

PROMOTING AUTONOMY THROUGH REFLECTION: EXPLORING THE LEVELS

PROMOTING AUTONOMY THROUGH REFLECTION ACTIVITIES: EXPLORING THE
LEVELS

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Facultad de Humanidades – Departamento de Lenguas

Master in Foreign Languages Teaching

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Abstract

This qualitative explanatory case study aimed at describing the role that reflection activities might play on the exercise of the levels of control of autonomy when creating diverse types of texts following a process writing approach. Besides, this study goaled at describing the ways in which A2 learners at a private institution in Bogota exercise control over learning management, cognitive processes, and content while participating in reflection activities. The need for the development of this study was related to the importance of tackling the different levels of control of autonomy, since the institution mainly focused on the control over learning management. The study was developed with five adult students situated in the courses to achieve the B1 level. Data was collected through questionnaires, students' artifacts, and students' reflective journals. The results of the study revealed that reflection played a significant role in the exercise of the three levels of autonomy; through the implementation learners developed a more critical overview of their learning and writing processes. Therefore, participants became more involved in the different aspects of learning, which made them politically involved in the educational context. The study suggests it is important to encourage a change in the traditional paradigm and power relations within the classroom, since promoting pedagogical encounters that have a more autonomy and reflection-oriented perspective may contribute to the education of integral human beings and the creation of significant learning experiences.

Key words: Autonomy in language learning, levels of control of autonomy, reflection in learning, process writing.


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Resumen

La presente investigación cualitativa de estudio de caso buscó describir el rol que actividades de reflexión podría tener en el ejercicio del control de los niveles de autonomía al crear diferentes tipos de textos teniendo un enfoque procesual de escritura. Además, tuvo como propósito describir la forma como los estudiantes del nivel A2 en una institución privada de enseñanza del inglés ejercían control sobre la administración del aprendizaje, los procesos cognitivos y el contenido, mientras participaban en actividades de reflexión. La necesidad de desarrollar este estudio está relacionada con la importancia de alcanzar el desarrollo de los diferentes niveles de control de la autonomía, ya que en la institución se hace énfasis en el nivel de control sobre la administración del aprendizaje. El estudio fue desarrollado con la participación de cinco estudiantes adultos quienes tomaban en su momento los cursos para alcanzar el nivel de B1. La información fue recolectada a través de cuestionarios, diarios de reflexión del estudiante y los artefactos producidos por los estudiantes. El análisis mostró que las actividades de reflexión jugaron un papel significativo en el control de los niveles de autonomía; a través de la implementación, los estudiantes desarrollaron una visión más objetiva y crítica de los procesos de escritura y aprendizaje, por lo cual, los participantes lograron involucrarse más en diferentes aspectos del aprendizaje, lo que hizo que participaran de una forma más políticamente activa en el contexto educativo. El desarrollo del estudio sugiere la importancia de promover un cambio en el paradigma tradicional de las prácticas de enseñanza aprendizaje y en las relaciones de poder dentro del salón, debido a que motivar encuentros pedagógicos que cuenten con una perspectiva más orientada al desarrollo de la autonomía y la reflexión puede contribuir en la formación de seres humanos integrales y en la creación de experiencias de aprendizaje significativas.

Palabras clave: Autonomía en el aprendizaje de una lengua, niveles de control de autonomía, reflexión en el aprendizaje, escritura procesual.

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2. Descripción
<p>Tesis de Maestría en Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras que presenta una investigación caso de estudio de tipo cualitativo desarrollado en el programa de inglés para adultos del Centro Colombo Americano en Bogotá. La investigación busca describir el papel de las actividades de reflexión en el ejercicio de los niveles de control de autonomía cuando se crean textos de diversos tipos siguiendo un enfoque de escritura procesual. En este sentido, la investigación pretende analizar en detalle las formas en las que los cinco participantes del estudio ejercen control sobre la administración del aprendizaje, los procesos cognitivos y el contenido que abordan (Beson, 2001). El estudio sugiere la importancia de transformar el paradigma educativo impuesto y las</p>

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relaciones de poder tradicionales, debido a que motivar los encuentros pedagógicos que cuenten con una perspectiva orientada al desarrollo de la autonomía y la reflexión, puede contribuir en la formación de individuos integrales y en la creación de experiencias pedagógicas significativas.

3. Fuentes

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4. Contenidos

Esta investigación busca describir el rol que las actividades de reflexión pueden tener en el ejercicio del control de los niveles de autonomía cuando se crean diversos tipos de textos siguiendo un enfoque de escritura procesual. El proyecto de investigación se divide en seis capítulos:

El capítulo 1 incluye las generalidades del estudio. En primer lugar se tiene la introducción, el planteamiento del problema y el foco de la investigación. Inmediatamente, se presentan los objetivos y preguntas que guiaron el desarrollo del proyecto, y finalmente se describe la justificación del mismo. La investigación tiene dos objetivos: Primero, describir el rol de las actividades de reflexión en el ejercicio del control de los niveles de autonomía en la creación de diversos tipos de textos siguiendo un enfoque de escritura procesual. Segundo, explorar las formas en las que las actividades de reflexión sobre las diversas producciones escritas tienen un impacto en el involucramiento político de los estudiantes en el proceso de toma de decisiones dentro del salón de clase.

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El capítulo 2 presenta el marco teórico que iluminó el estudio. Por un lado, se presenta la teoría de aprendizaje de segunda lengua y el dominio de lingüística aplicada que soportan la investigación. Adicionalmente, se hace una descripción de los constructos teóricos que sustentaron la investigación: Autonomía en el aprendizaje, los niveles de control de la autonomía, reflexión, y escritura procesual. Finalmente, los constructos son analizados desde perspectivas tanto teóricas, como investigativas.

En el capítulo 3 se hace una descripción del diseño metodológico. Se sitúa el estudio en el paradigma cualitativo de investigación y se caracteriza como estudio de caso de tipo explicativo. Se presenta el contexto en el que se realizó la investigación, así como quienes participaron en el estudio y el rol de la investigadora. Al final de este capítulo, se muestran los instrumentos usados para la recolección de los datos, así como, los procedimientos de utilizados para tal fin.

El capítulo 4 se enfoca en la intervención pedagógica; dentro de este capítulo se encuentra la teoría que sustenta las acciones tomadas. En primer lugar, se describen las visiones de currículo, lengua, aprendizaje y salón de clase. Enseguida, se presentan la intervención pedagógica y se caracteriza cada fase del estudio.

En el capítulo 5 se presenta el análisis de los datos recogidos y los hallazgos de la investigación. En la primera parte del capítulo, se describe el tipo de enfoque elegido para el estudio, así como las estrategias de validación. Adicionalmente, se presentan las categorías y sub-categorías que guiaron el análisis de los datos.

Finalmente, en el capítulo 6 se indican las conclusiones del estudio dando respuestas a las preguntas de investigación. También se hace una descripción de las posibles implicaciones que tiene desarrollar un estudio de este tipo; se presentan las limitaciones del estudio; así como algunas consideraciones para próximas investigaciones relacionadas.

5. Metodología

La investigación presentada en esta tesis de grado fue desarrollada en cuatro (4) etapas:

1. Identificación del problema de investigación, análisis de las necesidades de la población y posterior formulación de las preguntas y objetivos de investigación. Consideración de la intervención, tipos de actividades y metodología.
2. Articulación de la teoría. Indagación teórica de recursos bibliográficos para la construcción del marco teórico. Se hizo uso de recursos bibliográficos tanto teóricos como investigativos. Con base en dicha construcción bibliográfica se diseñó la propuesta de intervención pedagógica.
3. Implementación de la acción y recolección de datos. Durante tres meses los participantes del estudio realizaron composiciones escritas las cuales fueron seguidas por actividades de reflexión. Se contó con el consentimiento del coordinador del programa, y se solicitó consentimiento de los participantes. Se aplicaron cuestionarios al principio y al final, se escribieron en total siete composiciones que fueron recolectadas como artefactos, y se realizaron siete actividades de reflexión consignadas en diarios del estudiante.
4. Se hizo un análisis de los datos recolectados siguiendo el enfoque *a priori* y ubicando los datos en las categorías dadas por la teoría. Finalmente, se le dio respuesta a las preguntas de investigación.

6. Conclusiones

- Este estudio permitió evidenciar el rol que juegan las actividades de reflexión en los niveles de control de la autonomía. Se observó que gracias a las actividades de reflexión los participantes desarrollaron una perspectiva más crítica y objetiva de su aprendizaje.
- Se evidenció que las actividades de reflexión hicieron que los participantes fueran más

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selectivos y precisos con el uso de las estrategias de aprendizaje.

- Los datos mostraron que la percepción de las estrategias de colaboración social mejoró, así como la frecuencia con la que eran utilizadas. Gracias a las actividades de reflexión los participantes mostraron reacciones positivas y proactivas a la retroalimentación y a la continua participación.
- El estudio mostró un aumento en el uso y el repertorio de estrategias al ejercer control sobre procesos cognitivos. De acuerdo al contenido de las actividades de reflexión, los participantes encontraron nuevas formas de organizar, discriminar, inferir y deducir información.
- Gracias a las actividades de reflexión los participantes se involucraron de forma más política en las decisiones relacionadas con el contenido. Se evidenció que los estudiantes cuestionaron y evaluaron de manera crítica lo que era aprendido en clase y los métodos utilizados para alcanzar esas metas.
- El estudio mostró que las actividades de reflexión jugaron un papel muy importante en el ejercicio de los niveles de control de autonomía. Las actividades de reflexión generaron un involucramiento constante, crítico y objetivo en los tres niveles de control de autonomía. Fue, además, evidente que los participantes ampliaron su repertorio de estrategias y se convirtieron en sujetos activos en la toma de decisiones y en la evaluación de los procedimientos en el proceso de aprendizaje.

Elaborado por:	Paula Andrea Becerra
Revisado por:	Johana Montaña Moreno

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest challenges we face as teachers is the one of guiding our students in the pathway of becoming more involved and responsible in and for their own learning process. Despite the learning environment and the conditions of the population, we have encountered that learners are, in general terms, dependable on teachers and institutions for deciding on a series of aspects that affect their learning process, for instance, goals, strategies, assessment procedures, etc. Certainly, this turns into something even more problematic, when it comes to adopt these behaviors and adapt them to the dynamics of a defiant skill such as writing. At the institution where this study was developed, teachers and students work cooperatively in order to reach autonomous learning. Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go, especially in the writing area, since this skill is one of the hardest for students to master and feel comfortable with, something that makes them even more dependable on teacher's guidance and instructions.

With this in mind, the present qualitative explanatory case study aimed at describing the role of reflection in the levels of control of autonomy when writing diverse types of compositions following a process writing approach, as well as, identifying the ways in which these reflection activities could have an impact on the ways learners got politically involved in the decision making process within the classroom context. The importance of exploring reflection emerged from the different paths teachers and learners followed in order to construct autonomy, such as the use of learning strategies, some reflection activities and assessment. Although teachers and learners used this resource constantly in assessment moments especially, reflection seemed to be detached from the several relevant aspects of the learning process, such as, emotional responses, content decisions, use of learning strategies, amongst others, and in some moments, despite

linked to these aspects, too superficial, as explained in a deeper way in the statement of the problem.

With the aim of studying the levels of control of autonomy, reflection and process writing from a deeper perspective, three instruments were designed. On the one hand, with the objective of accounting for the learning habits students had at the beginning and at the end of the research implementation, questionnaires were designed. Additionally, there were reflective journals, which provided information on the experience learners had when writing the different types of compositions, the emotions that emerged, the difficulties they faced when writing those texts, the ways in which they planned to improve, the decisions they made, etc. Finally, students' artifacts were all the compositions learners wrote throughout a period of three months, and which offered information about the strategies they used, the writing process they followed, and the results learners obtained from the whole experience. Each of these instruments provided an opportunity for me to understand the way learners saw their learning process, the decisions they made and the tracks they followed in order to improve.

The data collection instruments, as well as the instructional implementation, and the categories of the analysis are all framed under the literature revised for this study. The concept of levels of control is taken from Benson (2001), who asserts that there are three main levels of control over autonomy. Firstly, control over learning management, secondly, control over cognitive processes, and thirdly, control over content. Although this is a case study, there are two elements that are part of a pedagogical intervention. On the one hand, students wrote seven compositions throughout the implementation, such texts were written following a process writing approach (Gray, 1987). Also, this research study has its bases on the use of reflection as a resource for building autonomy; this concept was taken from Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985), who with their analysis provided the stages and process of reflection for this study.

Statement of the problem

Learning a second language involves a series of processes that contribute to the transformation of the individual's mind. The development of diverse the skills in the foreign language has an impact on the ways the learners see, understand, configure and express their reality. In this sense, writing shall not only be comprehended as a way of using language, but also as a means of accomplishing objectives (Cassany, 1999), a tool for mind transformation, and as a way of reaching analytical and logical reasoning skills (Camelo, 2009).

At the institution where the present study was carried out, the writing process is perceived as one of the most relevant aspects of the foreign language learning process. As a matter of fact, the institution pays special attention to including writing in the design of the syllabi for specific courses, which, according to the institution aims at promoting autonomy. Nevertheless, it has been observed that the aspects of autonomy on which the program concentrates are mainly related to just one of its dimensions, namely, control over learning management, specifically exploring the use of learning strategies and assessment, leaving aside important aspects related to autonomy and learning, such as the emotions produced by the experience, the metacognitive processes, social strategies, the political dimension of learning, the participation of students in the decision-making moments, and the external factors that may have an impact on learning. This has been spotted in the assessment instruments created to evaluate the writing process and in the lesson plans produced by teachers. These formats, rubrics, and checklists concentrate especially on language correctness, coherence, and the use of certain learning strategies. Even though some of these formats do include spaces for additional comments, reflection is constantly superficial and does not take into account more profound features of the learning process and success in writing.

With regards to the lesson planning, in informal talks, teachers have expressed they focus on incorporating learning strategies that can expand the repertoire students have. Nonetheless, these strategies come from the ones stated in the syllabus, and are mainly imposed. It is true that teachers make an effort to guide students in assessing the learning strategies, something that is a vital part of the lesson planning, but the reflections are steered to identify the positive impact that these mechanisms may have, ignoring the opportunity of challenging the strategy. “I think that most of the times we want to show students that the strategy that is suggested by the syllabus is great, and we do not necessarily take into account the needs or preferences students have in regards to strategy-using” (Teacher of the Skills 1-3 courses).

In addition to this, teachers and learners have made clear that the writing process is difficult for them for a number of reasons. In a questionnaire applied to students, they characterized the writing process as complex because they need to have a good vocabulary repertoire, and at this point students have only been in the program for six months taking the basic levels. In the same questionnaire, students conveyed the process of writing as arduous, especially in this course, given the need of making decisions in regards to the topic that they would select to write about.

In a separate questionnaire, teachers have said that since students are not used to writing in Spanish, which makes expressing their thoughts and ideas much more difficult in English. Also, teachers have mentioned that for students it is difficult to research about a given topic, since they do not have the necessary tools and knowledge to look for reliable and relevant information.

Finally, time and the size of the groups have represented a limitation. There are only four weeks to guide students in the process of writing one complete article, which is, in some cases hard, since teachers should provide feedback and students need to make corrections to come up

with a final version by the end of Skills 2. To this, is added the fact that in some courses there are up to 25 students and teachers are generally assigned two other courses.

To sum up, there are mainly three aspects that characterize this problematic situation. On the one hand, despite the institution's intentions of promoting autonomy and critical thinking skills, the attention is mainly focused on one of the dimensions of autonomy, which leaves aside relevant aspects of this construction. Second, students and teachers see the writing process as something challenging, given the level of students, their vocabulary repertoire, their capacity of producing coherent texts, and their empowerment for making decisions. Finally, the time and the size of groups represent a challenge for teachers to have a constant follow-up in the learners' processes of writing and learning.

Research Focus/ Statement of the Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to observe and describe the ways in which students from a private institution enrolled in an intensive English program for adults exercise autonomy in its three levels (See Chapter II), and the impact that these reflection activities could have on the political involvement of these learners in the classroom and learning decision-making process. In order to carry out this observation, students created eight written texts following a process writing approach and were encouraged to reflect upon these writing tasks. The reflections and productions created by the students were analyzed within a framework of autonomy construction, having in mind the three levels of autonomy proposed by Benson (2001). To get through this exploration three main instruments were used, questionnaires, which provided information about learners' progression in the levels of control of autonomy, students' artifacts, which accounted for their writing process, and students' reflective journals that gathered data related to the learners' experience.

Objectives and Research Questions

This research aimed to contribute to the understanding of the field of autonomy in language learning, being specifically developed from the analysis of the three levels of control of autonomy proposed by Benson (2001).

Research Objectives: These are the objectives that guided this study:

1. To describe the role of reflection activities in the exercise of the levels of control of autonomy and ELF learning when producing diverse types of texts following a process writing approach.
2. To explore the ways in which reflection activities upon the development of diverse writing tasks have an impact on the political involvement of EFL adult learners in the classroom decision-making process.

Research Questions:

1. What is the role of reflection activities in the exercise of the levels of control of autonomy proposed by Benson when producing diverse types of texts following a process writing approach?
2. How do reflection activities upon the development of writing tasks have an impact on the political involvement of EFL adult learners in the classroom decision-making process?

Rationale of the study

In the different experiences I have had as an EFL learner and as a teacher, I have come to understand that the process of writing in both English and Spanish is a difficult endeavor. Especially, because of the implications it has to be successful at producing well-structured

compositions in the academic and labor worlds. Expecting a high grade or being judged by the way one writes, makes it more intimidating and stressing to face one of these tasks.

Nevertheless, as it is my view, writing is not an ability to be mastered overnight. It is a process that takes time and that requires constant and deep reflection. From this perspective, as EFL teachers, it is relevant to understand that it is our mission to provide learners with the necessary tools for them to appreciate writing as a resource more than an imposition, and one of these is reflection. Doing this might bring several benefits for learners. On the one hand, students might reduce the negative feelings they have developed towards the writing process. Also, learners might see the different possibilities they have to be successful in these tasks, the variety of strategies they can use, and select the most useful for their particular case. Being able to reflect upon the learning and writing processes might help students identify the strengths they have, as well as their weaknesses, making them more aware of the aspects they need to pay greater attention to. An experience such as this one could help students to be more open to making and receiving comments on their work, something that might help them have different overlooks on the tasks proposed. Finally, there is a strong political dimension in the development of a study such as the present one. On the one hand, by providing learners with moments to reflect upon EFL writing and learning, they might become more empowered to criticize, question, and challenge the decisions made within the classroom and in the institutional context. Therefore, this might lead to the true constitution of autonomy, opening doors for dialogical negotiation and the changing of the traditional power relations and impositions installed in the Colombian educational context.

