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Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y Humanísticas

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ESCUELA SUPERIOR POLITÉCNICA DEL LITORAL

Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y Humanísticas

"PERCEPTIONS THAT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, AT AN INTERMEDIATE LEVEL (CEFR), HAVE WHEN USING FACEBOOK TO PRACTICE THEIR WRITING SKILLS."

This thesis is presented in partial fulfillment for the degree of Master in

Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Deffended by:

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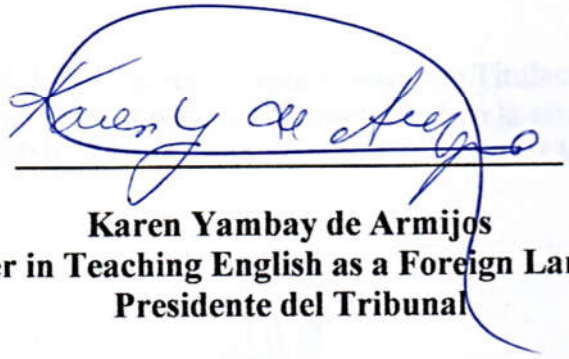

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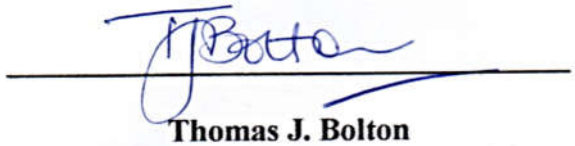

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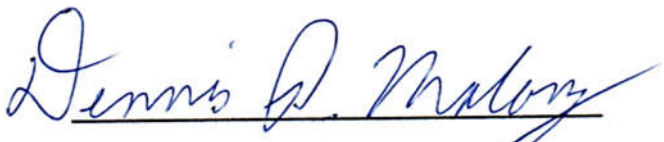

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to understand how students feel the moment when they are exposed to using the social networking site Facebook as a platform for their practicing of writing skills. Writing has been one of the skills that learners have more trouble with, because of several reasons. One of these reasons says Carlino (2012) is the lack of proper writing practice during the student's primary and secondary life. It was this as well as the frustration this author feels when reading some student's written works that functioned as the motivation to look for a viable tool to help students practice their writing skills.

To achieve this goal this research was set into place. The researcher used a survey to secure demographic information as well as facts on how students use the Internet and the Facebook, which is the platform base of this investigation. Participants additionally did a writing test at the beginning of the intervention and then another test, with the same characteristics, right after the intervention period finalized. This test was performed to try to evidence the improvement the group, as a whole, had after they had received the intervention. Finally, a set of interviews took place. Finally, the bulk of data for this paper was obtained from a set of semi-structured interviews where the informants spoke about their experience of using the Facebook to practice their writing skills, as well as how beneficial they felt the whole experience was.

From the data gathered, this researcher could determine that respondents actually appreciate and enjoy working on the Facebook platform. A general feeling was that of having a low level of stress and anxiety while working on the platform as it reduced their affective filter. Students were able to work at their own pace, anywhere they wanted to do the work, and they could communicate with each other, and the teacher, if they had questions. When they were ready to post their work, after doing some revision, they uploaded their responses which were then commented by their peers and the teacher. The results from the paired T-test were also positive as the null hypothesis resulted negative and as a whole, the class improved in a four percent in their average grade.

Considering the work that was done and the results obtained from this study, the researcher suggests some paths to be followed in terms of new research. A new inquiry could be performed in the same issue but this time from the point of view of the instructors

so that knowledge could be available in regards ti their perceptions of the efficiency of the tool. Also, a more in-depth study, in which more institutions in the city of Guayaquil take part, can occur so that population validity can be accounted for and generalization can be granted. Finally, another research is suggested in which a quantitative methodology is relied upon. In this other inquiry, a correlation between the errors encountered the post-test and the input received in the intervention could be studied.

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Abbreviations

AFH:	Affective Filter Hypothesis
ANECA:	National Agency for Evaluation of Quality and Accreditation
CALL:	Computer Assisted Language Learning
CEAACES:	Council for Evaluation and Accreditation and Assurance of the Quality of Higher Education
CES:	Higher Education Council
CFER:	Common European Framework of Reference
CLT:	Communicative Language Teaching
CMC:	computer mediated communication
CS:	Computer Sciences
EBA:	Evidence-Based Approach
EFL:	English as a Foreign Language
FB:	Facebook
HCI:	Human-computer Interaction
ICT:	Information and communications technologies
IMC:	internet mediated communication
INEC:	National Institute of Census and Statistics of Ecuador
IT:	Information Technologies
LIH:	Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis
LOES	Organic Law of Higher Education
SENESCYT	National Secretariat of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation
SLA:	Secon Language Aquisition
SNS:	Social Networking Sites
TESOL	Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
VLE:	Virtual Learning Environments
EFSET:	English First Standard English Test
PET:	Preliminary English Test
ESL:	English as a Second Language
ZPD:	Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

English is globally deemed as the language everyone should be involved with, the real Lingua Franca, according to Calle et al. (2012), and this assertion applies to the Ecuadorian environment as well. The Ecuadorian government has been making efforts to try to improve the levels of proficiency by making changes in the education system as depicted below.

The efforts to democratize higher education in Ecuador

The Organic Law of Higher Education (LOES) saw the light on October 2010. Through this law, several organizations came to life as well. The Higher Education Council (CES), which among other things is in charge of producing a plan for the development of the higher education system, is the governing body. The other ruling body is the Council for Evaluation and Accreditation and Assurance of the Quality of Higher Education (CEAACES), this entity is in charge of planning, coordinating and executing the activities required in the process of evaluation and accreditation of higher education institutions. Finally, through the LOES, and the National Secretariat of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (SENESCYT) was created, which serves as the link between the educational system in Ecuador and the executive function of the country. These bodies of law have emitted a series of regulations that have affected the way universities in Ecuador teach English. Let us take a quick look at some of the most significant effects these new regulations have generated.

More students in each classroom

In the first place, the government through the LOES declared that public university education had to be free for everybody. According to the Secretary of the SENESCYT, Mr. René Ramirez, since the law came into effect, there has been an increase of 140,000 students, nationally, in the Ecuadorian higher education system. This rise is, Ramirez continues to say, approximately five percentual points increase of students. However, what

is also important, the Secretary ends, is the offer of scholarships for the lower socio-economic levels.

This assertion implies a definite surge of learners coming to University, and a good number of these new learners deriving from public schools where foreign language maintains a low profile. The additional number of pupils that have been registering in public universities, such as the one in which this study takes place, result in more crowded classrooms. This augmented number of learners lead to a daunting experience for teachers says Bahanshal (2013). This researcher also came to the conclusion that despite the teachers' efforts to promote the improvement of language learning in such circumstances, the results obtained by students cannot be deemed as satisfactory.

A higher level of training for University teachers

According to the National Agency for Evaluation of Quality and Accreditation (ANECA), which is an organization created by the Ministry of Education of Ecuador, to be able to teach at university level, teachers require several qualifications. A tertiary level degree, whether this is a bachelor's degree or an engineering one. Also, a fourth level degree on the subject that will be taught. Finally, university teachers ought to get a Ph.D., regarding education. Furthermore, the CES in their resolution RPC-SO-037-No.265-2012 requires college professors to be involved in activities concerning teaching, research, educational management, and community connections. This body of law also mentions that faculty is expected to have published at least three articles in indexed journals in the are of their teaching field.

In this same area, the Ministry of Education through their resolution MINEDUC-ME-2015-00069-A rules that all candidates to be English teachers in universities in Ecuador must take an English language test to obtain a reference framework of the mastery of linguistic competencies of the candidate. These same regulations stipulate that the candidate, to be able to teach in an Ecuadorian university ought to pass the standardized test to demonstrate a minimum level of B2 or higher, according to Common European Framework of Reference (CFER). All these requirements will turn into a more specialized faculty, which will ultimately be beneficial for the education of university students.

The goal for students

Mancero (2012), states that it is necessary when speaking of teaching the English language, to think about the multicultural background of Ecuador. This allegation means that some students, learning the language, are descendants from different indigenous cultures for whom English would be a third language, as Spanish becomes their second one. This fact, in turn, refers to the potential complexities of teaching English to such portion of the population. The standards currently used for teaching English, issued by the Ministry of Education have been developed by the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and are based on the CEFR, relying on their explicit description of objectives, content, and methods. This manual concludes by defining the ultimate aim to attain at the end of high school, which is for students to reach a B1 level according to the CEFR.

Problem definition

Ponnudurai and Jacob (2014) define writing, in their works, as a complex interaction between factors both physical and cognitive. They also mention that writing skills include the use of vocabulary, general knowledge, grammar, spelling as well as punctuation. Bromley, as cited by Ponnudurai and Jacob (2014), say that students need to focus on three main activities, if they want to write effectively, that is planning, composing and revising.

Having these writing skills is a critical ability that people ought to have to communicate, both clearly and with ease. Students might have to, when in their working or training environments, write reports or a press release, communicate their ideas via a blog or apply for a grant with no spelling or grammatical mistakes. Kotzee and Johnston (2011) say that in The United Kingdom it is quite important that students who come out of university and into the working field have proper writing skills; on the other hand, a lack of these skills is a huge detriment on their employability. Although this is a study done in the U.K., it is no less certain that it is both valid and applicable to our country's reality.

The most common complaint businesses have is that university graduates cannot sometimes even put together a coherent sentence (Kotzee and Johnston, 2011). A study performed by the US National Commission on Writing in 2004, as cited by the authors, arrived at the conclusion that writing is considered in the business world as a "threshold skill." Also, half of the companies surveyed deem their candidate's writing skills as an issue to consider when making promotions. There are intangible costs of having poor writing skills. First, the image of the employee might be degraded in front of his bosses and peers. Secondly, there might also be an impact on productivity, at the moment an employee is trying to read a poorly written manual or report, as they might need to read it more than once which creates a lost time. The possible outcome of a poorly made decision as the result of a poorly written document is also considered a detriment (Quible and Griffin, 2007).

Often do we hear teachers complain that their students do not know how to write or read, and they cannot understand what they read and make very little sense of a writing piece. Carlino (2012), states that one important point of the whole teaching process is that students need to receive feedback and most importantly the author believed that students could not write to the expectations of their teachers just because they did not know how to do it. The teacher ought to think about activities in which learners can acquire new forms of thinking, as well as making compelling arguments or write about the topics that are related to the field explored in the said activities. As above-mentioned employers believe that their staff members need to handle themselves satisfactorily with their writing abilities. Therefore, if students can practice and improve their writing skills in the university, they will be better candidates when applying for a job.

Some approaches to teaching writing

We have seen changes over the years on the way we teach a Foreign Language. Richards and Rodgers (2001) identify several teaching methods; among those, we have the audiolingual method and the communicative language teaching. Cerezal (1995) adds other approaches in the analysis, including the grammar-translation method, and the direct method, among others.

The grammar-translation method

Let us look briefly at some of these different teaching ways. The grammar-translation method is part of the classical or traditional methods; Brown (2000) explains that it helps students learn grammatical rules by applying them to the translation of sentences to their native language. Brown then states that the purpose of this method is for learners to develop their reading skills. This approach has some significant disadvantages, out of which Cerezal (1995) says that students need to memorize great lengths of grammatical terms and memory plays a predominant role in the learning process. This memorization can create, the author mentions, lots of frustration in learners and teachers might feel they do not need to demand too much from their students. Regarding developing writing skills, this method does little or nothing to help in this sense.

The direct method

The direct method is also referred to as the natural method; its focus is the development of oral skills. In contrast to the grammar-translation, the use of the native language is not recommended. This approach suggests teaching vocabulary ought to be done using realia or mimes and gestures in the classroom, and the grammar is taught using the induct approach. The vocal training, states Brown (200) helps with the reading and writing skills development. The demerit of this methodology points the author is that it systematically ignores the practice of writing skills.

The Audio-Lingual method

The audio-lingual method, says Cerezal (1995), follows the structuralist tradition of language teaching. This approach has many similarities with the direct method; mainly these two procedures believe that the mother tongue has no place in the language classroom and the focus lays in an oral approach to the teaching of the language, mainly on accurate speech, leaving grammar and the practice of writing skills to a lesser role. As it can be imagined, from the two approaches explained neither of them would be used in the project at hand. However, they belong in the analysis of the history of the approaches.

The communicative approach

Finally, let us cover the communicative approach. For Cerezal (1995), it draws from the applied linguistics, and its basis is the notion that a language can be learned with ease when it is focused on communicating real meaning. This approach targets on the purpose of a writing piece as well as on the audience to which it is intended (Raimes, 1983). The activities used by practitioners of this method are characterized by the attempt of students to produce meaningful and real communication. The lessons are typically learner-centered, and they focuse on the use of authentic materials. This emphasis, says Raimes, encourage writers to do a better job as they are trying to communicate in real situations. The goal of this method say Richards and Rogers (2001) is to develop communicative competence with meaningful activities. Raimes (1983) expands on this issue and states that teachers following this concept widen the audience of written works. They permit other learners to read them, comment on them and make questions to obtain more information, but not correct them.

Consequences of poor writing skills

Graduates lack writing skills, often having trouble when they have to face the task of writing declarative statements and form coherent paragraphs. Furthermore, research has demonstrated the existence of some issues that can affect the performance of students at the time of writing. Ghodbane (2010) says students usually write the way they speak. Therefore, they face problems when they try to express themselves systematically and logically, whether they are doing it in their mother tongue or the foreign language. The author identifies three problems presented by students, which tend to hinder their writing accurately. They are the lack of motivation, the lack of reading habits and the interference of their mother tongue.

Students' motivation and the Affective Filter

When talking about the lack of motivation Harmer (2006) says that students who have the motivation to writing will be more successful since motivation makes the task a lot easier and more pleasant for the students and the teacher as well. Du (2009) says, "Motivation is vital if not the most important factor in language learning." The author asserts that even the most gifted student would not achieve their goals without the right motivation. Gardner, as cited by Du (2009), defined the motivation to learn a second language as the desire students have to acquire that language. Krashen (1988) also indicates there are two types of motivation, integrative and instrumental. The student who has integrative motivation is interested in learning the language, and they are willing to take part in the social life involved in the class environment. While those students having instrumental motivation keep only one goal in mind: passing the exams. Teachers, following on Krashen's theory, have to create a class environment that is both welcoming and safe so that students can feel that they can make mistakes as well as take risks in their language production.

This view agrees with the concept of the Affective Filter Hypothesis (AFH) as explained by Krashen (1985). The author identified "hidden forces," which he says, demotivate learners. One of these demotivational factors is the fear of failure, which is generated as they are afraid of the mistakes they might commit when writing a piece. It is this fear that makes them, says Harmer, be careful and not take chances. It is the role of the teacher to encourage students to write, to find attractive topics for them to feel motivated and relaxed when they write (Ghodbane, 2010).

In simple terms, the AFH specifies that there are factors related to the process of second language acquisition. Krashen identified three main categories of factors, and they are motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. The author says that there are students who are highly motivated, confident that they can learn the language and do not feel anxious about, do much better at language acquisition than those who are not.

Krashen, as cited by Harmer (2006), concluded that when students do more reading than writing, they could reflect better scores in their compositions than those who did not. Krashen also found that even though reading is a receptive skill and writing is a productive

one they are complementary and can both be developed in close collaboration. Eisterhold is cited by Chokwe (2013) to make the point that good readers are good writers who can make pieces of writing that are better syntactically. He additionally touches on the need for teachers to help students use the skills they already possess in L1 when writing in L2 by emphasizing the existing relationship between reading and writing.

Why students are not writing correctly

Cabrera et al. (2014) maintain that in a study conducted in Ecuadorian high schools, they could identify that the areas that give students more problems are the use of grammar and vocabulary as the result of L1 interference when writing. The authors also mention participants accepted that most of the times they had to write; the first thing they did was to think in Spanish and then translated the text to English, thus causing a lot of interference errors. These findings are supported by the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (LIH), which stresses the influence that L1 has in the L2 writing skills, as the competencies in the two languages are interdependent (Cummings, 2004).

On the other hand, the role played by schools is critical, on developing good reading, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, habits and writing skills. If writing is not fostered during the students' schooling, this failure is dragged to their university, filling it with unprepared writers (Chokwe, 2013). This assertation is further backed by the reports made by Harris as cited on Chokwe. The author claims that this problem students are having in schools is exacerbated by the lack of interest that some teachers have for teaching them how to write. Moreover, this issue can get even more critical if students encounter professors, at the tertiary level, who are not willing to prepare them either.

The Facebook

Facebook is an online social networking service. According to the results of a study done in 2014 by the National Institute of Census and Statistics of Ecuador (INEC), 41% of the Ecuadorian population, aged above twelve, has an account on Facebook. Now, of course, Facebook is used for entertainment and connectivity between friends, a means to

gossip some people might dare to say. However, Bosch, as cited by Kalamai (2015), states that in general in universities in the United States Professors seem to find it a lot better to communicate with their learners through Facebook rather than their own institutions' portals. Since this is an SNS, it allows for the support of eLearning making it easy for students to not only communicate with the teacher but also to foster better relationships and to exchange learning information. (Kalamai, 2015)

Research questions

It is the primary purpose of this study to understand how students, at an intermediate level of English (according to the CEFR), of a polytechnic state university in the city of Guayaquil feel about the effectiveness of using the SNS Facebook as a tool to practice their writing skills. Therefore, the following central question and sub-questions have been established as the compass for this research. However, it is the intent of the researcher; following Creswell (2012) that the questions at this moment defined will not be set in stone but may well be in need of adaptation as the participants of the study share their information.

The central issue to research is:

What are the perceptions that learners have regarding how the SNS Facebook helps them to improve their writing skills?

The importance of the information that shall result from this question will favor, by all means, the English teachers in the university host of this research. Nevertheless, it will also be of help for all other teachers locally, if we reflect on the benefits for teachers in the city of Guayaquil. Moreover, it will assist in a general sense or scale those teachers of English residents of Ecuador since that they will have a technological tool to mediate the teaching of writing. Finally, yet importantly, the students will be direct beneficiaries of the results of this investigation as they will be able to write better pieces.

With the idea of reaching the end goal, several sub-questions have been set. They will be the aid when trying to pave the road during the research. With the primary purpose of obtaining, the responses from the students that shall permit the researcher and the future

readers of this paper to use these means to help their students with their writing skills better.

The said sub-questions are listed as follows:

1. Do learners feel that using Facebook to practice their writing skills is beneficial to them?
2. Does the continuous use of the SNS Facebook to practice writing skills permit students to increase their writing performance?
3. What types of input do the students appreciate the most?
4. Does the use of Facebook motivate students to write?

Objectives

Pérez-Sindin López (2012) states the research objectives should always follow the research questions since the role of the goals is to explain how the questions are going to be answered. Therefore, following the same spirit of the above-posed questions, the objectives below have been designed to guide the research and allow the researcher reach the desired goal.

The general aim of this study is:

To understand how students perceive the use of Facebook when they use it as a platform for constant practice of writing skills.

Whereas, the specific objectives that will guide the research are as follows:

1. To identify which is the students' most used SNS.
2. To determine if students feel their practicing in Facebook has been of help for them.
3. To distinguish whether or not students have improved writing skills from the use of Facebook to practice them.
4. To make sure that the use of Facebook has been a motivational tool for students' writing.

Justification

This is not the first time that the use of Facebook as a means to improve students' writing skills has been carried out. Bani-Hani, Al-Sobh, and Abu-Melhim (2014), Yunus and Salehi (2012), as well as Gamble and Wilkins (2014), have performed similar studies. However, they all recommend further study including the actions of a moderator who takes care of giving better input and including specific feedback on students' work. In summary, these authors recommend a teacher's presence to give learners a feel of order and that they are not all alone in the Facebook environment.

Additionally, it is this researcher's personal experience that students do not like to be faced with the writing dilemma in class or outside, as homework. With this in mind, the researcher has attempted at different methodologies to try to improve students' writing skills. After doing some research in this sense, some references were found, and since the author likes to use technology in the classroom, it was only logical to follow this course of action.

Another issue that helped to make the decision to go in this research direction was the fact that the researcher enjoys developing writing skills, although, this is the first time I get involved with doing research. Additionally, to this, I have been involved with technology most of my life, and I like to consider myself as an early adopter and have had a personal Facebook account for a long time and opened a fan page to use from time to time with my classes in the University.

Finally, it is worth to mention that shortly there will be a change in the curriculum that is currently used in the University. Consequently, the Languages Department has prepared a series of shifts in the subjects that are taught there. One of the main changes is the move to a more autonomous learning method. With this in mind, the heads will have introduced the flipped classroom methodology in the following term. This switch makes it even more important the results of this study. Blattner and Lomicka (2012) say that in 2LA is necessary to deem students as active learners who get actively involved in their learning process engaging with their peers in authentic interaction. The authors continue to say that FB is so versatile that it could impact positively on students' learning experiences and it can turn into a springboard for real-world activities.

Scope and limitations of the study

The following section deals with the different issues that limit this study both regarding geography as well as the several problems that arose during the intervention prepared.

Scope

This study centers on the students enrolled at a polytechnic university in the city of Guayaquil. They are now in the last course of the English levels, which are required by their schools' curriculum. Now English is a transversal subject in the university, which means that every single student needs to take the English classes offered by the languages department. Students at this level have already done other four additional courses, the introductory course, although, is done online and they meet for face-to-face classes once a week. In the sixth level, intermediate according to the CEFR, learners see their teacher twice during the week, and each class lasts for two hours. It is during this time that the teaching-learning process takes place. The primary teaching method used in the English classes is the communicative one, although, the heads of the department also encourage teachers to use cooperative and collaborative activities as well as flipping the classroom.

The information that follows was obtained through a survey that students had to fill out during the first week of classes, and it was done through the Google forms platform. There are 38 students registered in the course, out of which the majority, (63%) are female, and the other 37% is composed of men. Their ages range from 18 to 25 years of age, and the most representative age group stands in the 20-21 years of age range. When asked if they were residents of Guayaquil, the majority of the participants said their residence is in the city of Guayaquil while sixteen of the students stated that they come from other cities in Ecuador and twenty-five of the students went to private schools, and the other thirteen students did their schooling in a public school.

