRIP .I LOVE TRAVELING TO YOPAL BECAUSE IT WAS THE MORE BEAUTIFUL EXPERIENCE AND I SHARED WITH MY FAMILY.

I ATE FRUITS SUCH AS: BANANA, ORANGES AND APPLES AND THEY ARE VERY DELICIOUS. AFTER THIS, WE WENT TO JUNGLE WHERE THERE WAS A HORSE, SNAKE, AND TOUCANS.

LIKEWISE, I SAW TOUCANS AND I LIKED THEM FOR THEIR FORMS AND COLORS BESIDES BECAUSE IT IS PACIFIC AND INOFFENSIVE ANIMAL.

(Excerpt 10. Participant 3. Student's blog .Workshop 5: An unforgettable experience)

I traveled to Yopal and San Luis de Palenque, but in Yopal I bought shorts and two t-shirts in GEF because in the day it was hot. After this, I traveled to San Luis de Palenque and I arrived at 09:30 pm at night, where my aunt lived.

Besides, I left the Malecon with my brothers and saw many monuments for example a horse and man.

After that, we left to have lunch in my aunt's house with my cousin, later in the afternoon I left my female cousin and she enjoyed a delicious and cold.

(Excerpt 11. Participant 10. Student's blog .Workshop 3: My last vacations)

The former texts showed that students were increasing their awareness regarding how to generate accuracy in a text and how to link sentences through cohesive devices. As it was mentioned previously, students' written texts gathered in the needs analysis stage showed that the learners did not make smooth transitions and they did not combine sentences appropriately in a given text.

Consequently, in this subcategory, the participants also acknowledged that the organization of sentences was improved by the use of transitional devices; however, it was a challenging task for them due to their English level (A1) and the lack of practice in previous scholar years. The use of transition words gradually helped learners to become better skilled writers. The changes analyzed by the researcher in their writings previously was also perceived and experienced by the learners who noted specific aspects of their development as writers following writing process carried out through blogging:

Se aprende a utilizar algunos verbos y a escribir párrafos. [sic] (Excerpt 12.

Participant 10. Questionnaire 1)

Asi mejoro mi escritura como el uso de los conectores y a realizar párrafos. [sic]

(Excerpt 13. Participant 8. Questionnaire 3)

(Excerpts from questionnaires and interviews and translated by the researcher in Appendix N)

As shown in the excerpts, students considered that the activities and process carried out in the blog stimulated them to start organizing their sentences into paragraphs and they were also aware of the importance of paragraphs to obtain effective writing. According to Booth (2011) paragraphs are important to break the elements of the writing into distinct sections with similar content, allowing the reader to more easily focus on the key points of the writing. In this sense, it was necessary that learners organized their ideas considering the similar content.

Brown (2004) points out that the quality of paragraphs depends on the clarity of expression of ideas, logic of the sequence and connections and cohesiveness or unity of the paragraph. It was seen in the students' texts because they used clear sentences and transitions words to produce their texts cohesively.

This category has reported findings on how participants developed their linguistic awareness, demonstrating the improvement of some writing aspects though the use of blogging, for this, the researcher articulated and discussed findings proving samples to support outcomes. The subsequent category is to the initiation of learners' autonomous behaviors.

Category 2: Initiation of learners' autonomous behaviors

According to Scharle and Szabò (2000) learners are autonomous when they act responsibly and act independent of the teacher, not waiting to be told what to do. The students demonstrated independent work because they used the blogs and worked on the activities in the blog by themselves. The teacher became a facilitator and a guide and the learners became responsible for their own learning. Students could manage their time and work by themselves as an extra-curricular. The blog became a place where learners could develop their assignments, express their ideas, and reinforce the topics studied in class. This core category is subdivided into three sub-categories: Increase of Intrinsic motivation through the blog as a self-access resource, development a sense of responsibility and empowerment of feedback processing task actions

Subcategory: Increase of intrinsic motivation

During the whole process, the use of the blog played an important role because students felt motivated to work on writing. The blog provided the students with interactive materials such as videos, games and websites that helped them in the process of writing.

The following excerpts taken from the questionnaires and interviews show some positive perceptions that demonstrated that students were motivated throughout the process.

Me saca de la rutina normal. [sic] (Excerpt 14. Participant 6. Questionnaire 2)

Es divertido. [sic] (Excerpt 15. Participant 7. Questionnaire 3)

Si porque es muy divertido y es muy chévere, es algo que no había experimentado. [sic] (Excerpt 16. Participant 5. Interview 2)

(Excerpts from questionnaires and interviews and translated by the researcher in Appendix O)

Thus, learners acknowledged that the use of the blog to develop writing skills was a new method that allowed them to get involved in the writing process with commitment and motivation. Students were intrinsically motivated because they found that what they were doing was fun, enjoyable and interesting. Ryan and Deci (1999) state that intrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable. Intrinsic motivation is defined as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence. When intrinsically motivated a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards. In this case, students had the desire and the challenge to do something and if all

learners were intrinsically motivated to perform classrooms tasks they could make many things on their own and succeed in their learning.