This document is divided into six chapters: Chapter one includes the introduction, statement of the problem, research focus, research objectives and questions, and the rationale of the study. In chapter two, the main theoretical constructs are explored, namely, autonomy in

language learning, reflection in learning and process writing, which are complemented by a revision of relevant studies that support the theoretical understandings I have. Chapter three concentrates on describing the research design of the study, which includes the qualitative research paradigm, the explanatory case study methodology, an exploration of the participants and setting, the type of sampling, and a characterization of the data collection instruments and procedures. Chapter four deals with the pedagogical intervention designed for the study, which focuses on the development of a series of texts following a process writing approach and framed under constant work on reflection. Chapter five presents the data analysis, the categories and subcategories adopted from the theory and the general findings. Finally, chapter six shows the conclusions and implications gathered from the data analysis and the whole research process.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I present the theoretical foundations that guided my study. The chapter situates the study within a second language learning perspective, along with an applied linguistics domain, to which the research subscribes. Furthermore, the ideas of autonomy in language learning, reflection, and process writing are defined from both the theory and some relevant studies that have been developed in these areas. Accordingly, this section provides a general overlook of the theoretical considerations that guided the actions taken throughout the study.

Second Language Learning Theory

The present research study is supported by the sociolinguistic perspective of second language learning. On the one hand, due to the fact that this study sees language learning as a social endeavor, which means that learning occurs in the interaction with others, something that according to Tarone (2007), is the core of any study that adopts a sociolinguistics perspective. Gass (2002) and Vygotsky (1978) claim that the environment is a powerful agent in learning, since it acts as an asset and permeates all the aspects of every learning process, which makes the notion of environment a relevant aspect, given the impact that it may have in any learning process. Equally important, the fact that in the context in which the study was developed, the participants, the teachers and in general all the ones involved in the study were together in a constant interaction, something, that provided insights and helped them to build the learning process.

Therefore, by adopting this perspective, there is a great chance of exploring the many traits that affect learning (Tarone, 2007), -in this particular case: autonomy, reflection, and

process writing-. As explained by the author, the sociolinguistic approach is a tool that can provide useful guidelines to bring together dissimilar areas of research, and that may open doors to identify and make evident acquisition results. Bearing in mind the fact that autonomy, reflection, and process writing are all seen as dynamic, interdependent, and changeable concepts that adapt to the conditions of the environment, the sociolinguistics perspective seems to be the most appropriate for the development of the present research study. Certainly this perspective needs to be complemented by the applied linguistics domain, which contributes to the understanding of the pedagogical intervention, vision that is developed in the following section.

Critical Applied Linguistics Domain

The domain for applied linguistics adopted in this study is critical applied linguistics, which is based on Pennycook (2004). On the one hand, the author considers transformative pedagogy as the base of a critical approach to language education. In this sense, when adopting this perspective the pedagogical interventions should be based on the contextual problematic situations, and the possibilities the research studies have of transforming the situation in which learners find themselves. The present study had transformative aims for different reasons. Firstly, it aimed at encouraging learners to become more involved in their learning process. Secondly, to be more aware of the actions taken by them and by others (the institution and the teachers). Thirdly, learners found in the participation of this study a chance to be politically involved in the decision-making process within the classroom context, learners started to question, criticize, and transform their educational context by understanding how effective certain practices were, the role they played in this selection and in the evaluation of these practices, and their relevant participation in the decisions that concern their learning.

Autonomy in EFL Learning

In the past, autonomy had been understood as a capacity to take charge or responsibility of one's own learning (Holec, 1981). To elaborate, from Holec's understanding, being autonomous meant to be capable of being conscientious of the actions taken and the results obtained throughout the learning process. Nevertheless, such a definition seemed to be too narrow in the light of other authors' analysis. As explained by Little (1991), the concept of capacity is the core of the definition of autonomy, which is shown in what he proposes: "Essentially, autonomy is a *capacity* – for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action" (p.4). This definition complements the previous one as it provides a psychological dimension that is not always taken into account in traditional definitions of autonomy. For Cotterall (1995), on the other hand, autonomy has to do with the capacity learners have to use tactics for controlling their learning. The latter perspective is more oriented to the use of strategies learners have in order to face their learning. Similarly, Benson (2001) considers autonomy to be the capacity a learner has of having control over their own learning. In spite of the fact, that Benson continued with the notion of "capacity" (p.47), which was also included in Holec's understanding, he went further and included the idea of "control" (p.47), that in his opinion was "more open to investigation" (p.47). Perhaps, because within his understanding control can be expressed in terms of levels, which opens the doors for researchers to have a wider spectrum for understanding, since control can be associated to specific and observable behaviors learners have.

Undoubtedly, Benson identifies a relevant issue when he determines the importance of understanding autonomy from the perspective of control, and more specifically, the levels of control. In his opinion, autonomy may be displayed by learners in three main ways: the level of

control over learning management, the level of control over cognitive processes, and the level of control over content. When exploring the levels of control proposed by Benson (2001), it is evident that the study of autonomy can be undertaken from a more descriptive and clear perspective. As a result, when carrying out a research study, the researcher has more detailed and defined aspects that can be observed in an autonomous learner. Following these ideas, I have decided to adopt Benson's understanding of autonomy to be the theoretical bases underlying this research study. In the upcoming section, there is a detailed description of the author's understanding of control, which also provides the categories for the data analysis presented in Chapter V.

Control and levels of control over autonomy

One of the main aspects that Benson (2001) points out in his reflection upon autonomy is the idea of control. Citing Thomson (1996), he acknowledges the fact that humans are “self-directed learners” (p.59), and that we are configured to be like this since we are born. For Benson, this natural “tendency to take control of various aspects of learning” (p.59) is relevant for the understanding of autonomy for two main reasons. First, due to the fact that autonomy analysis is rooted on observable behaviors, which means that for autonomy to be a less abstract concept “it must be built upon generalization of capacities that learners can and do exercise” (p.59). Secondly, in order for autonomy to become a reachable set of behaviors, it needs to be shown “that most, if not all, learners already possess and exercise” them “to some degree” (p.60). With this in mind, I now introduce the three levels of control proposed by Benson as a way to describe in detail the possible autonomous behaviors that can be observed in learners.

Control over learning management

The level of control over learning management is compound by three main types of strategies learners use at the moment of facing the learning process. On the one hand, there are the metacognitive strategies, which are used mainly in management processes. These strategies are planning, self-management, self-monitoring, and self-assessment. On the other hand, there are the social strategies, which Benson points as the mechanisms learners use with other people, such as cooperating with others, peer assessment, making comments on others’ work, providing feedback. Finally, there are the affective strategies, the latter are the ones learners use to manage their feelings, either to reduce the discouraging emotions or to keep up the encouraging ones. Here the strategies to reduce anxiety, reward oneself, or encourage oneself are included. The following graphic, which I designed for this particular study, illustrates the diverse types of strategies learners use in each of these categories:

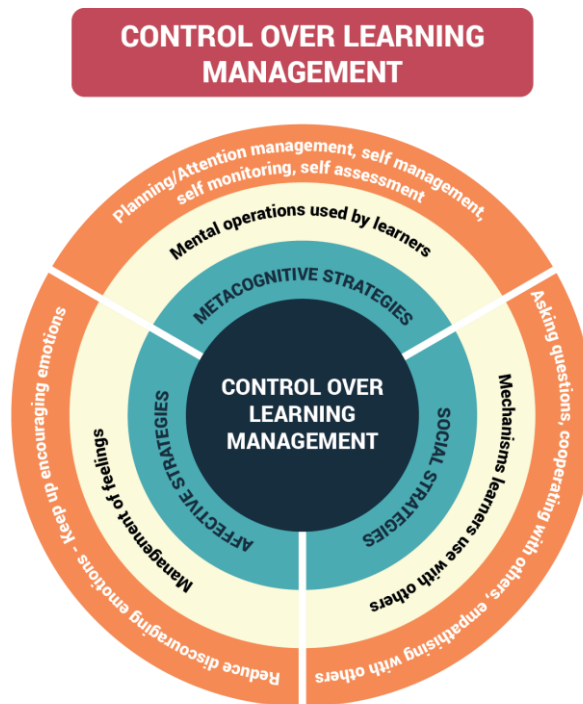


Figure 1. Control over learning management (Designed by the author)

Control over cognitive processes

Benson maintained that the second level of control is the one related to the cognitive processes. For the author, the control over cognitive processes tends to be a more psychological aspect of learning, which makes it more difficult to observe, given the fact that this one involves the mental operations learners develop when handling new information, linguistic and sociolinguistic. These mental operations affect directly the information received in order to improve learning. In Benson's opinion, there are three aspects that need to be taken into account when exploring this level, namely, attention, reflection, and metacognitive knowledge.

For Tomlin and Villa (1994) attention is the mechanism used by humans to “reduce and control” (p.184) the information influx. In the particular context of L2 learning, attention serves as the tool to organize the great amount of input received. In addition to this, it is considered by Benson (2001) that attention is a “precondition of acquisition”, which entails that language learning depends upon learners taking charge of the input that needs to be acquired.

The second aspect taken into account in this context is reflection. In this area, Little (1997) asserts that when placing autonomy as the core of learning, reflection plays a “central role” (p.94). Having this in mind, Dewey (1933) defines reflection as “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge” (p.7). An idealistic definition that could be complemented by the one provided by Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) “a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experience in order to lead to new understanding and appreciation” (p.30). Consequently, reflection is seen as a relevant component of autonomy; it is even asserted that “the autonomous learner is essentially one who is capable of reflection” (Benson, 2001 p.95).

The third aspect is the metacognitive knowledge, which is defined by Wenden (1998) as the knowledge a learner has of his or her own learning, or better, the knowledge they have of the

knowledge they acquire. For this author, there are certain activities that contribute to the construction of metacognitive knowledge, such as, elicitation, articulation, confrontation, and reflection.

Control over content

The last level of control is very important for Benson, as he considers that having control over the determination of content is crucial for the development of autonomy. Benson asserts that in order for learners to be truly autonomous they need to be capable of deciding what they want to learn. As a result, the topics, activities, the syllabus or program, and the ways in which learning is reached, are indeed the learner's decisions. Nevertheless, when being part of an institutional context it seems to be difficult for learners to make real decisions for their learning. At the institution where this study was conducted there is a clear organization of the contents, activities, strategies used, and even the assessment processes, which are all followed by teachers and learners. Although the institution aims at decentering the evaluation from the teacher; the dynamics in this EFL learning institute suggest that despite opened to promoting autonomy, the learner's voice is not heard and their personal learning needs not taken into account.

With this in mind, it can be understood that the negotiation of content in an institutional context has relevant social and political dimensions, which reveal the selection of content, activities, strategies, and evaluation processes as a features of power relations in the EFL classroom. Negotiating this responsibility with learners changes the traditional paradigm, which sees the teacher as the authority and learners as the subjects to be guided. This study, although carried out within an institutional context, aimed at encouraging learners to be more politically involved in the decision-making process within the classroom context, developing a voice to participate in the selection of content, activities, strategies, and evaluation process.

This study aimed at empowering learners to make decisions with regards to their learning process, to participate in the decision-making process within the classroom context, to evaluate the pertinence of activities, use of strategies and accuracy of evaluation processes. This responds to Penycook's (2004) view of critical pedagogy for two main reasons. First, the fact of facing the traditional paradigm of power relations set in the educational institutional contexts, in which learners do not participate in most decision-making process. Second, the possibility that the development of a study like this one provides to overcome it.

The following graphic shows how the three levels of control are interconnected and they all depend on each other and on the process of reflection to build in the individual behaviors of autonomy.

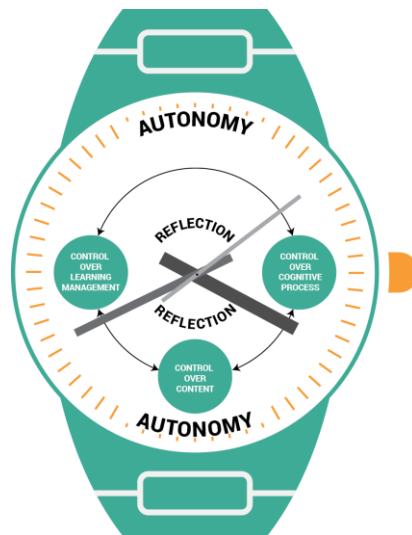


Figure 2. The levels of control of autonomy. (Designed by the author)

The revision of the theory has provided a detailed overview of the theory consulted to understand the concept of autonomy in learning and particularly in language learning. These theoretical considerations are supported in this study by relevant research studies developed in the field of autonomy. I present, then, a summary of the actions taken in each study, as well as the results and a critique stating its relationship and importance for my study.

The first study that supports this research study is the one developed by Picón (2012) called “*Promoting learner autonomy through teacher-student partnership assessment in an American high-school: A cycle of action research*”. The study was developed with 19 Spanish learners from eleventh and twelfth grades, whose ages ranged from 15 to 18 years old. The author noticed the difficulties they had when writing in the target language, which led him to develop an action research study to determine the impact that teacher-student assessment partnership could have on students’ autonomous behaviors. Consequently, two strategies of assessment were designed and used with students. The first strategy was a rubric planned between the teacher and the students by negotiating the criteria that needed to be taken into account for writing compositions. The second strategy was a series of symbols for self-correction, which students used in their written productions. During the implementation, the researcher collected data through three main instruments, that were, teacher’s journals to account for students’ attitudes and responses to strategies; a survey that provided information about learners’ perceptions of the process, and students’ artifacts to assess performance and quality.

The findings of this study show aspects that are relevant to my own study, as they provide hints on the ways in which learners may show behaviors of control in the different levels. Firstly, the researcher found that students managed their learning process in a more strategic way; they became more capable of planning their tasks thanks to the rubric cooperatively designed. Also, they learned to monitor and self-evaluate their own use of language resorting to the symbols for correction. Secondly, they started to show behaviors that allowed them to have control over their cognitive processes; the researcher observed that learners were more willing to participate in reflective activities and they provided deeper analysis of the tasks developed, which shows to some extent they became more critical. Finally, learners showed to be more willing to make decisions with regards to content and progress steps.

In spite of all these changes shown through the implementation of these strategies, certain flaws can be seen in the analysis of this study. The study could have provided more insights on the effect that this implementation could have had on learners' affective control, since the use of such a rubric might have contributed to the decrease of learners' anxiety, and therefore help them become more secure when writing and showing their productions.

The second study that contributes to the understanding of the concept of autonomy is "*Building up autonomy through reading strategies*", conducted by Izquierdo & Jiménez (2014). This study was conducted with six ninth grade students at a rural school. The researchers focused on the reading skill, this due to the difficulties learners had when approaching a text, identifying its main ideas, looking for specific information, and making predictions. For the authors, the reasons why students struggled facing the proposed activities was mainly because they had poor reading skills and they were not used to using reading strategies.

As a response, the researchers proposed an action research study, which provided students with strategies that could help them approach the reading exercises in a more effective way. In order to collect data, the researchers designed a series of instruments, which included a self-assessment checklist used at the beginning and at the end of the study, three questionnaires to identify the extent to which students had improved their reading skills, a post-lesson self evaluation for the teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses in the lessons, and a reading achievement test, used to decide if students had become more skilled in using the reading strategies.

The conclusions brought by this study provided me with insights about the issues that need to be explored in this area. This study shows the importance of the control over learning management, namely, learners learned to use new reading and assessment strategies, which showed how learners adopted autonomous behaviors. The authors point out, that students became

more involved, motivated and aware in the reading process. Although the focus of this study was not necessarily to explore the other levels of control of autonomy, it would be interesting to go beyond this analysis and investigate the cognitive and content components of this study.

Additionally, it is mentioned that learners became capable of transferring the use of strategies into other reading contexts. However, in the document there is not clear evidence of such finding, something that opens doors for the present study to explore this issue and see the role that reflection strategies may play in other contexts.

To finish with this literature exploration, I present the last study that contributes to the understanding of the theory and the observable autonomous behaviors in practice. This study was developed in San Buenaventura University in Cartagena in the Bachelor Program of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (Cabrales, Cáceres & Marrugo, 2010) and it aimed at exploring the ways in which the decision made by the university of helping students become more autonomous and of working on more flexible guidelines, was being reflected in the process of learning. For this reason, a descriptive-correlational study with 40 student-teachers, which interpreted data from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives, was proposed.

Consequently, a series of data collection instruments were designed, a structured survey with both open and closed questions created to identify students' practices of control of learning management, cognitive processes and content, based on Benson's (2001) theory. In addition, an observation guide to capture the way in which students behaved in the English class. A semi-structured interview that was applied to the teachers, with the aim of getting familiar with their perception of students' autonomy, and some explanation about the independent work assigned. A written reflection that was done by seven students, which allowed the researchers to deepen on the perception students have of their own profile as autonomous students, and an analysis guide that was used to identify the characteristics of the independent work assigned to students.

With regards to learning management, learners resorted to different strategies to organize, assess, and make learning more successful. However, in areas like time management, self-assessment, self-monitoring, and cooperation, there was a great need for improvement. With regards to mental processes, it was found that, the majority of students take notes and use repetition and translation as strategies. Nonetheless, more complex strategies such as grouping, inferring, deduction, induction, concept creation, and documental research are not common strategies for students to use. Related to the level of control over content, it was found that a great number of students look for additional material to complement their language learning. This finding depicts the intrinsic motivation students had in order to learn the language. Nevertheless, it was found that students mainly resort to technological tools, such as chatting, and online dictionaries, but the use of libraries, study groups, research groups, and tutoring was very limited. With regards to learners and teachers' perceptions, it was found that learners still need to refine their behaviors to become autonomous and to build an image of autonomy in the eyes of their teachers.

This study contributed greatly to my study for a number of reasons. In the first place the theoretical foundations of this study matched my own, which allowed me to adopt and adapt one of the instruments the researchers used into my own study, something that can be observed in Chapter 3. Additionally, this study resorted to the *a priori* data analysis method, which is also the one selected for the present study (See Chapter 3), and which provided the categories for the analysis of data. Finally, conclusions in regards to the tasks assigned to students also impacted the instructional design presented in this study, since the skills of investigation and concept-formation were both encouraged throughout the process. Nonetheless, the study fails to provide the learners' ages and throughout description of the population's characteristics.

Certainly, there is still much to be explored in the field of autonomy. Despite the numerous studies, there are specific issues that have not been regarded, such as political dimensions in the EFL classroom which could contribute to a better understanding of autonomy in language learning and could contribute to change the traditional paradigms in the Colombian educational contexts. However, it is necessary to start bridging the concept to other features as reflection and process writing, in such a way that autonomy is not studied in isolation, but creating paths that show how through other concept-explorations we can see its development. In this sense, the aim of this study is precisely to study the connection there is amongst autonomy in language learning, reflection in learning and process writing, which could open doors for teachers in the designing of activities and tasks for students, and open spaces for them to be more politically involved in the decision-making process within the classroom context.

In the next section, an exploration of the notion of reflection is made, going from a description of some theoretical considerations, to a discussion of relevant studies that can help to have a better understanding of this concept.

Reflection in EFL Learning

The concept of reflection has been approached and discussed by different authors. Such authors have provided several viewpoints that contribute to understand this idea from the learning perspective. To begin with, Dewey (1933) described reflection as the dynamic and continuous deliberation of ideas or assumed forms of knowledge in the basis that hold them up and the outcomes to which they aim. This definition shows how Dewey started to identify the relationship there is between the previous acquired knowledge with the new provided by any kind of source and the importance of reflecting as an active and persistent activity.