Regarding their English, the majority of the students stated that they started learning the language in their primary schools, so most of them responded that they have been studying or receiving some English preparation for seven or more years. When participants had to rate their level of English, 68% of respondents said they believed they had an intermediate or lower intermediate level of English, while the other remaining students

deemed their English level as upper intermediate and advanced. Finally, when students were inquired whether or not they liked the English language, thirty-four out of the thirty-eight learners surveyed said they enjoy English.

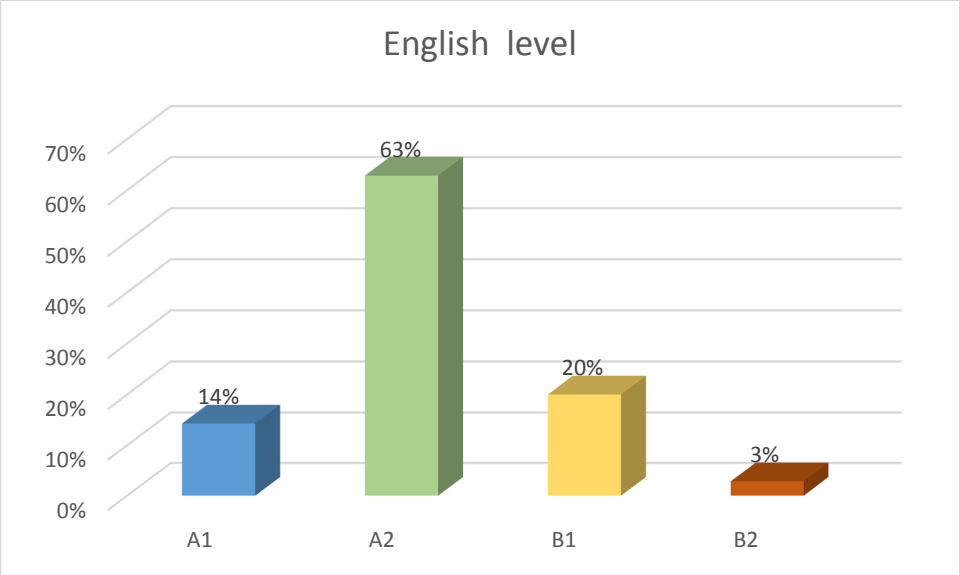
With the idea of having a real understanding of the participants' level of English, they were asked to take a placement exam. For this examination, the researcher requested the Academic Coordinator of the English Department the necessary authorization. The exam was administered on-line through the platform, used to determine each country's English Proficiency Index, provided by the organization Education First (EF). The global results of this exam can be seen in figure 1. According to these results, the majority of the students were placed in an A2 level, in line with the CEFR. This body of standards defines that in this level, learners would have an ability to deal with simple, straightforward information and begin to express oneself in familiar contexts.

This test is internationally known as EFSET (EF Standard English Test) and in the words of the Technical Background Report issued by that international institution in 2014, "the EFSET is a standardized objectively-scored test of listening and reading skills." EF also asserts that they designed it to classify test-takers' reading and listening performances into one of the six levels established by the CEFR. The program functions as an adaptive test, which means that the test continuously adjusts as result of the test taker answers.

Limitations

There were a few inhibitions when implementing this research project that should be covered to avoid any possible negative issues. When thinking about the potential solutions, the best one resulted in being the one solution that would be more efficient for the students, the language center of the university and me who as a professional teacher has decided on carrying out research in the classroom. There are also some ethical issues, which as the project progressed appeared, and have been considered and handled as they emerged. These ethical issues will also be mentioned in this section.

Figure 1: Participants' level of English According to EFEST



Source: Researcher

The first limitation in the study is also the most obvious one. That is the lack of experience of the author in the research field, as this is the very first time doing these kinds of studies. It has required a long time to take each of the steps to do an adequate investigation. Many things had to be consulted as the study was in progress and many of the issues related to trustworthiness, ethics, and methodology were done as they seemed only logical. However, all these matters, which the researcher talks about in further sections, were at some point or another reviewed and checked with the proper literature.

While implementing this research project, it was more than evident the fact that there was a time constraint. At the time I was performing my duties as a teacher in the department, which includes a lot more than just teaching. I had to teach 16 hours a week and on top of that planning classes and marking my students' homework, quizzes, and projects. Additionally to that, I had to devote ten hours a week to the academic writing center of the department and some extra time to the translation work that I do for the university. So, the time available for me to devote to the production of this project was a concern to me.

Another limitation that appeared as the project progressed was the interviews done to the participants. They were considered a restriction as the conversations with the students were done by the researcher who is also the teacher of the participants. This circumstance might have created a problem of honesty on the part of the respondents as they might have felt compelled to say that everything done was great. Therefore, affect the results of the study. It was thought at one point that the solution for this constraint might have been to appoint a colleague from the center to do the interviews but again, time was against the project.

Validity is another limitation of this study. Member checking validity, that is. Creswll and Miller (2000) declare that member checking is when researchers shift the validity procedure to the participants of the study. Creswell (2007) say that in a focus group with the respondents, where they are presented with the results of the study for them to comment on the credibility of the data and the narrative of the results. Respondents can also assess intentionality, check and correct factual errors, as well as add more information to their original responses and check how adequate and real the analysis has been done (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007). Unfortunately, again the study was limited by the time of availability of students after the semester was over. It would have become rather difficult to get in touch again with them and organize such reunion.

Looking at some ethical issues, I wanted to be sure that the results of this research were going to be beneficial. Not only to the students who participated in the project but also to the languages department the researcher works for as well as for his colleagues. The idea behind this project was not just to comply with the Master's program requirements. The goal was to take an issue, which had previously been identified as a flaw on the learners' part and tried to implement a solution for them to overcome it, or at the very least, help them improve their writing skills.

Person (2013) asserts that teacher's grading is not one hundred percent objective, and this bias could not be consciously done. Therefore, to ensure reliability and to avoid any bias on the part of this researcher, a colleague was asked to help with the blind marking of the pre and post tests as suggested by Fleming (1999). Also, the researcher never told

this colleague whether he was grading first the pre or the post tests since all the grading took place in the same period after the intervention was finished.

In addition, to account for reliability, this researcher chose at random five different papers from both tests and graded them to check how similar the final grades were. These tests had students write a composition that was extracted from a past paper from the PET exam taken from the Cambridge ESOL website. The tests were graded using the ESL Composition Profile (Jacobs, 1981), which can be viewed in Annex 1. This rubric was chosen over the rubric used for the PET because the literature offers several advantages over other ones. Ghanbari, Barati, and Moinzadeh (2012) state that this grading scale helps identify the qualities in a composition that will deem it as good writing. These researchers continue saying that the Profile has been constructed by ESL researchers who based their work on pieces written by real ESL learners. Jacobs (1981) speak for the Profile saying that it contains several subscales that are weighted differently to favor those issues that matter most. Content is the scale that receives the biggest weight while mechanics is the one that receives the lowest weight.

Although this research project respected and agreed with the university's policies, it was necessary to make sure of that. Therefore, there was a written request made to the administration of the English Center of the University to obtain their authorization to carry out this research (see Annex 2). Additionally, the participants were informed of all the details of the study using an informed consent form, (see Annex 3), which was explained in detailed to all of the potential participants at the time and signed by everyone.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This section aims to have a scholarly view of the most relevant issues that have a relationship with the main topic at hand, namely the use of the Facebook to practice the students' writing skills. A thorough scrutiny on theories relating to teaching a foreign language, the approaches to teaching grammar as well as a look at Computer Assisted Language Learning and finally at the use of Facebook for teaching English writing skills will follow.

A couple of early days' theories

Every piece of research ought to have a theoretical framework that leads the way for the information that is to be obtained and analyzed. Vygotsky recognized that our minds carry out mental processes, but they are of small significance. On the other hand, he understood that the human consciousness works with high-level symbolic artifacts, such as language, logic or categorization among others. Moreover, these artifacts are the tools that function as mediators between the being and the world (Lantolf and Thorne, 2015). One of these forms of mediation, the authors say, is called object regulation. This control refers to the instances when students meet the artifacts in the environment in the shape of cognitive activities. In the classroom, these exercises could take the form of the translation application we use in class for vocabulary tasks or the power point presentation when trying to explain grammar concepts, vocabulary or even at the time of using games to review a particular point from the content. Additionally, the Facebook employed in the classroom will be the mediation tool for learners to receive the knowledge on how to improve their writing skills. These activities or objects are the mediation bridges between the student and their education.

Another form of mediation described by Lantolf and Thorne (2015) is called other-regulation, and it deals with the mediation with people. In the classroom environment, it is the teacher giving feedback after writing or speaking exercises to students. In short, SCT claims that human beings have a direct reaction to the environment that surrounds us. It is the symbolic artifacts, described above; that mediate the cognitive and material activities as well as the material objects and technology.

Another term coined by Vygotsky was the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which in simple words is the optimal learning environment. Sometimes the work we assign is very easy for our students, and it is at that moment when they are in their comfort zone. The downside of this comfort zone is that if it happens quite often, learning does not occur and the student will lose interest at some point. Other times the load assigned is the opposite and students tend to feel frustrated, and they position themselves in a "frustration zone" says Bainbridge (2016). The downside of this second zone is that frustration can accumulate to the point that the student will just give up. The area continues Bainbridge, between the comfort and the frustration zone, is the ZPD. This area is the ideal one in which a student feels neither boredom nor frustrated but challenged and is in the "mood" to obtain more information, whether from peers or the teacher. Furthermore, the teacher using the Facebook as a mediation tool needs to make sure to plan each input carefully. This planning must be done with the idea of challenging learners as much as possible with the information but not to cross to the frustration zone. To achieve this balance, this researcher believes that it is important to mention Coffey's (n.d.) explanation of what ZPD means. The author says "The teacher is responsible for structuring interactions and developing instruction in small steps based on tasks the learner is already capable of performing independently — an instructional strategy known as scaffolding."

Krashen and the affective filter theory

Another theorist that is necessary to mention is Stephen Krashen how formulated the Input Hypothesis. This approach has also gained recognition as the monitor model, and it is composed of five different hypotheses on second language acquisition. The five hypotheses are the acquisition–learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis.

The affective filter hypothesis

This premise theorizes the way certain affective factors relate to the success of the process of second language acquisition. Krashen (1985) cites Dulay and Burt as the coiners

of the term for Affective Filter. Krashen also looks at relevant research and categorizes the affective variables in one of three groups.

Motivation is the first category, and Krashen states that students with high motivation will, in general terms, do better, than those who are not, in acquiring a language. Self-confidence is the second group. The author explains that students who are self-confident are likely to have more improvement at the moment of learning their second language. Anxiety is the third division. There are Krashen asserts, two types of anxiety, personal and classroom anxiety. The theory explains that when students have a low level of anxiety, they will be more successful in acquiring the language than those students who are more anxious.

This hypothesis looks at the relationship between the affective variables above and the second language acquisition process, postulating that learners vary on the rank of their affective filters. Krashen (1985) describes that a student with non-optimal attitudes towards the acquisition of another language will have a high Affective Filter. Thus, the input is not to reach the part of the brain where language acquisition happens. In contrast, those students who favor the acquisition of another language will want to obtain input nd have a weaker affective filter. Ergo, the Affective Filter defines a new kind of language teacher as someone who can supply input and help make that input understandable, to their students, in a situation characterized by low anxiety, for example.

Teaching writing

Writing is not a skill that people acquire naturally, not even in the mother tongue; it is an ability needs teaching. L2 learners require explicit instruction on how to write in the new language. Otherwise, the skill will be left behind (Kroll, 1990).

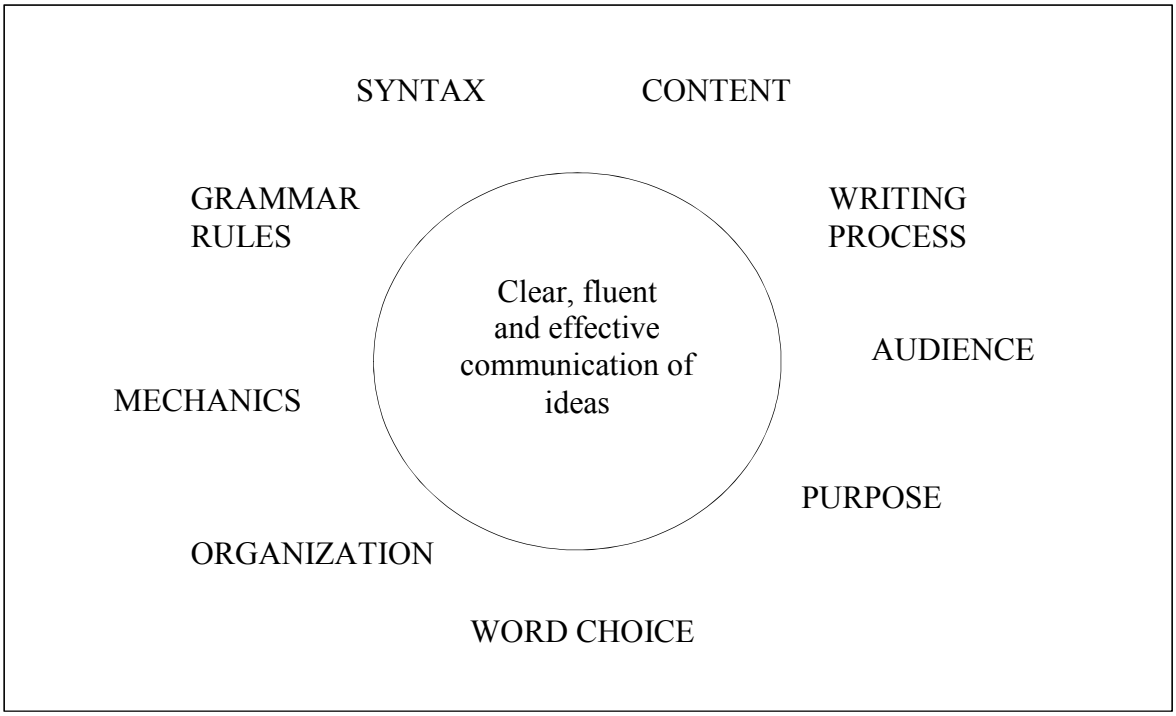
Approaches to teaching writing

"When we learn a second language, we learn to communicate with other people: to understand them, to talk to them, read what they have written, and write to them" (Raimes, 1983). The primary objective of the writing exercise performed in the classroom is, not to communicate – this is a given, but for students to learn. When students write, they reinforce

the grammatical structures that have previously been taught, as well as any vocabulary that might be specific to a written piece. Raimes also says that when students write, they can be adventurous with their texts; they can explore and go the extra mile when writing. Writing involves dealing with a different number of factors that can and will influence the final piece; we can see these elements in figure 1 below.

Taking into account the factors from the graph above, teachers have at their disposal a series of approaches to the teaching of writing, which we will look at in the following lines. Scott (1996) says there are six main approaches to teaching writing, the controlled-to- free approach, the free writing approach, the pattern-paragraph approach, the grammar- syntax organization approach, the communicative approach, and the process approach. Let us

Figure 2. Factors affecting students' writing products



Source: (Raimes, 1983)

briefly, discuss the approaches that have relevance to the study at hand.

The controlled-to-free approach

The controlled-to-free approach puts a particular emphasis on three elements: grammar, syntax, and mechanics. The teaching of writing using this method involves devoting to practicing for an extended period until students can gain a proper manipulation of the said elements (Scott, 1996). First, to writing sentences, teachers ought to give learners several exercises from simple to ones that are more complex and then moving on the manipulation of paragraphs. This approach focuses on the structural issues of the use of language but oversees the communicative aspect (Raimes, 1983). In a regular class, involving this approach, the students would have been asked to change words in clauses or to combine sentences using the right linking words. The learners' work was, although, very limited to what was determined by the teacher for them to do. According to Raimes (1983), the idea, in the end, behind this approach is to give more freedom to the student as they progress and "master" the writing experience; therefore, they can be writers that are more autonomous.

The communicative approach

It is important to understand that writing has one particular purpose, and this is to communicate. McKay (1979) says that the materials used for writing in the ESL environment ought to be directed towards developing grammatical fluency. However, when the practice of this skill happens in a communicative context, then both the grammatical and the communicative competencies can be cultivated at the same time.

In the communicative approach, the stress is on the purpose or writing as well as on the audience it is directed to (Raimes, 1983). Composing sentences is not the only ability students require to communicate, claims Widdowson as cited by McKay (1979).

Communication occurs when sentences take the function of different acts that have a social nature. McKay continues reporting that students must be given an array of writing voices, meaning like an engineer, a businessperson, or even a government employees and within these voices, they have to solve a problem. Nevertheless, students also need a context, which helps them identify the appropriateness of the words they might use in their writing piece. Giving learners these voices, says McKay (1979), has two advantages. First,

it gives students the context, necessary for them to locate themselves within the task and identify what words are appropriate and; secondly these voices introduce students into a more technical vocabulary of different fields which will, in turn, prepare them for what they might be asked to do in the future.

A good strategy to use when bringing this approach into the classroom is to tell students to use the six Ws (Raimes, 1983), which means asking themselves who, where, when, why, what and how. In the traditional English classroom, the audience for the students' writings is the teacher. However, there is a growing feel that we write better when there is a real audience for our work. Therefore, this approach has as readers the teacher and the writers' peers as well. Facebook permits us to have these different recipients of the writing piece since when students write on the Facebook page; everybody will be able to read what they post. Furthermore, this researcher will make sure that participants will read and comment on their peers' work. Thus, non-native speakers will learn to write papers, which are not only grammatically correct but also appropriate and useful for a particular situation (Raimes, 1983).

The process approach

Finally, we touch on the process approach. When following this concept, the teacher does not focus only on the final product the students can produce but on the whole process. Thus, the teacher becomes more a facilitator or a guide. Supporters of this approach deem every piece of writing as a creative act that requires time from the students and positive feedback from the teacher to be done well. The core of this approach calls for the teacher to stop just being the one who instructs and receives a final product without having done any intervention in the process. White and Arntd (1991) explain that a focus on errors does not improve students' writing and that teachers should provide feedback from the first draft and not wait until the final product is submitted. The teacher role, in this approach, states Kroll (1990), needs to change from a simple grader to a respondent to the content of the students' writing.

There are three stages to this writing approach:

1. Pre-writing: This is the first stage of writing. The objective is to generate and clarify ideas related to a topic. There is a diverse array of pre-writing techniques, although the more common are brainstorming, clustering, and freewriting, among others. During this stage, the teacher role is to stimulate the creativity of the students, having them think about how to develop their writing. The most important thing here, explains Raimes (1983), is for the ideas to flow from students' minds to their papers. The teacher can support students with comments on how to enhance their initial ideas.

2. Writing: This stage is rather obvious; however, it is of utmost importance to clarify for students that when they start writing, they should use the ideas they gathered during the previous stage.

3. Editing: In this section of the writing process students have to take a closer look at what they have produced. They should start organizing what they have written in a coherent manner as well as paying attention to the mechanics they have used. A strategy that is very useful in this stage is peer editing.

Despite the undeniable attractiveness of this approach, Keh (1990) reports that there are teachers who do not favor it, viewing it as impractical and time-consuming, especially when having to mark papers. Another detriment on the approach is the constant use of red ink markings on students' papers which seem to demonstrate, more than anything else, a superiority over students.

Planning a writing lesson

The lesson plan is the teacher's compass of on what the learners need instruction. Teachers, before they actually start planning their lessons, need to ponder on a series of issues concerning, mainly, the students. There is, in this heading, an analysis focused on what teachers need to do so that the writing lesson is planned efficiently.

Factors to consider when planning the lesson

When discussing the planning of a writing lesson Raimes (1983) poses the task lead by, what she calls, seven fundamental questions. From them, it is this researcher's believe

that the following are the most important ones to ponder about before planning a writing lesson. The first question deals with what could be, probably the most relevant of all wonderings teachers might stumble upon in their teaching careers. How can the writing exercise help students learn the language better? Of course, the teachers' answer this question will determine the road to walk on. Additionally, English teachers need to understand that learners have several difficulties when sitting down to write, writer's block, it is called in the general sense. Nevertheless, Raimes says it is more than not knowing what to write or finding the exact words and using the grammar adequately. It is, she states, finding the ideas and communicating them effectively. Moreover, the author pinpoints that it is because there is not, usually, a process to scaffold the writing experience. Building in-class activities to help students prepare for the written assignment, give learners a chance, in the classroom, to speak, listen and read about the topic before they start writing (Raimes, 1983).

The second question posed by the author deals with making the writing exercise meaningful for students. They need to be interested in the piece they are going to write; otherwise, it will be a simple work of torture for students, they need a purpose to writing, other than "because it is in the book." When the assignment is made meaningful to students, then they feel more committed to the writing, putting in a lot more effort and thought, as they will want to communicate their opinions to an existing reader. On this sense, Harmer (2006) relates that a factor to help teachers choose a writing topic is the students' interests, therefore giving them a context they understand and giving them a purpose for writing.

Raimes (1983) poses the question of what to do about errors. Finding them should not be the primary goal of the teacher, but working with them in such a matter that marking errors do not become the objective of the writing piece for the teacher. It is disappointing for a student to receive back his paper and see it covered with red markings. This form of feedback only tells them their writing is bad. Harmer (2006) points out that a way to reduce this demotivating effect is to tell students to concentrate on spelling, as that will be the focus of that particular piece. Making an active use of these errors made by students, using them to plan for the next class; if students were having trouble with subject-verb

agreement, for instance, then this would be an issue to deal with in the following classes (Raimes, 1983). Another point worth considering when looking at a writing assignment is if the error is fossilized one or if it is just due to carelessness.