Moreover, according to Benson (2001) ability and motivation are forms to measure autonomy. Learners who are intrinsically motivated carry out learning activities for the pleasure of learning, for the satisfaction of achievement, or to experience stimulation. In this regard, data collected from the three instruments: blogs, interviews and questionnaires revealed common patterns that support that the students were motivated through the process of creating and working on the blog because they expressed that they acquired some computers skills that will be useful in their futures lives:

Me sirve para mis proyectos futuros. [sic] (Excerpt 17. Participant 1. Questionnaire 2)

Me sirve para la educación superior. [sic] (Excerpt 18. Participant 5. Questionnaire 3)

Motiva a aprender inglés y enviar y subir información. [sic] (Excerpt 19. Participant 9. Interview 3)

Is an interesting project because gel to students for his future .i like because is easy his teaching. [sic] (Excerpt 20. Participant 9. Student's blog)

I like because is very interesting and you learn new things, this serves for the future, thank you for this Project. [Sic] (Excerpt 23. Participant 10. Student's blog)

(Excerpts from questionnaires and interviews and translated by the researcher in Appendix P)

Complementarily, students learned some important aspects that will help them in their professional and personal growth and they considered this became personal rewarding.

They learned how to open an e-mail and blog address, how to upload and download information in slide share, attach and upload files.

The results of this project intensified what Wutta and Festen (2004) express that technology can interest and motivate learners, expand access to a greater number of learners, provide flexibility of instruction, and develop learners' competence and expertise in certain aspects of language. This occurred in the project in a positive way since students were interested because the use of technology in their academic life was something new due to the fact that they did not have the use of technological tools in other subjects different than the computer class.

Subcategory: Development of a sense of responsibility through the blog as a self-access resource.

According to Scharle and Szabò (2000) “responsibility is understood as being in charge of something with the implication that one has to deal with the consequences of one’s own actions” (p.4). In this sense, the teacher encouraged students to be responsible because they were aware of the tasks they had to do in order to improve at any given time. The following excerpts show participants’ perceptions with regard to responsibility:

| |
|--|
| <p>Si he sido responsable pues ósea puedo trabajar realizar actividades fuera de clases y puedo pues practicar la escritura. [sic] (Excerpt 21. Participant 5.Interview 1)</p> |
|--|

Porque uno se preocupa para entregar las actividades lo mas pronto posible. [sic] (Excerpt 22. Participant 7. Interview 10)

Eee, pues, pues si, eee en eso es algo que es una responsabilidad pero de todos modos y nos sirve para, para muchas cosas pues, de nuestra vida diaria y usar el tiempo que, uno a veces desperdicia. [sic] (Excerpt 23. Participant 4. Questionnaire 3)

(Excerpts from questionnaires and interviews and translated by the researcher in Appendix Q)

The learners showed responsibility because they tried to do the best, working on their texts on time in order to improve by themselves before the next workshop started in class. These tenth grade tried to overcome some problems, for example the lack of support from their families, lack of money to pay for Internet access in a cybercafé, while demonstrating engagement and responsibility during the workshops, since most of the time, they visited the school in the afternoons and work in the computers lab independently.

Scharle and Szabò (2000) state that responsible students make an effort to use available opportunities to their benefit, including classroom activities and homework. In this project, students found the blog as an opportunity for learning because it was available all the time for them to practice, study and learn interactively.

Likewise, responsibility was increased because of the independent use the blog as a learning resource. Students perceived that this tool was practical because it helped them to support and reinforce the instruction and explanations given in the face-to-face sessions and

students could o organize their time effectively to extend the work on writing skills though the blog.

In this regard, Sharma and Barret (2007) express that the blog allows the learners the opportunity to do extra-work and the use of activities on the web can consolidate and extend the classroom work. Using a blog can establish good practices of learner autonomy. Learners have to be proactive in accessing the information posted on the blog and the links to online resources.

Students found more opportunities to work more time on their own learning though the self- access materials provided in the blog, in this sense, they organized their time spending more hours studying and using internet services academically. Some of the students' perceptions about the blog as a self-access tool to learn independently and responsibly are taken from the questionnaires and the interviews:

Puedo acceder en cualquier momento. [sic] (Excerpt 24. Participant 8.Interview 1)
 Porque uno aunque no estando en el salón de clase y estando fuera, uno aprende más conocimiento del inglés. [sic] (Excerpt 25. Participant 10.Interview 2)

Sirve para usar el tiempo libre, que a veces se desperdicia He ingresado más o menos 3 o 4 veces por semana. [sic] (Excerpt 26. Participant 8.Interview 3)

He entrado al blog cuando no tenemos clases, o cuando no tenemos que venir y lo he usado para desarrollar los talleres. [sic] (Excerpt 27. Participant 9.questionnaire 2)

Porque en las tardes uno anda pendiente del Blog y no en la calle con los amigos. [sic]
(Excerpt 31. Participant 7.questionnaire 2)

En mi tiempo libre no hacía nada y ahora con el Blog ando más pendiente del colegio
[sic] (Excerpt 32. Participant 2.questionnaire 3)

(Excerpts from questionnaires and interviews retranslations by the researcher in Appendix

R)

According to Little (1991) self-access language resources support the development of autonomy. The most successful self-access resources tend to be those that find effective and flexible ways of supporting learners. Within this perspective, the outcomes of the research re-affirm that self-access materials promote independent study and responsibility for learners. In the context of where the students live, self-access materials became an excellent tool because the students do not have materials in their houses such as: books or dictionaries. In this sense, the blog as a permanent support for them.

After analyzing the two categories, it is important to conclude that the use of blogging helps students improve their writing and also this promotes autonomy because students felt motivated to work on the workshops showing responsibility using the self-access resources available outside the classroom. Likewise, the use of the blog encourages learners to take a more active role in their own learning and also this promotes motivation to learn English.