In a broader consideration, authors like Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985), introduced new thoughts to the understanding of reflection in the act of learning. For these authors reflection is a human exercise in which the person retakes their knowledge, considers it, thinks it through and assesses it. From this point of view, reflection is seen as a process that ultimately leads to an outcome, which may help the individual act in upcoming situations. Having this in mind and transferring these assertions to the learning process, it could be considered that the process of reflection may have a positive impact as to the outcomes the assessment processes may bring. From a more elaborated perspective, De la Harpe and Radloff (1999) assert that reflection “includes the ability to be self-aware, to analyze experiences, to evaluate their meaning and to plan further action based on the analysis” (p.1). In this last approximation, the authors understand reflection taking into account the process of making meaning out of experiences. Such consideration provides a true idea of what reflection aims at, the possibility of understanding what has been experienced and the ways in which an individual can act over the upcoming experiences based on the previous knowledge acquired.

Equally important, Boyd and Fales (1983) assert that reflection is the process of making meaning of an experience based on the self. With this in mind, one can understand that reflection is a process that is, generally, developed by an individual based on what such individual has experienced. Furthermore, Sugarman, Doherty, Garvery, and Gass (2000) stress on the relationship there is “between experience, reflection, making meaning, and learning” (p. 2), from which they conclude that reflection is a vital aspect of learning because it may produce the understanding of an experience.

It is necessary to comprehend what the components or characteristics of the term reflection are. Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985), consider that when understanding reflection it is necessary to do it from three main phases they have suggested: returning to experience, attending

feelings and re-evaluating the experience. In the first stage, returning to experience, there is a recollection of what took place. This recollection aims at observing what occurred in the experience in order to explore all the elements of the experience and the reactions one had. Such recollection is a description of the experience that should be as neutral as possible. Neutrality in this case, may contribute to the full observation of features that may need to be reassessed at some point of the reflection process.

The importance of recollecting the experience lies on the need of exploring the personal reactions one had in a specific event. These reactions are mainly related to the feelings that arise in the experimentation of a situation. For this reason the authors have taken into account the second stage in the process of reflection. In this phase, the reflective learner takes the positive feelings to use them to get the strength to face challenging situations, and the negative feelings to remove them and prevent them from obstructing the success in the experience.

The final phase of the reflective process is related to the re-evaluation of a particular experience. In this phase, there are four elements that facilitate the evaluation of a given experience. These are: association, in which the reflective learner builds bridges between the new knowledge and previous information; integration, that relates mainly to identifying relationships within the information; validation, that aims at shaping the “authenticity of the ideas and feelings, which have resulted” (p.32) from the experience; and appropriation, that is to make knowledge part of the assets learners have in their repertoire.

The relevance of this construct is associated to the importance of helping students become more aware of their learning process. Having in mind the problem associated to the depth of the reflective processes within foreign language learning and process writing, this concept becomes a relevant agent. In the first place, through a reflective process students have the possibility of going back to the experience of writing texts. The recreation of these memories may help

students see the experience from an outer perspective, which may lead them to be more objective when it comes to assess their performance and ultimately their success in a given task. Secondly, given the fact that by reflecting upon an experience a person evaluates and considers the feelings produced by a certain situation, there is a chance of understanding the connection there is between the emotions experienced and the outcomes gathered from the task. Finally, when the process of reflection is continuous and conscious it may become the basis for exploring a process from its inception to its conclusion, which could also be taken to a wider range in the learner's life and the second language learning process.

I now present three relevant studies that contribute to the understanding of this concept. To begin with, the quantitative study "*Effects of dialogue journals on L2 students' writing fluency, reflections, anxiety, and motivation*" developed by Liao and Wong in 2011. In a diagnostic stage, it was observed that learners' writing was poor in general terms and that they perceived writing as "arduous, frightening, frustrating, and unrewarding" (p.139). Also, it is pointed out that students' reflective processes was declining because of the enormous amount of schoolwork, which is reflected in their low willingness to connect their previous experiences to the new knowledge acquired. Thereupon, the authors decided to explore the effects of using dialogue journals on L2 students' writing fluency, reflections, anxiety, and motivation. The researchers carried out a study, which included 41 10th grade students, who belonged to the same class. During the 14 weeks of implementation, learners were asked to write a total of 24 entries, each of which included two types of journal, one that focused on the learners' experience and the other on the situation in which the action occurred. In order to collect data from this study, the following instruments for data collection were selected: pre- and post-tests, a scoring rubric, students' journals, follow-up interviews and questionnaires.

This study concluded that the project developed with learners was “effective in guiding the students to generate, organize, and transform their ideas into higher quality of written texts” (p.154). In addition, the students writing production amount increased, and their capacity for reflection upon their English learning process and their behavior as human beings received an impact.

While reading the conclusions and actions taken in this study, different contributions to my own study were seen. Firstly, it is important to mention that this study presents insights on how the use of journals provides students with a deeper understanding of their own learning and writing processes. Furthermore, it is evident how students became more motivated to write as they started to perceive writing as an enjoyable task rather than as an unrewarding and even punishing assignment. The authors suggested that reflection contributes to meaningful learning and motivation. The implementation of this research study exemplifies the benefit of looking for different reflective techniques such as journals concentrated on feelings and experiences, which can allow students to become more involved in their learning process, to lower the anxiety, to participate in their productions in a more active way, and even to rethink their ways of acting.

I now introduce the second study explored in this construct, which was an experimental study developed in Iran by Baleghizadeh and Mortazavi (2014) named “*The impact of different types of journaling techniques on EFL learners’ self-efficacy*”. When one refers to self-efficacy is talking about the “beliefs about one’s ability to achieve desired outcomes” (p.78). This idea of self-efficacy has been constantly associated with concepts like achievement, motivation, and self-regulated learning strategies (Yusuf, 2011). As the researchers explored, they found that studies related to self-efficacy were sparse. Therefore, they decided to design a study “to investigate whether using reflective journals in general, and collaborative dialogue journals in particular can increase students’ self-efficacy” (p.78).

Having these inquiries in mind, the researchers carried out a study with 150 female English learners taking the upper-intermediate level at a language school. The design of the study included three main groups, namely, the *no-feedback condition*, the *feedback conditions (teacher feedback condition and peer feedback condition)*, and the *control group*. In the first group, students were encouraged to write reflective journals, but they did not have the opportunity to share their reflections with anyone else. In the second group, all learners wrote their reflective journals; however, the group was divided into two smaller groups. In the first group, learners were asked to share their insights with their teacher, and in the second group they were asked to share their insights with their peers. The last group was a control group, which did not keep any journals.

In order to collect data, all participants except the ones in the controlling group were taught on how to keep reflective journals, which were ultimately part of the instruments for data collection. After having collected the data, the analysis showed interesting results. The data revealed that evidently, journaling has an impact on students' beliefs of self-efficacy. According to the analysis made, the use of the different types of journaling techniques does have an impact on students' beliefs. It was found that students who received feedback from their teacher and from their partners had a similar outcome in the self-efficacy test applied at the beginning and at the end of the study. It was also found that students in the NFC (*no feedback condition*) also outperformed the ones in the NJC (*no journal condition*), despite the fact that they did not have any chance to share their reflections with anybody.

This study is relevant to my study for different reasons. Firstly, there is a great connection between the constructs adopted for the study developed by Baleghizadeh and Mortazavi and the ones I have selected for my own study. According to the discussion, self-regulation and motivation are relevant ideas that have been constantly considered in the discussion of autonomy

in learning. Secondly, through the exploration of this study there was the possibility of understanding the use of different journaling techniques in a deeper way. It was evident, that learners in this study, who had the chance of socializing their reflections, could get more benefits from their reflective exercises. This idea was a relevant option when designing the different instructional sessions, in which the students were asked to reflect upon their own learning process and discuss about their perceptions. Thirdly, this study showed how important it is to let students reflect upon their learning process and their success as language learners. The possibility of opening these spaces for learners gives them the chance of becoming more aware and responsible for their own tasks, having a chance to evaluate them themselves.

The third study I resort to in this section is the action research developed by Camelo in 2009, namely, “*Using metacognitive processes to improve students’ writing quality*”, which was complemented with an ethnographical analysis. In this study, the researcher noticed that students generally had problems with writing. For this reason, she carried out a study to see if students knew the purpose of the text, its outline, its audience, if they had the possibility of developing the task with coherence and cohesion, and whether the cognitive and metacognitive processes were developed in a stronger way. Additionally, the author considered that if learners carry out learning tasks following a process writing approach, they may be more motivated to write, find writing as a more practical task, and might be more involved in the decision-making process, which could lead them to be more autonomous.

The project had five cyclical stages, namely, “sensitivity increase, concentration, execution, evaluation, and reflection”. In each stage, metacognitive processes and students’ interests were taken into account with the aim of carrying out tasks related to writing and reflection. Besides, two data collection instruments were used: students’ artifacts and assessment grids.

The results from this research study determined that the writing of expository texts improved considerably, since in the last version of the composition the writing was more coherent and cohesive. This improvement may have been due to the fact that there was a possibility of reflecting upon the task, its results and the possible actions that could be taken in order to improve. In addition, the researcher found that learners were more familiar with the types of texts they were asked to write: narrative, expository, and argumentative. This conclusion was obtained in the process of guiding students through the writing of different types of texts and helping them to become aware of the development of each. The author asserts that cooperative work skills were also enhanced, since students had the possibility of interacting with their partners with the objective of coming up with a clear outcome.

This study is connected to the present research in different ways and it helps to understand certain aspects of the development of a project like this one. In the first place, the process writing seems to have been benefited from the process of reflection; the quality of texts and the awareness students acquired contributed to their performance in these types of tasks. Also, the processes of reflection were not developed in an isolated way; they were put in context, so learners had the possibility of understanding their actions with the assistance of the teacher and their peers. Finally, learners benefited from this process as it helped them become more autonomous in their learning. Firstly, because they had the chance of making decisions in a conscious way. Secondly, because their voices were heard and their interests taken into account. And thirdly, because they experimented the responsibility of carrying out a project from scratch, which made them aware of all the aspects they need to consider when working as a group and as individuals. However, the study could have been more rigorous in terms of the report on reflective processes. Although there was some evidence of what happened in regards to reflection, there is still a lot to be said. The study could have been more accurate if it had reported

on what students said during the reflective activities, and these reflections could have been compared to students' outcomes in order to see in what ways the reflections had an impact on students' outcomes. Having in mind that the process of reflection is a whole construction of an experience (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985), in which the individual mulls it over and evaluates it to come up with possible actions to be taken in these regards, this study could have shown the ways in which students reflected upon the writing process and the experience as such.

With this discussion upon the connection there is between the reflective activities and their impact on the development of the writing skills, I now turn to the description of the approach of writing that I have taken for carrying out this study, which is the process writing approach. The presentation of this final construct will allow the reader to situate the study theoretically and to understand the actions taken in the instructional design, as well as, in the research design.

Process Writing in EFL learning

When mulling writing one needs to acknowledge that writing is one of the most important processes in language. According to Cassany (1999) "writing is a way of using language, which at the same time, is a way of performing actions to accomplish objectives" (p. 25). In this sense, writing is a task that is developed with a purpose, or an intention. For Camelo (2009) "learning to write transforms the mind of the subject" (p.56). According to the author, the development of new intellectual capacities such as "analysis, logical reasoning, distinction among data and the acquisition of metalanguage" (p.56) is allowed by writing.

Bearing in mind the importance that writing has in a language, it is necessary to recognize its significance in the language learning process. Here, I have adopted the vision of process writing, since it is the perspective adopted by the institution in which the study was developed.

And given the program characteristics I could not have changed. According to Gray (1987), writing is a process and a tool for learning, which promotes the development of thinking skills, and as such, it should be promoted throughout the curriculum. In the author's view, the objective of writing instruction is to "enable students to develop skills in fluency, form, and correctness" (p.34). Given the objectives of the present research study, the perspective adopted for this particular study goes beyond this assumption. Here, process writing is not only about putting words and sentences together, but also it is a complex act of transforming thought into written communication, which involves constant reflection and negotiation tasks (D'Aoust, 1987). With this in mind, process writing serves as a framework that provides learners with a series of steps for organizing their compositions, nonetheless, this approach does not mean to establish a set of rules to be followed when writing, since it acknowledges the diverse characteristics of writers and the varied ways in which writing is carried out.

From this perspective, the definition this study advocates is the one that envisions process writing as composed by different stages, "the act of transforming thought into print involves a nonlinear sequence of creative acts or stages" (Gray, 1987 p. 14), such a definition is complemented by Rader (1987) when she asserts that process writing follows moments or stages: prewriting, pre-composing, writing, sharing, rewriting, evaluation, rewriting and reevaluation.

The first stage, prewriting, refers to the moment in which the writer prepares the text. Some strategies that can be used in this moment of the process are "brainstorming, collecting material, and giving data from which an assignment is written" (Rader, 1987 p. 13). When it comes to pre-composing, the author maintains that in this section of the process, the writer has already received the assignment and should start to prepare a writing plan. For accomplishing this goal, several strategies such as outlining and mapping can be used.

Once the writer has identified the main ideas, that will be presented in the written piece and a general picture of the organization of the composition is elaborated, the first writing stage takes place. In this part of the process, the writer develops his/her ideas from the previous stages in “verse or prose” (p.13). After there is a first draft of the composition, the writer is encouraged to share the product with partners or a group for positive feedback and general comments. Such insights from other people’s revision, provides the writer with the opportunity of rewriting the composition taking into account the suggestions received, in a stage called rewriting. At the last stages of the writing process there is the evaluation moment, where the writer uses a rubric or an assessment instrument that allows him/her to verify the accuracy of the composition, as well as its components. The evaluation stage provides information on how to improve the composition, which is done in the last part of the process rewriting and reevaluation. Although the stages seem to have a clear and logical order, one shall not assume that in the real process of writing every step will be as systematic. For Rader, the process is unpredictable and “recursive”, therefore the “various stages do not occur in a nice, neat and orderly fashion” (p.25).

However, not just the stages in writing should be taken into account. When guiding a writing process, teachers generally focus on three aspects that ensure the quality of such act of communication. These aspects are, on the one hand, fluency, which involves a capacity for selecting the appropriate words or phrases, the ability for being spontaneous, authentic with the voice, and having a clear idea of pacing. On the other hand there is form; Rader (1987) considers that this aspect of writing involves a sense of logic in the development of ideas, which includes the selection of accurate supporting details, the use of a variety of sentence structure and transitions. Finally, correctness appears as the last aspect teachers pay special attention when helping students carry out a writing task. The idea of correctness has to do with the appropriate use of “the conventions of the written English (spelling, punctuation, grammar)” (p.13). All these

stages and aspects that are presented as relevant in the writing process aim at helping students understand that they have ideas to express.

With these theoretical considerations, I shall now present relevant research studies that provide insights on what the writing process is, when taken to the real context of the foreign language classroom. For doing this, I have selected three studies that exemplify process writing.

The first study I have selected is “*Blogging: A way to foster EFL writing*” an action research conducted by Quintero in 2008 at a public university in Bogota. The researcher, in this case, decided to carry out an action research study, which was conducted with 17 students whose ages ranged between 17 to 23 years old. With this population, the researcher chose to collect data only from eight participants, but developing the activities with all the 17 students. The main goals of the project were, firstly to gather better understanding of the process of EFL writing within this particular context; and secondly, to “analyze the role that feedback played in the process of writing” (p.7). In order to achieve these objectives, the researcher proposed an online interaction between two groups of students, one located in Colombia and the other in Canada. In this context, students had access to three different types of blogs, one on topics of personal interest, the second a space designed for collaborative writing, and a the third one, which aimed of promoting argumentative writing, reason why it was denominated the blog for debate.

Given the type of study and the population, three instruments of data collection were designed and used: semi-structured interviews with the aim of getting insights from students’ and teacher’s perceptions, students’ artifacts (writing drafts), which provided the study with accurate information about “students’ actual writing development” (p.16), and students’ blogs, which served also to expand on the information related to students’ writing development. According to the author, the latter was the richest source of data, since it was the last stage in the writing process.

The analysis and results from this research lead to the following conclusions. For the author, it is relevant to design and create a space in which all learners have similar goals in terms of writing, as well as, similar interests, so they can have a continuous and meaningful interaction. Additionally, it was concluded that blogs represent rich spaces for writing. In this particular experience, learners had the chance of sharing with other people through blogs, expressing themselves more freely about their own understanding of the world. Finally, the study demonstrated that feedback played a “scaffolding role”, since it contributed to the process of writing: guiding students from writing simple to more complex texts.

This study is relevant for the present research for several reasons. Firstly, the theoretical approximations described in this study complement the framework adopted for this study, since it provides examples on how process writing can be approached, the benefits it can provide, and the opportunities it gives to develop autonomy and reflection, from the perspective of the self, as well as from the perspective of the other. Through this implementation, it was observed the way in which the theory played a relevant role in the pedagogical activities, because it encouraged reflection and motivated learners to monitor their written text. Secondly, the study showed that the act of writing becomes more meaningful when learners, or writers in general, have the opportunity of tackling topics that are of their personal interest. This was one of the main traits of my own study, since it aimed at providing students with the chance of writing texts that have a clear connection with their own lives, experiences, and interests. Finally, I consider of great importance to mention the role of feedback this study described. Although it is pretty different from what was done through the pedagogical intervention in my own study, it shows that reflecting upon comments and the experience as such, gave the learner-writers tools to improve in the way they produce their texts.

The second study that contributes to the understanding of process writing is “*Peer editing: a strategic source in EFL students’ writing process*” developed by Diaz in 2010. This research was conducted in a public school in Bogota. The study aimed at understanding “the role of peer editing in the writing process and to characterize the relationships built when students corrected each other’s writings” (p.85). Some of the reasons why the researcher decided to develop this study were the need of providing students with accurate feedback that did not necessarily come from the teacher; also, the positive impact that working with peers represents, since they are a less intimidating audience than the teacher, and the fact that peer editing contributes to what happens in the classroom.

From these needs and benefits, the author designed a qualitative and descriptive-interpretative study since it depicts a phenomenon studied. The participants of this study were 38 ninth graders from a public school located downtown in Bogota. The ages ranged between 13 and 16 years old, all coming from different places in the city. The type of sampling selected for this research was convenient sampling since the teacher-researcher worked as the homeroom teacher and had a close access to this population.

In regards to the research process, different procedures were followed during the implementation. For example, the selected instruments for data collection were field notes, which accounted for a description of the phenomenon; video recordings that provided information about the events that occurred in the classroom, and students’ artifacts, which displayed students’ writing process. After having collected and analyzed the data, the author concluded that the act of peer editing has socio-cognitive features. An example of this is that when students corrected their partners’ texts they resorted to learning strategies, therefore the process became a tool for cognition. However, not only learning strategies were used by students in the moment of peer editing; they also made use of metacognitive and social strategies. The former were displayed

when they had to give feedback and explain their comments to their partners. The latter, on the other hand, were shown when learners with more expertise helped the others to create their texts.

Despite the fact that this study was developed with a completely different population, there are several aspects that are related to the present research study. First, the study reveals a procedure that contributes to the use of several cognitive, communicative, and social strategies. Such use is promoted through the use of peer editing when writing texts in the foreign language. The study demonstrates that students received an important benefit from writing when they are involved in the process, not necessarily as passive producers, but more as active participants in the production and completion of different written tasks.