Assessing writing

Test validity

It is important to have a discussion on the assessment of the written piece. This analysis should start by stating that evaluating a writing task is, as remarked by Wong, Abd, and Siew (2011), a human being's job and therefore, the grades allotted in the assessment are quite subjective, to say the least. This subjectivity, from the rater, can lead to inconsistency, inaccuracy, and unreliability. To deal with these issues, Weir (2005) brought up the concept of Evidence-Based Approach (EBA) to testing with the idea of aiming for validity. He claims that teachers should be looking for evidence in their assessments of students writing. The author also states that for a test to be considered a serious one, it should supply real proof of validity, but in fact, very few do. As a matter of fact, the work of Wong, Abd, and Siew (2011), it is stated that for a test to show validity, it needs to use a seasoned rating scale. This scale can either be developed by a group of teachers, to aim both for validity and reliability and for the scale to be calibrated for the different levels existing in the department.

Weir (2005), going further on the issue of validity, explained that they identified three dimensions in every test such as cognitive, context and scoring validity. This conceptualization took Weir to introduce his Socio-cognitive framework, which includes three components: the test-takers' cognitive abilities, the environment in which the task is performed, and the scoring process. These three elements will lead to the previously mentioned types of validity.

Let us analyze a little deeper the concept of scoring validity. The first component identified is criteria and type of rating scale. In fact, Weir (2005) explains that the crucial decision that can deem a valid assessment of writing is the choice of appropriate evaluation criteria as well as the constant use of the scale by trained examiners. This appropriateness begins by establishing the criteria in accordance with the objectives of the assessment and

the construct that needs assessing. Needless to say, a measure that falls short to the previous affirmation can result in faulty scoring validity. Ghanbari, Barati, and Moinzadeh (2012) go further and assert that no matter what the writing context is, ignoring the scoring validity of the assessing instrument can turn out to be the reason why scores are not reliable signs of student ability.

Rating Scales

Reid (1993) says that there are two types of rating scales available for teachers to use when grading their student's work. She mentions both analytic and holistic scales. The analytical scoring levels, evaluate various components of the writing piece separately. For example, the grading schemes could be divided in grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and content. While when using the holistic scale the rater reads the piece without making any marks on it and after fishing, he rates the paper as a whole, of course depending on a given range.

The Composition Profile

It is a good idea to use an analytical rating scale, suggests Reid (1993). Furthermore, the author states that one of the most commonly used analytical rating scales for writing pieces is the Composition Profile (see Annex 1). This rating scale has five weighted factors. The first one is content, which has the heaviest weight of them all, while the other items are organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. Reid finishes the analysis of the Profile by saying that it can well be used to contribute to the students learning about writing as it can give them a more comprehensive feedback on a series of issues.

When talking about this scale, Jacobs (1981) says that the reasoning behind using the scale is to remind both teachers and students of the concepts and principles that are essential in writing, so that the final product is connected and coherent. Thus, resulting in an effective piece of writing.

Ghanbari, Barati, and Moinzadeh (2012) summarize the three most important characteristics of the Composition Profile. They say that the main features are the limited number of basic criteria, such as content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics; a match of such characteristics with, an easy to use, proficiency scale; and the further division of the features in a small number of sub-characteristics.

Jacobs (1981) makes another recommendation when using the Profile; she insists that for reliability purposes, two or three different raters should score each piece of writing, but working independently.

Giving feedback to students

The role feedback plays in the development of the ESL/EFL writing skills has always been deemed as essential, mainly because of the learning potential and the motivation it gives students. Keh (1990) conveys a precise definition of what is understood by feedback. She says "feedback is the input a reader offers a writer" and its purpose is to provide information for the writer to revise and improve the work. In general, teachers employ most of their time on summative feedback, focusing on the final product.

None-the-less, as it has been mentioned before, there is the need for a shift to formative feedback in which the teacher uses time wisely with the student during their writing process (Hayland and Hayland, 2006) and (Reid, 1994). A key factor to successful writing learning is the feedback teachers provide their students. However, there exists evidence of teachers feeling fearful of how their response might negatively affect students, making them feel disempowered (Reid, 1994). When paying attention to feedback, Keh (1990) asserts, the writer learns where, in their composition, they have not supplied sufficient or coherent information or there is a lack of logical organization of their thoughts.

Responding to students writings

There is nothing more time-consuming in a teacher's job than responding to a student's writing task. According to Sommers (1982), when educators estimate how much

time they dedicate to a student's written work, they say it takes about 20 to 40 minutes to comment on an individual student's writing assignment.

This researcher agrees with this affirmation. Going a little further, we can say that classrooms in the English department of the University, can sit about 40 students, on average. That number of students multiplied by the typical amount of time used in reviewing each paper and then times 3 or 4 courses in the semester, is a whole lot of time devoted to this endeavor, (Leki, 1990).

Another thing that cannot be detached from our teaching reality is that there still are teachers who are more concerned with how accurate and correct the products of their students are. Focusing principally on identifying errors, purposefully looking for them and calling the attention of learners on the mistake they made. This reality has been identified by researchers such as Zamel (1985), Raimes (1983), Keh (1990) among others.

Written responses on students writing, says Leki (1990), can have a positive effect on how students see writing or the opposite as well. It is a fact; she continues, that the response a writer receives might be crucial to them to keep writing or not. Therefore, teachers need to set priorities in their responses to students' compositions, and it is essential to let them know they need to address such concerns. As Zamel (1985) suggests, teachers have to play the role of readers and probe, challenge, raise questions and pinpoint vague expressions, helping students, as it is the teacher's goal, to understand what issues to address. By taking on this role, teachers can develop a pedagogical purpose; using their responses to students' writings, by putting themselves in the role of their future reader, (Sommers, 1982), to guide them in their composing assignment.

Research done on what students prefer to see in their written tasks after teachers have reviewed them has consistently found that students prefer to see comments from teachers on their written errors and they feel frustrated when this does not happen (Leki, Cummings, and Silva, 2008); (Hayland and Hayland, 2006). General comments given by teachers encouraging the work and suggesting revisions help to improve the content of the composition. On the other hand, Fathman and Whalley (1990) indicate that re-writing in itself has proved to be a major path to enhancing writing skills. Finally, responding to grammar and content either separately or at the same time, but in such a way that is not

mind-boggling to students, help them improve significantly when they write their assignments again (Fathman and Whalley, 1990).

Computer Assisted Language Learning

It is in the last few years that people have gained access to computers both at their homes as in their educational contexts. The usage of these artifacts has also expanded so much that most language teachers are now integrating them into their teaching environments. According to Levy (1997), CALL encompasses the study of the application of computers to assist the learning of a language, utilizing a vast range of information and communications technologies. The most recent manifestations of CALL include the use of virtual learning environments (VLE), which are web-based platforms that handle the digital aspects of a course of study, as well as in web-based distance learning.

The aim of CALL is to put emphasis on materials, which need to be both interactive and individualized, that are mainly student-centered which permit them to work autonomously. CALL is a tool that ought to aid teachers in facilitating the process, sometimes extenuating, of learning a language, used as reinforcement of what has previously been taught in the classroom or used as a tool for remediation for learners requiring extra support. For Warschauer (1996a), the development of CALL can be split into three phases behavioristic, communicative and integrative CALL. Let us take a brief look at the last stage as it is the most pertinent to this study.

Integrative CALL

As it is addressed by Warschauer (1996), it integrates computers, the Internet and all the multimedia files used in it, such as graphics, sound, animations, and video. The greatest advantage of this last stage is the appearance of hypermedia, which means all the different types of files can be linked together.

For language learning, this stage became a great resource of materials. More authentic materials became available as well as a more real environment. Now learners can listen and see as a combined feature, in the same way, they do in real life. Levy (1997) and

Warschauer (1996a), say that learners can now practice the different skills, altogether since the media make it natural for teachers to combine them in one single activity. The authors also agree that the greatest advantage of CALL now is that it eases the focus on content but having at the same time a language one, for example.

Computer Mediated Communication

For Thurlow, Tomic, and Lengel (2004), computer mediated communication is any human communication that is done aided by computer technology. Levy (2006) goes a little further and explains that when using CMC in the learning of a language, the term ought to be CMC-based CALL. In any case, Levy continues and gives a definition saying that CMC includes any network and on-line versions of materials, like e-newspapers. However, CMC-based CALL goes beyond that, says Levy (2006), besides the most popular sources used in CALL such as e-mail and chat, there is an application of audio-graphics, video-conferencing as well as mobile learning application. One distinction that needs to be set is the type of communication that can happen when using CMC. There is synchronous communication, which is when the people who are communicating do it at the same time, like through a video conference. On the other hand, there is also asynchronous communication; this happens when the people communicating do not do it at the same time, namely when using social networking sites or e-mail, for example (Thurlow, Tomic, and Lengel, 2004).

With the advent of CMC, there has been a change in how the whole process of learning is changing across different disciplines, according to Thurlow, Tomic, and Lengel (2004). They continue to say that education is moving to have a more interactive role online with the development of online tutoring and educational programs. The writers use the 5Cs to refer to the uses of CMC in the classroom. First, it is used to communicate, either with their peers, experts in the field or with teachers. Second, to collaborate with each other when working on group projects. Thirdly, to create content with the use of a variety of learning tools available on the Internet. Fourth, to collect information such as data resources or any reading material that can be useful for class. Finally, CMC can be used to critique, evaluating the importance of what has been discovered online.

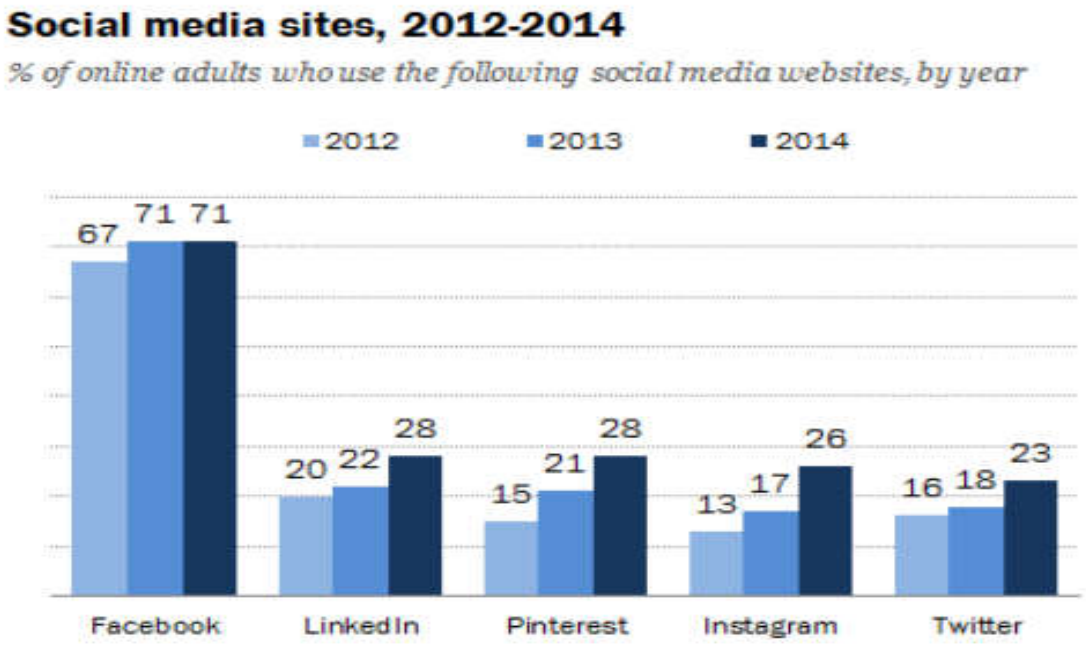
Warschauer (1996 b), found that in general students have a positive attitude toward the use of computers for written communication in the language class. This positive attitude of students is beneficial for the use of CMC which in turn makes them feel empowered of their learning and a sense of achievement. Finally, the author asserts, teachers can help students gain knowledge and skill by using electronic communication artifacts which ought to be integrated into the regular structure of the class. In writing classes, CMC is beneficial, as reported by Cummings (2004), mainly because students have more time to work. There is a wider variety of readers for the work of the student; it is not only the teacher, who plays the role of the giver of a grade.

Social Networking Sites

Social Networking Sites (SNS) are online locations where users can create a profile and build networks to connect them to other users, usually friends and family. In the recent years, these sites have boomed into a phenomenon that involves millions of internet users (Lenhart and Madden, 2007). Members use these sites, mainly, for communication and maintaining relationships with others. Some favorite activities for cybernauts of these sites comprise uploading personal information on whereabouts and activities, sharing pictures and posting public testimonials (Dwyer, Hiltz, and Passerini, 2007).

The social networking site with more followers in the last three years are Facebook (Facebook), followed by LinkedIn and Pinterest, tailed by Instagram and finally Twitter as it can be seen in figure 2 (Duggan et.al., 2015). The authors ascertain that Facebook maintains its lead in the last three years, but its growth has decelerated. However, user engagement has continued to raise. Another point they refer is that although, most users have and visit many SNSs their “base” is Facebook.

Figure 3. Social media use



Source: Pew Research Center

Although there are no official numbers on the use of Facebook in the city of Guayaquil, an online survey was completed by the participants of this study to confirm the above information. The results do in fact confirm the global trend towards the use of Facebook. The full results of the survey can be seen in Annex 4.

Using Facebook in Education

In an early study performed by Madge, Meek, Wellens and Hooley (2009) the authors suggest that Facebook is a tool that shows potential for the promotion of an efficient scholarly practice. They cite Mason who found out that the usefulness of this SNS lies in the mechanisms it offers for peer feedback as well as its reflective qualities and the collaborative learning models it can foster. Selwin (2009) adds to this by saying that undergraduate students tend to use the Facebook to obtain information on lectures, seminars or library visits to which they could not attend and have an attempt at getting at least the gist of them. In general, research has proven that students and faculty members have two different views of what SNSs should be used for. Undergraduates, in general,

have the perception that Facebook is a website for social interaction. Although, it could also be utilized for some degree of academic work, say Roblyer et. al. (2010), and Madge, Meek, Wellens, and Hooley (2009) and Rachtam and Firpo (2010) agree.

Regarding how useful the use of SNSs, and especially Facebook, can be, Selwyn (2009) confides that Facebook as a technology-mediated communication tool may well be an accompaniment for the traditional face-to-face classes. Furthermore, Gikas (2013) conveys that these technological devices permit learners to have access to content, posted by the teacher or others, communicate with their peers and instructors. They are also able to locate, identify and manipulate knowledge that is already existent and integrate it in their work and communicate it to the world.

It has also been reported that Facebook can be used as a tool for informal learning and Forkosh-Baruch and Hershkovitz (2012) comment that SNS might become sources for scientific knowledge for many users worldwide. The authors, as well, see Facebook accounts as having a high potential for forming online communities of practice favoring informal learning for individuals who consume content as well as collaborate with others. In this sense, Yanus and Salehi (2012) say that the sharing of information is done collaboratively and in original forms that cannot be thought of being one by only one person. So, Facebook can be regarded as a stance where learners can appreciate the benefits of collaborative learning, and it can link students with one another using networks of collaborative learning whose nature is social and academic at the same time (Yunus et.al., 2011).

The Facebook wall is one instrument used both by students and teachers to maintain a fluid communication, sharing answers and discuss assignments, as identified by Ractham and Firpo (2011). They also say that students help one another with questions on the subject they are studying and by consulting and answers already shared build students' confidence to respond. Likewise, says Shukor (2014), the use of collaborative activities on social networks like Facebook using commenting on posts in the wall and file applications, has boosted learning to a new standard and improved learners' confidence in their language acquisition and a sense of belonging. There is also, according to Petrovic et.al. (2012), evidence that the continuous use of Facebook increases student's productivity as well as

raising awareness on the subject taught. Additionally, they found that learners remained involved and enjoyed spreading the knowledge with other participants of their networks.

Using Facebook to practice EFL writing

If we take a look at what people, including our students, are writing these days, we can see them spending most of their time not using pen and paper but their electronic devices. Students are writing blogs, dropping quick messages on Twitter, text-messaging and of course sharing experiences on Facebook. Interestingly enough, students deem these kinds of writing as communication, although, they are not related to any of the tasks they do in school (Yanus and Salehi, 2012).

Shih (2011) investigated how the use of Facebook as a blended learning tool affected the learners' writing abilities when it was integrated with writing class instruction. During the experiment, the author explains, the intervention was successful as all of the students in the experiment had significantly higher scores in the post-test they did. "They made improvements in paragraph organization, content, vocabulary, spelling, and grammar." Shukor and Noordin (2014) report that the writing performance improved after using the SNS, an environment that is meaningful for learners was achieved and students reported the learning process was eased by the utilization of the comments section.

White (2009) determines that the creation of a Facebook group or page and providing weekly input gave learners a motivation boost and an achievement in grammatical complexity was attained. During the five-week study, White continues, students showed a positive development in their use of grammar and spelling, and they became concerned with their learning. This assertation is also confirmed by the results reported in a study performed by Suthiwartnarueput and Wasanasomsithi (2012).

Facebook permits students to have discussions with their peers. They can also give each other feedback and comment, which can be synchronous or asynchronous (Thurlow, Tomic, and Lengel, 2004), on their writing assignments. This collaborative writing using Facebook can harness the students' writing skills at the time that it can change students'

ideas on how useful this SNS is for learning the language and more specifically, writing skills (Shukor and Noordin, 2014) and (Yunus and Salehi, 2012).

Yunus, Salehi, and Chenzi (2012) discussed the advantages of using Facebook in a writing class. They indicate that one of the most compelling advantages is the fact that most, if not all, students already have their personal Facebook account, hence, they are familiar with the platform. Another significant advantage, they say, is the fact that when using Facebook learners have a wider audience and not only the teacher, this is also mentioned in the study done by Cummings (2004). This issue gains more weight when considering the ease of communicating with the teacher and peers in a safe environment and how this can foster those students who are shy as they can lower the Affective Domains, as reported by Bani-Hani, Al-Sobh and Abu-Melhim (2014) and Yunus et.al (2011).

Chapter 3: Methodology

This section deals with the different issues concerned with the methodology of the research. There is an analysis of the philosophical assumptions that served as a guide for the researcher. Research paradigms along with the ontological and the epistemological position opted by the researcher before moving on to answering the methodological question and finishing it with a thorough description of the data collection instruments and the procedures taken in the research.

Philosophical assumptions

The primary concern in qualitative research are the methods and methodology. Methods are the range of approaches employed in research used to collect data (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007). Traditionally, the authors continue, methodology refers to the techniques associated with a positivistic model for both normative research and interpretative paradigms. Creswell (2007) believes the research design process ought to start with the philosophical assumptions the researcher makes when undertaking a qualitative project.

Additionally, according to Creswell (2007), researchers ought to bring to the table their set of beliefs, views of the world and paradigms, which will guide the production of the study. So in short, the qualitative researcher needs to define which paradigm is going to serve as the umbrella for the study as well as taking an ontological and epistemological positioning towards the research at hand. With this three steps taken, it is the moment to make decisions in regards to the methodology to use.

The problem arises when researchers neglect these philosophical assumptions or do not deal with them in a satisfactory manner, says Türksen (2005). More often than not, they are left vague or imprecise. These assumptions exercise significant influence on how the researcher approaches a study.

Research paradigms

Ponterotto (2005) defines a paradigm as "the set of interrelated assumptions about the social world which provides a philosophical and conceptual framework for the organized study of that world." For Guba and Lincoln (1994), a paradigm is the group of

beliefs that appertain to first or ultimate principles, representing the nature of the world for the researcher. Denzin and Lincoln (2000), state that a research paradigm establishes the context for the study, and there are different paradigms available for use as a help to contextualize and classify the research. A paradigm is the way the researcher understands reality, builds knowledge and gathers information about the world (Tracy, 2013). The paradigm selected by the researcher guides the philosophical assumptions of the research as well as the tools and instruments that will be used to obtain the data (Ponterotto, 2005; Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006).

From the several paradigms introduced in the literature, Guba and Lincoln (2005b) make the most notorious and now used classification. They are positivism, postpositivism, constructivism and critical theory. Denzin and Lincoln (2000), go further and explain that they function around a set of principles that combine beliefs about ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Creswell (2012) confirms this assertion when he explains that there are knowledge claims such as ontology, epistemology, and even research methods. These three aspects will be covered below.

For Ponterotto (2005) positivism complies with the hypothetical-deductive method, focusing efforts on verifying hypotheses using quantitative propositions. These proposals ought to be converted into mathematical formulas that can express a functional relationship among them (Guba & Lincoln, 2005b). The primary objective of positivistic inquiry is the clarification of the phenomena which will lead to its prediction and control. The logical method to follow is the quantitative one.

Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) explain that postpositivism assumes that theories influence every piece of research. O'Leary, as cited by Mackenzie and Knipe, claim that post-positivism sees the world from an ambiguous looking glass, one that is variable and has multiple realities. This position sustains that the intellectual mechanisms humans have are flawed, and so there is never an actual reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This paradigm, concludes Ponterotto (2005), is aligned with the qualitative methods of data collection.

The constructivist paradigm observes to a relativist ontology assuming the existence of multiple realities (Guba and Lincoln, 2005a). These facts, says Ponterotto (2005), are built in the minds of each person. The interaction, via constant dialogue, between the researcher and participant, will stimulate the reflection necessary in the

inquiry. It is through this ongoing dialogue and its interpretation that the participants and the researcher jointly co-construct the findings. This paradigm emphasizes the aim of understanding the experiences the participants live from their unique point of view (Ponterotto, 2005).

Knowledge and reality, confirm Tracy (2013), are both constructed and reproduced with communication, practice, and interaction. In this sense knowledge about reality is mediated through the investigator. Additionally, Tracy continues saying that constructivist researchers look at the qualitative methodology as a decision of values and morals that can have ethical and political repercussions. Logically, Ponterotto (2005) concludes, the constructivist paradigm provides the base for the use of qualitative research methods. The human activity can not provide a substantial input of reality, and it needs to be read, interpreted, deconstructed and analyzed to be understood and transferred to knowledge, agrees Tracy (2013).

According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), the constructivist paradigm approaches to research with the intention of understanding human experiences and suggesting that it is society the constructor of reality. Creswell (2005) states that the constructivist approach usually generates a theory through the research process while a constructivist relies on qualitative data collection methods and analysis.