Chapter Six: Conclusions, Pedagogical Implications and Further Research

This chapter presents the most important conclusions that emerged from this study, some limitations found during the process, pedagogical implications and some recommendations for further research

Conclusions

The goal of this study was to analyze the possible effect of blogging in narrative writing skills and autonomy of tenth grade learners at San Martin School. Data collected allowed the researcher to identify a core category that described how the use of blogging helped the participants to improve some aspects of their writing skills and increase their responsibility and intrinsic motivation gradually.

The majority of the students found that blogging was useful, motivational, and effective for improving their writing and increasing their responsibility on their own learning process. In this way, learners responded positively to the blogging system, in which they had to post their own texts improving them in a process of revising, correcting, editing and publishing.

The participants were also given the opportunity to work on different interactive materials as an input before they started writing their own texts. The students stated that they enjoyed working on the activities because this kept them interested and they found that the materials were meaningful and relevant to their lives. Thus, they became motivated to learn responsibly.

Indeed, the use of the blog promoted autonomy and responsibility because its accessibility allowed learners to study independently at any time. Learners could manage their time going beyond the limits of a traditional classroom working autonomously and interacting outside the classroom while the teacher became a facilitator and a guide during the process.

Blogging was widely well-accepted by participants because of the advantages this tool provided them, mainly, to motivate them to start writing. Most students found blogging useful to create ideas and express their feelings. Huffaker (2005) reveals in one of his studies that blogs resemble personal journals or diaries and provide an online venue where self-expression and creativity is encouraged. Similarly, participants were encouraged to express their own and authentic ideas using their creativity to show it to their classmates and teacher. It was important to see how the students showed a positive attitude towards the process, expressing their own experiences and looking for images and designs to show the best, despite the problems they have to face daily. Undoubtedly, tenth graders found an opportunity to explore their realities and life stories making them a relevant aspect to share. They could recall and share their experiences through writing significantly.

This study also showed that students were able to improve some aspects in writing such as mechanics and organization of ideas. Considering mechanics, learners improved spelling, capitalization and grammar structures. They were also aware of the importance of using accurate sentences in order to make their messages understandable and clear to the readers. Regarding cohesion in their writings, learners started to use transitional devices in

order to connect ideas achieving coherence in their writings. At the end, students were able to produce coherent paragraphs because their sentences were organized logically.

In addition, the results indicated that the students at San Martin School became more independent from the teacher and responsible for their own learning. According to Scharle and Szabò (2000) "...responsibility is understood as being in charge of something with the implication that one has to deal with the consequences of one's own actions" (p.4). In this view, the teacher encouraged students to be responsible because they were aware of the tasks they had to do in order to improve each time.

Finally, this study also reported a significant finding that was not in the original plan which is that participants were trained in the use of some basic computer skills such as: open e-mails to create their blogs, save information, copy and paste images, upload, download and attach files. This was evident through observation and the students' written productions posted on the blog. In this sense, the use of blogs promoted some basic computer skills and autonomy taken as life-long learning skills because they are useful for students in their personal development, future life and education to face the challenges of today's world. This was perceived by the students who expressed through interviews that the knowledge learned through the development of the project is very useful for their lives and future studies.

Additionally, the research objectives were met because it was possible to determine that blogs had a positive effect in narrative writing skills and to identify that this tool had an impact in the development of autonomy because students showed some autonomous

behaviors to start learning by themselves . Furthermore, the use of blogs in this project was successful considering the students' background and it was a user-friendly program that allowed students to create their own blogs easily using basic word processing skills.

Pedagogical implications

According to the results obtained in this study, some pedagogical implications emerged. First, it is important to provide students with the opportunity to follow a writing process approach (pre-writing, writing and post writing) correcting and improving it considering the feedback and obtaining a better-written product. “The upshot of the compositional nature of writing has produced writing pedagogy that focuses students on how to generate ideas, how to organize them coherently, how to use discourse markers to put them cohesively into a written text, how to revise text for clearer meaning, how to edit text for appropriate grammar, and how to produce a final product” (Brown, 2001, p.335). In this way, the process approach to writing instruction benefits the learners; however it is important to note that this process is time-consuming both for the teacher and student but despite this the final piece is produced, both learners and teachers can witness a rewarding experience. The students need time to plan, organize thoughts, let the feelings flow, write, re-write, revise and share their writings in the best way and the teachers need time to revise and provide feedback different times.

Secondly, considering that today's students are different from previous generations in the way, they think, interact, learn and are motivated; these differences need to be understood by teachers in order to facilitate learning and motivate the students. If the

learners are not motivated to learn, they might feel bored and will fail. “When students feel that learning is relevant or important to their lives, they will become motivated to learn. By using digital media to develop lesson concepts, teachers bring familiar technology into the classroom. Concepts developed with digital media utilize technologies that student’s value” (Cashman, 2006, p.9). In this sense, technological tools can be useful to motivate learners, however, it is important that teachers adapt them considering the students’ needs and profiles.

Due to the fact that education is becoming virtual and there are more universities that use blending learning environments each day, it is required that students self-regulate their own learning and that teachers implement activities or projects that help them to increase their autonomy and take responsibility and active roles in their own learning. According to Scharle and Szabò (2000), learners behave responsibly as they are consciously making an effort to contribute to their own learning. They are also autonomous in the sense that they act independently of the teacher, not waiting to be told what to do. This means that learners need to accept that success in learning depends on them mainly, because the teacher can provide tools and support but they only achieve positive results when they contribute to their personal growth significantly.