The study selected to conclude this section provides a general overview of what is happening with the teaching of process writing in different schools in Bucaramanga. The research *“Current state of the teaching of process writing in ELF classes: An observational study in the last two years of secondary school”* developed by Mendoza in 2005. This was carried out in six schools; three public and three private. It aimed at determining the traits of the way in which process writing was being taught in the different schools.

Mendoza identified that writing had not been perceived as a beneficial process, since most of the attention from the institutions was on the development of the speaking skills. As a result, he designed a case study, which allowed him to determine the procedures followed in order to teach writing as a process in the EFL classroom; and to identify the “kinds of language instruction occurring in English classrooms in terms of reading, writing, listening, and speaking” (p.28). To collect the information from different schools, the researcher randomly selected six schools in Bucaramanga that held similar characteristics in terms of the number of hours of English taught per week, and teacher’s age and professional development. Additionally, the instrument used to collect information was observation, which focused on identifying activities

related to “pre-writing/planning, writing/formulating and post-writing/revising” (p.28) and “on pre-reading, reading, and post-reading” (p.28).

The findings of this study showed that, in general terms the English instruction in the different schools has a very clear emphasis on “listening and speaking” (p.32), that reading and writing do not play a relevant role in the process of learning English as a foreign language. However, according to the author, reading tasks were carried out with more frequency than writing activities. As for writing, the majority of activities are done outside the classroom, which demonstrates that process writing does not have a priority level within the activities performed in class. The lack of instruction in process writing was also evident because exercises such as “reports, summaries, and essays” were not seen during the observation process.

As a conclusion, the researcher points out the vast literature there is related to process writing, the different stages in this act, and the many possibilities there are in order to encourage writing within different contexts. In contrast, he points out that despite this richness, in Colombia there is still a vision that in a way segregates the acts of writing, responding to a culture of oral tradition. The author, therefore, suggests that teachers and students of English as a foreign language should start incorporating new strategies that open doors to incorporate the process writing. He asserts that peer feedback strategies can represent a useful tool to help students learn and improve in the process writing, but that teachers must carefully guide peers to identify the errors, so they can provide accurate and useful feedback. The author concludes his article by pointing out the benefit of approaching process writing, since it may lead to the creation of fine compositions.

The latter study may be the most relevant study for my theoretical framework and literature review. The discussion, created by this study, brings different questions related to the approximation there is to process writing in Colombia. It was shown that in schools both private

and public there is a huge lack of instruction in the process writing area, this due to the fact that little attention is paid to process writing. Of course, the present study was carried out with the participation of a population that has different traits and that comes from a complete different background. Nonetheless, certain insights from this study provide relevant information to design activities and to carry out the process writing in a more successful way. Additionally, we could observed that in Colombia there is still much to do in the many learning environments there are, therefore it is always important to contribute to the understanding and advances made through research studies.

In this chapter I presented the theoretical support for this research study. There was a deep reflection upon the concepts of autonomy in language learning, and the three levels of control of autonomy; the idea of reflection in learning; and the concept of process writing. The discussion was supported by bibliographical and research sources, and gives the basis for the actions taken throughout the study. In the following chapter the methodological considerations of the study are presented, which help to situate the study within a research perspective.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this section is to introduce relevant aspects of the research methodology and actions proposed for this study. These theoretical considerations situate the research within the visions that guide all the actions taken throughout. On the one hand, the research paradigm is explored, along with the type of study, the research approach, the selection of the setting, the participants and sampling, and the researcher's role. By the end of the chapter, the instruments for data collection are defined to provide the reasons why they are useful for the study. Finally, some ethical considerations are presented.

Research Paradigm

The research paradigm adopted to develop this research study is qualitative research. The selection of this paradigm responds, firstly, to the objectives stated for the research study, which aimed at describing the role of reflection activities in the exercise of the levels of control of autonomy when creating diverse types of texts following a process writing approach, along with the objective of exploring the ways in which reflection activities upon the development of diverse writing tasks have an impact on the political involvement of EFL adult learners in the classroom decision-making process. Given the research objectives, a research paradigm, that permits to explore the particular experiences of the participants involved in this study, is needed. In addition to this, the instruments selected to collect information from the learners' experience and in general the actions taken throughout this research study respond to the research paradigm selected.

In these regards, Croker (2009) understands qualitative research as a methodology that aims at understanding "how participants experience and interact with a **phenomenon** at a given

point in time and in a particular context, and the multiple meanings it has for them” (p.7). Such appreciation has two main points that are relevant for my study. One is the aspect of experience as this study aims at describing, precisely, the way in which learners exercise the levels of control of autonomy. However, the understanding of such an interaction does not only depend on the relationship the participant has with the phenomenon. This is also connected to the interpretation the researcher makes of the data collected in the setting where the participant is immersed (Creswell, 2009). In general, the data collection instruments used in qualitative research, do not provide quantitative data, reason why the results are subjected to the researcher’s interpretation.

Although the instruments used in the majority of qualitative studies provide data for interpretation, we should not assume that these are the only ones that frame a research study into a determined paradigm. Freeman (1998), for instance, acknowledges that research does not necessarily become qualitative because of the methods of data collection that it uses, this depends more on the examinations of the relations between information about people’s undertakings and phenomena, and the context in which they do such things. This latter consideration helps us understand how people do not just react to a specific situation or the implementation proposed, but they are also affected by the context in which they are immersed. In this sense, the qualitative research paradigm is useful for this study as the reflections students create depend on the knowledge they have of the world and their interaction with it. This interaction with the world is portrayed in what Merriam (1998) understands about qualitative research. According to the author, this type of research “is interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p.5).

Having this in mind, it is also important to consider the epistemological perspective taken for this study. From Merriam’s understanding there are different epistemological perspectives

that can be adopted when doing qualitative research. Amongst these, there is the critical perspective, which aims at empowering the participants in the social contexts in which they construct worlds and meanings. Certainly, power dynamics are located in the center of critical qualitative research (Merriam, 2009), which is one of the reasons why it is coherent with the aims of this study. When situated in the challenge of promoting autonomy in language learning it is necessary to go beyond the instrumental dimension. As presented in Chapter 2 the political dimension represents the true line to achieve autonomy since it allows the teacher and learners to question the traditional power relations the educational system has built. In addition to this, Croker (2009) states that the critical perspective is adaptable and it can be used in different contexts, with specific characteristics.

Type of study

The type of study selected for this research is the explanatory case study. Gall (2003) defined case study as “the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon” (p. 436). This definition includes important aspects that help us understand the concept of case study, first it should be understood that a case study is deep, it tries to identify details and characteristics of a phenomenon; second, there is a context that has an incidence on the phenomenon, therefore, the case study must always be linked to the context in which it occurs; and third, this type of study takes into account the participants’ perspectives and understandings of the phenomenon.

In a more profound understanding of the definition, we have that a case study is concentrated on making sense of a particular case or “bonded system” (Creswell, 1998 p.61; Merriam, 1988 p.9). In this particular case, five students from the A2 level at a private EFL teaching institution. Hence, the task of a researcher, who decides to use the case study as his/her

research methodology, is to be mindful when selecting the object of study, since the limits of such a system are not always completely evident, in fact, some of them are blurry (Yin, 2003; Stake, 1995). Some examples of cases of study are, a student, a classroom, a school, a country, etc. In this sense, it could be understood that the decision of subscribing to this type of research responds more to the focus of the study rather than to the methodology itself (Stake, 1995). In this particular study, the case is the group of students who are participants of a series of reflection activities associated to their writing process.

Nevertheless, as stated before, the case, object or “bounded system” cannot be studied isolated from its context. In fact, Hood (2009) asserted that the case study method has two elements that compose it; the first is an individual, namely, a student, a classroom, a class, an institution, etc., and the second, the context or site where the individual is framed. For this author, the context’s limits depend necessarily on the researcher’s interests, as they guide him/her in the specific needs the study has. Yet, the limits of the contexts are not the only ones set by the interests of the researcher, as a matter of fact; each decision made by the researcher is aimed at responding to the nature of the research itself.

For the purpose of situating the study within a more specific frame, it is necessary to explore the types of case studies there are, and their aims. According to Yin (2003), there are three main types of case studies; one of those is the exploratory case study, which aims at gathering more knowledge about a case from which there is little information. The second is the descriptive case study; such type aims at presenting in detail the specific case. Finally, there is the explanatory case study, which is concentrated on the how and why of a given phenomenon. For the purpose of this study, and given its scope, I consider the explanatory case study to be the pertinent methodology since it goes on a further explanation of why and how the phenomenon occurs.

Given the aims of this study, the explanatory case study seemed to be the most suitable and appropriate. In the particular case of the present study, one of the objectives is to describe the relationship there is between the participants and their experience of writing, which is documented through reflective journals, which provides an explanation of the dynamics and outcomes of this experience. Additionally, and in regards to the methodological characteristics of the explanatory case study, Yin (1981) deepens his understanding of explanatory case studies asserting that this type of study “consists of: (a) an accurate rendition of the facts of the case, (b) some consideration of alternative explanations of these facts, and (c) a conclusion based on the single explanation that appears the most congruent with the facts.” (p. 61). In this study, the instruments for data collection provided extensive information on the issues explored, writing, reflection, the levels of control of autonomy and the political involvement of students in the classroom context. In the data analysis the information was compared in the different sources, to identify the best interpretation of the data collected.

Setting

This study was conducted at a private organization located at Calle 19 N° 2A – 49, in the locality of Las Nieves. This institution aims at promoting the cultural interchange between Colombia and the United States. Some ways in which the institution promotes this are: English language courses, cultural events, a library opened to the whole community, international exams preparation and administration, and a permanent bond with the U.S. Embassy. The institution offers two different programs that are especially designed for different populations. Firstly, there is the Adult English Program (AEP) offered in the four branches (Niza, North, Downtown and Soacha) with a population of about 5000 students. The Kids and Teens Program (KTP), which is

only taught on Saturdays in the four branches and it is only aimed at kids' learning, with a population of about 2000 students.

The AEP, where my research was carried out, offers different English programs, including the *Skills 1-3* courses. This is a three-course period divided into: *skills 1*, *skills 2* and *skills 3*, which is developed in three months in which students start getting the knowledge for achieving a B1 level according to the Common European Framework. The *Skills 1-3* courses are generally taken after students have completed the basic (1-6) levels, and in this particular course classes were taken from Monday to Friday from 5:20 pm to 7:00 pm. The course is divided into three parts, *Skills 1* in which the first three units of a book are covered and the basics for writing a paragraph are studied and practiced in three different compositions. *Skills 2*, the second part of this block, covers four units more and guides students in the production of an article that is part of a class magazine. Finally, we have *Skills 3*, the course in which the productions are assessed and polished to be published and presented to the community of the institution. In these three courses students face new challenges in their learning process, such as process writing. In order to achieve these goals, students are encouraged to go through a step-by-step writing process, in which they learn the basics of writing; going from the creation of a paragraph to the production of a descriptive article. Within this process, students have the chances to explore different topics, which allow them to start reflecting upon the several perspectives they can tackle when writing a composition.

This study was carried out during the three cycles, in which I was the former teacher. In these three courses different topics were tackled, for instance, culture, technology, childhood issues, art, amongst others (See Chapter 4). However, the topics students selected for the writing of their articles were mainly focused on sports and social problems, which were combined by some of the students who participated in the study.

Participants and Sampling

The participants of my study included two male and three female students belonging to the *Skills 1-3* course taught from 5:20 pm to 7:00 pm in the Downtown branch, from January to April 2015.

Given the fact that population at the institution is in constant change, there is always the need to adjust the sample to the most convenient access. In this particular case, the group began with 17 students. When they were asked if they wanted to participate in the study 16 of them accepted and were eager to provide their insights and reflections from the process. However, as time passed, students started to leave the course for different reasons. In the first level, five students changed schedules because their personal and professional lives required it. Three additional students failed the course and they were sent to a different group to take the level again. Three other students were forced to postpone their classes because of personal reasons. When the next level began, new students were incorporated to the class, but they had not received the same instruction as the ones participating in the study from the beginning of the course. Therefore, the study was developed with only five students who stayed during the three months this experience lasted. Bearing this in mind, the type of sampling chosen for this study is *Convenience sampling*, which according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) is a type of sampling in which the researcher resorts to the individuals who are available and accessible at the moment. For Cohen Manion and Morrison (2007), convenience sampling is frequently used in case studies.

Table 1. Participant Description (Designed by the author)

Participant	Age	General Description
Participant 1	18	Male. Recently graduated from high school. Outgoing, willing to participate and collaborate.

Participant 2	23	Female. Former student of social communication. Did not enjoy writing, shy.
Participant 3	27	Male. Engineer. Outgoing, talkative.
Participant 4	30	Female. Sociologist. Outgoing, participative.
Participant 5	35	Female. Psychologist. Environmentalist. Shy and quite.

With this in mind, the students ranged in ages between 18 and 35, the youngest was a male who had just finished high school and was getting ready to start university in the second semester, and his interests were mainly related to philosophy, math, biology and other sciences. During the courses his performance was outstanding, especially at the beginning, he was participative and willing to collaborate with his partners in order to promote learning. He was outgoing, but in some cases he felt his partners did not share his interests mainly because of the age difference. His level was one of the highest in the course, and despite his difficulties with writing, he tried to keep it up.

Another participant was a 23 year-old girl, who was studying her bachelor degree in social communication at a private university. Her interests were related to social sciences, communication, fashion, and movies. She attended most of the classes. At the beginning of the course she expressed she did not enjoy writing because it was very difficult for her. She had an A2 level, but she sometimes made mistakes especially when speaking. Despite some of these difficulties, she participated in class, and tried to identify strategies to improve her performance in and outside of class. She constantly evaluated her texts and used synonyms to make them richer.

The third participant was a 27-year-old male student, who had a bachelor degree in oil engineering. Amongst his interests there were things like mining, social abuse, industrial production, and others. He was a very outgoing learner, a behavior that in some cases was a big distractor for himself and for his partners; in general terms he participated constantly, though in some cases he made mistakes that were the result of poor preparation. He was willing to learn, he was eager to do everything he was asked to, but he had great difficulties when it came to monitoring his productions.

The fourth participant was a 30-year-old girl. She held a bachelor on sociology from a public university in Bogota, also a master's degree in gender studies from the same university. Her interests were mainly related to social issues, gender problems, and female roles in society. She had a very good level, though she was also preparing to have a B1, she was able to write in a coherent way, make presentations, and participate actively in discussions and assessment moments.

The last participant was a 35-year-old-girl, who had a bachelor in psychology from a private university. She was an environmentalist, therefore she was mainly interested in matters that had to do with alternative transport, ways of stopping global warming, recycling, animals, amongst others. She arrived to the first level with a low A2 level, she had the tendency to confuse a lot of instructions and she was very shy, which limited her participation in class and her interactions.

The five students lived in the south of the city. According to the information provided by students, the English instruction they had received in both high school and the university was minimum and none of them attended a bilingual school. As to their background in the program, three of the participants came from the previous courses (*Basic 1-6*), the other two were new to the institution and were not familiar with the pedagogical principles held by the institution, which

include formative assessment, the use of learning strategies and very strict rules for class preparation and learning follow-up. None of the participants had taken the course before, and they all approved the requirements set for completing these levels.

Researcher's role

My role in this study was that of a *participant-observer*. I was always part of the class since I was the former teacher. I accompanied participants in all the stages of the process and had the opportunity to see students' process during the time the study was carried out. This role involved many different tasks, from guiding students in the writing process, to assessing, evaluating and encouraging students to reflect upon their own learning process. According to Burns (2003), acting as a participant implicates "entering the research context and observing oneself as well as the others in that context" (p.82). During the three months I spent working on this research, I had the opportunity of sharing two hours from Monday to Friday. Since I was always with students they started to see me as part of the group, although at the beginning they expressed they felt a little anxious because of the development of the research, they started to avoid these feelings as they perceived that I was not just observing them, but I was also evolving with them, since my reflections were also permeated by the interaction with them.

From this perspective, my role as a researcher was developed from an *emic* perspective, which for Fetterman (1998) is the view from within. The author considers that in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the way people perceive the world it is necessary to develop an insider view of reality.

With regards to ethical considerations, two main aspects were taken into account. One of the main aspects that needed to be considered in regards to ethical matters was the access to the population and to the institution, therefore, permissions were requested and a letter was

submitted in order to get them (See Appendix 1). Additionally, participants also needed to be informed of the activities, data collection instruments and moments that were going to take place during classes. For this reason, learners were given a consent form, in which all procedures were explained (See Appendix 2).

As part of the ethical considerations from this study, I asked learners to give me their authorization to include their information in the research study. In the consent form (See Appendix 2), most learners agreed to use their real names as part of the study, just one asked to be called a different name. Nevertheless, in the study all the names are confidential and the participants are anonymous.

Data collection Instruments

In this section of the chapter, I present the relevant concept of validity, and the type used for this particular study configurational validity discussed in order to provide a framework for the data collection instruments selected. Afterwards, the data collection instruments are defined and explained. Finally, a chart explaining the way in which instruments were used to answer the research questions is presented.

In qualitative research validity could be approached from the trustiness, profundity, abundance and range of data accomplished, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or neutrality of the researcher (Winter, 2000). In this respect, it is relevant to evaluate the configurational validity, since it provides a better support for qualitative research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). According to Goldman-Segall (1995), this type of validity is defined as a type of platform that provides support for understanding the multiple interpretations phenomena may acquire from the shoes of different people.

For Golman-Segall (1995), configurational validity illustrates how the validity of data is constructed by diverse viewpoints. Therefore, this type of validity does not aim at taking a judge role, nor does it try to generalize the multiple interpretations of a phenomenon. It targets at deeply analyzing information that has been put together in groups to come up with wider meaning configurations. In this sense, a configuration can be understood as “a grouping of parts to a whole where each part has a relative position, where no defined center and no finite relationships are fixed, and where a range of perspectives and points of view broaden what is seen” (p.164).

With this in mind, and given the nature of my study, I present here the data collection instruments and the characteristics of the data. The configurational validity provides the opportunity of understanding the ways in which the participants from this study interpreted the experience, the different outcomes it had for them, in order to come up with more valid conclusions fed by the diverse types of view received through the instruments used to collect data.

In the following section, I introduce the data collection instruments selected to collect data. First, a table, which shows the objective each instrument aims at reaching and providing data to. Second, a theoretical description of each instrument and the reasons why they contributed to answer the research questions and reach the research objectives.

Table 2

Data collection instruments (Designed by the author)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	DATA SOURCE # 1	DATA SOURCE # 2	DATA SOURCE # 3
What is the role of reflection activities in the exercise of the levels of control of autonomy proposed by Benson when	Students’ journals	Questionnaires	Students’ artifacts

producing diverse types of texts following a process writing approach?			
How do reflection activities upon the development of writing tasks have an impact on the political involvement of EFL adult learners in the classroom decision-making process?	Students' journals	Questionnaires	-

Questionnaires. For Wilson and McLean (1994) a questionnaire is a data collection instrument, which provides useful information generally presented in quantitative data. This type of instrument can be administered without the necessary presence of the researcher in the setting, and is comparatively unambiguous to analyze. Since this instrument was adapted from another research study, namely the one developed by Cabrales, Cáceres & Marrugo in 2010, which is explored in Chapter 2, and based on the theory proposed by Benson, it shows trustworthiness. (See Appendix 3).