Looking at the information provided in the literature and contrasting it with the researcher's beliefs and positions, a decision on the paradigm, to be followed in this study becomes rather apparent. What this investigator wants to gain from this exercise, is to, acquire knowledge of how learners feel about the use of a technological tool for their use outside the classroom. An instrument that is not unknown to them but it is rather of their daily use. With this knowledge, a change in how this teacher-researcher and the present and future learners benefit from the teaching-learning process is expected to improve. Therefore, the type of investigation for this inquiry shall be a qualitative research, as proposed by the constructivist paradigm.

Ontological positioning

Guba and Lincoln (1994) discuss the three research paradigms mentioned before ontology, epistemology, and methodology. They say that the ontological question deals

with the form and nature of reality and, as a result, the ontological positioning of the researcher is to wonder what he can know about the research problem.

Grix (2002) explains that the ontological positioning is the commencement of any investigation and the epistemological and methodological positions of the researcher flow from it. The author cites Hay to explain that this positioning will lead the researcher to understand the social and political reality that will be investigated.

Creswell (2007) sheds more light on the ontological question and reports that reality is subjective and multiple, as it is the way the participants of the study see it.

As previously mentioned the starting point in any research, according to Grix (2002) and not limiting it to only social research, is the ontological positioning of the researcher. This is the way the researcher takes on the social research. They key question, say Furlong and Marsh (2010), is whether the real world is independent of how we see it. In the case of the present study, we are dealing with the way students see the usefulness of the SNS Facebook for the development of their writing skills. This is the knowledge that, with the results of the intervention, will be obtained.

Epistemological positioning

Regarding the epistemological positioning, Ponterotto (2005) states that it is concerned with the relationship the researcher has with the participant of the study. Guba and Lincoln (1994) assert that researcher and respondent are independent entities and the first can explore the latter without exercising influence on it or be affected by it. For Creswell (2007) one of the functions of the investigator is to make attempts to diminish the distance existing between him or her and the object researched. Therefore, the participant and the topic can be analyzed, through rigorous procedures without the danger of bias from the researcher (Ponterotto, 2005).

Epistemology deals with the theory of knowledge, especially with the methods, validation as well as with the forms to gain knowledge of social reality (Grix, 2002). A researcher's epistemological positioning can be compared to that same person's religion, but as subjective and personal the religion can be so it can the epistemological position, and it will influence the way investigators interpret and do research Brown and Dowling (1998).

The epistemological positioning of this researcher, considering the paradigmatic nd ontological stances described above is a constructivist one.

The methodological question

Finally, let us look at the methodological question. Guba and Lincoln (1994) specify this is the way the researcher approaches how to find out what he or she believes to be known. However, they also point out that the answer to this questions is constrained by those answers already given when dealing with the ontological and epistemological positioning, meaning not any methodology is appropriate for the research design chosen.

Grix (2002) states that the methodological approach a researcher proposes has to be supported by and reflect the ontological and epistemological positioning. This stance will, in turn, represent a choice in research methods adopted by the researcher in a given study.

The tradition chosen for this paper is the action research which according to O'Brien (2001) is used in real situations as its focus is to solve real problems. Action research, states Creswell (2012), collects data using quantitative, qualitative or both methods. Although, it seeks to find solutions to practical classroom problems.

Nunan (1992) explains that three distinct features characterize action research. Firstly, it is done by practitioners, the teachers that are every day in the classroom setting. Secondly, action research implies a collaboration between the researcher and the participants. Thirdly, and this is the most recognized characteristic of action research, the aim is to change things (Nunan, 1992). When researchers get involved with action research, they follow systematic procedures to gather information and, as the outcome, improve their teaching and the learning of their students.

Among the different types of action research, practical action research is the most proper tradition to follow in this project as it will take place in the university classroom. McKay (2008) states that the primary interest when doing this type of the investigation is to bring about change in the practice, of teaching writing skills in this case. Also, practical action research has teachers working in their classrooms collecting and analyzing data. For Norton (2009) there are several reasons why action research is a good idea, and it is one of those assertions that fits in this paper because the aim is to look at some elements of the

students' academic performance as well as an aspect of the teaching practice. Creswell (2012) explains that in practical action research the teacher-researcher, which is the case of this researcher, is interested in looking at his own teaching practices, rather than on other teachers'. The aim is for the teacher-researcher to reflect on his own practice and what they can do to make his teaching better.

Data collection instruments

Regarding the tools used in this research to collect the data, there were four primary forms to gather the data during the project.

A survey

The first instrument was a survey, which the participants had to answer at the beginning of the semester. According to Blair, Czaja, and Blair (2013), surveys obtain information from respondents of a distinct population who have similar demographic characteristics, and they use a questionnaire containing pre-specified questions.

In this instrument, besides their demographic data, additional information was obtained from the participants' use of SNS in their usual every-day life, as well as some information about their perception of their level of English.

A couple of colleagues in the department checked this instrument for content validity by assessing the questionnaire to determine whether the items in the survey are relevant to the expected outcome. Additionally, before doing the survey, the questions were translated into Spanish so that there was no problem in the understanding of what was required for participants to answer. This translation was given then to a colleague at the languages department to review and confirm that the translation was an accurate account of the original English language questions. Additionally to this measure the researcher also did a pilot use of the survey, with a group of students from another of the courses the researcher had, and asked the participants to focus on how easy for them the questions was to read and understand. Pilot respondents also had to analyze whether or not the words used in the questions was simple enough for everybody to understand. This procedure was done to ensure for face validity.

After the procedures mentioned above had been done and some of the suggestions that came up from the pilot study were duly included in the final survey, it was put on-line using Google forms (see Annex 5) on https://goo.gl/forms/llr8ljGNt1eX2DCq1. The questions for the survey were adapted from the questionnaires used by Nolan (2011) and Karim (2015) who performed studies that addressed the academic use of Facebook in the English writing class.

The questionnaire had three sections. The first section had to do with general information and demographics. The second section asked participants about their use of SNS and Internet. Next, there were questions directed to their use of Facebook.

Questions one, two and three, asked participants for their gender and age range, which we divided into six groups with an interval of two years in each cluster, as well as if they were from Guayaquil. On question four, participants responded if they attended a private or public school. We then asked them to give information as to when they had their first English instruction and what they perceive is their real level of English proficiency. The section ends up by asking respondents whether or not they like English.

On the use of Internet section, we gave them a list of nine sites, from the ones suggested by Duggan, et.al. (2015). From this list, students had to choose all the sites they regularly used. The next question asked them about what they use SNS for; again there were several options from which they had to choose all that applied to them. The following questions aimed at obtaining information on the devices which students use with Internet access. Also, how appropriate it is for them the use of both Internet and Facebook in the classroom.

The final section of the survey had to do specifically with the use of Facebook. We asked very general questions at the beginning of this chapter and then moved to asking participants about their perceptions and opinions of the usefulness of Facebook in communication. This section used a Likert scale for respondents to grade their agreement with the proposed statements.

Semi-structured interview

The second instrument used is a semi-structured interview with six questions which will be later on analyzed. One of the particularities of this type of device is the fact

that it does not follow a fixed questionnaire (Blair, Czaja, and Blair. 2013). The authors explain that the interviewer can have a list of topics which can guide him in obtaining the information desired. However, the ultimate goal is to have respondents answering as freely as possible and allowing the opportunity for further probing when necessary.

The semi-structured interviews were used because they give us the option of having a set of questions to guide it, but at the same time, it allows space for divergence if there is a topic that might seem interesting or necessary to probe from students. Cohen and Crabtree (2006) mention that semi-structure interviews are best used when there is a good chance that it will not be possible to interview respondents again. The authors also say they should always include open-ended questions, which give interviewers the option of following on relevant topics brought up by those interviewed.

Additionally, Flick (2009), indicates that the teacher-researcher can start constructing his theory on the subject he is probing from respondents during the interview. The interview guide contains the topics and the questions the participants will answer, and an open question should introduce each of them and end with a confrontational question.

This operational tool was composed of only six questions, which were adapted from the questionnaire used by Kamnoetsin (2014), given the demand from the graduate committee of the program of using a sample of 30 participants. Following on Cohen and Crabtree (2006), all the interviews were recorded and transcribed for later analysis. The only limitation encountered with the interviews was the reduced number of questions asked of participants and the fact that because of that the interviews were not very long. As a matter of fact, the most extended interview took about eight minutes. This issue resulted in the researcher not being able to obtain as much data as it might have been desired. This final bit might have been the result of the researcher being novice in this type of enterprises.

The questions asked were as follows.

- Can you describe your writing experience on the Facebook tutorial platform? (e.g. did you like it, is it difficult to write on the Facebook platform?)
- How did you do on the Facebook tutorial session? Did you write a lot? Why or why not?

- What do you think about the tutorial sessions provided on Facebook? Did you like them? Why or why not?
- What do you think you learned most from participating in the tutorial lab regarding writing skills?
- In your opinion, do you think writing on Facebook helps you improve your English writing skill, or do you think it impedes (make it worse) your writing skill? Why or why not?
- What do you think of the feedback done on the Facebook platform?

It is necessary to mention that when doing the interviews, the researcher spoke to every one of the students to wanted to take part of the study and hence signed the informed consent forms. Including all the students, thirty-five was a decision made to maintain an ethical position towards the whole intervention. This stance was adopted because it would not have been ethical to treat some of the students in the course and not all of them. Therefore the interviews were done, as mentioned previously, to all of the students willingly participating in the study.

The writing test

The third instrument employed in this research is a writing test. Participants took this writing test at the beginning of the semester and then again at the end of the semester when the intervention had concluded. Using a pre-test-post-test design is a frequent practice in educational research designs say Dugard and Todman (1995). The authors continue to say that one of the attractiveness of using this sort of design is the potential it bears for controlling internal validity. Additionally, the pre-test-post-test design is widely used for the purpose of making comparisons between groups or measuring change resulting from an educational intervention (Dimitrov and Rumrill 2003, Creswell 2007). The measurement of change, continue the authors, provides a vehicle to assess the impact, hopefully positive, in the group that receives the intervention.

The researcher used a pretest and post-test to compare them both and determine whether learners have improved their writing skills or not. Additionally, at the beginning of the study, the intention was to show the results of the tests to the participants so they would

know that they had improved after their participation in the FB tutorials. In the end, it was decided not to do it as it could influence students' views and perceptions of how important the Facebook had been for them and so it could have biased the results of the interviews.

In the planning stage of the study, the researcher had considered doing two different topics for the pre-test and the post-test. Nevertheless, to be clear on the differences or improvement participants would have gained, it was defined to keep the same topic for both tests. After a quick search on the internet, a website was found which offered past papers from the Preliminary English Test furnished by the Cambridge TESOL department. Using the test from the PET was decided because this is an official international exam, offered by an international recognized organization. Therefore, it is quite confident that the test topics had been piloted and used in real exams before. This reasoning led the researcher to believe in the validity and reliability of the test. Furthermore, these results would add to the trustworthiness of the outcomes, as a whole, from the study.

The topic of the pre and post-test, as already mentioned, was the same and it can be seen on Annex 10. Students had received an e-mail from a British friend asking them to relate a special day celebrated in Ecuador. Students had to give information on why it is a special day and how it is celebrated. This topic was chosen, from the diversity of subjects offered in the flow-joe page, because it offered the possibility of personalization. On these regards, McKay (1979) says that customization occurs the moment an activity permits learners to use their language to articulate their ideas, opinions, preferences or feelings. Personalization continues McKay, is essential in the communicative approach since it comprises communication of real information about them.

Participants did the pre-test on the sixth of July, including those students who for any reason had decided not to take part of the investigation, because it was a way to deal with the ethical implications of not treating every student in the class equally. For the pre-test, as it happened with the post-test, the students had to work individually on the writing piece and were allotted a thirty minute time to do their writing pieces, and they wrote and handed their work in during the face-to-face class on the date above mentioned.

At the moment of grading these two tests, the researcher thought about doing the grading by himself using the EFL Composition Profile (Jacobs et al. 1981). Nevertheless, after pondering on the potential ethical implications of doing it in such way, this decision

was changed. As a result, and to gain on validity, one of the colleagues at the University was requested for assistance with the marking of the tests. These markings were done blindly. Person (2013) makes an acceptable analysis on the use of blind grading and concludes that, in general, knowing the identity of the test taker does generate a bias on the teacher of those students. So to avoid any bias grading was done blindly. Besides that, the teacher did not know which lot he was grading first, the pre or the post-test. This teacher did the grading at the same time, which was after the intervention had finished, using, as above mentioned the EFL Composition Profile. Additionally to this colleague's grading, the researcher decided to take a few tests from both groups and graded them himself just to check to see if the grading teacher was marking similarly, as he was.

The Facebook page

The final instrument used was the Facebook page (see Annex 6) were the researcher posted the information the participants needed to read and further practice. The address of the page is https://www.facebook.com/English.class.with.David.Estrella/.

Initially, it was thought to create a page only for this research, to protect the privacy of the group. Therefore, after doing a quick investigation on the Facebook's options for privacy, it was found that they offer three different levels of privacy for group pages: open, closed and secret. Therefore, secret level of privacy seemed to be the right choice to make. However, while reading existing studies, it was found that this level of privacy also offered several potential problems for the development of this analysis. In Kamnotsin (2014), the researcher followed this path and the participants of this study had many challenges with their communications as Facebook considered their accounts as spam since there were no "friends" added to these accounts. They were being used only for the research and in the end, the author explains, the participants who decided to stay after all the trouble they were exposed to, had to start using their real Facebook accounts.

After knowing of these problems, a change to the original decision was resolved and explained to the participants that they needed to use their personal accounts to avoid any of these potential problems. Besides, this way it would seem a lot more natural and real for them, and we treated all the Facebook input as another one of their general fan pages. The tutorial Facebook sessions started on the fourth of July and went on until August

fifteen, for a period of four complete weeks. The students knew that they would have to visit the page every day they had class, and they would find the tutorials to follow and do the activities posted. Participants also knew that besides answering the tutorials, they could as well post things on the wall, like any other Facebook page, as ask questions via a public post or a private message.

During the period allotted for the intervention, the researcher input, on every day the class met for regular instruction, several topics which resulted from a needs analysis performed on sample writing pieces done by participants during the first period of the semester, time in which there was no intervention, but regular classes.

The several topics of input along with the exercises the students had to do are listed in the table below. All of the issues that were used for input in the Facebook page came from grammar books such as Focus on Grammar by Fuch and Bonner, the Intermediate level textbook; The Practical English Usage from Michael Swan; and information obtained from the ego4u website.

Additionally; it seems imperative to explain that the only writing practice that was done, with the group of students involved in the study, was from the Facebook page, as any other type of classwork in writing was not done. This decision was made to avoid having any confusion regarding whether or not the improvements students would have had come from the Facebook instruction or the one given in the face-to-face time.

The participants

The participants for this study were the students from one of the courses the researcher had at the time. From a total of forty-two students who enrolled in this class, only thirty-five agreed to take part of the study and signed the informed consent form. However, all of the students enrolled were able to participate in the instruction and exercises given in the Facebook. All of the students are currently enrolled at the University, and they are taking the last of the English courses of the curriculum.

The following demographic information was obtained using the survey the participants completed at the beginning of the study. The purpose of the information gathered from the study was to set the context of the participants. There are more men than women in the class, and their ages range from 19 to 23 years old, almost three-quarters of

the students come from the various parishes of Guayaquil. The other quarter of the students is originally from other provinces like Manabí, Esmeraldas, and Los Ríos as well as from different cities in the Guayas province too. The majority of them have spent their school years in the public sector, although the division is almost fifty-fifty.

More than seventy-five percent of the participants started studying English when they were at the primary level, while twenty percent of them started in high school and only one of them had their first encounter with the language in the University. Most of the students are halfway through their studies, and thirty of them admitted to liking the English language.

In regards to participants use of Internet, they said they connect to the Internet every day of the week, and most of the respondents stated that they spend more than four hours surfing the net in a day. Almost all of the students taking the survey said they mostly connect to the Internet when they are at home. When asked about their preferred activities while connected, the majority chose using social networking sites, such as Facebook. They keep an eye on their social networks two or three times in a day completing a total of more than two hours with the expectation to see what their friends, as well as their favorite singers or actors, post on their walls. More than half of the respondents declared that their favorite SNS are Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter, in that order.

The survey also had a section devoted to obtaining information about the way informants use the SNS Facebook. All of the students, except for two of them, have a Facebook account which they have had for more than two years. Students also, in their majority, chose to say that they see Facebook as a means to communicate with people using their English skills. They also opted to say that they use the SNS to write in English and when the students surveyed do, they try to pay closer attention to the way the write and the way the use their grammar.

Sampling

With the purpose of carrying out the data collection, the first step to take, according to Flick (2009), is to select the sample for the study. A sample is a part of the target population that the researcher has considered to study to make generalizations about (Creswell, 2008). However, choosing the sample for the research project is not an easy

endeavor to take on. Researchers need to make decisions on several issues, among which we can count the size of the sample, how representative the sample is of the target population, the access to the sample and finally the sampling strategy to use (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007).

Sample size

Considering the information mentioned above, it is necessary to indicate that most of the decisions were relatively easy to take. Regarding the scale of the sample, even though Marshall (1996) asserts that when researchers engage in qualitative inquiry, they tend not to understand that small samples are more useful than large ones. As a requirement for this study program, the sample size was established in thirty participants as a minimum, and thirty-five students decided to take part of the analysis. Creswell (2008) expands when he says that the appropriate sample size in qualitative studies depends on the research question. For issues that are not that complex, the size might be less than ten participants. However, if a complicated matter is to be studied large samples and a variety of sampling techniques might be necessary.

Sampling methods

Purposeful sampling

Regarding sampling methods, Creswell (2012), differentiates the use of random and purposeful sampling by saying that the first sampling method is widely used in quantitative research, while the latter is well-fitted for a qualitative project, such as the one in our hands. The author says that purposeful sampling selects people or places that can be useful for the researcher to understand the phenomenon under the scope. Purposeful sampling engages qualitative researchers in obtaining data from participants which they purposefully choose because they are suitable for the parameters established in the investigation as well as with the questions set and its goals. Additionally, participants are selected this way because they can report what they know about the problem that we are studying (Tracy, 2013; Creswell, 2008; Cohen, Mannion, and Morrison, 2007).

Among the different types of sampling strategies offered within the purposeful sampling techniques, we can identify in the literature, the following common strategies:

Maximal variation, critical, opportunistic or convenience sampling, snowball, theoretical construct sampling, and extreme sampling, among others. Table 1, shows each of these strategies and the purpose each of them attains.

Table 1. Sampling Strategies

Sampling Strategy	Purpose
Maximal Variation Sampling	Used to cultivate many perspectives. It helps include data that might be left out.
Critical Sampling	Used to describe "dramatical situations" in particular cases. It focuses on data that not studied in full or that are rare.
Opportunistic/Convenience Sampling	Used to take advantage of the way the investigation unfolds. It is adequate when there is not enough time or money.
Snowball Sampling	Used to locate people or places to investigate. It expands in size as the researchers ask for other recommended participants.
Theoretical Construct Sampling	Used to explore a concept or generate theory. It is good when to test and find gaps in current theory.
Extreme Sampling	Used to describe burdensomely cases. It can be valuable regarding data but also time-consuming.

Source: Cohen, Mannion, and Morrison (2007)

Sampling strategy

From the different sampling strategies mentioned in Table 1, the one chosen to work with was the convenience sampling technique. This approach suggests the researcher selects those individuals who are more at hand to play the role of respondents. They usually, say, Cohen, Mannion, and Morrison (2007) just happen to be available and are accessible when the research is going on.

Saunders (2011) sheds a little light in the advantages and disadvantages of using this type of sampling strategy. Among the benefits, Saunders mentions the main characteristic of this approach is its directness as well as how easy it is to use it in research. When a sample is obtained this way, the data collection can be done in a shorter period, and finally, this is the cheapest implementation sampling strategy. When considering the drawbacks of using convenience sampling Saunders (2011) explains that selection bias is a big issue to think about, also he says that the level of sampling error is high and finishes the analysis on the credibility factor when using this type of sampling.

Considering on the assertions from the authors above mentioned and the time that the researcher had to implement the intervention necessary for this study, the method that fit the necessities of the research was convenience sampling. However, to help to reduce the selection bias as Saunders (2011) explains, the decision to include all the students in the investigation was taken.

Research procedures

The researcher contacted the Academic Coordinator of the English Department at the Polytechnic University in the city of Guayaquil to obtain their authorization to carry out the research. She was kind enough to authorize the request letter to her addressed (see Annex 2). As mentioned before the researcher and the teacher of the course used in this investigation are the same person. Once we obtained the authorization for the intervention, the participants received a class in which every single detail of the project was to them explained. We told them exactly what we were going to do during the last term of the semester.

The students were informed that the project required their participation, though they were not obliged to take part of it if they did not want to do it. After this had been said, seven of the students in the class expressed their concerns, of various natures, about their participating in the project and preferred not to do it. Therefore, from the forty-two students enrolled in the class, only thirty-five of them decided to take part in the project. After that, the informed consent forms were given out to the remaining students. This form was translated into Spanish just for the sake of a hundred percent understandability of the document. Before letting them read the forms, the researcher made a thorough explanation

of the study in which they were going to take in part, in Spanish, and asked if there were any questions regarding their participation. A few questions were asked, especially about their gain in the study or if their names would be coming out in the research. All the inquiries have been fully resolved. Students then read and signed their corresponding informed consent forms once they agreed with its contents.

The intervention consisted of four tasks participants had to for four weeks. It started on July fourth and ended on August twenty-fourth. The first task they needed to complete was to answer the online survey posted on Google forms (see Annex 5). This survey asked participants for their demographic information, which was used to make the description of the participants above as well as information on their use of internet and Facebook as it has been previously explained. The complete set of questions can be seen on Annex 7.