Findings also suggest the efficacy of the blog in English learning because it is a tool that could be used in pre-teaching, teaching and post teaching. The teacher is able to present the activities in advance such as vocabulary, videos and texts before the lesson, so the learners would have this information available before the lesson. Likewise, teachers use

the links to other web pages in which they show images, games or interactive slides to explain or provide examples.

Additionally, it is important that teachers provide learners with opportunities to use and practice the language outside the classroom and one way to do it is using the materials that internet offers. Those materials also help students to acquire computers skills that will be useful in their future lives. Language professionals who have access to an Internet computer classroom are in a position to teach students valuable lifelong learning skills and strategies for becoming autonomous learners.

Limitations

Although the findings of this research were significant, some limitations emerged through the process. First of all, time became a crucial factor to develop the workshops because some of the steps required more training than others. For example, in the first sections of the implementation, the students spent five hours when they had to create an e-mail account and their own blogs because they did not even know how to send an e-mail. However, as students were really motivated to learn, they took some of their free time in three afternoons and the researcher explained them how to manage those aspects in the computer. In this sense, time was a great constraint because the students had only two hours of English per week; however, once they started to work on the workshops, they worked on the activities as extra-class work and the time constraint was overcome. A possible solution that can be done in the future in order to avoid these types of limitations is to provide students with basic computer skills before starting the project. This might be done in the

computer class proposed as a cross-curricular project or students could receive some guides with clear instructions of how to open blogs and do some other things necessary for working on the blogs. In this way, they would learn those things before starting the project implementation.

Further research

According to the results obtained in this research, writing process approach developed through the use of blogging has been an effective strategy to improve writing; however, it would be a great idea to incorporate self-assessment practice during the process in order to guide the students to increase self-regulation and self-determination in their language learning.

Furthermore, it is recommended for other teachers interested in researching about the use of blogging, to consider the possibility of using different types of academic writing such as: opinion, cause-and-effect or argumentative essays. This type of academic writing might embark students on a process of analysis, evaluation of facts and problem solving, preparing them for the demands of further education and the workplace.

As the students were digital natives and enjoyed working with technology, it would be worthwhile to implement the use of the blog as a virtual resource center where students share products collaboratively designed using the Web 2.0 tools. Those tools might motivate learners to reinforce writing, listening, reading and speaking skills.

As the blog is a tool that fosters collaborative work and writing skills, it is recommended that further research involve the design a course which could be implemented between two different school classes that have the same English level. This proposal could be planned in order to provide the students with the opportunity of analyzing and writing about global issues such as racism, solidarity, nature, poverty and education. This study might produce outcomes about the possible effects of collaborative work between two schools to encourage tolerant towards contrary points of view, arguing and sharing opinions about global issues.

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Footnotes

¹ The standards were translated by the researcher.

²SENA (National Learning Service), a Colombian public institution focused in the development of programs of professional formation to generate employment.

Appendixes

Appendix A

Institucion Educativa Tecnico San Martin de tours

Anecdote in my life.

A day in the house of a friends, was playing to the war with Valeria, Sara, Sharon and I, Valeria and Sara a group we the paint the face of black, and saw much funny.

Sharon and I we paint the face with.

(Excerpt 1.Participant 3. Needs analysis artifacts.

Appendix B

Questionnaire



INSTITUCION EDUCATIVA TECNICO SAN MARTIN DE TOURS.

Lee las siguientes preguntas y responde cuidadosamente:

1. ¿Usted considera que el uso del blog es útil para trabajar habilidades escriturales?

Si ☒ No ☐

Explique

Porque por medio de este se mejora la escritura del mail ya no se escriben oraciones sino en párrafos

2. ¿Piensa usted que el blog presenta ventajas para el aprendizaje del Inglés?

Si ☒ No ☐

Explique

Pero solo por parte de escritura pues esta se practica mas

3. ¿Le gusta trabajar con blog en el área de Inglés?

Si ☒ No ☐

Explique

ya que puedo por medio de este puedo mejorar mi escritura

4. ¿Piensa usted que ha mejorado su autonomía en el aprendizaje del Inglés mediante el uso del blog?

Si ☒ No ☐

Explique

Porque me expuso por mejorar y presentar las actividades

5. ¿Piensa usted que el blog presenta desventajas para el aprendizaje del inglés?

Si ☒ No ☐

Explique

presenta desventajas por parte de pronunciación
ya que solo se practica escritura

6. ¿Le motiva la idea de trabajar habilidades escriturales mediante el uso del blog?

Si ☒ No ☐

Explique

porque me motiva aprender inglés que es me ayuda
para un futuro

7. ¿Considera usted que el uso de blog le ha ayudado a mejorar su responsabilidad?

Si ☒ No ☐

Explique

porque me preocupa por presentar las actividades

8. ¿Considera usted que el uso de blog le ha ayudado a incrementar su motivación para desarrollar el trabajo extra-clase?