The use of questionnaires in my study provided different benefits for the data collection and analysis stages. In the first place, they provided relevant information about the specific levels of autonomy developed by students throughout the process of implementation. On the other hand, these questionnaires helped me to observe the results of the research from a comparative perspective, since they were administered at the beginning and at the end of the study development. Another relevant benefit provided by this instrument was the possibility to triangulate the data collected with this one and the other instruments used in the research. Having in mind the components of the instrument I could identify new information in the analysis of the other instruments.

Also, it is convenient to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the use of this instrument. Wallace (2006) acknowledges the fact that questionnaires can represent an advantage

when applying them to a large number of respondents since they can be highly structured. Nevertheless, when writing questions for this kind of instrument the researcher needs to be fully aware of the fact that questions should avoid ambiguity, therefore wording needs to always be assessed. Additionally, it is considered that the easiness to analyze questions depends on their level of structure (Bell, 2005). Bell, however, informs about the importance of accuracy and phrasing; moreover, she warns about how the questions may be based on untruthful suppositions, they may trust on respondents' memory or knowledge, or they may be presuming, controlling or conjectural. In order to prevent these issues, I piloted the questionnaire that I decided to use at the beginning and at the end of the study, which at the beginning showed to have some questions that were unclear for students and that in some cases did not apply to the dynamics of the institution, which led me to make the pertinent adjustments.

The questionnaire is divided into three parts that correspond to the theory of levels of autonomy proposed by Benson (2001), namely, control over learning management, control over cognitive processes and control over content. The same questionnaire was applied in both moments, at the beginning of the research process and when it had finished in order to explore the evolution of students' levels of control.

Students' journals. Given the nature of the present study, one of the biggest and most important aims was to find the ways in which students used to see their own writing process and experience, as can be observed in table 1. Therefore, an instrument that could account for this reflection was needed and later designed. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006) when carrying out a qualitative study, it is basic to resort to observational strategies that allow the researcher to gather as much data as possible from the interactions and events occurring inside the setting. In this context, it was ideal to look for an instrument that provided participants with

the chance of retelling their experiences, being free of expressing their thoughts, feelings, frustrations and unconformities.

As a result, journals were selected as one of the basic sources for data collection. For Marshall and Rossman (2006), journals or field notes have special characteristics that make them so relevant for a qualitative study, in their opinion they should be “detailed, non-judgmental, concrete descriptions of what has been observed” (p.98). For the purpose of this study, participants who were the ones who wrote the journals, were encouraged to describe their experiences, first from a neutral position, describing what the activities were like and the ways in which they carried them out. After that, students were encouraged to write about their experience from a more subjective point of view (See Appendix 4).

There are diverse types of journals and different forms of information that can be recorded in them. For the present study, I consider to be pertinent the combination of two types of journals, the personal diary, which is defined by Rasinski and Padak (1996) as an instrument to write about personal experiences, feelings, and the perceptions those experiences created, along with a learning log, which is seen as a type of journals in which students reflect upon their learning experiences. Here learners usually write information about metacognitive insights from the experience.

Students’ artifacts. Mason (2002) approaches the use of visual methods and documents as an important source to gather data. In her opinion, elements such as diaries, books, letters, shopping lists, amongst others can be used as already existing data sources. Nevertheless, she points out that there are different materials that do not necessarily exist in the context; therefore, the researcher is entitled to get them from the participants or the setting itself. For instance, there are artifacts, diaries that are written during the process of the research, “written accounts and stories, biographies, pictures and drawings, charts; tables and lists” (p.103).

The author asserts that when deciding to use “documents or visual methods” (p.106) the researcher has a vision of the data collection instruments that benefits these types of data sources. These instruments may provide deep information about the phenomena studied, probably information that can be more useful than that gathered through other instruments, like verbal utterances. However, the researcher should not assume that by having data collected in documents or images, they are going to have an “indisputable quality” (p.106). On the contrary, the researcher needs to continue being as strict and judicious with his analysis as with any other data source. The fact that written documents or images provide a static image; should not make the researcher believe that there is no need for a deep analysis.

In regards to the specific type of instrument selected at this point of the research, it can be said that for Hubbard and Miller (1999) students’ artifacts are a very useful and rich type of data collection source. In their opinion, “it is tangible evidence of what kids (learners) are able to do and of the range of responses kids (learners) make to different learning tasks” (p.102). Despite the fact that the present study was not developed with kids, the principle is the same in the sense that these kinds of instruments do provide information about the capabilities of students especially in terms of writing. By analyzing these kinds of data collection instruments, the researcher can have an idea of the progress students have had in the development of different skills, as well as the progress they have made when reflecting upon their own learning process.

The use of this instrument contributed to my study in different ways. On the one hand, the instrument evidences how the texts were constructed throughout the different stages of the process. It was possible to observe whether students had improved on their writing skills by looking at the evolution of the compositions. This instrument also showed the importance of reflection on students writing, since they implemented changes and made decisions with regards both to learning and writing (See Appendix 5).

Data Collection Procedures

In this study data was collected with the *Skills 1-3* group for twelve weeks, starting on February 11th 2015 with the first questionnaire, and finishing on April 17th 2016 with the implementation of the second questionnaire (See Appendix 3). A description of the collection procedure employed in each case will be made here.

In the course taken by students in the *Skills 1-3* level, there are fifty-seven face-to-face sessions delivered in an intensive modality. During these three courses data was collected every week with students' artifacts (See Appendix 5) and students' journals (See Appendix 4). Every time students finished a writing task, the data was collected, through both the compositions and the journals students wrote.

As to the *questionnaires*, one was applied at the beginning of the three courses (February 11th) and again at the end (April 17th). The information that the first application revealed provided me with insights on how to make decisions in regards to the development of tasks and minitasks (See Chapter 4). During the sessions, they also gave me an idea of the students' traits and a general idea of the stage in which the levels of control had been developed throughout their language learning process in previous experiences. The second application of the questionnaire aimed at having an idea of what had happened with students' activities and habits with regards to their learning process after the reflection activities had been implemented. This implementation allowed me to compare the results gathered at the beginning and at the end to see if there was any kind of evolution.

In this study respondents were presented an informed consent, which asked for their permission to use their information for academic purposes only. Additionally, it was at all times clear for the respondents, they could withdraw from the study in the moment they considered it

necessary. Finally, the questions were designed in such a way that respondents did not feel their privacy disrupted.

As for the second instrument of data collection, which in this study were *students' journals* data was collected on a weekly basis. Every time students finished a task they had the opportunity of writing about the experience they had had. This implementation provided all the participants, including me with a general idea of what the process had been throughout the months in which the study was developed. Learners reflected on these entries the way they felt about the experience, the ways in which they had made corrections, the moments in which they felt frustrated, the difficulties they faced in the moment of writing and receiving feedback, as well as the satisfaction produced because they could complete all the assignments and be promoted to the next block of the program.

This instrument was successful because although students were asked to include certain aspects of the experience, they were also encouraged to write any comment that they considered relevant for contributing to the experience, not just their own individual experience, but also their collective experience.

Finally the *students' artifacts*. These ones were collected with the same regularity as the students' journals. Therefore, students wrote an entry per week, which allowed them to compare not just their texts' quality and success, but also the reflections they had written after they had completed different stages of the process. It was enriching to see how students went back and forth in the experience, going through the ways in which they developed the tasks, and also their feelings they experimented when writing the texts and receiving feedback. This instrument provided students with the chance of having different references to understand their success or failure when carrying out the tasks proposed.

Throughout this chapter the research design was described. First, I situated this research study within the qualitative research paradigm, then I characterized the study as an explanatory case study; also I presented the setting, the participants of the study, and my role as a researcher. Finally, the data collection instruments were defined, as well as the procedures followed for collecting the data. In the following chapter I will focus on the description of the instructional design, and the pedagogical actions taken throughout the study.

CHAPTER IV

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

In the present chapter I describe the theoretical support for the pedagogical intervention applied in my research. In the first part, the visions of curriculum, language, learning, and classroom, that underpinned my proposal, are presented. Afterwards, a description of the activities carried out throughout the intervention is made, which is accompanied by an example of the activities developed with students in the process. All the actions taken in the pedagogical intervention are framed under the process writing approach, which provides guidelines for the written productions, and are aimed at motivating students to reflect upon their writing and learning.

Curricular Vision

The curricular perspective this study subscribes to is the emancipatory curriculum proposed by Grundy (1987). This vision of curriculum corresponds to the one adopted at the CCA, and therefore, shares goals and objectives with it, such as helping learners become critical, responsible, and autonomous, through a constant process of reflection, dialogue, and negotiation, which ultimately may lead them to reach emancipation. Besides, the beliefs and experiences of the people involved in the curriculum determine the way and the features of their educational practices, which configure the curriculum as a cultural construction.

In Grundy's perspective, the curriculum is a way of organizing pedagogical practices and it is composed of three main elements. The first element is the emancipatory cognitive interests suggested by Habermas (1984). For this author, this interest is based on the search for independence from everything that is external to the individual. This search is supported by a state of autonomy, and it is reflected in the human need of transcendence, growth, and

development, and in the concern for self-knowledge reached through self-reflection, freedom, and the rationality of autonomy.

The second element is the critical theory of education, established by Carr and Kemmis (1986), which challenges the traditional precepts of the educational notions. In their dissertation they consider the rejection of the positive notions of rationality, objectivity, and truth; the importance of giving room to the interpretative categories of teachers; and the use of the interpretative theory to question ideologically distorted understandings. For these authors, the education should aim at identifying the social aspects that hinder rational aspirations; and at helping teachers transform the way they perceive themselves and their current conditions. Finally, all educational matters should be analyzed and evaluated in relation to practice, and not in isolation. In other words, the critical theory of education holds as its main objective the transformation of self-knowledge to alter the repressive conditions. In my study this is evident in the constant participation of learners in the decisions made within the classroom context (See Chapter 5).

The third element Grundy takes into account is the concept of praxis recommended by Freire (1970). From this point of view, the praxis is not an action that maintains a situation the way it is in the present, but an action that changes the world and its comprehension. The vision of praxis holds three main components. First, that learners are active participants in their process. And second, that the learning experiences need to be significant; and third that there should be a critical focus on learning. All these provide students with the freedom to act and take control over their actions, which may contribute to reach emancipation. In this study, learners are active participants in various ways, in the selection of topics, in the determination of strategies, the order of steps, the evaluation of their tasks and of the practices performed in class.

The three elements taken by Grundy (1987) provide a framework for designing a curriculum that goals at helping learners transform their consciousness. In this particular study, elements such as the evaluation, the content, methods, and techniques, the interaction between the teacher and learners, and the educational experiences are permeated by the vision of the emancipatory curriculum.

The evaluation, for instance, is a process in which both teachers and students are active participants. The decisions made, with regards to the quality and accuracy of the actions taken throughout the process, are their shared responsibility. Therefore, the evaluation procedures need to be carefully designed, negotiated, and discussed, in order to come up with a series of criteria that help when judgments are needed. In all the writing activities developed by learners they were the ones who made decisions with regards to the aspects to be evaluated (See Pedagogical Implementation). This, necessarily, entails that teachers and learners are involved in a dialectical relationship, in which there is action and constant reflection.

On the same track, the content tackled throughout the course needs to be discussed between teachers and learners, so the learning objectives being set respond to their real learning needs. Besides, the methods and techniques, applied in the learning process, should also be under the consideration of all actors involved. In this study, learners made informed decisions with regards to their learning objectives, writing interests, the strategies they aimed at using throughout the process, and the linguistic aspects they needed to learn in order to reach their goals.

The constant dialogue, reflection, and participation contributed to get all the participants more involved in the process, to transform the roles that are traditionally imposed to learners and teachers, to promote autonomy and responsibility, and to explore new ways of approaching the learning tasks. In general terms and following Grundy's idea of the emancipatory curriculum, the

actions taken during the study searched for a transformation in the consciousness of learners, by encouraging them to participate in their learning process and in the decisions made with regards within the classroom context.

Vision of Language

The vision I adopted for the development of the instructional design of the present study is the one of language as culture and ideology. According to Tudor (2001), language can be understood in several different ways. From this perspective, the view a teacher has of language necessarily affects the way learners see the world, and the way in which matters are dealt with within the classroom. In this sense, the vision of language adopted for this study responds to the activities done in class, and the ways in which learners were guided to do such activities.

In this view, language is seen not simply as a “linguistic system” (Tarone, 2007 p.69), on the contrary, it is acknowledged that language functions as a “means of expression and communication” (p.69). In Tarone’s opinion, the vision of language as culture and ideology entails the understanding of language as a tool for conveying the “world view of its speakers”, bearing in mind that the use of the target language is always permeated by certain sociocultural aspects that play a relevant role when being effective in such use.

For Stevick (1989), learning a new language is no other thing than learning a new culture. Tudor complements this idea by pointing out that learning a new language is learning to see the world through the eyes of that different culture. In this way, when learning to understand the world through new eyes, a new sense of the others and of the world organizations is developed.

In this sense, the vision of language as culture and ideology fits to the development of the present research study for different reasons. In the first place, one of the objectives that the pedagogical intervention had was to provide students with the opportunity of expressing

themselves through writing. All the compositions students wrote during these courses encouraged them to express their own opinions and provide their own visions of the world. In the second place, students had the chance to explore their own culture and use the target language to express their ideas, keeping in mind the appropriate ways to convey the messages successfully in the target language. Finally, all the linguistic units, learned throughout the course, were always intended to be used for communicative purposes. The language therefore, stopped being a system and became a means for students to interact and communicate in different ways.

Vision of Learning

The vision of learning adopted for this study is analytical learning (Tudor, 2001). The analytical vision of learning provides a series of opportunities for opening doors in the process of learning. I selected this vision because it responds to the type of study, the population that participated, the setting and the activities done in its development.

To begin with, we have the constructs of the study, which are autonomy in language learning, reflection in learning and process writing. The selection of these constructs calls for a vision of learning that is not instrumental or based purely on repetition or modeling, it demands a chance for motivating students to be more involved in their own language learning process, through the use of reflection, learning strategies and communicative tasks. According to Tudor, the analytical vision of learning “calls for the explicit will to learn as well as the more or less conscious use of various strategies for analyzing ambient data into meaningful units of comprehension, assimilation, and use” (p.85).

Additionally, the setting in which the study was developed is the Centro Colombo Americano, an institution which has, for a long period of time, promoted the development of autonomy and reflection within the learning process. As a way to follow this philosophy, the

analytical vision of learning helps to frame the study within the ideology of the program and to continue contributing to students' development of a more conscious view of their own learning.

The activities proposed for this study also respond to the vision of learning selected. Learners were carried out to develop communicative tasks. Students were guided in using the language to convey their ideas and messages in an appropriate way (Tarone, 2007). In addition, the participants were encouraged to reflect upon their use of language, the feelings they experienced when writing their tasks, their success when completing tasks, and the strategies they used in order to complete them. Such reflections provided insights on students' results and on how to perform in a more successful way in upcoming tasks.

Therefore, the selection of this vision truly complemented the development of this study and provided not just the students, but also me with relevant information on how to guide a learning process in a more conscious way; allowing students to express their feelings and perceptions gathered from the experiences they had during the whole process.

Vision of Classroom

For the present study, I have decided to use the vision of classroom as a school of autonomy (Tarone, 2007). In the author's vision, the idea of classroom as a school of autonomy is associated with the concepts of "learner autonomy, self-direction, and learner empowerment" (p.117). From this point of view, the author asserts that when understanding the classroom as a school of autonomy, there are two main principles that need to be taken into account. Firstly, the learner is seen as a subject who participates in his/her own language learning (Tarone, 2007; Pennycook, 1997). In this context, learners should be part of the decision-making process that is developed in the process of learning, they should take part in the activities performed in class, and they should contribute with their own knowledge to the construction of the course.

According to Tarone (2001), having students become agents may affect directly the learning process itself, it may enrich the process, it may help students become more independent in terms of learning, and it may assist students in transferring the new knowledge into other different contexts. Such development of skills may help students be empowered and become more independent language learners and users.

The classroom as a school of autonomy provides some advantages for the development of a variety of activities. With this vision, there is the opportunity of having genuine communicative exchanges, what Van Lier (1988) sees as the true “communicative potential” (p.30) the classroom has. In addition, from this perspective there is a clear chance of helping students become more involved in their learning process; in other words, students make decisions, they understand the things they should do to start being more successful language learners and users. Also, there is the possibility of turning the classroom into a space of genuine exchange, in which teachers and learners have the possibility to express real concerns, insights and ideas.

Pedagogical Intervention

Based on the characteristics of the problematic situation identified in the context, a pedagogical intervention, which responded to the needs for autonomy construction, reflection and an improvement in writing was designed. This implementation was not the work of the teacher only, but it was a collaborative construction in a partnership with the learners who participated along the study. In this sense, the principles of autonomy, and specifically the levels of control were addressed, not only to continue offering learners strong basis for strengthening their use of learning strategies, but also, to motivate them to consider the other aspects that are relevant to their learning, such as its affective, social, cognitive, and political dimensions (Benson, 2001).

The decisions made in this section respond to a constant process of reflection (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985) developed with students and which allowed them to be more involved in their learning process, by making their voices be heard in the different stages of this implementation. The need for contributing to reflection was also identified in the problem statement, and was evident in the different instruments used by teachers within the classes at the institution. Learners did use some reflection strategies, but they were constantly shallow, and did not provide extensive information about the impact that tasks had on the learners feelings, perceptions, understandings and actions taken throughout the activities. As explained in Chapter 2, through reflection learners had the chance of going back to experience, discovering the feelings they had, and going through a process of re-evaluation.

With regards to writing, the tasks proposed are the result of constant discussion with learners. In the first month, they selected the topics they wanted to write about, which were to some extent related to the content of the unit in the book used at the institution. Also, they decided on the length of writing they were going to do, going from one paragraph, to a whole article. Although they were shown some steps to develop their compositions, namely, prewriting, pre-composing, writing, rewriting, evaluation, rewriting, and re-evaluation (Gray, 1987), they individually selected the ways in which they wanted to carry out their tasks, the organization strategies, the time they devoted and the objectives they meant to accomplish.

With all these aspects in mind, I designed a course program (See Appendix 6), which provided an idea on the way in which the course was going to be developed. This program was divided into three main stages, the first one "*Getting into writing*": at this stage of the course, the strategies for writing were discussed, learners provided their insights and opinions about the ones suggested by the theory and considered that it was an easy model to follow, which allowed them to get into writing. Nevertheless, as time passed, each learner started to make modifications,

applying diverse strategies and selecting the most appropriate for them. As mentioned before, learners made decisions with regards to the topics they wanted to write about, and considered it to be pertinent to write about the book topics, so they could use what they had learned throughout the unit.