The second task and this was the actual bulk of the intervention. In this section, students had to participate in the writing tutorials posted on the Facebook page twice a week. This frequency was decided as this is how much the class convened every week. On most of the tutorials, a subject was dealt with via images, as this was one of the preferred media chosen by the participants on question three, section three of the survey. This is also the answer to the third sub-question of this research. There was a different topic every time there was a post on the Facebook page of the class. Students knew that every day they had class, in the afternoon they would find the writing tutorial, accompanied by one or two exercises they needed to do. Most of the times participants were encouraged to interact with their peers on-line by commenting on their posts or short paragraphs. Participants were also advised that all submissions had to be on the positive side and that nasty or rude behavior or vocabulary was not acceptable. The schedule of the activities done as well as the topics utilized in the intervention along with the types of exercises is presented in Annex 9.

The third task the participants of this investigation had to do was to take a pre-writing test, at the beginning of the intervention to determine their writing abilities. And, they had to do a second writing test after the writing tutorials had finished for them to see their improvement after the intervention. The last task for the participants was to take part of personal interviews to obtain their affirmations on their use of the Facebook to improve their writing skills.

Validity, reliability, and trustworthiness

There is a significant amount of literature covering the issues under this heading. Some authors claim these three terms ought to be dealt separately, and others fell the opposite way is the correct approach to them. It is the belief of this research that one can not be without the other. As Creswell and Miller (200) state that a measuring instrument, whichever is used, in research may be reliable without been valid. That same instrument, however, can consistently wrong, The authors call this bias.

Validity

The literature is extensive and sometimes not very clear, at the time of making proper definitions of this term. Conhen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) say, that validity is, fundamental for proper research either qualitative or quantitative. Lincoln and Guba (1985) say that validity can be deemed as the level of honesty, depth, and richness of the information obtained as well as the attitude with which the researcher faces the participants and his objectivity on the matter at hand.

Creswell (2007) asserts that validity should be viewed regarding qualitative equivalents and terms, as well as utilizing interpretative angle. Creswell ends this definition by making a metaphor comparing validity with the clarity of a crystal. Validity is concerned wit the connection there is between the concepts and the observed variables, explain Mackenzie and Knipe (2006), they continue with their reasoning saying that validity is the measure of the extent to which researchers measure what they believe are examining. Likewise, there are texts in which readers experience confusion due to the abounding quantity of terms used for validity, among those Creswell and Miller (2000) include authenticity, goodness, verisimilitude, adequacy, validation and credibility.

After reviewing the definitions mentioned above as well as from other texts; it is safe to say that validity is concerned with how well a tool can assess what the researcher designed it to assess. With this interpretation as the base, the following analysis of the different choices of validity procedures opted for, during this study, is done.

Descriptive validity

Descriptive validity is a branch from external valatidy. Maxwell as cited by Conhen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) explain that descriptive validity is regarded as the accurate account of the events that surround a study. These reports shall not be made up, distorted or discriminatory. Additionally, Creswell (2008) asserts that when a study has a rich and dense description of the happenings in the research, this leads readers to make their minds regarding transferability. Creswell cites Erlandson et al., by saying that the level of detail in the description permits to transfer the report to other settings because of shared characteristics. This study has maintained throughout all its elaboration that objective in mind.

Construct validity

In Creswell (2012) there is an account on construct validity. The author's description asserts that this is a device mostly used in social sciences, such as language education, where there is plenty of subjectivity regarding concepts. Additionally, Cronbach and Meehl (1995) go a little further and explain that a construct is an attribute of people which can be reflected in the test designed to measure it. Therefore, the authors believe that construct validation needs to be involved any time a test measures an attribute that is not "operationally defined."

This study has used two different procedures to test for construct validity. The first process as put by Creswell and Miller (2000) is to have a pilot study to identify where the strengths of the instrument lie and which parts need to be adjusted. During the study performed, the different tools to be used, namely the survey and the interview questions were piloted, as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), with the intention of testing the instruments and see where or if they needed to be adjusted. It was found during the piloting that both the interviews and the surveys required to be done in Spanish as the language was, at times, too complex for learners to respond to them without problems.

The second procedure to secure the construct validity of the instruments was to utilize in the intervention stage of the investigation a pre and post-test. Cronbach and Meehl (1995) say that it is necessary to provide for the validity of the test to have a statical procedure run over the results of the pre and post-test to determine whether or not the null

hypothesis is positive or negative. This procedure was done with the hope to measure the differences in writing performance before the intervention took place and after the participants received the instruction. The researcher used a Paired T-test to prove the null hypothesis. This kind of procedure explains Creswell (2012) allows for the researcher to claim for a good construct validity.

Peer debriefing

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) speak about peer debriefing and say that it is only giving your work to peers so they can honestly give their opinions on the contents as well as on future steps to be taken. Creswell (2000) maintains that peer debriefing is the scrutiny of the data as well as the research process. This review, claims the author, is done by someone who is acquainted with the phenomena investigated. Additionally, Lincoln and Guba (1985) clarify the role of the reviewer saying that he or she plays devil's advocate by disputing the assumptions made by the researcher and asking questions about the methods and the interpretations done by the researcher.

This study counts with peer debriefing in the hands of the tutor that was chosen by the investigator and confirmed by the university to accompany during the investigation process. This guide has played the role of mediator between this researcher's work and what he at a higher level and from outside the process believed could improve the quality of the present work. Throughout the completion of the different stages of the research, the peer debriefer has analyzed the various documents created as well as taking a look at the pre and post-tests and revising the transcripts of the interviews. While considering all of the above mentioned, the reviewer challenged a diversity of issues which without this intervention, would not have been addressed. Therefore, adding for validity.

Face validity

To test for face validity, Nolan (2011) and Karim (2015) explain that the researcher has to analyze the item used as well as whether or not the instructions that accompany it make sense to those responding it. Norton (2009) suggests doing this by following two steps. The first one is for the researcher to read the questions and then by piloting it on approximately 20 to 30 people. These people are preferably ones who are not

part of the primary study. They will be able to say if the options for responses do not make sense or if the questions are ambiguous, or the instructions for respondents are not clear.

Before putting up the survey online, the items, adapted from the questionnaires used by Nolan (2011) and Karim (2015), were translated into Spanish with the intention that respondents would have no problem understanding what they had to answer. The translation was then handed over to another teacher in the languages department to review and confirm that the translation was an accurate account of the original English language questions. Additionally, the researcher did a pilot study using the survey, with a group of students from another of the courses the researcher had and asked the participants to focus on two things. First, they needed to see how easy the questions were for them to read and understand. Then the pilot respondents had to determine whether or not the words used in the questions were simple enough for everybody to understand.

Reliability

Reliability deals with the stability and consistency of a research instrument or the method used with the pass of time (Tracy, 2013). The author also claims that a study is reliable when any other researcher can replicate it in the same way. Even though reliability is an approach usually applied to the evaluation of qualitative research, it is used in different types of research as well (Golafshani, 2003). In qualitative research, asserts the author, the quality of the study is primordial, and the concept of quality is related to the generation of understanding coming from the results of such qualitative investigation.

For Lincoln and Guba (1985), the terms validity and reliability are more related to quantitative than to qualitative research. They explain that a qualitative study should relate its quality to other concepts, such as "credibility, neutrality or confirmability, consistency or dependability, and applicability or transferability." Lincoln and Guba pay particular attention to their understanding of dependability as they say it is the closest corresponding term to reliability. For Golafshani (2003) validity and reliability cannot be dealt with as separated entities, so the clear demonstration of the existence of validity ought to be sufficient to determine the presence of reliability.

Despite the fact that validity and reliability are components of high importance regarding how objective the research is, especially in quantitative inquiry, reliability

receives more criticism than validity in qualitative research (Shimahara as cited by Clonts, 1992). Reliability and internal validity, explain Clonts (1992), are closely related as they both appeal to descriptions done over the phenomena observed. Guba and Lincoln (1985) go further on this issue and explain that it is not possible to talk about internal validity and not have reliability. The authors conclude that any time a researcher can demonstrate internal validity in a study, it is equivalent to the testimony of reliability.

Focusing on Lincoln and Guba's assertion, and after careful consideration, it is the belief of this researcher that a longer analysis and justification of reliability in this study is not necessary. It has become more than apparent, from the literature revised, that the issue of reliability is more connected to quantitative than qualitative research, which is the case of the present study. Additionally to this reasoning, it is relevant to mention that in the subheading of validity, internal validity has been proven so that reliability can be adhered as such. One final thought on this matter is that reliability is closely related to measuring numerical data. However, this is not possible in this study as we are analyzing people's feelings and opinions to which one can not assign such mathematical measurements.

Trustworthiness

An issue that seems too frequent, according to the words of Krefting (1991), is the fact that qualitative research is assessed using criteria that are suitable for quantitative research and not for the former. Krefting (1991), citing Agar, continues to say that investigators who follow a qualitative tradition champion the position, that following the concepts of validity and reliability strictly on account of their applicability to quantitative views is erroneous. As a result, these ideas are not suitable for qualitative research. Therefore, to describe the character of qualitative inquiry accurately, trustworthiness has become a primary tool (Given, 2008).

Positivists, say Shenton (2004), frequently challenge trustworthiness in the qualitative investigation because they can not reconcile their concepts of validity and reliability with the formerly mentioned studies. This option that qualitative researchers have to drift apart from quantitative conceptions allow them freedom enough to describe their work with such rigor but without forcing the into a quantitative model (Given, 2008).

Cobb and Gravemeijer (2010) reveal that the primary concern of trustworthiness is with how reasonable and justifiable are the inferences and allegations that arise from thoughtful analysis. The main issue, the authors propose, is how credible the analysis of the data generated during the research is, as well as how open that data is to criticism and scrutiny from other researchers.

Guba (1981) citing Guba and Lincoln speak of evolution that trustworthiness has suffered given the four pillars over which this concept rests. The issues the authors depict are truth value which would be equivalent to credibility or internal validity. Applicability or transferability refers to external validity or generalizability. Consistency or dependability stands for reliability; and confirmability which qualitative researchers rather use instead of objectivity or neutrality (Shenton, 2004; Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These four aspects comment Krefting (1991) can be employed in both quantitative and qualitative inquiry.

Truth value

Shenton (2004) explains that positivist researchers focus broadly on internal validity in which they pursue to guarantee that their examination measures what is intended to do. The qualitative researcher ought to take an interest in the compliance of the findings obtained and the reality the researcher seeks to understand. Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that the assurance of truth value or credibility is one of the most relevant issues in establishing trustworthiness. Truth value is based on how confident the researcher feels with the truth of the data and conclusions reached with the research design (Kreftin, 1991). The author keeps explaining that truth value comes from the analysis of the experiences that informants live. Lincoln and Guba (1985) gave this concept the term of credibility.

Guba (1981) explains that factor patternings can affect the research as it might produce non-interpretability. Factor patternings, asserts Guba, are the "naturalists take account of the bewildering array of interlocking factor patterns that confront them and pose formidable problems of interpretation." The answer to this problem is to take actions to take account of their complexities (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The literature serves researchers with several methods to help them deal with the truth value issue. Among the several options depicted by Guba (1981), Lincoln and Guba (1985), Krefting (1999),

Shenton (2004), Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), and Tracy (2013), the discussion will focus on what was done in this study.

Peer debriefing

Guba (1981) explains that the researcher needs to get detached from time to time from the research and permit more knowledgeable peers to take a look at the study. As it was mentioned before, the researcher asked the help of several colleagues to read different sections of the report. The researcher's peers could view the advances in the research with fresh eyes, as they were not involved with it (Krefting, 1999).

The researcher spoke to a few fellow teachers at the languages center of the university for them to take part in these review dialogues. Previous to the meetings, the researcher provided each of the colleagues a copy of the draft for their examination. After the teachers' revision of the content, conversations were set up with each of them to discuss their reactions to the reviewed chapter. There was one conversation done for the methodology section after the conclusion of the first draft, and there was another session performed in which the results section was scrutinized. An additional not so formal meeting took place to talk about the results chapter.

Before these sessions took place, the researcher made clear to the assisting professors, that their help would be mostly appreciated and that they were to remain as objective as possible. During these reunions, issues arose from questions and doubts the teachers had about the different sections. Some of the concerns were resolved at the moment, and others were kept for further review. The researcher kept notes of the opinions and comments from his peers which after careful consideration were included in the final draft of this paper. It is the belief of this researcher that With this measure, the quality of this investigation is sure to have been improved.

Reflexivity

A considerable threat to truth value is the closeness of the relationship between the researcher and the participants of the study (Krefting, 1999). However, the author also explains that proximity is necessary to establish rapport with the informants because that way informants should answer the researcher's questions more candidly. The problem

arises at the moment when this relationship might bias the analyst's ability to portray the data accurately. Krefting (1999) says that it is important that the researcher is not separate from the research but part of it. Reflexivity was achieved throughout the intervention stage as the researcher became part of the tool for practicing the writing skills. This relationship was being established every time respondents posted on the Facebook page, and the researcher commented, giving feedback on the accuracy of the postings as well as intervening sharing personal information with them. It is believed that because of this good relationship that was created by these means that the participants' answers were all, or most of them were truthful.

Transferability

The concept of transferability indicates that the results of the research can be transferred to other contexts, different from the ones that were initially investigated (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Shenton (2004) argues that the problem that qualitative works often face lies in the numbers of participants in a study, which is often small. These limited samples asserts Shenton, make it impossible to demonstrate that the results and conclusions of a study can be pertinent to other populations. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose that the responsibility of the investigator goes as far as been able to make sure that there exists plenty of information about the research so that the reader can make an informed decision to whether such transfer can be done. Krefting (1999) agrees with Lincoln and Guba when saying that the issue of transferability depends on the stance the researcher has on the generalization of the information obtained.

As it was related in an earlier chapter, the intention of this researcher is to understand how the students, of an intermediate level of English, of this university, feel in regards to their use of the Facebook platform for them to practice their writing skills. In the subheading devoted to the participants, it is the impression of this researcher, that a good characterization of the nature and context of the participants is done. Therefore, it was not the main idea behind this study to reach a generalization status, which is why in the recommendations for further study, a larger scale inquiry is to be made to apply for generalization.

However, with the idea of giving the reader as much information as possible for them to make a right decision on the transferability of the results of this study, there is a rich description of the different contexts, regarding both the participants as well as the institution, as suggested by Guba (1981).

Dependability

In quantitative studies, Shenton (2003), explains that the researcher follows certain techniques to ensure the replicability of their study in different contexts. Although, in qualitative inquiry, because of the always-changing nature of the human phenomena this reproduction of methods and results might not have the same end (Field and Marshall and Rossman, as cited by Shenton, 2003).

Guba (1981) recommends naturalist researchers two strategies when trying to afford dependability. The first method is to overlap designs, a kind of triangulation, says the author. The use of focus groups along with personal interviews is a good example of triangulation (Shenton, 2003). The second method, says Krefting (1999) by citing Guba, is the step-way replication technique.

With the intention of undertaking the dependability question more directly, this researcher has reported in as much detail as possible the different processes carried out during the investigation as recommended by Krefting (1999). The idea behind this efforts is to establish a good background for any other researcher who wishes to get involved in duplicating this work in their contexts. It is the hope of this researcher that the present work can serve as a prototype model for other scholars to assess the extent to which adequate research traditions have been followed. Therefore, readers can have a comprehensive understanding of the research design used and the effectiveness of the implementation. To achieve the mentioned goal, there are sections in this report that are committed to explaining what had been planned as well as the different activities performed during the intervention stage and to the discussion of the results obtained from it.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

The vast majority of the findings related in this study were obtained through the use of qualitative techniques for the analysis of the interviews.

All the interviews carried out to collect the data were done face-to-face, and the participants expressed their willingness of taking part in them. Each interview lasted between five and seven minutes, and participants did not receive any compensation for their participation in this dialogue. At the beginning of every interview, the researcher reminded the respondents what the study was concerning and what their role in the whole research was. Next, the researcher explained to them that continuing with the discussion meant they were giving their consent to continue participating in the project. Also, the researcher assured respondents that their Facebook profiles were never looked at to obtain any information.

According to Bogodan and Bilken (2003), it is essential to record the interviews because this allows the researcher to be an active listener, as well as preventing any loss of information. Therefore, the interviews were recorded in digital format using the investigator's laptop. Before starting with the interviews, each of the participants was asked if they did not feel hindered by the recording of their answers to which informants were very receptive and allowed the recording to take place. Moreover, the researcher made sure that every participant understood that at the time of reporting their comments, their names would not be displayed in any manner, but that they would only be identified by a number from on to thirty.

Before starting the interviews with the respondents, the researcher offered each of them the option to carry out this conversation in English or Spanish. It was made evident to participants that they could choose whichever option was more comfortable for them and that their choice would not affect the results of the investigation. Given this choice, twenty-seven students decided to do the interviews in Spanish, and only three of them opted for the English version. For the Spanish interviews, the corresponding translation was done, and another teacher from the Department was kind enough to review the accuracy of the translations for validity purposes. The data obtained from the interviews supplied the respondents' feelings and their thoughts in regards to how positive or negative their

experience was with the use of the Facebook platform for them to improve their writing skills.

The researcher used an interview protocol, to serve as a guide for the interviews, which included the following questions which were adapted from the questionnaire used by Kamnoetsin (2014):

1. Can you describe your writing experience on the Facebook tutorial platform? (e.g. did you like it, is it difficult to write on the Facebook platform?)
2. How did you do on the Facebook tutorial session? Did you write a lot? Why or why not?
3. What do you think about the tutorial sessions provided on Facebook? Did you like them? Why or why not?
4. What do you think you learned most from participating in the tutorial lab regarding writing skills?
5. In your opinion, do you think writing on Facebook helps you improve your English writing skill, or do you think it impedes (make it worse) your writing skill? Why or why not?
6. What do you thnk of the feedback provided?

As mentioned before, these were the initial or base questions in the interview. However, there were a few times when the researcher asked additional questions to deepen in the answers given by some of the participants.

Working with the amount of data obtained from the interviews is not a simple task to do. However, Bogodan and Biklen (2003) offer some advice and explain that researchers should use a coding categories system so that it is easier to understand what students relate to being their experiences and perspectives on the Facebook platform. Once presented with all this data, the researcher proceeded to follow the recommendations stated by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), Creswell (2012), and Denzin and Lincoln (2000). These researchers say data ought to be coded, categorized, analyzed, and interpreted to come to conclusions and obtain responses to the research questions.

To complete the analysis of the interview data, we followed what Bogdan and Biklen (2003) suggest as a strategy for carrying out the analysis of the data. They describe a

five-step process to analyze qualitative data. First, they mention, it is reasonable that a researcher tries out to divide the data into themes. Secondly, they suggest working with words, playing with metaphors, analogies, and concepts. Another suggestion from the authors is to develop diagrams, tables, matrices and graphs with the intention of displaying the data. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) also suggest developing coding categories that are sufficiently easy for the researcher to follow, expand or contract when necessary. Finally, qualitative researchers need to sort the material into categories and then, after following this process the data is ready to be presented.

After all the recorded interviews received the process of transcription and then translation into English, there was a total of around 180 minutes of data. The analysis process started by reading a few times the transcriptions of the interviews with the idea of getting a real sense of the information available and the ways to go about it. Then the coding of the data followed. Coding allowed the researcher to make connections between the data and categorize it.

Initially, there were around twenty different themes identified, and after doing a couple more rounds of reading through the data, several codes were brought together as they made sense more that way than alone. Some of the initial codification had to be dropped as new ones were more interesting or better for the project. In total, there were about ten categories at the moment, and after some time some groupings could be again joined and received their labels.The final categories, as well as the evidence using quoted parts of the interviews, follow below.

The overall experience

In general, participants said they liked the experience of using the Facebook to practice their writing skills because they can do it in any place and whenever they have free time. There is, respondents commented, no stress in how much time they spend on doing the homework and something that is quite valuable for them is the opportunity to see what their peers have written before they input their responses as well as receiving feedback from their classmates. It is easy to do as being on Facebook is part of their everyday life, and it involves them more in the writing experience.

One of the participants said this when referring to the experience on the Facebook platform:

Student 1: "Well, I think that it is a good experience to write in the… in Facebook… because… I can practice and also if you send me a tutorial, I can, I can learn more… fast. I have some problems in writing, and for this reason, I think that it is, it is a little difficult. But if I practice every day for… many times… I think I can improve my writing and I think that it is a good option for all the English but more in writing."

Another participant stated:

Student 4: "Well, I, hum, I think it is a good method. It is easy and modern. It is like, it is easy to get to the platform and you… you usually stay there. So… it is like a modern and dynamic learning media."

Amount of writing done during the project

There were several pieces of information under this label. However, participants agreed that they did what the instruction in the writing exercise asked them to do. So the amount of writing they did in each exercise, depended on what it the researcher asked them to do.

Also, some respondents accepted they did not write as frequently as the activities came up because they lacked time to do it. One of this participants, student 1 claimed that "other subjects required me to spend a lot of my day doing different types of tasks and I don't have enough free time to go into the Facebook as often as I would like to.". Another repetitive answer was that they enjoyed writing more when the topic they had to develop was something about they already had some knowledge.

Student 23 claimed "At the beginning… I… I write a little…because at the start of the course I was not used to writing very long paragraphs. But, …I think…that with the past of time, now that we are about to finish the class… hum…I now write fairly well."

Types of posts

There were no questions included in the protocol in these regards because this was solved at the beginning of the intervention when in the survey respondents had to answer which kind of post was the most interesting to them. However, during the interviews,

several participants mentioned that they were compelled to write more when the tutorial included information explained with pictures. “The pictures made the explanation more fun,” said student 19.

Another participant, student 21 stated, “When you put pictures I understood better and felt more motivated to show I understood.”

Finally, a third respondent, student 15 commented that “When something is explained and pictures are put with the explanation it is easier to understand, and it sticks to my mind better and longer. I also think that videos are a good way to give us the information.”

Opinions of tutorials

The general opinion of the tutorials was that they covered interesting and useful topics. The guidance sessions were good because they helped students to clear their doubts about topics that even though their teachers have presented these items previously, they had forgotten about these issues. The tutorials served them as support for the moment they had to study for tests and supplemented the information they were taught in the face-to-face classes.

“The best,” student 21 said “the best… is that everything is always on the Facebook and…er… I can go back and check whenever I need.”