Si ☒ No ☐

Explique

ya que puedo resolver las actividades cuando
estoy haciendo otras tareas



MUCHAS GRACIAS



Appendix C

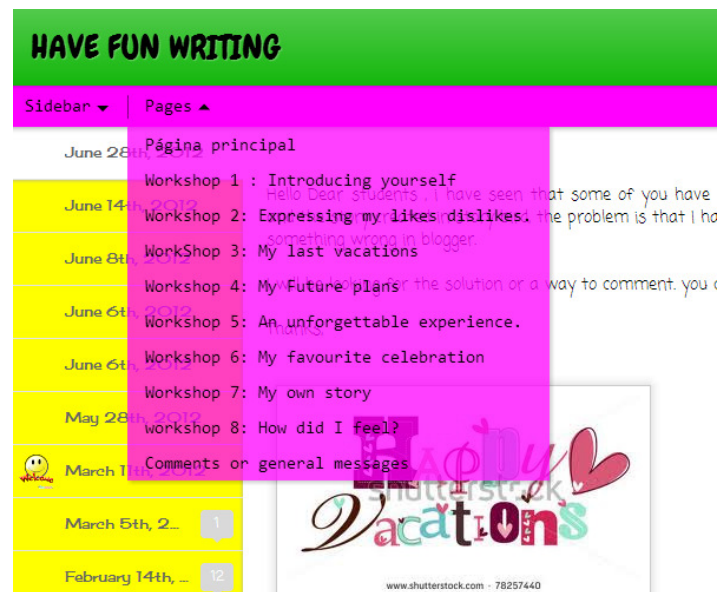
Interview:

1. ¿Cuántas veces ha ingresado en el blog durante una semana y para que lo ha usado?
2. ¿Cree usted que se ha convertido en un estudiante responsable después del uso del blog? Si, No, ¿Por qué?
3. ¿Su escritura ha mejorado desde que comenzó a seguir los pasos del proceso de escritura y el uso del blog? ¿Cómo?
4. ¿Es el uso del blog una oportunidad para usar el inglés fuera del salón de clase?
5. ¿Se ha sentido motivado a escribir y a mejorar su proceso de escritura por medio del uso del blog?

Appendix D

Main Blog: *havefunwriting*.

<http://pilarwriting.blogspot.com/>



Some excerpts from students' blogs:



After my father rescued me. Also I visited a real estate where I found a wild dog that bites me a leg. I had to go to the hospital with my family and I was good. My family and me had a great time because this is a beautiful city. When we came back to house the bus damaged and we lasted over two hours sitting in the bus waiting to that. Finally we came to our land very happy and well.






MY EXPERIENCE WAS ABOUT A TRIP TO YOPAL BECAUSE I SHARED WITH MY BROTHER FOR A MONTH BESIDES I SWAM IN THE RIVER AND I WENT THERE AND IT WAS A FUNNY TRIP. I LOVE TRAVELING TO YOPAL BECAUSE IT WAS THE MORE BEAUTIFUL EXPERIENCE AND I SHARED WITH MY FAMILY.

I ATE FRUITS SUCH AS: BANANA, ORANGES AND APPLES AND THEY ARE VERY DELICIOUS. AFTER THIS, WE WENT TO JUNGLE WHERE THERE WAS A HORSE, SNAKE, AND TOUCANS.

LIKEWISE, I SAW TOUCANS AND I LIKED THEM FOR THEIR FORMS AND COLORS BESIDES BECAUSE IT IS PACIFIC AND INOFFENSIVE ANIMAL.



(Excerpt 1. Participant 1 and 3. Student's blog .Workshop 3: My last vacations)

My future plans

I will study business administration and I will work running a company.
 Likewise, I will buy my stuff and I will buy a car and a house. furthermore, I will have a family. I will have two sons.
 I will travel to France, Italy, Rome, Argentina, Paris, Canada, Los Angeles, and United States.
 I will live in other places around the World.



(Excerpt 2. Participant 8. Student's blog .Workshop 3: My future plans)

Dear Teacher and classmates,

My Likes
 I Like Eating Fruits and Vegetables. I like eating sandwich. I Like Playing Basketball and hanging out with my friends. Besides, I like speaking with my best friend. I like playing in the computer and writing in my Facebook. I Like Studying English and Biology. I like speaking with Funny people.

I Love listening Christian music. Thus, I Love watching movies in the cinema. I Love Sleeping in my bed. I Love doing Exercise in the park and the gym. I Love eating apple. I Love drinking water and green Tea. I Love listening music in English. I Love Speaking in my cellphone.

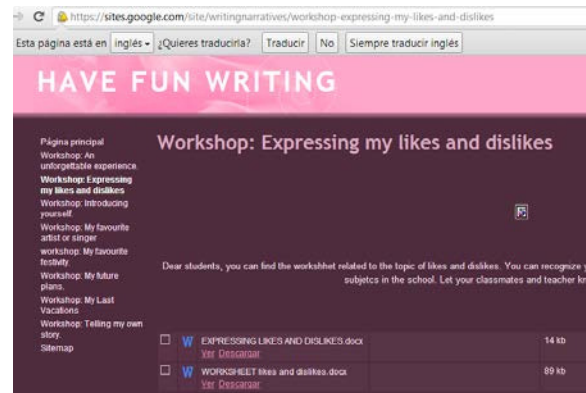
Some of my dislikes are: I Hate listening vulgar music, I Hate speaking with liar people, I Hate the war!!!. I hate bad people. I Hate Speaking with people without personality. I hate nasty people.

I Don't Like Eating Pork. I don't like playing Soccer and Golf. I don't like watching the stupid tv programs. I Don't Like Singing. I don't like orange color. I Don't Like Studying Math.