During the first month, learners wrote a total of three compositions, the first one “*Tips for a visitor to Colombia*”. Learners considered that they could use this as the topic, since most of the vocabulary studied in the lesson was related to the trips, suggestions and experiences. Additionally, they decided to write only one paragraph because they thought they could go from small compositions to more elaborated ones. Here some strategies were suggested, such as listing, nevertheless, some learners used mapping and others to organize their ideas.

The second composition was also selected by them in relation to the content of the book. In this case, the text was a “*movie review*”, here learners had to research more information about the movie they wanted to write about, this allowed them to organize the information and develop some of the steps of writing according to their personal needs. Each learner decided what they wanted to evaluate, by setting certain objectives in their notebooks, and reflecting upon them when the task had been completed.

The third composition was a hotel recommendation, again learners decided on the length of the composition. Here they agreed on three paragraphs, which allowed them to present complete information. Some learners decided to write about a hotel they had visited and others to write about a hotel they would like to visit. Since this composition was much more extensive, learners devoted more time and energy, drafting and socializing with their partners. Also, they reflected upon the experience and tried to incorporate these reflections on the upcoming texts.

The second stage was called “*Writing my article*”: here learners did not associate the topics to write about with the ones from the book, since they wanted to start writing about their

particular interests. This is related to the theory I have presented throughout the document in several ways. On the one hand, this responds to Penycook's transformative pedagogy.

Transferring the decisions with regards to content and strategies to the learners represents a great challenge, especially in the Colombian context. Traditionally, we, as teachers, are used to having control, to providing instructions and to judging whenever a learner does not follow them.

Nevertheless, with the objectives of this research study in mind, learners were the ones in charge of making decisions. The second stage represented a challenge for them, since they were in charge of selecting topics, researching about them, identifying the best strategies to be used, the steps they wanted to follow as writers, and the aspects they were going to evaluate from their writing process. Adopting these new roles made learners more conscientious of what it means to be autonomous, what it means to decide what they really wanted to learn, and to evaluate this process from a more objective perspective. In table 3 there is a description of a tentative timetable, nonetheless, learners divided the time as they considered to be most effective for their process. In some cases, learners planned, wrote and evaluated their compositions in class, in some others learners prepared them in class and wrote them at home because they felt more comfortable with it.

During this month, learners created one whole article based on their particular interests. It was interesting to observe that most learners were concerned with social issues, and wanted to tackle them in their texts. Each one of the participants decided on the length of their article, since it depended on the space they needed to develop all the ideas.

In the last stage "*Launching the magazine*", learners needed to present their work to the community. This moment was really important for them because they had the opportunity of going back to the experience as a whole, from the very first steps of writing, to the final version of their article. During this month, learners talked to their partners and teacher looking for advice

and feedback, reflecting upon what they had done, the decisions they made and the success they had had during this process. The last stage represented a great challenge for each individual because they faced the opinions of other people, not just their partners and teacher, but other learners who read their work.

Given the fact that this study is an explanatory case study, there were no cycles of action and data collection as in an action research study. However, the activities proposed were framed under a clear organization of tasks, which contributed to the collection of data and accounted for students' experience throughout the process. The data collected in the experience documented the discussion made in the following chapters.

Table 3

The stages of the pedagogical implementation

STAGE	TASK NUMBER	TYPE OF WRITING TASK	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	ESTIMATED TIME
Getting into Writing	1	Basic paragraph	To write a paragraph about tips for a visitor to Colombia bearing in mind its basic components.	Listing	February 11 th to February 17 th
	2	General to specific	To write a movie review composed of two paragraphs: one providing general ideas and the other going to details.	Clustering	February 17 th to February 20 th
	3	Introduction, body and conclusion	To write a hotel recommendation that includes an introduction, a	Generating Ideas	February 21 st to February 26 th

			body and a conclusion.		
Writing my article	4	Article's introduction	To write the introduction of the article presenting a thesis statement to be developed in the body paragraphs. (Learners had the chance to select their topic).	Brainstorming and providing reasons	March 5 th to March 9 th
	5	Article's body paragraph # 1	To write supporting ideas developing the thesis statement presented in the introduction. (Learners had the chance to select their topic).	Contrasting Models	March 10 th to March 13 th
	6	Article's body paragraph # 2	To write supporting ideas developing the thesis statement presented in the introduction. (Learners had the chance to select their topic).	Using a Pyramid – Graphic Outlining	March 14 th to March 19 th
	7	Article's conclusion	To write the conclusion of the article wrapping up the ideas developed throughout the paper. (Learners had the chance to select their topic).	Compare and Contrast	March 19 th to March 25 th
Launching	8	Article's Revision	Learners go over their composition and make adjustments to the whole article.		March 26 th to April 3 rd
		Partner's	Learners and the		

the magazine	9	and Teachers Feedback	teacher get together to read and make comments on the writing the process and the composition as such.		April 6 th to April 13 th
	10	Presentation Preparation	Learners prepare their presentation and rehearse in front of their partners		April 14 th to April 20 th
	11	Presentation	Another course from the Skills 1-3 block is invited to read the articles and attend the presentation		April 21 st to April 27 th

As explained before, each written activity took approximately four to five lessons to be developed. During this time, learners had the chance to go through the process writing stages, back and forth. Additionally, learners had the opportunity of reflecting upon the experience they had had and its implications on their learning process. Generally, the reflective-journal writing was done outside the classroom and it was developed after having received comments either from the teacher or from other learners.

To have a more comprehensive understanding of the activities carried out during the implementation, the table 3 exemplifies what was done during the sessions, the activities learners developed, and the writing exercises. Also, the learning strategies are described and the reflection moments learners had, are presented. All the lessons followed the same structure and aimed at similar objectives (See Appendix 7), the changes were mainly related to the topics and the types of strategies proposed (See Appendix 9). Nevertheless, it must be clear that despite the suggested

learning strategies, learners used the ones they considered to be most appropriate, and they made comments on the ones proposed, deciding whether they found them useful or not.

In this chapter I presented the visions of curriculum, language, learning and classroom to support the pedagogical actions taken throughout the study. Also, I described the activities developed in the different stages of the pedagogical intervention, which is exemplified by a sample of the procedures followed during one of the weeks of the implementation. Finally, a table describing the activities, the type of writing exercise, the objectives aimed to be achieved, and the time devoted to develop each one. In the following chapter I focus on the analysis of the data collected during the study.

Chapter V

Data Analysis and Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to present the analysis of the data that was collected throughout the classes and processes of reflection carried out with and by the participants. The chapter is divided into sections, which comprise, on the one hand the data analysis procedures, namely; codification, data reduction, and validation, followed by the perspective that the analysis accounts for, and finally the categories and subcategories the theoretical framework provided, which are supported by evidence extracted from the data collection instruments used.

Procedures for Data Analysis

For the data collection process of my research study, I saved the documents gathered during the process in different folders. I decided to use one for the first instruments designed, which were, the opening questionnaires, the three written productions developed throughout the first month (as presented in the instructional design), and the students' journals, in which students reflected about their first compositions, and their experience. Additionally, I used another folder to keep the outcomes of the second stage; the four written compositions that compound the magazine's article, and the journals for the new compositions. A third folder was used for the final stage, in this one I stored the final versions of the article, the journals learners wrote and the closing questionnaires. All this information was stored in such a way with the purpose of having a comparative source, for analytical purposes. Nevertheless, I also scanned the documents so I did not have any information lost, and I had the chance to use cropped images to exemplify the discussion made with the theory and the data collected (Patton, 2002).

Having organized the data collected, I proceeded to embark on the data analysis phase. In qualitative research, one of the greatest trends is to let the data guide the researcher into finding

the most common patterns and emerging categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). However, given the fact that this study had the specific purpose of exploring the levels of control in autonomy (Beson, 2001), the analysis of data was not developed in an deductive way, on the contrary, the categories were drawn specifically from what the theory establishes. Therefore, the data analysis was conducted framed under the information provided by the author. In this particular case, I encountered the need of exploring the three levels of autonomy firstly, because of an extensive reading that led me to consider the study of these levels relevant for understanding how autonomy is constructed by learners. Additionally, the reading of Cabrales, Cáceres and Marrugo (2010) encouraged the profound need of going to the levels and exploring them from a more qualitative perspective, since their study was a quantitative one.

In this sense, it was found appropriate to have a data analysis approach that provided me with the opportunity of departing from a clear perspective. Consequently, the selected method for this task was the a priori data analysis, which for Miles and Huberman (1994) is a type of method that comes from what has been said by recognized authors in the studied field. According to Bazeley (2007) after a conscious reading of the theory, a researcher may want to base the coding of the categories on what he or she has observed on the pre-established concepts or ideas in the field. In her words, “who are bringing a strong theoretical basis to their investigation will come to their data already with a start list of concepts they are interested in exploring, developing or testing” (p.76).

With the categories established by the theory, I had the opportunity of adopting a more structured way of thinking when I approached the data. This given the fact that the information collected was placed in each of the proposed levels of autonomy. Once the findings started to be revealed, there was a deep dialogue between what appeared in the data and the theoretical approximations. For Bazeley (2007), the use of this type of data analysis brings benefits for the

study developed. In the first place, she considers that this procedure is useful as it provides the basis for exploring the research questions. Another positive aspect of this procedure is its convenience when it comes to time-limited studies, such as the present one, that was implemented in approximately three months, in an intensive course at a private EFL learning institution.

Nevertheless, subscribing to this type of data analysis method can also be problematic. As the data was explored, I noticed that some information did not completely fit into what was suggested by the theory. This represented a shortcoming especially when coding the information. In spite of this, after comprehensive reading and comparative process, the data showed characteristics that could contribute to the understanding of the levels of autonomy, something that appears to be one of the greatest aspects of my study.

Categories of the analysis

The main purpose of this study was to explore and describe the role that reflection strategies might have on the three levels of control of autonomy, namely, control over learning management, control over cognitive processes and control over content. Additionally, the study aimed at exploring the impact that reflection activities may have on the political involvement of adult learners in the decision-making process within the classroom context. This exploration was framed under the development of a series of writing activities that responded to the process writing approach, which is the model used at the institution for writing tasks, and that acts in this study as a basic construct. The hierarchical system presented in Figure 3 is a graphical representation of the way in which the categories and subcategories are organized in the present study. In this graphic I seek to display the relationship there is between the two research questions and the categories that were adopted from the theory and their correspondent sub-

categories. The names used for the subcategories were taken from the movie Star Wars, and are quotes that represent the categories selected.

In order to understand this organization, I now introduce the relationship between the categories and subcategories. In the first place, there is *Control over learning management*, from

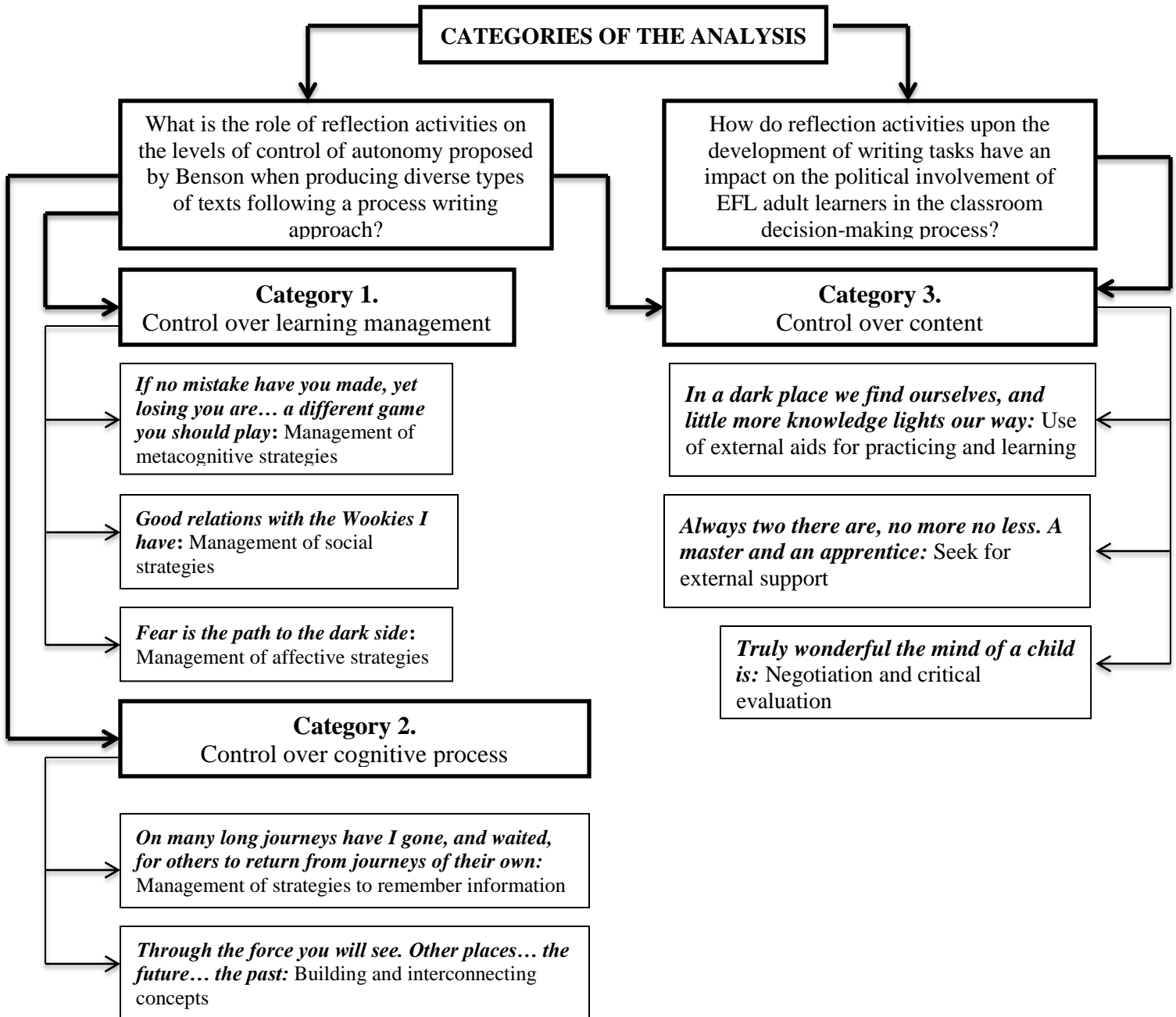


Figure 3. Visual representation of the categories resulting from the analysis.

which three sub-categories are derived. On the one hand, there is *“If no mistake have you made, yet losing you are... a different game you should play”*: *Management of metacognitive strategies to improve writing*, this name was selected to describe the actions taken to manage strategies of metacognition, which has to do with all the things done to manage time, plan, organize, self-manage, monitor, and self-assess. On the second hand, there is *“Good relations with the wookies I have”*: *Management of social strategies*, related to the ways used to improve learning, which involve social interaction, for instance, asking questions to other people, and working cooperatively with partners. Finally, the third component of this category is *“Fear is the path to the dark side”*: *Management of affective strategies*, which is linked to the doings of control over personal emotions, like controlling anxiety, self-encouragement, and emotional management.

Subsequently, the second category is *Control over cognitive processes* that embraces diverse aspects of the mental activities, which occur within the learning process. Despite the struggle to observe the components of this category, given its mental nature, specific behaviors, which displayed those mental activities, were identified. Hence, the first sub-category was named *“On many long journeys have I gone, and waited too, for others to return from journeys of their own”*: *Managing strategies to remember information*, a title that responds to the ways in which participants recall details and data. Finally, the second sub-category is *“Through the force things you will see. Other places... the future... the past”*: *Building and interconnecting concepts*, I have denominated this subcategory with this name because of the importance of establishing connections with the information students receive, which is revealed when learners develop their arguments and support them, when they connect their readings with personal experiences or previously read materials, etc.

As the final category, there is *Control over content*, which, as its name suggests, is related to everything that has to do with the content learners are interested in working on and get familiar

with. In this context, three subcategories have been established, first *“In a dark place we find ourselves, and a little more knowledge lights our way”*: *Use of external aids for practicing and learning*, which aims at accounting for the external mechanisms learners use to acquire knowledge and reinforce the one they have, for instance, watching movies or videos, reading books, magazines, or listening to music, this subcategory is different from the next, because it involves the use of external objects and not people, whereas the next one is related to social interactions outside the institutional context. The second sub-category is *“Always two there are, no more no less. A master and an apprentice”*: *Seek for external support*. This sub-category holds the use of strategies that allow learners to exchange in different contexts from the institutional one, as being part of study groups, having tutoring sessions with teachers and even online exchange like being part of an online community and practicing with others. Finally, there is the third sub-category, which is *“Truly wonderful the mind of a child is”*: *Negotiation and critical evaluation*. In the last section the critical evaluation upon practices, and the comments and suggestions made by learners are analyzed. This is one of the most relevant sections of my study, since it contributes to respond the first question and actually answers the second. This subcategory is related to the political dimension of learning, how students get involved in the decision-making process within the classroom context and the resistances that are developed in order to make their voices be heard.

Category 1: Control over learning management

The first category that the theory provided for the present study responds to the level of autonomy in Benson (2001), namely *Control over learning management*. This category is based on Benson’s revision of different literature with regards to autonomy, in the work of several authors (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). As pointed out in the theoretical framework,

this level of control includes a series of strategies that learners use in order to organize, plan, develop and assess learning. In Benson's discussion there are three main types of strategies that are implemented by learners in order to make their learning more successful, *metacognitive, social, and affective*. Hence, the category is divided into three sub-categories that account for the use of the three kinds of strategies.

“If no mistake have you made, yet losing you are... a different game you should play”:

Management of metacognitive strategies to improve writing. This sub-category is understood as the accurate use and pertinent implementation of strategies that help the learner in the processes of planning, attention management, self-management, self-monitoring, and self-assessment to improve his or her writing skills. Through the data analysis, it was found that students who used metacognitive strategies were able to see their writing processes from a more objective perspective, it was observed also that learners became more capable of organizing, monitoring, and assessing their own work. The excerpts and examples below show how the use of metacognitive strategies was displayed and experienced by students throughout the implementation of this study.

11. **S1:** creo que el reflexionar acerca de lo que hacíamos en clase me dio la posibilidad de
12. pensar acerca de mi proceso, de lo que hacía bien y de lo que debía mejorar. Aunque en
13. ocasiones me costo pensar en mi propio trabajo, me parece que me dio herramientas para
14. ser capaz de identificar mis dificultades, no solo en escritura sino en otros aspectos y
15. prestarle más atención a los aspectos relevantes.

[Sixth journal entry, March 20th, 2015]

This participant finds the reflective process beneficial for her learning, such as tools to identify her strengths and weaknesses, a way to transfer this ability to other areas of learning, and the capacity to determine the importance given to certain aspects of her progress.

35. **S2:** una de las cosas que más me costaron fue que la composición no estaba organizada, mis
36. compañeros me dijeron que había escrito mucha información, pero que no estaba
37. conectada, para las correcciones de esta tarea y de las próximas actividades tengo que

38. organizar mejor el texto.

[First reflective journal entry, February 17th, 2015]

In addition, this other participant found three relevant aspects. First, acknowledging the level of difficulty each task has, the importance of organizing one's work, and the need of planning, especially when he expresses that for his next tasks he will "organize the text better".