Another participant, student 5 said “Yes…well…I write because it gave me a chance…and… as I said… it was really cool. It was very interactive, and I like… because we learned even better ways…hum…better forms to write correctly, even punctuation and even how to express…using the terms that have to use in paragraphs.”

“I wrote what… in some, I wrote more and less in others… hum… I really… I tried to write what you asked us to do… if I didn’t write sometimes is because of time,” asserted, student 27, one more respondent.

What they have learned

Participants focused their answers on this question in three main sections: vocabulary, grammar and how to write sentences correctly. Here are some of the things the students said about this.

"Well, what I learned is you can learn English in an easy and pedagogical way. I can do…hum…different kinds of activities…and… you know… these activities… are the activities we normally do…hum… like chatting on Facebook or looking at the news," said student 4.

"The most interesting about the tutorial," explained student 17 "was the way that we can use links to make a paragraph or… just… the particular uses of articles that they can give me more information that all I know."

Another informant, student 3, concluded that "I learned many things…but… I am sure… I learned to write better, especially… because it is a social network that is public, and… you know… I had to see what I wrote because, if not… I'm not going to write whatever things."

Participants' perceived improvement

The general comment on this theme was that now they feel they can write a lot better than when they started the course. Informants also believe that their writing abilities have improved because of the innovative tool that the Facebook platform became for them. As this is part of the core of the research, several students' responses are accompanying this heading:

"The truth is... hum… now… at least now… I can do at least a little more than I… at least I wrote then, so… then yes, yes. I realize I have improved." Said student 17

"Yes… like…like I said it helped me a lot in Grammar. I liked it…very much because…it is something to learn English… for me, it was very complicated to write then, but it was for that moment, but now… I recorded it in my brain… because one way or another… associating it with the Facebook makes me keep it longer in my mind." This was asserted by student 1.

Additionally, to the above accounts, student 23 asserted "Yes, of course. In the first term… we can say… I wrote very little… but now I have been writing for all the activities we have done. Then… I have noticed a big difference between the beginning of the course and now at the end of the course. Participating in his project has been very beneficial to me."

"Yes… I believe I improved. Because there were some words, I did not know…However, the instruction on Facebook had examples…this made me look and find a good dictionary or translator online… and, find words that are new to me or I did not know them. So… it also helped me with vocabulary," said student 26.

Feelings about the feedback sessions

This section includes what learners feel in general about the feedback that was given to them via the Facebook. Every time a participant posted something on the Facebook, whether it was part of homework or question or comment, they received an immediate response from the researcher. In the case of homework, it was personalized feedback. This feedback always started by congratulating the good things done in the piece of writing and then the mistakes were highlighted, and finally, the researcher asked the participants to make the corrections.

On this matter, generalizing respondents' comments, they preferred to have their errors pointed out as it was a way to learn from them and not to make them again. Following some of the comments from participants:

One of the informants, student 9 said "I think… the feedback was good… It was fabulous, because… one thing is what we wrote and having the certainty that it was good or wrong… we have it there… you said it was good, but if it was wrong… if it was wrong, you posted remarks and… and then I could see where I was wrong. I could identify it."

While, on the same subject, student 25 explained "I really like that… you know… because they can give me the corrections about, avoid to keep or repeat the mistakes again… so I can improve my English in this way… and we can make a good relation between teacher and students."

Seeking information

This was one last theme found among participants' responses to the interview. It was interesting to hear them say that after reading the posts of the tutorials if something were still not clear enough, they would go to the Internet and do a search to find more information on the subject. That way, participants' commented, they felt more confident at the time of writing their posts on the Facebook.

On these regards, student 6 had the following to say: “If I didn’t understand something, I researched it, and I especially liked writing but paying attention to the grammar rules.”

Additionally, to this account, student 8 said: “You basically see what you have to do and you can get help from other resources and things that you don’t know, you can research and do the work better.”

Finally, student 17 declared “Since I already had the Facebook opened, I also had access to translators, and if there were any words I didn’t know, then I looked it up, and I even consulted more stuff about writing.

Motivational tool

The last theme that was identified in the data collected was in regards to how motivated or motivational they believed the Facebook platform was for them. During the interviews, although this issue was not dealt with directly in the questioning protocol, several of the informants expressed their feelings about it. The general comment was that the Facebook allowed them to work more freely and without stress as they did not have anybody to watch over them when writing. Respondents also stated that they had time enough to look at their peer's answers which moved them to write without restrictions as they felt they were following the general path in which everyone was moving.

Student 18 said “As… I was saying, what helped me the most… hum… it was not only the homework you sent, but it was actually using the Facebook in my own time… and I think… I think it was great to work at my own pace… I felt more motivated to write when… before posting, I looked at what my classmates had written.”

Additionally to the above student’s impression, student 15 explained that “It is a dynamic method. The Facebook is a tool that tries to get the student’s attention, and then it motivates us to write something related to the English language.”

Student 23 said that “Facebook is a tool very dynamic that helps students. I felt more relaxed when writing on the platform and I was motivated to write even more. At the beginning of the class I wrote a little but by the end, I was writing more, and you were giving me more positive feedback than corrections.”

Chapter 5: Results and Discussion

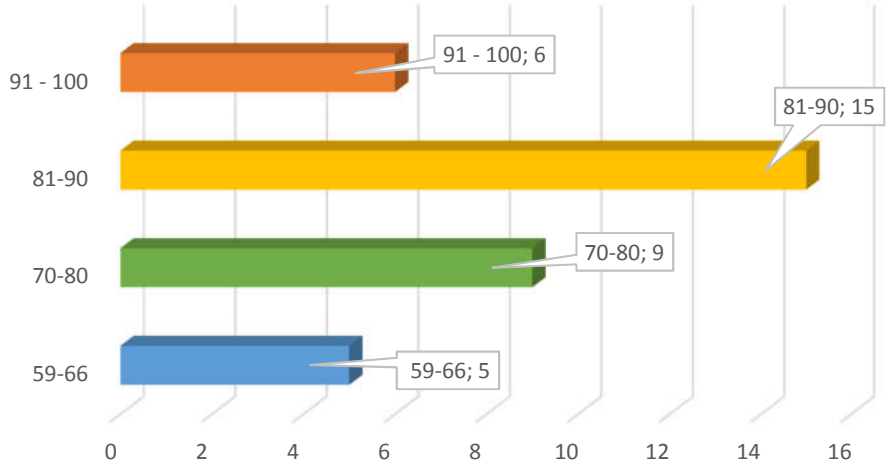
This chapter will take a look at the results obtained from the pre and post-tests, the survey and the interviews in light of the research questions posted in the introduction section. The research question will lead the discussion and will refer to the instrument out of which came the data used in the previous analysis chapter.

Question 1.

The first question posed stated: Do learners feel that using Facebook to practice their writing skills is beneficial to them? The answer to this issue came from the interviews and the pre and post tests used.

Results from the pre and post-test

Figure 4. Pre-test Results



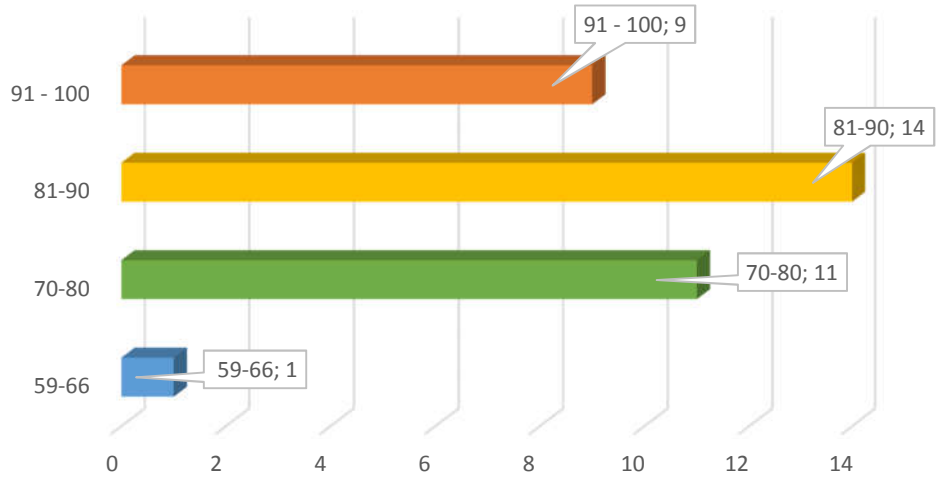
Source: The researcher

Figure 5 illustrates the pre-test results for the students. It can be seen in this graph that out of the thirty students who took part of the project, one-half of them scored in the range of eighty and ninety points on the Writing profile. On the other hand, six participants received a score of between ninety-one and one hundred points. The second largest group of scores position themselves on the range between seventy and eighty marks with a total of nine participants. The scores range of fifty-nine to sixty-six had five participants obtaining

this grades. A little thought is necessary for this paragraph regarding the grades the respondents earned. This piece of thinking comes from the fact that in the university the minimum passing grade is sixty over one hundred. Therefore, it is also a fact to say that almost ninety percent of the students in this class reached the passing grade without much trouble.

On the other hand, figure 6 depicts the results achieved by the same group of students after they participated in the Facebook tutorials. This graph shows that the highest grade scores had increased and the number of students placed in this range increased from six to eleven participants. The second largest score range is still the eighty-one to ninety, although we can see that it lost two students in comparison. The seventy to eighty range gained one more participant, and the lowest grade range only has one student placed there.

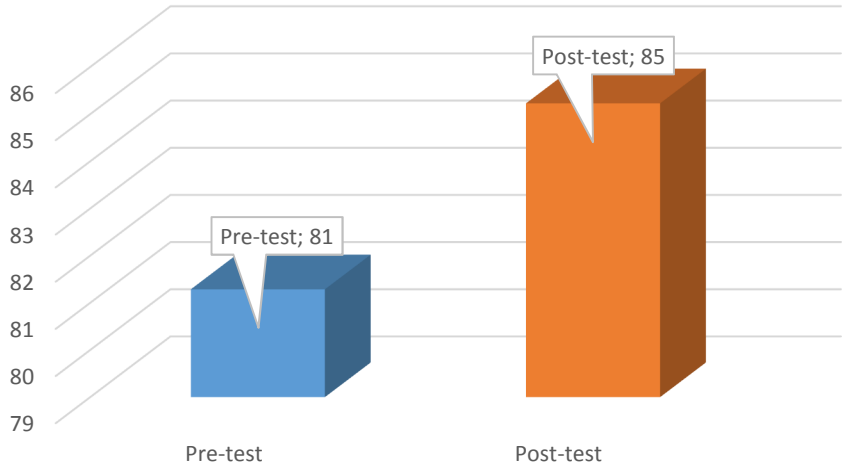
Figure 5. Post-test results



Source: The researcher

The comparative average test results from the pre-test, and the post-test can be seen in figure 7 below. In this chart, we can identify the improvement that the writing pieces had as a whole class. The average grade in the pre-test was eighty-one, while the post-test averaged on eighty-five points. This change in five points means an increase in the mean grade for the class of five percent.

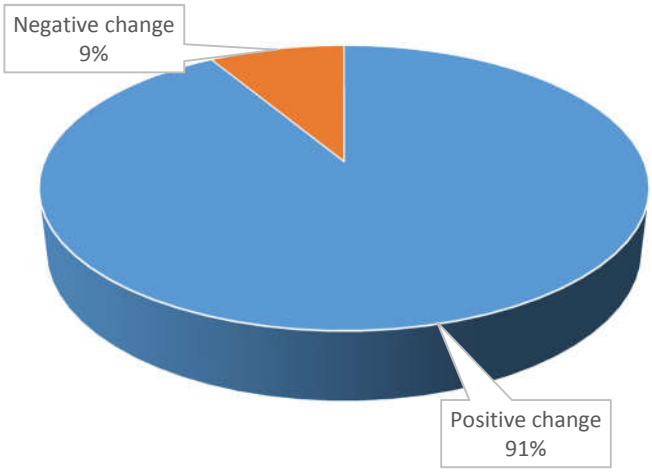
Figure 6. Grade inprovement



Source: The researcher

Finally, it is important to mention that not all the results were positive. There were students who despite their participation in the Facebook tutorials did not improve their grade, but they had a decline in their results. We can see this in figure 8. The positive change is, of course, the bulk, and seventy-four percent of the students improved their grades, but Twenty-six percent of the participants had an adverse change.

Figure 7. Grade changes



Source: The researcher

Afterward, the results of the pre and post-test were analyzed using the Paired T-test, as suggested by Creswell (2012), to have confirmation of the above, and as mentioned in the previous chapter, the results supported this assertion.

The results mentioned above are in accordance to what was presented in Ibrahim (2013). This researcher reported that after using the Facebook to practice writing skills, the participants of the study were obviously affected in a positive form by using the Facebook at the time of trying to improve their writing skills. Nolan (2011) also reports positive results on a similar study performed in Thailand, although the research was measuring both reading and writing skills at the same time.

A point of caution when reading these results is that due to the scope of this study there was not a deeper inquiry into the reasons why these variations in the grades of the students took place as such. Meaning that it is not one hundred percent certain that these positive results came as the sole consequence of the exposition of the participants to the sessions on the Facebook or was it by any other means possible. Therefore, it seems necessary to perform a future investigation in which a deeper quantitative analysis can be carried out on the correlation of the Facebook input and the errors or speech used in the participants' writing tasks.

Results from the interviews

During the interviews, there was a question that inquired the respondents whether or not they believed the use of the Facebook tutorials had been beneficial to them. In fact, a vast majority of the informants stated that the Facebook platform was very useful to them. Some of the respondents said that the Facebook allowed them not to worry about space or time as they do when they have to attend classes. "I don't have to worry about when or where I have access to the platform. I can be in my bedroom, or I can be at the Sweet and Coffee doing the homework. It is great because I can take advantage of my free time," said student 1.

Student 15 stated "Using the Facebook platform… it is a great idea. It is very convenient for me, hum, because, I can… I can have access to it every day when I check my wall, and… and I can activate the notifications on my page. This way, it is like a lot easier, because that way I know when the teacher sends a homework or I have to do some

tasks. I use it all day in my things, you know. I watch videos or read the news, so it is not a bad idea to use it with homework."

Some other participants also shared this notion of using Facebook as a platform to write in English. They also stated that they preferred to use the Facebook instead of the platform the university has for academic use. "The Sidweb, although, it is a good platform, does not have the appeal that Facebook does, it is more interesting, and it has different contents. It is not only about the university and the studies like Sidweb is," asserted student 17.

Another benefit from using the Facebook platform, respondents said, is the fact that the teacher can post videos, made by him or other people and they can go back anytime and look at them as much as necessary. Moreover, Facebook allowed students to keep in touch with each other, as they could communicate using their smartphones as well as their computers. It permitted them to talk with their peers about the homework and check what other students were asking and solved the questions they might have had.

They also practice their English all the time because one of the rules, of the project, was for them only to use English on Facebook. One of the participants said that she had enjoyed a lot using the Facebook platform for a class for two reasons. The first one was that she already had it and used Facebook every day and the other one was the fact that she was able to learn to write better. She added that she liked it when they had to go back and read their partners' work and post positive comments. Some of her peers even dared to give her writing advice, she recalls.

All of the above is in agreement with the results presented in several studies done previous to this one. In one of the said investigations, Kabilan, Ahmad, and Abidin (2010) concluded that their students felt Facebook could help them learn English. Respondents believed, the authors continue, they were writing better and stated they enhanced their communications skills and allowed them to practice their writing abilities more than usual.

Selwyn (2009) concluded that the Facebook platform is of great importance for communicating in the everyday lives of students who he covered in the study. However, the author continues, it was not only reserved for social interactions but also, according to the data, the Facebook wall functions as a means to exchange information on their academic concerns.

Finally, this researcher feels that Facebook is user-friendly, convenient and accessible to most students, not to say, everyone in the university. It is also palpable that the moment learners can see these benefits from using Facebook in the English language classroom, they will be inclined to take part of the Facebook tutorials. Additionally, the platform used in the project created an interactive communication among participants with no limit about the time frame of its usage. These results give the researcher confidence enough to say that the informants of this project did have a strong feeling about the benefits of using the Facebook platform as a tool for them to practice their writing skills.

Question 2.

The second inquiry proposed was whether the continuous use of the Facebook to practice writing skills permits students learners to increase their writing performance. This question has also had a positive result. This development was evidence with the pre-test and post-tests discussed in previous chapters. For the researcher to have a clear read on this issue, the decision to use a quantitative analysis seemed to be clear. That is where the paired t-test came into action.

Results from the Paired T-test

Researchers should use the Paired T-test, says McDonald (2009), when there are multiple pairs of observations. This procedure will assess whether or not the mean difference in the pairs is other than 0. It measures before and after observations of the same subjects (Shier, 2004). This test reviews the null hypothesis. If the mean difference between the paired observations is zero, then the means of the two groups has to be equal. If the results of the test are lower than 0,05, then the researcher can confidently say the null hypothesis can be rejected. The opposite result means the null hypothesis can be accepted. The table with the calculations and results of the Paired T-test can be seen on Annex 8.

Results from the interviews

Additionally, to the results above illustrated during the interviews when the participants responded to question one, the researcher poked a little further on their thoughts. It was then when the investigator asked the participants if they felt that the continuous use of the SNS Facebook to develop their writing tasks would have helped them. Although not all of the students were positive about it, a good percentage of them did make the connection and affirmed that it must have helped them too.

Let us go a little deeper into this assertion. The answers the respondents gave to that question suggest the Facebook platform did aid them to improve their English in general. Participants stated they felt they improved in different areas, such as grammar, vocabulary and the correct writing of sentences. One of the participants said he had learned much Grammar during the period of the project, while another student stated that the tutorials helped her to remember things she had studied before but had forgotten about them, and the tutorials refreshed her memory and, therefore, she believes her writing is now better.

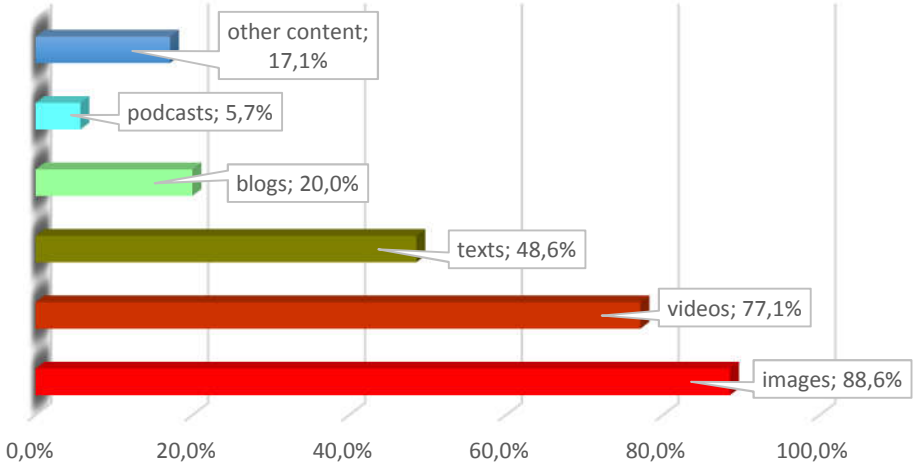
Student 17 said, "I learned much vocabulary with the tutorials. I now do what you told us. I mean. Remember? You said we should print everything you posted and keep it in a folder so we can use it in the future. I did that, and I also remember how to write sentences correctly. You know, subject, verb, and object. I will never forget that."

In summary, participants can recognize the benefits from using the Facebook for their English writing. Although, the majority of participants did not make a connection between their participation in the Facebook tutorials and their continuous practice in the platform with their improvement in writing. This assertion is backed by the results obtained by Shih (2011) who acknowledged that the use of Facebook as a blended learning tool helped the students' writing skills. This claim, the author says, is supported by the significant increase in scores when comparing the pre and post-test. Moreover, the study performed by Shukor and Noordin (2014) concludes that the performance of their students endured a raise after the use of the Facebook platform, especially, the authors deduced, the learning process was easier for their students when they used the comments section, of the platform, a lot.

Question 3

The third question of this research paper inquired about the types of input that participants deemed as most attractive or appealing. We obtained answers for this question from two sources. The first one came from the survey as this was asked at the beginning of the term with the idea of maintaining a steady flow of input to which students could feel attracted. Figure 8 shows participants preferences to the types of information. The information from this question of the survey has very helpful for the researcher regarding the kind of content that was uploaded to the platform.

Figure 8. Input types



Source: The researcher

Respondents first identified images as their number one choice of input, followed closely by video sources and in third place texts. This information was as well corroborated during the round sessions of interviews in which participants confirmed that they enjoyed more and felt they learned and retained the information better every time they saw the tutorials with pictures to illustrate the different concepts or points.

Question 4

The final research question addressed the emotional issue by asking if learners regard the use of the Facebook platform as motivational for their writing tasks. During the

interviews, students responded about their general experience on Facebook, some of them described it as a positive experience.

One participant, for example, commented that he enjoyed writing in the Facebook sessions because he believed it was fun discussing what other classmates had posted. Another respondent, student 1 said, "Using the Facebook is much fun, and it is interesting too. If there is something from the class I did not understand, I feel comfortable posting a question on the Facebook. Sometimes a partner responded, but I always knew you would clear my doubts."

Likewise, another interviewee, student 23 commented, "using the Facebook is not new or difficult and it makes me feel more comfortable than using the university's platform. Although I was not a very active writer because I didn't have a lot of free time, I liked coming to the platform and see what everybody else was writing, and I used that as help for my writing."

Still, another participant said that it was fine to do the writing on the Facebook because she could ask her friends for help and they could have their interaction in English, which she says made her improve her writing skills. She also commented she learned a lot of grammar and how to write her sentences in the correct form. "When I saw your comments, very good or great work," says student 3, " it made me feel good about myself because I was doing things correctly."

In brief using the Facebook platform to practice their writing skills proved a pleasant experience for students. Moreover, the platform functioned as Lantlof and Thorne (2015) state as a mediation tool between the being, also known as the student, and the artifacts in the environment that will permit them to understand the cognitive activities. This platform allowed informants to express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas in a written form more freely. The fact that they were using a tool they use every day for their personal affairs made it easier for them to accept the work. Seeing their peers' and teacher's comments made them feel confident about the things they were posting on the platform. Participants felt comfortable when they were writing their ideas on Facebook.