(Excerpt 3. Participant 2. Student's blog .Workshop 2: My likes and dislikes)

Appendix G

Samples of the worksheets and games that students developed through the use of the blog



(Excerpt taken from the blog, students could download worksheets to develop as previous steps before writing the first draft)

Appendix H

| Stage | Month | Week | Activity | Data collection instruments. |
|-------------|--|---|--|---|
| Pre- stage | February | Week one and two. | To get the institutional permission for implementing the research study. Asking the students about their Interest on being part of the research study. Inform consent. | |
| While stage | February March April May | Week three. Week four Every week, three hours per week. | Implementing the first lesson plan and activities: Reading and giving personal information. Reading and analyzing information collected. Implementing the 9 lesson plans and activities and analysis the data gathered. Every week, the observation and data analysis helps to identify the possible changes to be implemented in the lesson plans and in the blog. Likewise, the questionnaires will be implemented after the closure of the lesson plan implementation. | Students narratives Written productions posted on the blog. Questionnaires. Journal. |
| Post stage | June July and August. September October | Week one | Implementation of the final questionnaire. Analyzing and validating data. Triangulation process. Writing and refining the final product. Sharing findings. | Triangulation. Final thesis. |

Time line

Implementation chart

| Week | Time | Topic | Strategy |
|--------|--|---|---|
| | 4 hours | Getting ready with the use of the blog. | Warm up, Explanation, practice. |
| Week 1 | 2 hour face-to-face 1 hour (extra-time from the students) | Introducing yourself | Outlining, drafting, correcting, revising and publishing. |
| Week 2 | 2 hours face-to-face 1 hour (extra-time from the students) | My likes and dislikes. | Outlining, drafting, correcting, revising and publishing. |
| Week 3 | 2 hours face-to-face 1 hour (extra-time from the students) | My last vacations | Outlining, drafting, correcting, revising and publishing. |
| Week 4 | 2 hours face-to-face 1 hour (extra-time from the students) | My future plans | Outlining, drafting, correcting, revising and publishing. |
| Week 5 | 2 hours face-to-face 1 hour (extra-time from the students) | An unforgettable experience | Outlining, drafting, correcting, revising and publishing. |
| Week 6 | 2 hours face-to-face 1 hour (extra-time from the students) | My favorite celebration | Outlining, drafting, correcting, revising and publishing. |
| Week 7 | 2 hours face-to-face 1 hour | My own story | Outlining, drafting, correcting, revising and publishing. |

Appendix I

Lesson Plan

| Stage | Aim | Procedure | Time and interaction | Tutor's comments |
|------------------|--|---|----------------------|------------------|
| Warmin g up. | To motivate the students. | Teacher and student activity The song that will be sang is: "I like the flowers". http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6PKcnTGVX4 | 30 minutes. | |
| Present ation | To introduce the topic having the learners be interested in the topic. | The song will be played and learners are going to use the pictures to complete the song. Teacher will present a power point presentation telling the students his or her likes and dislikes. | | |
| Practice | To generate ideas. | Teacher explains the grammar inductively using some questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Do you like to watch tv? ✓ Do you like to play football? ✓ Do you like to eat fruits? ✓ What do you like to do on Sundays? What are your dislikes? Students get a worksheet where they do some activities related to the topic. Communicative activity. In this worksheet, the students start to generate ideas of what they are going to write. | 15 minutes. | |
| Prelimi nary. | | | 15 minutes. | |
| | To write the first sentences. | Students start to write what they like to do and what they do not like, they need to write two paragraphs. (each one of ten lines) students publish it in the blog. | 15 minutes. | |
| | To be aware of the | Teacher provides feedback around the class, and students need to correct the | 15 minutes. | |

| | | | | |
|-------------|--|---|--------------------------|--|
| Drafting | mistakes. | mistakes and look for the solutions with the classmates. | | |
| Correcting. | To organize the writing in a power point presentation. | Students create a power point presentation using some pictures of them and they need to present what they likes or dislikes are. | 15 minutes | |
| Revising | To publish it on the clog. | Students need to post their last written production on the blog and start reading other classmates writing to provide positive and negative comments. | 20 minutes. | |
| Editing | To exchange opinions. | | 20minutes. Asynchronous. | |
| Publishing | | | | |

Appendix J

Excerpts from questionnaires' transcripts.

Lee las siguientes preguntas y responde cuidadosamente:

Pregunta número uno: ¿Usted considera que el uso del blog es útil para trabajar habilidades estructurales?

Todos los estudiantes respondieron SI

| | |
|-----|--|
| S-1 | Porque me facilita la escritura y el aprendizaje. |
| S-2 | Porque es una forma dinámica de trabajar |
| S-3 | Porque nos ayuda a mejorar nuestra gramática en ingles y nos enseña a manejar el blog para nuestra vida diaria. |
| S-4 | Porque practico más mucho las palabras que no sabemos asi vamos mejorando y desarrollando nuestras habilidades. |
| S-5 | Porque nos ayuda a conocer mas el ingles, palabras como se escribe lo que uno quiere decir y lo podemos practicar más seguido. |
| S-6 | Porque el uso del blog es muy bueno uno aprende cosas nuevas que nos sirven para nuestra vida. |
| S-7 | Porque me ayuda a encontrar el interés y la motivación por el inglés ya que el blog presenta información de la cual puede ayudarme a mejorar. |

| | |
|------|---|
| S-8 | Porque los estudiantes practican la escritura del ingles. |
| S-9 | Gracias a esto, he mejorado un poco mi escritura en ingles pues no ha la perfección pero si un poco a saber utilizar el vocabulario aprendido, saber manejar verbos en diferentes formas. |
| S-10 | Se aprende a utilizar algunos verbos y a escribir párrafos. |

Green: Motivation.