In the learners' experience there was a benefit in using reflection strategies to become more aware of their process. According to the data, the use of these strategies gave them a different overview of their learning process; the tasks that they were successful at and the ones they needed to improve. Additionally, students began to pay more attention to specific details that were relevant in their writing, such as the use of connectors and the order of a paragraph.

8. **S5:** Comparando el párrafo anterior que escribimos sobre los tips para un extranjero en bogota yo noté que hice la tarea mejor porque me dedicué más, usé los mapas mentales que nos sugirió la profesora, y también los conectores y la estructura de un párrafo, que fue lo que se me dificultó la vez anterior.

[First reflective journal entry, February 17th, 2015]

As observed in this excerpt, this learner noticed that comparing his task with the previous one, he could see the progress, as well as the usefulness of implementing strategies such as mapping, linking, and organizing. This proved to be beneficial for learning as it helped him become aware of the importance of observing one's progress from an objective and critical perspective. This is evident in the two versions of his paragraph:

If you visit Bogota, you can see places, Monserrate, La zona T, la G, San Andresito. You can visit the parks Simon Bolivar, El Salitre, El Tunal, El de la 93. I go to this places with my family and my friends. Our like go to this parks, they are beautiful, big and peace.

S5:

[Student's artifact. First Composition "Tips for a visitor to Colombia", February 16th, 2015]

Bogota has many places beautiful that you can visit. There are many touristic sites, like Monserrate, Zone T and G, and for shop San Andresito. Additionally, you can visit the parks in the city, a big park is Simon Bolivar, also El Salitre, El de la 93. I have been to this places with my family and friends. We like to go to these parks because they are beautiful and peaceful.

S5:

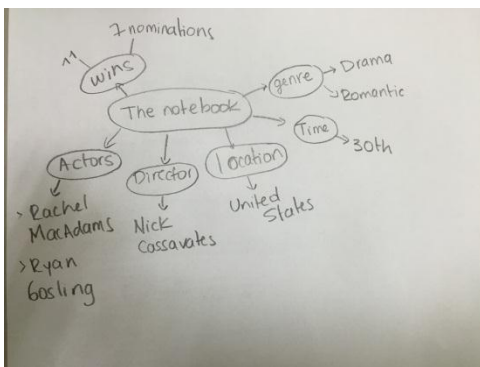
[Student's artifact. First Composition "Tips for a visitor to Colombia (Revision)", February 18th, 2015]

Identifying weaknesses may contribute to the improvement of tasks students develop.

This participant considered that through using the strategies suggested he could have a better performance in the second task he developed. Becoming aware of the difficulties and identifying ways of overcoming them provide learners with elements to face challenging situations, not only while learning English.

As Benson (2001) points out, one of the characteristics of the use of metacognitive strategies is the ability of verifying accuracy and effectiveness of the procedures when a task is undertaken. The data revealed that learners identified as positive the fact that they could transfer the abilities to other contexts and tasks, which ultimately helps them become more autonomous.

On the other hand, the use of strategies such as mind-mapping, outlining, classifying and diagram-designing constituted a relevant tool for students in different aspects. The data analysis showed that firstly, learners established new ways of planning their compositions as it can be observed:



S2:

MOVIE REVIEW

"The Note Book" is an unforgettable drama and romantic film that is based on a true love story. The movie was filmed in United States, the places show the different traditional customs in this country in the 30th.

The famous Nick Cassavetes is the director and his starring actors are Rachel McAdams, remember this actress is much suggested for romantic films and don't forget the handsome Ryan Gosling, everyone will love his performance. This movie has eleven wins and seven nominations

S2:

[Student's artifact. Prewriting exercise "Movie review", February 19th, 2015]

[Student's artifact. Second Composition "Movie review", February 20th, 2015]

The previous artefacts show how the learner indeed used the mapping strategy to construct the paragraph about the movie review. Comparing the two sources, the data shows that the learner used a clear categorization to determine the way she was going to present the information. In this way having details and sub-details helped the learner organize her paragraph and include all the information she aimed at considering.

Besides from mapping learners used a wide repertoire of strategies that helped them in the writing of their compositions. Learners noticed that some of these strategies were more useful for them than others, which allow them to recognize the ways in which they are more effective learners.

10. S4: Para mí una de las mejores estrategias que usamos fue outlining, porque me permitió
11. organizar y planear mi escrito. También me gustó que nosotros mismos pudimos diseñar
12. el outline, con eso no teníamos que seguir solamente lo que los formatos decían sino
13. también lo que nos interesaba incluir.

[Third reflective journal, March, 4th, 2015]

This participant sees outlining as one of the best ways to organize the texts, because of the uses it had in the planning of the composition. In addition to this, the learner considers designing

the outline as a way to getting involved in the process, to really get familiar with these strategies and taking charge of their responsibilities as a writer and learner.

There are two relevant aspects to highlight from the excerpts presented; on the one hand, it is evident that by using the strategies learners had the opportunity of writing their texts in a more logical way. The images showed that the information the learner planned and organized through the mind-map was turned into a logical and well-structured paragraph. In the same way, the second student acknowledges the usefulness of an outline to organize and plan his composition. On the other hand, the second student mentioned that they had the chance of designing the outline themselves, which detached them from the format, something that contributes to the decision-making process and demonstrates learners felt confident enough to take over the design and development of the task.

Similarly, when comparing the data gathered, it was found that learners identified changes in the frequency with which they used strategies. In the first take of the questionnaire, learners expressed that they used some strategies such as controlling attention; the other ones, appeared not to be as important for them: time organization, identifying learning problems, self assessment, and self-monitoring showed to have a limited frequency at the beginning of the study:

Table 4

Participants' use of metacognitive strategies – Entry 1

Criteria	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost never	Never
I organize my time	1		2	2	
I control my attention		3	1	1	
I identify my learning problems	1		3	1	
I self-assess learning		1	2	2	
I self monitor my work			3	1	1

[First questionnaire, February 11th 2015]

This is contrasted with the results from the second take, in which a great number of changes were observed. Students considered their use of strategies as identifying learning problems, self-assessment, and self-monitoring became more frequent, showing a great difference from the first take. Nevertheless, controlling attention and organizing time experience slight changes.

Table 5

Participants' use of metacognitive strategies – Entry 2

Criteria	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost never	Never
I organize my time	1		2	2	
I control my attention		4	1		
I identify my learning problems	2	3			
I self-assess learning	1	2	2		
I self monitor my work	3	1	1		

[Second questionnaire, April 15th 2015]

The questionnaires' answers revealed learners felt there were changes in their use of certain strategies. It is evident here, that learners started to give levels of priority to specific behaviors that helped them in the search for a more successful writing process. As a consequence, aspects such as attention control, identification of learning problems, and self-monitoring went from very low frequency to a higher regularity and established themselves as more common behaviors. This change entails that learners are more aware of the fact that there are some paths that allow them to become more efficient and accurate in their writing process.

In a deeper analysis, it is seen that some behaviors were lower in a scale of relevance for learners. Even though there was movement in areas like attention control, the change was not as strong as in the previous behaviors. This could be a result related to the fact that in some cases,

learners are more concerned with their passing or failing, or the success of the task, rather than with their own learning progression.

Finally, it was observed through the data gathered, that learners did not display a change in their time-management behaviors. A characteristic that could be associated to their multiple occupations, as students study in other institutions and full-time employees.

From an individual perspective, this sub-category showed that learners did experience changes in the ways they approached their tasks. Their reflection provided insights on the aspects that they considered more relevant such as clarity, coherence, as well as the order of the text. Additionally, learners acknowledged the importance it had to be able to reflect upon the actions taken throughout the process, which reminds us that this should be an underlying practice in all learning endeavors.

Nevertheless, the control over learning management is not a process that is developed only from an individual standpoint. Social interactions also play a significant role when completing a task, given that it provides individuals with different perspectives. With this in mind, the following section is dedicated to the social relationships that are beneficial for the writing, as well as for the learning processes.

***“Good relations with the wookies I have”*: Management of social strategies for improvement.**

The second sub-category is related to the management of social strategies for improvement. This unit is understood as the actions that are taken by learners in association with teachers or peers in order to improve. Within this sub-category there is a number of behaviors that occur in a social framework, such as asking questions, cooperating with others, and feeling empathy. After a deep revision of the data it was found that in several moments of the writing process learners resorted to their partners' or teacher's assistance in order to improve their work. Asking questions,

assessing tasks cooperatively, and understanding the new practices through the features of their writing styles allowed learners to expand their repertoire of learning strategies.

12. **S3:** durante este ejercicio tuve varias dificultades porque no podía comprender como llenar
13. el outline, me parecia que el formato no estaba claro y que me perdía cada vez que
14. trataba de llenarlo con la información de mi artículo. Sin embargo, cuando la profesora
15. nos puso a trabajar en grupo y pude hacerle preguntas a mis compañeros acerca de como
16. desarrollar las ideas, fue mucho más fácil.

[Fourth reflective journal, March, 10th, 2015]

This learner experienced the importance of working with others. For her, asking questions to his partners opened the doors for her to develop her ideas in an easier way.

7. **S2:** cuando comenzamos a escribir el artículo mis compañeros me ayudaron mucho porque
8. entre todos resolvíamos las dudas.

[Fourth reflective journal, March, 10th, 2015]

Similarly, this participant expressed that his partners represented a great help and that they all together found ways to solve problems related to their tasks.

19. **S2:** Después de escribir mi artículo me sirvió mucho que mis compañeros leyeran mi
20. trabajo, especialmente por que cuando ellos no entendían algo yo podía imaginar como
21. podía decirlo de una forma que ellos comprendieran.

[Sixth reflective journal, March 20th, 2015]

In a different task, this learner again asserted that his partners had been an asset in his process since they asked him questions about the things that were not clear. This led the student to find solutions and make his written communication more effective.

As these three pieces of evidence show, learners found the social interaction to be relevant in their writing process. In some cases, due to the need of assistance and guidance, as the learner explains in the first excerpt. According to Benson (2001), learners benefit from asking questions when concepts, that are unclear do not allow the learner to advance in the development of the

task. As the data shows, learners worked with others in order to understand better the procedures they had to follow.

Looking at the participants’ reflections, the data illustrates learners saw interaction with partners as an important feature of learning because they represented an audience for their written productions. As they went over the texts different questions aroused and the authors had to find ways to make their texts more comprehensible.

When looking at the process of writing and the products themselves, the data revealed that learners worked cooperatively in different moments of the writing process. One of these moments was related to peer assessment exercises. In the following excerpt, the reader assesses the writer’s work and provides suggestions, which is also revealed in the journal entry written by the writer after she received these suggestions.

Peer Assessment Format – Article's introduction
Assess your partner's work using the following criteria. Decide what your opinion on all of these aspects is and provide suggestions for further writing.

Criteria	Excellent	Good	Below
The writer uses a <i>catchy</i> sentence to open their text.		✓	
The writer provides <i>enough</i> contextualization for the reader to be situated.		✓	
The vocabulary used by the writer is <i>clear and appropriate</i> .	✓		
There is a <i>clear thesis statement</i> that gives the reader an idea of what the text is going to be about.		✓	
The use of language is <i>coherent and clear</i> . The writer uses grammar structures <i>accurate</i> to the level.	✓		

Comments:
You need work the parts of the outline because you have some problems especially the thesis statement.

S5:

[Student’s artifact. “Article’s introduction peer assessment format”, March, 10th, 2015]

This artifact shows that the evaluator took the time to read the writer’s composition, to identify the weaknesses and provide comments on her performance. Such cooperation is also revealed on what the writer expressed in her reflective journal:

- 12. **S5:** Después de escribir la introducción de mi artículo, una de mis compañeras me evaluó y
- 13. ella notó que la tesis de mi trabajo no era clara. Yo me puse a la tarea de volverla a
- 14. escribir con ayuda de la profesora.

[Fourth reflective journal, March, 10th, 2015]

Here the learner expressed two significant points. For this student the assessment of her partner had given her tools to make corrections and improve her work. Furthermore, she asserted that in order to make these corrections and have a better thesis statement, she resorted to the teacher.

When exploring the peer assessment instrument and comparing it to the actual reflection process the writer went through, the data shows that the writer found the peer assessment process as a valuable activity, which she combined with asking questions to the teacher. The last excerpt shows how the learner has a positive and proactive attitude towards the task, she did not only acknowledged the importance of the comments she received, but also the need of taking actions upon them. This is discussed by Oxford (1990), when he asserts that cooperating with peers and other proficient users contributed to the development of social skills for learning improvement.

Additionally from peer feedback, learners encountered that asking questions and corrections to the teacher was also a way of improving on their writing success.

7. **S4:** En este primer párrafo me sirvió mucho que la profesora me leyera y luego me diera
8. comentarios.

[First reflective journal entry, February 17th, 2015]

For this participant, for example, the comments and reading from the teacher were an important aid. However, peers and even more advanced learners offered assistance to the authors, especially delivering them with ideas, which, for this learner in particular, was something productive.

12. **S2:** cuando fuimos al salón de skills 6 fue muy productivo porque ellos nos dieron nuevas
13. ideas para que sonáramos más claros.

[Second reflective journal entry, February 21th, 2015]

The previous excerpts demonstrate the importance of social strategic cooperation. For learners having other people revise their work, provide new ideas to make composition clearer and more coherent, and also sharing with others about their own experience, represents a very

rich source of reflection and assessment. Through the journals, it can be observed that learners felt more comfortable when receiving feedback, as they understood in which they were going through a process and that they had to go back and forth making corrections and evaluating the progress. This was also revealed in the questionnaires applied, as displayed in the tables:

Table 6

Participants' use of social strategies for improvement – Entry 1

Criteria	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost never	Never
I cooperate with other learners		1	2	2	

[First questionnaire, February 11th 2015]

As it can be observed, there were some changes in the behaviors seen in the two takes of the questionnaire. In the first one, learners expressed to almost never and sometimes cooperate with other learners. This behavior changed in the second take, when most of the learners stated they almost always did, which might be the result of the implementation of the group activities and reflection tasks.

Table 7

Participants' use of social strategies for improvement – Entry 2

Criteria	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost never	Never
I cooperate with other learners		3	2		

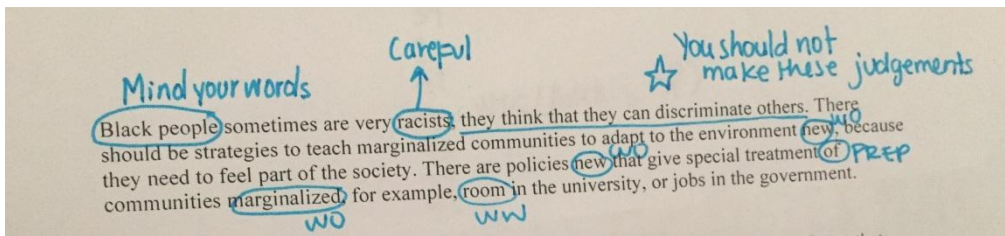
[Second questionnaire, April 17th, 2015]

The transition experienced by learners was portrayed in the data collected. As learners expressed in their reflections, it was very useful for them to have the access to the knowledge of more advanced learners and users of the language. When recognizing this benefit, learners opened new possibilities for dialogical interactions that could contribute to their development of

tasks and to reduce the negative feelings they could experience when receiving feedback. As a consequence, when being asked for the second time about their resorting to social strategies for improvement, there was an evident progression displayed in students' perceptions.

Sharing thoughts and ideas with others became a relevant feature of the learning and writing processes. Not only, it broke barriers in terms of peer cooperation, or clarification, correction and verification, but it also demonstrated to be of great importance to the development of the capacity of understanding the other's culture, thoughts and feelings.

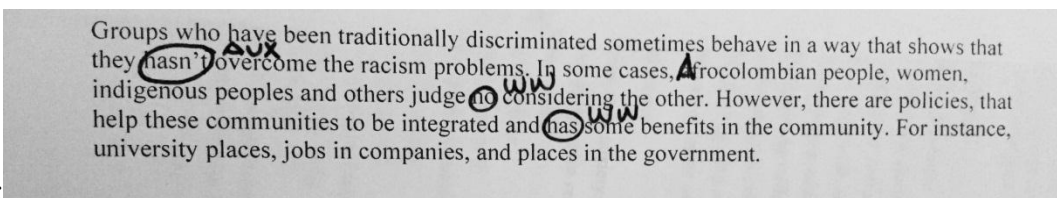
In addition to this, socialization of texts provided different view points related to learners' assertive use of language:



S2:

[Student's artifact, Fourth Composition "Article's Introduction" March 9th, 2015]

This artifact displays that the learner was not completely aware of how he needs to refer to different communities. In his writing exercises he uses words such as "black", or "racists", which could be offensive and misinterpreted. Therefore, after receiving comments from the teacher, this student made adjustments and came up with the following text:



S2:

[Student's artifact, Fourth Composition "Article's Introduction Corrections" March 11th, 2015]

It can be observed in this artifact that the writer tried to be more careful with his word-choice; he was more assertive and polite when referring to marginalized communities. He also reflected upon his work:

1. **S4:** Al comenzar a pensar en mi tema del artículo tuve muchas ideas que me parecían
2. importantes como lo que está relacionado con la discriminación positiva. Me pareció
3. importante tener algunas ideas claras sobre lo que quería decir sobre el tema. Pero cuando
4. se lo presenté a la profesora, ella me hizo sugerencias relacionadas con las palabras que
5. había utilizado, porque podían ser ofensivas. Yo no lo había visto desde ese punto de
6. vista, pero creo que sí podía sonar un poco grosero.

[Fourth reflective journal, March, 10th, 2015]

In this excerpt the student showed how the comments from a reader could help her to reflect upon the people she was talking about. It was evident that after the process of reflection, the participant decided to use other words that can be more assertive.

As this excerpt shows, this learner never thought that it could be problematic to use certain words in an exercise. However, the data shows that the learner became more aware of her wording, since in her second text she makes an effort to be more mindful with them. Such reflection is also displayed in her journal, when she points out that she considered that those words could be rude.

Learners highlighted the importance of sharing with others in order to be more capable of identifying the audience's expectations and needs:

10. **S4:** Es muy importante saber para quien se escribe, no es lo mismo tener una audiencia de
11. niños que una de adultos.

[Sixth reflective journal, March, 20th, 2015]

As the reflective journal displays, this learner was concerned with the audience who read him. He states that all audiences are different and that authors need to be aware of that.

9. **S5:** si quiero llamar la atención de mi lector tengo que saber que espera.

[Fourth reflective journal, March, 20th, 2015]

Similarly, this learner considers that in order to have a text appealing for the reader, she needs to know what the reader might expect from the text. This recognition allows the writer to be more considered of the reader and more careful when expressing his or her ideas.

These reflective journal excerpts show that learners are concerned with the other, as Oxford (1990) points out, one of the characteristics of an autonomous learner is to be able to think of the other having a cultural understanding. Such strategies certainly contributed to learners understanding of communicative acts and purposes.

All the data presented in this subcategory shows how learners are concerned with the use of strategies that are involved with social interaction in the institutional context. Working with peers in assessment exercises, listening to comments, asking questions, and cooperating with others helped learners to mull over the actions they took and the results produced. In the next sub-category, however, there is a transition from the social dimension of the control over learning management, to a more individual side of its representations, namely, emotions and feelings.