A theme that was evidently familiar across the student interviews was the fact that they liked using the platform as a tool for practicing their writing abilities on account of its usefulness, being fun and exciting. Their use of Facebook was an advantageous channel to

supply additional time for students to be more aware of how they were using their English in the written form.

In addition to the above explained, learners could express themselves with a lot less anxiety in the Facebook than in the classroom environment. This setting was favorable for students to gain confidence in their writing abilities as they could lower their affective filter by reducing their writing anxiety as it is addressed by Krashe (1985). As a result, their feeling of self-confidence was raised, and their written work performance also experience a beneficial development.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Conclusions

This study aimed to understand how intermediate level, according to CEFR standards, learners felt about the usefulness of using a social networking platform such as Facebook for their practicing of writing skills. The project took place in a state polytechnic university of the city of Guayaquil.

Considering the increasing importance of the role that social media is having in the daily lives of college students in the digital era (Selwin, 2009), it becomes necessary to pay attention to the different ways teachers can use SNS. Especially Facebook to enhance their traditional classrooms and include a bit of technology in them. Additionally to this assertion, Warschauer (2007) ponders on the concerns of whether the use of SNS in the English classroom is beneficial or not, especially when used in writing classes.

Keeping these two points in mind, the researcher devised this project looking at EFL students and how their use of the Facebook platform in the context of the practice of writing skills would benefit participants. Rose (2014) conveys that the perceptions students have about their use of the SNS will vary without considering how well the implementation of the Facebook in the English class occurs. In the case of this study, participants have had, in a vast majority, previous experiences using the platform for their private affairs. This previous experience eased the inclusion of Facebook in the practice of writing skills.

The results discussed in the preceding chapter show that there were effective developments when students used Facebook to practice their writing skills. This development was evident not only regarding their writing mechanics, such as punctuation, spelling or capitalization of words but also of the correct use of sentence structures. The results of the present research work have answered the central research question positively as participants broadly agreed they felt an improvement in their writing skills, which confirms the results obtained by Ibrahaim (2013); Kamnoetsin (2014); Rose (2014). Participants in the study concurred that one of the benefits they derived from the Facebook platform is they received much information promptly, and they enriched their knowledge by seeing each other's pieces of writing permitting them to better their writing tasks as well. Hence, the platform served as an active channel for expediting both the practicing and as a result the learning process of writing more competently.

Recommendations

Basing on the results of this study the researcher can make the following recommendations for action:

1) The university academic coordinator should ensure that all teachers have a basic knowledge of computer skills, also known as computer literacy in the field of social media. The information from this study as well as other studies ought to be available to practitioners so that they can confidently start using SNS in their classrooms as a support tool. Following on this thought, it is this researcher's opinion that the academic coordinator of the Language Department organizes workshops and training sessions in which the effects of using Facebook to improve students' writing skills become the main issue to discuss and analyze. Additionally, it is of great importance that teachers become aware that it is necessary to integrate technology into their classrooms as it can make the learning process easier and more enjoyable for students. When teachers understand how useful this tool is in the language teaching-learning process, they will be more motivated to make use of the Facebook for out of class practice.

2) It is evident that the Facebook will never replace the traditional face-to-face language class. However, including the utilization of this SNS in the English classes may provide a level of stress-free learning environment. The results obtained in this research work indicate that Facebook can create a pleasant experience for students when practicing their writing skills, as it can create a motivating and enjoyable climate. If we consider the level of influence that Facebook has on young adults nowadays, we can infer how beneficial it could be for students while relying on how engaging it can be. Moreover, Facebook could be well used as an additional tool in the classroom. As a place where teacher and learners can convene to share new, support material, exchange doubts and receive feedback on assignments. Since Facebook has occupied a significant part of our students' lives, it is only logical that using this tool pedagogically could represent an attractive benefit in the way learners can practice the language away from the classroom, (Kalamara, 20015).

3) When using Facebook as a tool for aiding the teaching-learning process, it is essential that teachers keep in mind the following:

a) It is necessary to pay more attention, at the beginning stages of the implementation, to the types of communication that learners have instead of focusing more on the grammar. However, after some time of usage, more attention to the making mistakes in grammar and vocabulary is necessary so that the efficacy of using the Facebook takes place. Continuing on this same page, teachers should always provide feedback to the students involved with the platform and not be shy about pointing out the mistakes they are making as learners value these corrections as learning moments. This feedback needs to be immediate and personalized. Every student has their particular concerns and problems when writing, and treatment of errors needs to be specific for each learner. Feedback should include praise, criticism, and suggestion with the latter two understated, say Hayland and Hayland (2006).
b) The work to be done is not simple as there is a need for planning what contents the Facebook platform is going to have as well as the extra activities to practice what has been uploaded. Moreover, teachers who are interested in using Facebook in their classes, ought to be aware that they need to commit to going continuously to the platform and post the required information, monitor their students' interactions, and engage in immediate feedback. All of the above needs to be done to ensure that learners obtain the most profit out of using Facebook for their classes.
c) On the other hand, for a project such as the one depicted in this research to be successful, it is also fundamental that there is an inclusion of learning objectives and an integration of the platform with the curriculum to be taught. It is this researcher's belief that with these two core issues resolved, the Facebook platform can act as the paved road for students to practice English skills, such as writing, outside the classroom.

Suggestions for further research

A new inquiry can take place but this time on teachers so that we can understand how they would feel. It would be interesting to look at how teachers would respond to the inclusion of a Facebook platform in their teaching of writing. Knowing whether they would

have a positive or negative attitude towards using SNS in their English language classrooms could aim at a potential wider use of the platform in the English class. It would be interesting to look at how teachers react when they have to take on this tool as well as obtaining their input on how to make the platform work better for students.

Since the present study was done focusing only on the students of one particular university in the city of Guayaquil, it lacks on population validity. Population validity is a subset of external validity and explains how well the sample used can be extrapolated to a population (Breland, 1978). In the case of this study since the sample was restricted to only one class in the university. Therefore, it is a good idea that another study can try to encompass a larger sample, probably utilizing students from three or more higher education institutions in the city of Guayaquil. That way this new study could be proven for a generalization of the results.

Also, another investigation could be carried out with a quantitative tradition in mind, in which the researcher focuses on the input provided and the types of errors that are committed during the intervention stage, by the participants. In this paper, the analyst could look at the correlations that might exist between these two variables as well as the way the treatment of such errors could influence participants' post-tests results.

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Annexes

Annex 1: ESL Composition Profile

STUDENT: **DATE:**

LEVEL	CRITERIA
CONTENT	
30-27	**EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD:** knowledgeable • substantive • thorough development of thesis • relevant to assigned topic
26-22	**GOOD TO AVERAGE:** some knowledge of subject • adequate range • limited development of thesis • mostly relevant to topic, but lacks detail
21-17	**FAIR TO POOR:** limited knowledge of subject • little substance • inadequate development of topic
16-13	**VERY POOR:** does not show knowledge of subject • non-substantive • not pertinent • OR not enough to evaluate
ORGANIZATION	
20-18	**EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD:** fluent expression • ideas clearly stated/supported • succinct • well-organized • logical sequencing • cohesive
17-14	**GOOD TO AVERAGE:** somewhat choppy • loosely organized but main ideas stand out • limited support • logical but incomplete sequencing
13-10	**FAIR TO POOR:** non-fluent • ideas confused or disconnected • lacks logical sequencing and development
9-7	**VERY POOR:** does not communicate • no organization • OR not enough to evaluate
VOCABULARY	
20-18	**EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD:** sophisticated range • effective word/idiom choice and usage • word form mastery • appropriate register
17-14	**GOOD TO AVERAGE:** adequate range • occasional errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage but meaning not obscured
13-10	**FAIR TO POOR:** limited range • frequent errors of word/idiom form, choice • usage • meaning confused or obscured
9-7	**VERY POOR:** essentially translation • little knowledge of English vocabulary • idioms • word form • OR not enough to evaluate
LANGUAGE USE	
25-22	**EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD:** effective complex constructions • few errors of agreement• tense • number • word order/function • articles • pronouns• prepositions
21-18	**GOOD TO AVERAGE:** effective but simple constructions • minor problems in complex constructions • several errors of agreement •tense • number • word order/function • articles • pronouns • prepositions but meaning seldom obscured
17-11	**FAIR TO POOR:** major problems in simple/complex constructions • frequent errors of negation • agreement • tense • number • word order/function • articles •pronouns • prepositions and/or fragments • run-ons • deletions • meaning confused or obscured
5-10	**VERY POOR:** virtually no mastery of sentence construction rules • dominated by errors • does not communicate • OR not enough to evaluate

MECHANICS

5 **EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD:** demonstrates mastery of conventions • few errors of spelling • punctuation • capitalization • paragraphing

4 **GOOD TO AVERAGE:** occasional errors of spelling • punctuation •capitalization • paragraphing but meaning not obscured

3 **FAIR TO POOR:** frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing • poor handwriting • meaning confused or obscured

2 **VERY POOR:** no mastery of conventions • dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing • handwriting illegible • OR not enough to evaluate

Total Score **Reader** **Comments**

Annex 2: Letter requesting authorization for intervention

Guayaquil, Julio 18 de 2016

[redacted],
Academic Coordinator
[redacted]

Dear [redacted]:

I would like to request your authorization to perform an academic intervention with the students from the Advanced B, course 920.

These students will be part of the study entitled **"PERCEPTIONS THAT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AT AN INTERMEDIATE LEVEL (CEFR) HAVE WHEN USING FACEBOOK TO PRACTICE THEIR WRITING SKILLS",** this project is done in order to fulfill in part with the requirements for graduation of the Master's degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

I will be looking forward to a positive reply.

Sincerely,

Félix David Estrella Ibarra

Annex 3: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Please read and complete this form carefully. If you are willing to participate in this study, sign it at the end of the form. If you do not understand something and would like more information, please ask.

I …… hereby voluntarily consent to participate in the study "Perceptions that university students at an intermediate level have when using Facebook to practice their writing skills." I have read and understood the following:

- The purpose of the study is to understand how you feel about using the Social Networking Site Facebook to practice writing skills at this institution. You will be asked to participate by writing different texts in the Facebook outside the classroom at your own time and your pace.
- This study will be carried out for the period of a whole academic semester.
- Classes will be observed and recorded and you do not have to modify your behavior in any way.
- You will be asked to participate in surveys and/or interviews.
- Your anonymity will be assured through the use of a pseudonym in the research report and anytime the data that results from this study is published your real name shall not be used in the text.
- All the information hereby collected will be confidential and it will only be used for research purposes.
- No information of this study shall be passed on to a third party such as another institution.
- All data that result from this study will be kept for three years and then will be destroyed.
- Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and your participation will not have any effect on the grades you receive in any class.
- You may withdraw from the study at any time with no negative repercussions and request the destruction of all data related to you.
- There are no reasonable foreseeable (or expected) risks that might come to you as a result of your participation in the study.
- You will receive neither benefit nor discomfort from your participation in the study.
- You will receive a copy of this form.

If you have any questions you can contact David Estrella by telephone at 2269-145, by e-mail at destrell@espol.edu.ec or in person at the offices of CELEX in the Gustavo Galindo Campus of the Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral (ESPOL).

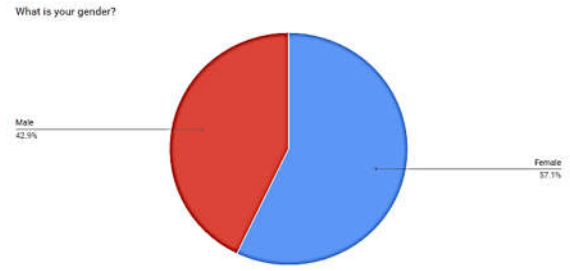
Participant's Name: _____

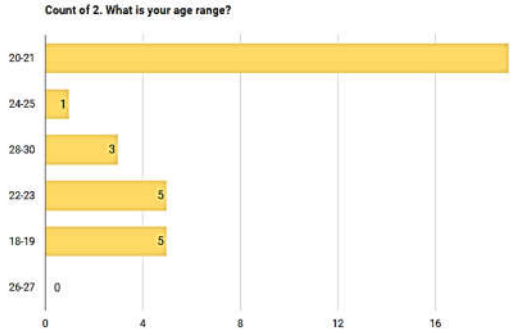
Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

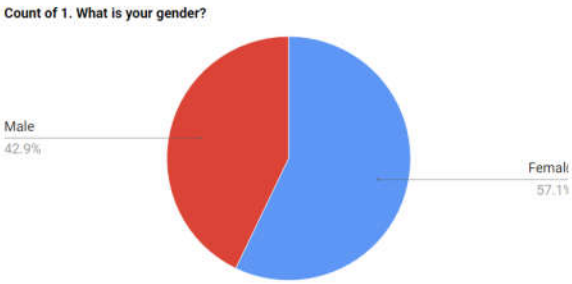
Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

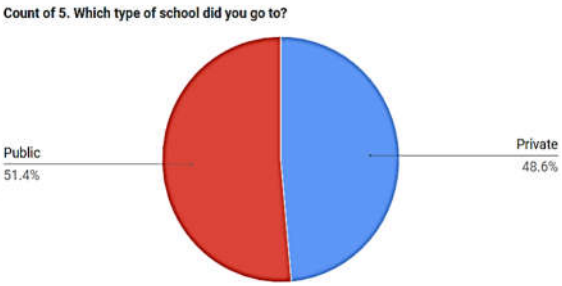
David Estrella Ibarra

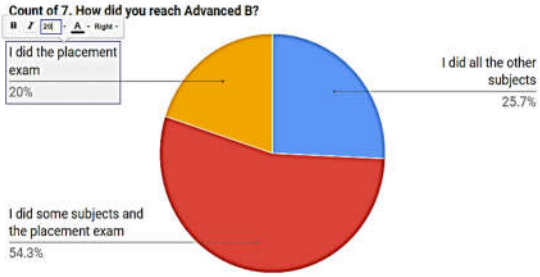
Annex 4: Results from student survey.

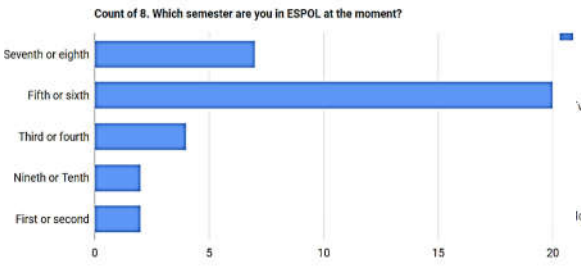


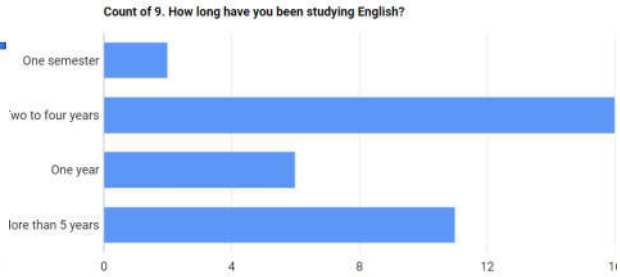


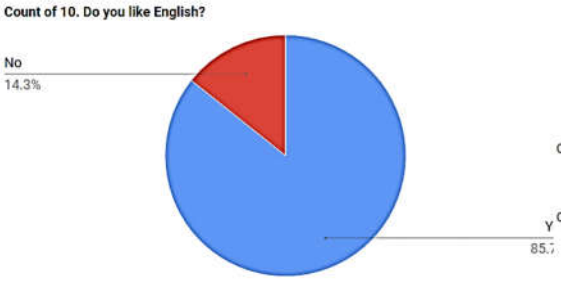


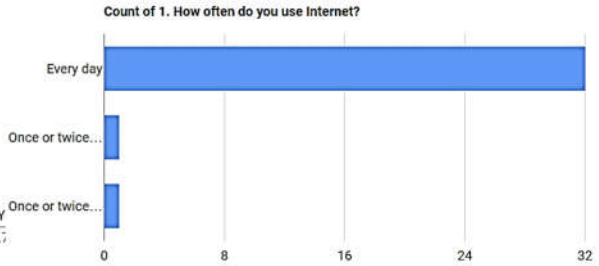


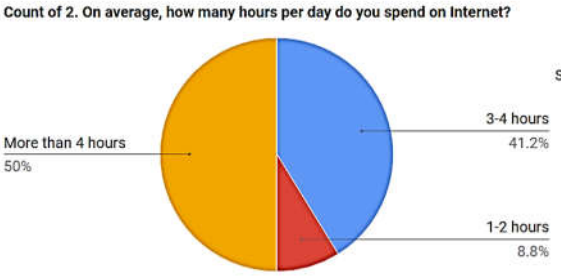


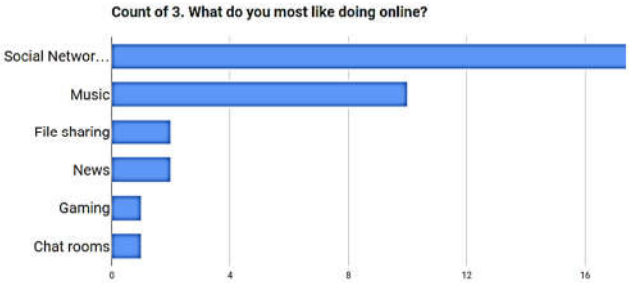


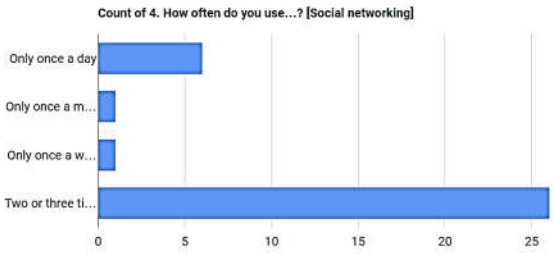


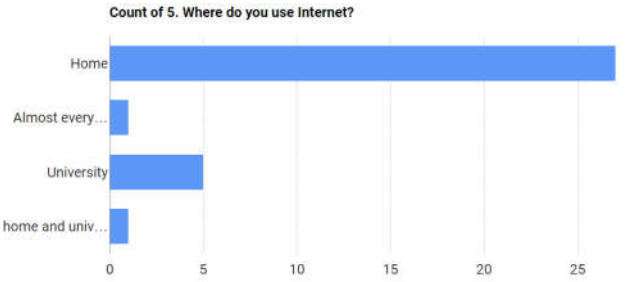

Count of 10. Do you like English?
No
14.3%
Y
85.7

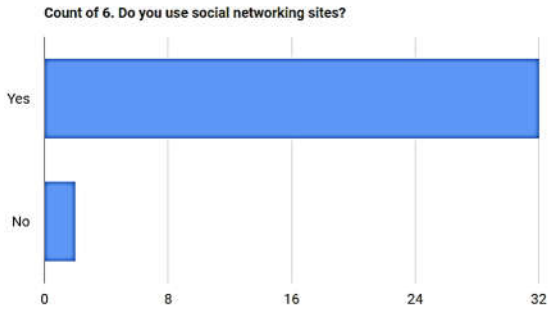

Count of 1. How often do you use Internet?
Every day
Once or twice...
Once or twice...
0
8
16
24
32

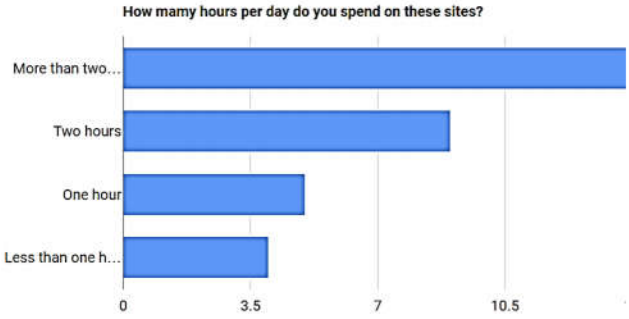

Count of 2. On average, how many hours per day do you spend on Internet?
More than 4 hours
50%
3-4 hours
41.2%
1-2 hours
8.8%

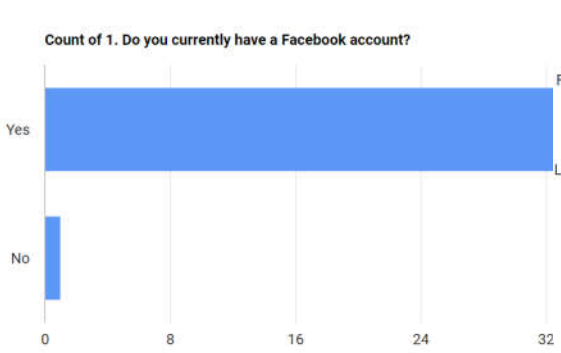

Count of 3. What do you most like doing online?
Social Networ...
Music
File sharing
News
Gaming
Chat rooms
0
4
8
12
16

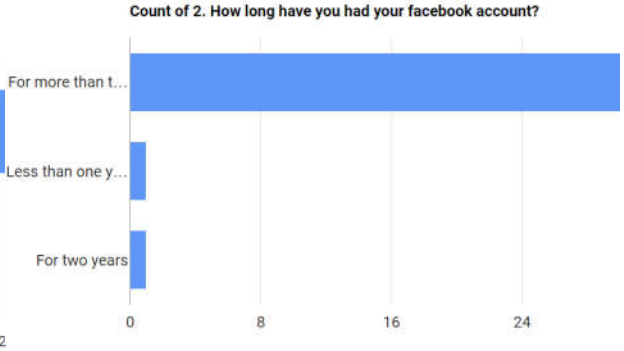

Count of 4. How often do you use...? [Social networking]
Only once a day
Only once a m...
Only once a w...
Two or three ti...
0
5
10
15
20
25