Blue: Writing: Sentences,

Red: Writing: Paragraphs

Orange: Other skills

Blue highlighter: Responsibility

Other findings: yellow

Excerpts from questionnaire's transcripts.

Pregunta número 7. ¿Considera usted que el uso del blog le ha ayudado a mejorar su responsabilidad?

Todos los estudiantes respondieron SI

| | |
|------|---|
| S-1 | Porque uno puede entrar a cualquier hora, porque mi autoestima a sido mucho mejor, y e aprendido nuevos conocimientos. |
| S-2 | No es para mi ningún esfuerzo entrar a internet. |
| S-3 | Mas o menos me intriga aprender cada vez mas y realizar las actividades. |
| S-4 | Porque nos ayuda mucho a nuestro mejoramiento y a la integración de nuevas cosas. |
| S-5 | Digamos que asi mucho la responsabilidad no pero he aprendido hacerlo mejor y mas responsable con las otras cosas. |
| S-6 | Porque en las tardes uno anda pendiente del Blog y no en la calle con los amigos. |
| S-7 | Porque la responsabilidad me la he ganado yo mismo porque he subido los trabajos sin que me estén diciendo sino que lo hago por mi propia cuenta. |
| S-8 | Porque se preocupa por entregar sus actividades a tiempo. |
| S-9 | Porque aveces no tengo tiempo para hacer tareas porque estoy en música por la tarde pero me gusta el English. |
| S-10 | Porque uno se preocupa para entregar las actividades lo mas pronto posible. |

Excerpts from questionnaires' transcripts.

Pregunta numero dos: ¿Piensa usted que el blog presenta ventajas para el aprendizaje del Inglés?

Todos los estudiantes respondieron SI

| | |
|------|--|
| S-1 | Porque es divertirnos, porque es interactivo, porque uno aprende fácil, y no necesita tanta ayuda del profesor. |
| S-2 | Es una buena estrategia para el aprendizaje del ingles, pues es una forma diferente y dinámica que atrae para el gusto del ingles. |
| S-3 | Porque es practico y fácil de usar y me ayuda a mejorar mi escritura gramatical, y parrafos |
| S-4 | Aprendemos nuevas cosas como el past simple, el futuro entre otros temas que nos brinda para nuestro desarrollo. |
| S-5 | Si xq nos ayuda a mejorar nuestro vocabulario y nos ayuda a entender mejor las actividades que hay en el blog. |
| S-6 | Por que experimentamos cosas nuevas que nunca había visto. |
| S-7 | Por que tiene ayuda como videos, y diferentes enlaces en los que se puede entrar y encontrar explicaciones y necesidades educativas. |
| S-8 | Porque cuando uno lee textos en ingles, juega a través del ingles y mejora bastante en la conformación de oraciones y párrafos. |
| S-9 | Como poco a poco uno le va poniendo en practica eso le va ayudando a recordar y aprender cosas q no sabia. |
| S-10 | Por que nos enseña como manejar los verbos en forma correcta y a motivarnos por algo que es tan importante en nuestras vidas como el uso de herramientas del computador y demás. |

Excerpts from interviews' transcripts.

Interview number one Interviewed: Student number four Interviewer: Margarita Mariño.

| | TRANSCRIPTION | COMMENTARI ES. |
|--|--|-------------------|
| | <p>I: ¿Cuántas veces ha ingresado en el blog durante una semana y para que lo ha usado?</p> <p>S3: – eee he entrado 3, a ala semana y lo eh usado para mm mejorar mis conocimientos, para mejorar mis capacidades eee y desarrollar mis habilidades.</p> <p>I: ¿Cree usted que se ha convertido en un estudiante responsable después del uso del blog?</p> <p>S3: Eee, pues, pues si, eee en eso es algo que es una responsabilidad pero de todos modos y nos sirve para, para muchas cosas pues, de nuestra vida diaria y usar el tiempo que, que uno a veces desperdicia.</p> <p>I: ¿Su escritura ha mejorado desde que comenzó a seguir los pasos del proceso de escritura y el uso del blog?</p> <p>S3: He aprendido a manejar los verbos en forma correcta, el deletreo de las palabras y la escritura de oraciones.</p> <p>I: ¿Es importante el proceso de escritura que se ha realizado?</p> <p>S3: Eee, si, eee porque todos nos equivocamos, entonces, según los comentarios que nos hace nuestra profesora, nosotros podemos darnos cuenta que nos equivocamos y podemos eee digamos los podemos corregir en lo que tenemos mal y reflexionar sobre eso y mejorar las escrituras de oraciones y demás.</p> <p>I: ¿Es el uso del blog una oportunidad para usar el inglés fuera del salón de clase?</p> <p>S3: Si, si nos sirve para aa aprender y nos sirve digamos a veces para nuestro futuro nos puede servir eee y es muy interesante.</p> <p>I: ¿Se ha sentido motivado a escribir y a mejorar su proceso de escritura por medio del uso del blog?</p> <p>S3: Sí, me ha motivado mucho y me ha servido y es una, una gran ayuda, porque digamos las clases de inglés es diferente, es casi igual al block, pero el block nos sirve más para desarrollar nuestras escrituras.</p> | |

Appendix K

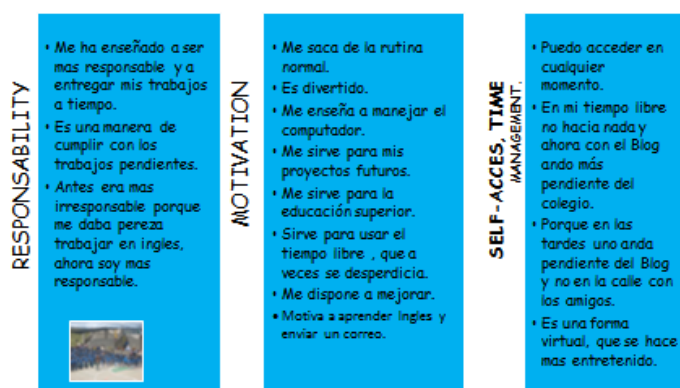
Numerical code.

| | |
|------|---------------|
| S-1 | Student one |
| S-2 | Student two |
| S-3 | Student three |
| S-4 | Student four |
| S-5 | Student five |
| S-6 | Student six |
| S-7 | Student seven |
| S-8 | Student eight |
| S-9 | Student nine |
| S-10 | Student ten |

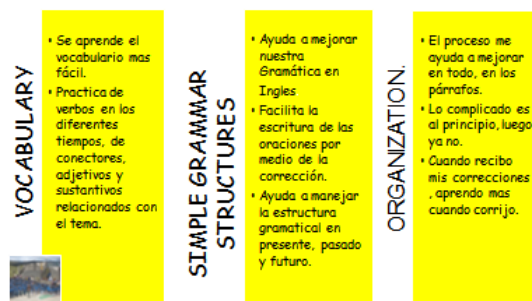
Appendix L

Excerpts from the axial coding stage.

To what extent could blogging develop AUTONOMY ?



What is the possible effect of the implementation of blogging in student's narrative writing skills ?



Appendix M

Translation of excerpts 4-7 from questionnaires and interviews.

I have improved my writing in English thanks to this project. I have used new vocabulary and learned different verb tenses. (Excerpt 4. Participant 9. Questionnaire 1)

I have learned some grammar aspects such as the use of simple future and past tenses besides the use of the verb have and like. (Excerpt 5. Participant 3. Questionnaire 2)

I have learned to use verbs correctly, to spell words and write correct sentences too. (Excerpt 6. Participant 4. Interview 1)

We have improved grammar aspects through the use of videos, exercises and games posted on the blog and this has helped me in writing. (Excerpt 7. Participant 5. Interview 2)

Appendix N

Translation of excerpts 12-13 from questionnaires and interviews.

We learn to use verbs and write paragraphs. (Excerpt 12. Participant 10. Questionnaire 1)

In this way, I improve my writing, the use of the connectors and paragraph writing. (Excerpt 13. Participant 8. Questionnaire 3)

The activities and the process developed through the blog helped me to write paragraphs and improve writing. (Excerpt 15. Participant 5. Interview 2)

Appendix O

Translation of excerpts 14- 16 from questionnaires and interviews.

This takes me out from the normal routine. (Excerpt 14. Participant 6. Questionnaire 2)

This is an enjoyable experience (Excerpt 15. Participant 7. Questionnaire 3)

Yes, because it is very nice and enjoyable. This is something I had not experienced before. (Excerpt 16. Participant 5. Interview 2)

Appendix P

Translation of excerpts 17- 20 from questionnaires and interviews.

This is helpful for my future projects. (Excerpt 17. Participant 1. Questionnaire 2)

This is very important and helpful for my higher education. (Excerpt 18. Participant 5. Questionnaire 3)

This motivates me to learn, send and upload information on the web. (Excerpt 19. Participant 9. Interview 3)

This is an interesting project because this helps students for their future education. I like because it is easy for learning and teaching. (Excerpt 20. Participant 9. Student's blog)

I like because it is very interesting and you learn new things, this serves for the future, thank you for this Project. (Excerpt 23. Participant 10. Student's blog)

Appendix Q

Translation of excerpts 21-23 from questionnaires and interviews.

I have been responsible because i can work on different activities outside the classroom and in this way, I can improve writing. (Excerpt 21. Participant 5.Interview 1)

Because, we are worried to deliver the activities as soon as possible. (Excerpt 22. Participant 7.Interview 10)

I think it is a responsibility and this helps us for different things in our daily life and also it is an opportunity to spend our free time. (Excerpt 23. Participant 4.Interview 3)

Appendix R

Translation of excerpts 24-27 from questionnaires and interviews.

I can access to it at any time. (Excerpt 24. Participant 8.Interview 1)

Because, we learn more knowledge in English and we are not in the classroom because we are outside the classroom. (Excerpt 25. Participant 10.Interview 2)

This helps to spend the free time that sometimes we waste. I have access to it three of four times per week. (Excerpt 26. Participant 8.Interview 3)

I have accessed to it when we do not have classes or when we do not have to attend to school and i have used it to work on the workshops. (Excerpt 27. Participant 9.questionnaire 2)

Because we are working on the activities from the blog in the afternoons, and we are not hanging out with friends. (Excerpt 31. Participant 7.questionnaire 2)