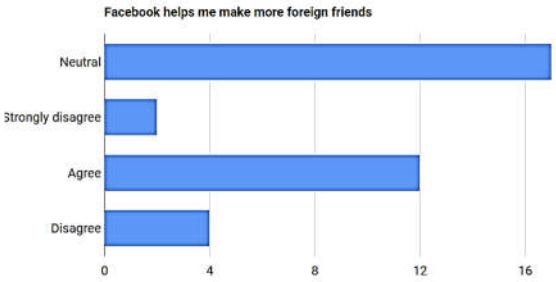

Count of 5. Where do you use Internet?
Home
Almost every...
University
home and univ...
0
5
10
15
20
25

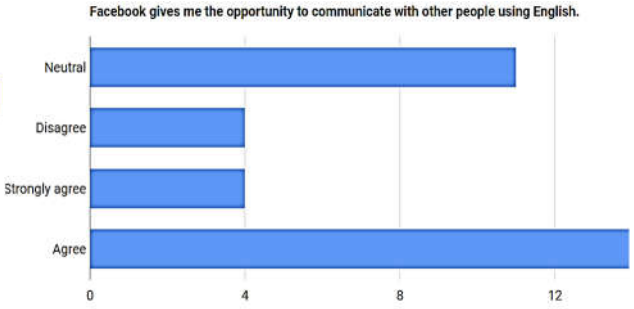

Count of 6. Do you use social networking sites?
Yes
No
0
8
16
24
32

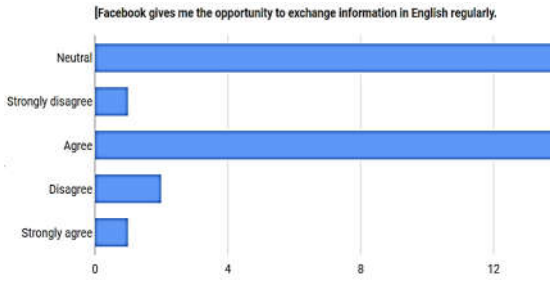

How mamy hours per day do you spend on these sites?
More than two...
Two hours
One hour
Less than one h...
0
3.5
7
10.5

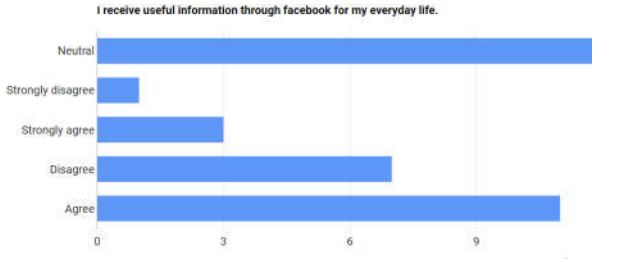

Count of 1. Do you currently have a Facebook account?
Yes
No
0
8
16
24
32

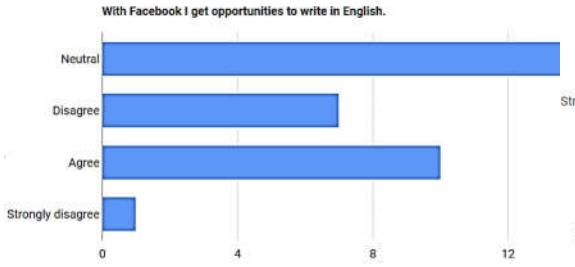

Count of 2. How long have you had your facebook account?
For more than t...
Less than one y...
For two years
0
8
16
24

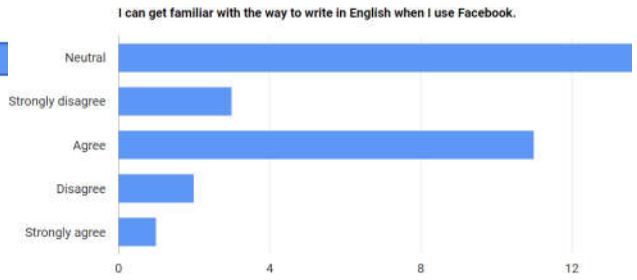

Facebook helps me make more foreign friends
Neutral
Strongly disagree
Agree
Disagree
0
4
8
12
16

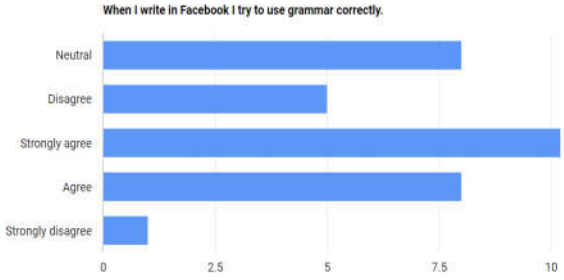

Facebook gives me the opportunity to communicate with other people using English.
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly agree
Agree
0
4
8
12

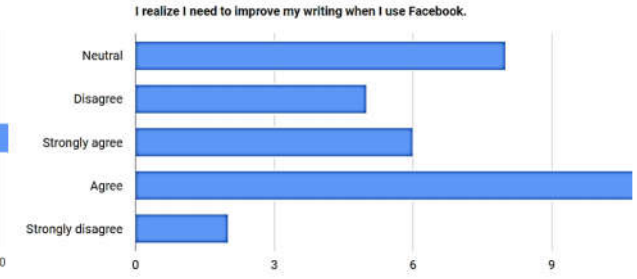

Facebook gives me the opportunity to exchange information in English regularly.
Neutral
Strongly disagree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly agree
0
4
8
12

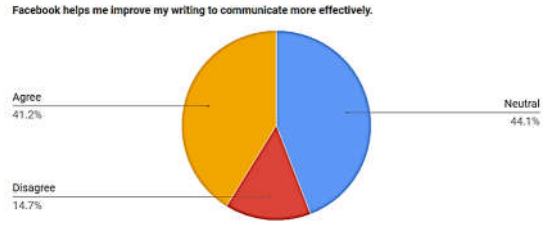

I receive useful information through facebook for my everyday life.
Neutral
Strongly disagree
Strongly agree
Disagree
Agree
0
3
6
9

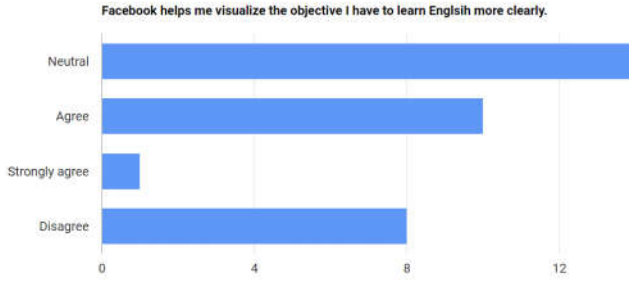

With Facebook I get opportunities to write in English.
Neutral
Disagree
Agree
Strongly disagree
0
4
8
12

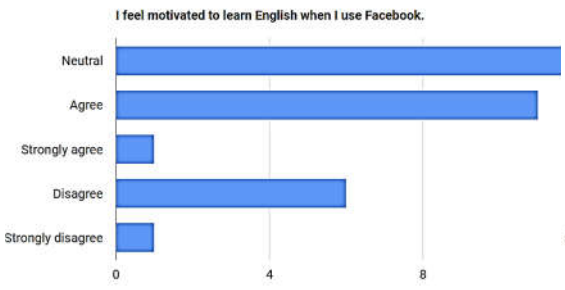

I can get familiar with the way to write in English when I use Facebook.
Neutral
Strongly disagree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly agree
0
4
8
12

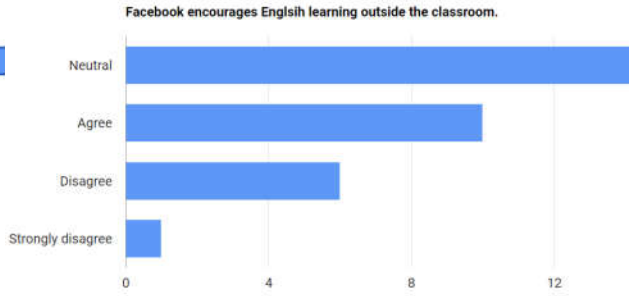

When I write in Facebook I try to use grammar correctly.
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly agree
Agree
Strongly disagree
0
2.5
5
7.5
10


I realize I need to improve my writing when I use Facebook.
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly agree
Agree
Strongly disagree
0
3
6
9

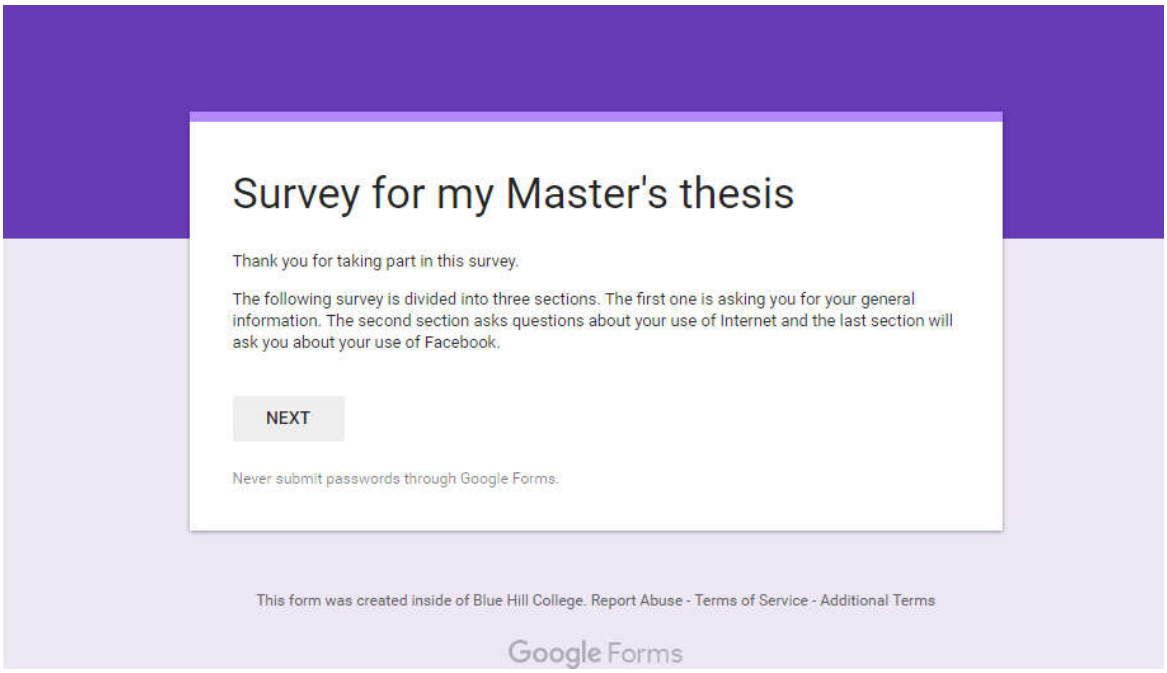

Facebook helps me improve my writing to communicate more effectively.
Agree
41.2%
Neutral
44.1%
Disagree
14.7%


Facebook helps me visualize the objective I have to learn Englsih more clearly.
Neutral
Agree
Strongly agree
Disagree
0
4
8
12


I feel motivated to learn English when I use Facebook.
Neutral
Agree
Strongly agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
0
4
8


Facebook encourages Englsih learning outside the classroom.
Neutral
Agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
0
4
8
12

Annex 5: On-line survey on Google Docs



Survey for my Master's thesis

Thank you for taking part in this survey.

The following survey is divided into three sections. The first one is asking you for your general information. The second section asks questions about your use of Internet and the last section will ask you about your use of Facebook.

NEXT

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Google Forms

Demographics

1. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

2. What is your age range?

- 18-19
- 20-21
- 22-23
- 24-25
- 26-27
- 28-30

3. Are you originally from Guayaquil?

- Yes
- No

4. If you are not from Guayaquil, which province do you come from?

- a. El Oro
- b. Esmeraldas
- c. Manabí
- d. Los Ríos
- e. Chimborazo
- f. Pichincha
- g. Azuay
- Other:

5. Which type of school did you go to?

- Public
- Private

6. Where did you first started studying English?

- In primary school
- In high school
- In University

7. How did you reach Advanced B?

- I did all the other subjects
- I did the placement exam
- I did some subjects and the placement exam

8. Which semester are you in ESPOL at the moment?

- First or second
- Third or fourth
- Fifth or sixth
- Seventh or eighth
- Nineth or Tenth

9. How long have you been studying English?

- One semester
- One year
- Two to four years
- More than 5 years

10. Do you like English?

- Yes
- No

BACK NEXT

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Use of Internet

1. How often do you use Internet?

- Every day
- Once or twice a week
- Once or twice a month

2. On average, how many hours per day do you spend on Internet?

- 1-2 hours
- 3-4 hours
- More than 4 hours

3. What do you most like doing online?

- Chat rooms
- Blogs
- Music
- News
- File sharing
- Gaming
- Shopping
- Social Networking (like Facebook)

4. How often do you use…?

	Two or three times in a day	Only once a day	Only once a week	Only once a month
Chat rooms	○	○	○	○
Blogs	○	○	○	○
Music	○	○	○	○
News	○	○	○	○
File sharing	○	○	○	○
Gaming	○	○	○	○
Shopping	○	○	○	○
Social networking	○	○	○	○

5. Where do you use Internet?

- Home
- University
- Cafeteria
- Cyber café
- Friends' houses
- Other: _____

6. Do you use social networking sites?

- Yes
- No

7. If your answer to question 6 is yes, how mamy hours per day do you spend on these sites?

- Less than one hour
- One hour
- Two hours
- More than two hours

8. If your answer to question 6 is yes, which social networking sites do you use? Check as many as apply.

- [ ] Facebook
- [ ] YouTube
- [ ] Twitter
- [ ] LinkedIn
- [ ] Pinterest
- [ ] Google+
- [ ] Tumblr
- [ ] Instagram
- [ ] Reddit
- [ ] Flickr

BACK NEXT

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Use of Facebook

1. Do you currently have a Facebook account?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

2. How long have you had your facebook account?

- ○ Less than one year
- ○ For a year
- ○ For two years
- ○ For three years
- ○ For more than three years

3. What posts do you think are more interesting? Check all that apply.

- [ ] Images
- [ ] Texts
- [ ] Videos
- [ ] Other people's content
- [ ] Blog posts
- [ ] Podcasts

4. Which of the following levels of agreement best describe what you think about the stements below?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Facebook helps me make more foreign friends	○	○	○	○	○
Facebook gives me the opportunity to communicate with other people using English.	○	○	○	○	○
Facebook gives me the opportunity to exchange information in English regularly.	○	○	○	○	○
I receive useful information through facebook for my everyday life.	○	○	○	○	○
With Facebook I get opportunities to write in English.	○	○	○	○	○
I can get familiar with the way to write in English when I use Facebook.	○	○	○	○	○
When I write in Facebook I try to use grammar correctly.	○	○	○	○	○
I realize I need to improve my writing when I use Facebook.	○	○	○	○	○
Facebook helps me improve my writing to communicate more effectively.	○	○	○	○	○
Facebook makes me understand the benefit of learning Englsih to use it in real life situations.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel motivated to learn English when I use Facebook.	○	○	○	○	○
Facebook encourages Englsih learning outside the classroom.	○	○	○	○	○
Facebook helps me visualize the objective I have to learn Englsih more clearly.	○	○	○	○	○

BACK NEXT

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Survey for my Master's thesis

Thank you for your cooperation

BACK SUBMIT

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Google Forms

Annex 6: The Facebook page

Annex 7: Survey questions.

Section One: Demographics

1. **What is your gender?**
    - **a.** Male
    - **b.** Female
2. **What is your age range?**
    a. 18-19
    b. 20-21
    c. 22-23
    d. 24-25
    e. 26-27
    f. 28-30
3. **Are you originally from Guayaquil?**
    a. Yes
    b. No
4. **If you are not from Guayaquil, which province do you come from?**
    a. El Oro
    b. Esmeraldas
    c. Manabí
    d. Los Ríos
    e. Chimborazo
    f. Pichincha
    g. Azuay
    h. Other
5. **Which type of school did you go to?**
    a. Public
    b. Private
6. **Where did you first started studying English?**
    a. In primary school
    b. In secondary school
    c. In the University
7. **How did you reach Advanced B?**
    a. I did all the other subjects
    b. I did the placement exam
    c. I did some subjects and the placement exam
8. **Which semester are you in ESPOL at the moment?**
    a. First
    b. Second
    c. Third
    d. Fourth
    e. Fifth
    f. Sixth

g. Seventh
h. Eighth
i. Ninth
j. Tenth

9. How long have you been studying English?

a. 1 semester
b. 1 year
c. 2 to 4 years
d. More than 5 years

10. Do you like English?

a. Yes
b. No

Section Two: Use of Internet

1. How often do you use the Internet?

a. Everyday b. Once or twice a week c. Once or twice a month

2. On average, how many hours per day do you spend on the Internet?

a. 1-2 hours b. 2-3 hours c. 3-4 hours d. More than 4 hours

3. What do you most like doing online?

a. Chat rooms b. Blogs c. Music d. News
e. Gaming f. File sharing g. Shopping h. Social networking (Facebook)

4. How often do you use…?

	Everyday	More than once a day	Once a week	Once a month	Less than once a month
Chat rooms					
Blogs					
Music					
News					
Gaming					
File sharing					
Shopping					

5. Where do you use the Internet?

a. Home b. School c. Cafeteria
d. Cyber café e. Friend's house f. Others

6. Do you use social networking sites?

a. Yes
b. No

7. If your answer to question 6 is yes, how many hours per day do you spend on these sites?

a. Less than one hour
b. One hour

c. Two hours
d. More than two hours

8. **If your answer to question 6 is yes, which social networking sites do you use? Check as many as apply.**
    a. Facebook
    b. YouTube
    c. Twitter
    d. LinkedIn
    e. Pinterest
    f. Google+
    g. Tumblr
    h. Instagram
    i. Reddit
    j. Flickr

Section Three: Use of Facebook

Check the box that best indicates your level of agreement with the statement.

1. Do you currently have a Facebook account?
    a. Yes
    b. No
2. How long have you had your Facebook account?
    a. Less than one year
    b. For a year
    c. For two years
    d. For three years
    e. For more than three years
3. What posts do you think are more interesting? Check all that apply.
    a. Images
    b. Texts
    c. Videos
    d. Other people's content
    e. Blog posts
    f. Podcasts
4. Which of the following levels of agreement best describe what you think about the statements below?
   Strongly disagree= 1; Disagree=2; Medium=3; Agree= 4; strongly agree= 5
    a. Facebook helps me make more foreign friends
    b. Facebook give me the opportunity to communicate with other people using English.
    c. Facebook gives me the opportunity to exchange information in English regularly.
    d. I receive useful information through Facebook for my everyday life.

e. With Facebook I get opportunities to write in English.
f. I can get familiar with the way to write in English when I use Facebook.
g. When I write in Facebook I try to use grammar correctly.
h. I realize I need to improve my writing when I use Facebook.
i. Facebook helps me improve my writing to communicate more effectively.
j. Facebook makes me understand the benefit of learning Englsih to use it in real life situations.
k. I feel motivated to learn English when I use Facebook.
l. Facebook encourages Englsih learning outside the classroom.
m. Facebook helps me visualize the objective I have to learn Englsih more clearly.

Annex 8: Calculations and results from T-test

Calculations

Mean of x_1	81
Mean of x_2	86
$\Sigma(x_12)$	-165
Mean of Square of diff	2585
Square of Mean of diff	27225
$(\Sigma x_2)2$	9060100
Count x_1	35
Count x_2	35
Sum of Squares for x_1	-942,857143
Sum of Squares for x_2	-256275
n-1	34
Combined Standard Error	2,323232323
T- test statistics	3,82554344
Degree of Freedom	34
One- tail T test	0,000266154
Two tail T test	0,000532308
SD x_1	9,918999678
SD x_2	8,516420126
Final P value	0,000532308
Critical t value - Two tail test	2,032244509
Critical t value - One tail test	1,690924255

Results from T-Test

X_1 - Statistics	
N_1	35
Mean of x_1	81,2857
Std Dev of x_1	9,919

X_2 - Statistics	
N_2	35
Mean of x_2	86
Std Dev of x_2	8,5164201

Confidence level	0,95
Degree of freedom	34
Confidence Interval	29,27862
t statistics	3,825543
Mean difference	34

Test difference for μ1 -μ2	0

t

38,72137613

Choose Hypothesis

○ One tailed test ◉ Two tailed test

Two tailed P- value = 0,0005

Two tailed critical t- value = 2,0322

Since P-value is less than 0,05 we have sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis at 5% level of significance

Annex 9: Schedule of topics for the intervention

Date	Topic	Exercise student did
July 4th	Introduction of the study to the class and giving out informed consent forms (Spanish version).	
July 6th	Pre-test	
July 11th	How to write a sentence. Using the correct format: Sub + Verb + Ob	• Write three sentences using the correct format.
July 13th	Using capital letters	• Write three sentences using the correct capitalization. • Correct the five sentences given.
July 18th	Using a, an, or one	• Fill in the gaps with the correct form (three sentences).
July 20th	Selecting the topic for a paragraph.	• Answer questions to choose a topic.
July 25th	Holiday	
July 27th	Narrative verb forms.	• Write a short paragraph using narrative verb forms.
August 1st	The process of writing	• Choose the correct forms (three sentences)
August 3rd	Linking words – compare and contrast words	• Write three sentences using the linking words provided
August 8th	Linking words – sequence words	• Write three sentences using the linking words provided
August 10th	Linking words – alike words	• Write three sentences using the linking words provided
August 15th	Adjective clauses	• Write three sentences using adjective clauses
August 17th	Post-test	
August 22nd	Interviews round one	
August 24th	Interviews round two	

Annex 10: Pre and Post-test

Preliminary English Test: Writing Part 3 Practice Test

Question 7-8

Write an answer to one of the questions (7 or 8) in this part.

Name: _____ Date:_____

This is part of a letter you receive from an English friend.

For my homework project, I have to write about a special day that people celebrate in your country. Which special day should I write about? What information should I include?

Now write a letter, giving your friend some advice. Write about 100 words.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

http://www.flo-joe.co.uk/preliminaryenglish/writing/pet_writing_practice_test_part_3.htm