***“Fear is the path to the dark side”*: Management of affective strategies.** The third sub-category included in *Control over learning management* has to do with the management of affective strategies. This sub-category is understood as all the doings of the learner in order to control aspects that can affect the emotional side of learning. In this context, there are different strategies that act as components of this sub-category, namely, lowering anxiety, encouraging one self, and taking one’s emotional temperature¹ (Oxford, 1990 as cited by Benson, 2001).

During the data collection stage, there were different moments in which the data showed strategies that were used by learners to execute control over their emotions. In the following

¹ See Oxford (1990), taking your emotional temperature: Listening to your body, using a checklist, writing a language diary, and discussing your feelings with someone else.

section, I present findings and evidence that illustrates how these strategies were applied and what their impact on learners' performance was.

On the one hand, data showed learners lowered the anxiety by using different strategies:

3. **S2:** escribir por primera vez en inglés fue muy intimidante, me produjo mucha ansiedad
4. pensar que lo que estaba escribiendo podría no tener sentido. Además seguir nuevas
5. instrucciones y pasos, aunque lo hizo más organizado y lógico fue demandante.
6. Finalmente, decidí enfrentarme al reto pensando mucho lo que quería decir.

[First reflective journal entry, February 17th, 2015]

As expressed by this learner, the writing task represented a source of stress and anxiety.

He thought that the text he was creating was not completely clear, which fostered fear.

Nevertheless, the learner tried to reduce his levels of anxiety and actually get through the experience.

12. **S5:** Dejar que mis compañeros leyeran toda mi composición en un grupo hizo que me
13. sintiera juzgada y observada por los demás, sin embargo vi que al leerme habían cosas
14. que me podían servir para este trabajo y para los que vamos a hacer más adelante, lo que
15. me ayudó a relajarme mucho.

[Third reflective journal, March, 4th, 2015]

As in the previous reflection, this learner identified that being assessed made her feel observed and judged, both negative feelings. Nevertheless, when she observed that despite these negative feelings there was a positive result of the exercise, she felt much more confident.

Data shows that learners understood that despite the emotions that they experienced they could find benefits from the different interactions and from the feedback they could receive. The theory in this regards, asserts that learners can use strategies such as meditation, relaxation, deep breathing, music, or laughter, in order to reduce the level of anxiety (Benson, 2001). The next excerpt illustrates how learners developed the ability to face situations with laughter:

22. **S3:** Cuando nos sentamos a darnos feedback, yo sabía que había hecho el trabajo a medias

23. porque no había investigado lo suficiente. Mis compañeros se burlaron de mí porque no
24. había completado la actividad. Yo me sentí apenada, pero en ese momento no podía
25. hacer nada, así que también me reí.

[Fifth reflective journal entry, March 14th, 2015]

This participant's reflection shows that she was aware of her weaknesses, and reveals that despite the comments she received, she found in laughter a way of decreasing the levels of her negative feelings, which helped her to transform them into positive feeling, and therefore positive feedback. Learners used different strategies that helped them first, to cope with the situation, to understand that the comments people make related to their texts are aimed at providing the author with more tools and ideas for their writing, and to look at their outcomes from a more objective perspective.

Additionally, learners displayed they could benefit from this emotional control as they could be more successful when they developed a task:

- 4.S3: Este fue el primer ejercicio de escritura, el cual me dio muy duro porque era la primera vez
5. que escribía algo. Enfrentarme a la hoja en blanco me produjo miedo porque no sabía como
6. comenzar a escribir. Pensé que no podía ser tan difícil y que tenía que intentarlo.
7. Finalmente, me sentí bien porque no tuve tantos errores.

[First reflective journal entry, February 17th, 2015]

This student refers to her emotions constantly, it is observed through her reflection that the task itself represented a challenge, something that translated into fear and anxiety. Her not knowing about how to start writing, made her feel uncomfortable. Nonetheless, she used positive statements such as "it can not be so difficult", in order to face the challenge and start writing.

As it is asserted in the theory, making positive statements help learners face the challenging situations in a more comfortable and anxiety-free way. This was evident as learners went through the writing process. They learned how to encourage and reward themselves. Such behaviors took learners to develop a greater control over their emotions.

In the same exercise of exploring the data related to emotional control, it was found that at the beginning of the study learners had behaviors that seemed to have changed by the end of it.

Table 8

Participants’ use of affective strategies – Entry 1

Criteria	Always	Almost always	Sometimes	Almost never	Never
I use relaxation techniques			3	2	
I make positive statements		1	3	1	
I use a language learning diary					5

[First questionnaire, February 11th 2015]

As it can be observed in the table from the first take of the questionnaires, learners hardly used strategies to manage their emotions. Tools like relaxation techniques, and using a language diary move between never and sometimes, whereas making positive statements only had one student who almost always used it.

In contrast, the second table showed there were changes in students’ behaviors. Learners expressed they used positive statements more frequently, as they went from almost never, and sometimes to always and almost always. In the same way, the use of a language diary moved from never to sometimes and almost always, which responds to the reflective strategy promoted throughout the time of implementation. The use of relaxation techniques seemed not to have a change in the two takes, but in the reflective journals, students expressed to have used them and to have found out they were effective.

Table 9

Participants’ use of affective strategies – Entry 2

Criteria	Always	Almost always	Sometimes	Almost never	Never
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I use relaxation techniques			3	2
I make positive statements	1	2	2	
I use a language learning diary		4	1	

[Second questionnaire, April 17th, 2015]

Learners started this process mostly unaware of the importance of having techniques that could help them face the emotional challenges they encounter. It is not that learners did not acknowledge the crucial role that emotions played in any learning process. In different sources, students point out how their feelings affected their performance, as well as their willingness to comply with a given task.

5. **S4:** a veces uno se siente mal cuando los demás le dan comentarios, o cuando la
6. profesora lo corrige a uno. En mi caso, no me gusto cuando me dijeron que tenía
7. que repetir mi movie review, no me dieron ganas de hacerlo porque me sentía
8. derrotado.

[Second journal entry, February 21st, 2015]

In his reflection this learner shows that he experienced some negative feelings, especially when he was told he had to repeat one of his compositions. He expressed he did not want to do it again because he felt defeated. The way this learner felt prevented him from continuing working on his task, which shows that emotions played a significant role on the learner's decisions.

Nevertheless, through the development of the research project it was observed learners started to use ways that helped them to control their emotions. Some of these techniques included making positive statements, and keeping a language diary. The latter, despite of being part of the implementation was recognized by learners as having a positive impact.

11. **S1:** creo que el reflexionar acerca de lo que hacíamos en clase me dio la posibilidad de
12. pensar acerca de mi proceso, de lo que hacía bien y de lo que debía mejorar. Aunque en
13. ocasiones me costo pensar en mi propio trabajo, me parece que me dio herramientas para
14. ser capaz de identificar mis dificultades, no solo en escritura sino en otros aspectos y
15. prestarle más atención a los aspectos relevantes.

[Seventh journal entry, March 26th, 2015]

This learner considered that reflecting upon her learning progress and her writing performance was a positive way of improving. She asserts that this process helped her to identify the difficulties she had, as well as, her strengths. Having this in mind, it is observed throughout the category, that learners benefited from the use of reflective strategies to manage their actions in learning, both from a social and individual perspective, working with participants in the institutional context and managing their emotions.

Continuing with the analysis of the three levels of autonomy, I now turn to the second category, namely, control over cognitive processes, which contributes to the understanding of the different ways learners have to be involved in their learning process and act over it.

2. Category 2: Control over cognitive processes

For Benson, this is the most difficult level of control to be observed, given the fact that it is based on the different mental processes that are carried out by learners. In this study, this category is understood as all the mechanisms used in order to manage the information learners acquire, in which three relevant aspects are framed: attention, reflection and metacognitive knowledge. Such management processes, are intended to contribute to the learning process in several ways, like interconnecting concepts, finding logical orders to manage information, coming to conclusions from deductive or inferring processes, amongst others. Within this category we can find two sub-categories that group the mental processes observed throughout the implementation and that respond to the ones given in the theory. On the one hand, there is the strategy connected to the management of strategies for remembering information, which includes strategies such as following models, repetition, note taking strategies, translation, etc. The second, on the other hand, has to do with building and interconnecting concepts and information,

it is based on what the learner does with the information in their brain; therefore, the behaviors in this one are inferences, deductive and inductive processes, and elaboration.

***“On many journeys have I gone, and waited too, for others to return from journeys of their own”*: Management of strategies for remembering information.** This first sub-category is framed under the first aspect mentioned in the psychology of autonomous learning, which has to do with the attention a learner pays to the information they aim at learning. In this sense, the category is focused on the management of strategies for remembering information, which is a set of actions learners use that help them direct their attention to the information that is ultimately important for them, this process gives order to that chaos of input. Therefore, strategies such as repetition, note taking, translation, and model following are representations of the attention learners devote to the information they seek to learn.

The data, in these regards, showed that learners who applied the reflective strategies became selective and consistent with the attention they paid to the information they received. One example of this is how learners constantly used and reused the different language structures they learned, this with the aim of learning to use them in a more natural way:

18. **S2:** como teníamos que escribir un párrafo relacionado con los tips para un extranjero que
19. visita Colombia y habíamos estudiado el uso del presente perfecto, yo traté de utilizar esta
20. estructura lo más que pude, porque sabía que era importante para la comunicación básica.

[First reflective journal entry, February 17th, 2015]

This is evident in the paragraph the learner wrote, in which he used the structure repeatedly:

In Colombia there are much beautiful place to visit. I have been to Cañon del Chicamoca a place that has a valley and landscapas beautiful. I have been to Cartagena that is a city in the north of Colombia. It is very historical and you can to see monuments, a castle, a wall and the beach. I think the place most important to visit in Colombia is Bogota, because Bogota have big parks and the city. The people in Bogota are friendly and they help you. But you have careful because Bogota is dangerous sometimes, I haven't been stolen, but some of my friends have been stolen, so I think it is dangerous.

[S2: Student's artifact. First Composition "Tips for a visitor to Colombia", February 16th, 2015]

As it can be seen in this excerpt, the learner identified the importance of using what he had learned in class as much as possible. He asserts that using this structure could have a beneficial impact on his communicative acts. This suggests that the learner was aware of the need of repeating information to acquire the knowledge.

Learners realized that it was important to use the language repeatedly, especially if they expected to be able to learn that particular language feature. In this case, the learner considered that by using recycling he could become more proficient at using it. The implementation of strategies such as this one is a feature of effective language learning (Benson, 2001). According to the author, when learners take responsibility for what needs to be learned, they become more successful.

Recycling is combined with repetition and monitoring, processes that help learners to be aware of the elements they use when communicating ideas. With the objective of learning how to use different features from the language, learners went from simple compositions to more elaborated ones:

In Colombia exist pretty places, like Cartagena, Bogota, San Andres, and Medellin. This places are cheap and very touristic, especially the coast, because you can swim and go the beach. My favorite city is Medellin because has lights in christmas, and is organize.

[S3: Student's artifact. First Composition "Tips for a visitor to Colombia", February 16th, 2015]

This artifact shows that the use of grammatical structures in this first compositions were very basic. The writer limited herself to concentrate on simple tenses and basic linking words. This is contrasted with her second composition in which she uses more elaborated expressions, some of which were taken from the models, more complex structures, more complete information:

The Béliet Family is a beautiful movie that will take your breath away. It is a French movie directed by Éric Lartigau, produced by Philippe Rousselet, Éric Jehelmann and Stéphanie Berman. The movie star Louane Emera and François Damiens, as Paula and his father. The movie was filmed in France in 2013 and it was launched in 2014. The movie has won awards and nominations in festivals in different countries. It has been famous in all the world, so you can not miss it!

[S3: Student's artifact. Second Composition "Movie Review", February 20th, 2015]

The use of new expressions, grammar structures, and text organization techniques shows how learners determine what information they need to store in their brains. The decisions they made in this regards have to do with the language features that are useful for them in common communication, which is directly linked to the purposes learners have when learning a language.

Asking learners to write about topics they found interesting was a way of helping them decide what type of information they needed to learn. If the topics had been imposed, learners might not have been as interested as they were when writing their articles. Even topics that seemed to be very complex, for an A2 language learner, became a motivation that encouraged them to look for the words, expressions, and right elements to construct a text.

WHAT IS BEHIND YOUR CELLPHONE?

INTRODUCTION

Hundreds of thousands of new technologies are used by people around the world. Faster computers which are able to do things that they couldn't do before. More applications help us to have a more comfortable life by using a computer, tablet or a smartphone. But have you thought about how this types of items have come to you? Have you thought what has to happen so you can buy the ultimate tablet? Have you thought about the string of steeps **behind your cellphone**? If we take a glance around all smartphone's production system we can see smartphones are not just a fine device placed in a nice glass cabinet. Smartphones are a result of a great commercial interchange meaning billions of dollars in play, but specially are the result of hard labor of thousands of people around the world, generally poor people loosing their lives while our life is easier.

[S2: Student's artifact. Fourth Composition "Article's Introduction", March 9th, 2015]

When analyzing this artifact, it is evident that the author concentrated on using expressions that helped him to be more fluent and elaborated in his statements. Also, the different grammatical structures used showed the dedication and the relevance these aspects acquired in the eyes of the learner. Nonetheless, this was not the only significant aspect of this text, reading carefully, it can be observed that the learner was concerned with the social issues behind the production of cell phones. Such a topic was not part of what been discussed in class, which shows that the interest for writing about this topic was entirely intrinsic. This motivation was also expressed by the learner when he reflected upon this task:

14. **S2:** Seleccioné este tema porque siempre he estado interesado en los problemas sociales que
15. traen los fenómenos como las maquilas. Creo que es importante denunciar lo que sucede
16. alrededor de este tema. Adicionalmente, aprendí mucho sobre el tema, algunos terminos
17. en ingles y expresiones que hicieron mi introducción más llamativa.

[Fourth reflective journal, Article's Introduction March, 10th, 2015]

As afore mentioned, the freedom to select a topic for writing made it more appealing for learners. In this particular case, the learner selected this topic because he was interested in it. He considered pertinent to denounce these phenomena and describe the social problems behind it. The interest for this topic led the student to learn new expressions and vocabulary that could be useful when writing his article.

In other excerpts it is observed that learners perceived recycling and repetition as powerful strategies to practice and learn vocabulary:

15. **S4:** recycling es la estrategia más efectiva para poder aprender nuevo vocabulario y
16. gramaticas, he aprendido que necesito usar todo lo aprendemos en clase para que no se
17. me olvide.

[Fourth reflective journal, March, 10th, 2015]

In this reflection, for example, the learner admits that recycling is the best strategy for learning new vocabulary. Here it can be observed that the learner has identified a tool that is effective for his learning process, and has been able to master its use.

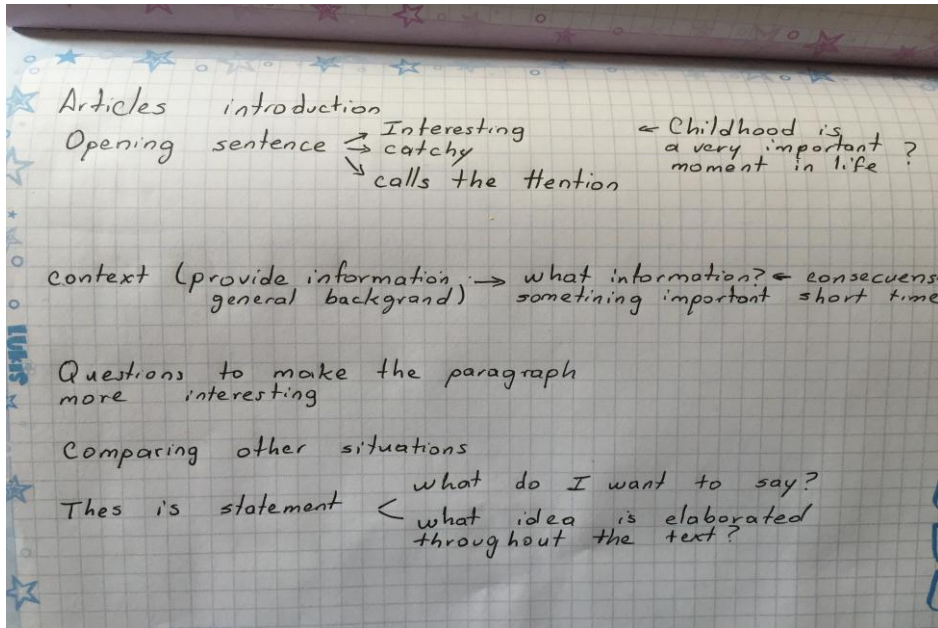
3. **S3:** En estas dos composiciones he tratao de usar el vocabulario que aprendemos en la
4. lección, porque sé que si no lo uso lo voy a perder.

[Second reflective journal entry, February 21st, 2015]

This second excerpt shows the reflection upon the need of using what has been learned in class. In the learner's opinion, not using what is studied in class might mean losing it. This shows that probably this learner has gone through a similar experience in other contexts.

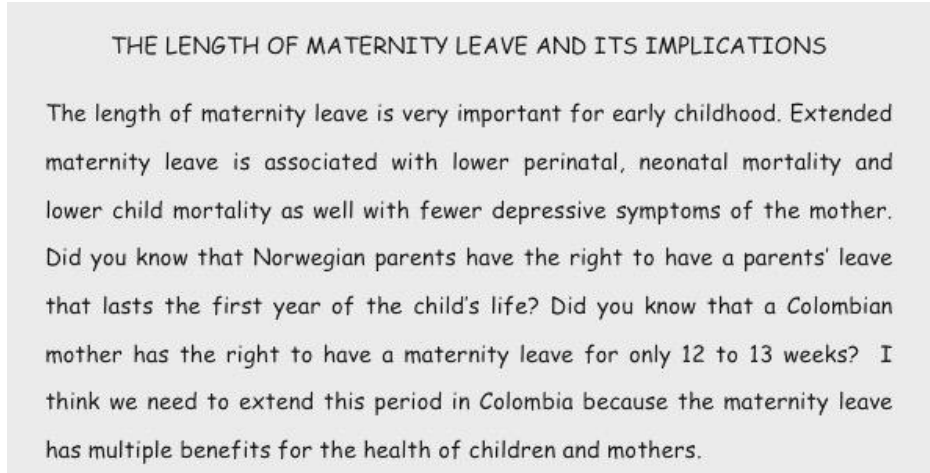
The data collected through the different instruments reveals that learners decided to focus their attention on the specific things they were concerned about. The previous artifacts and reflective journal excerpts show how learners oriented their attention to the goals of using the language they had learned before, incorporating new and more complex structures, becoming more fluent and specific, and having a more elaborated use of language. For Tomlin and Villa (1994) when humans have a great influx of information, they need to use attention in order to reduce it and control it, which is ultimately what these learners did.

Similarly, an additional way of orienting attention is by taking notes, which is a process that allows learners to determine and synthesize the information they want to gather from the one they receive. In the following excerpt, the learner shows how taking notes in class had an impact on her production of the article.



[S3: Student's artifact. Fourth Composition "Note taking exercise", March 6th, 2015]

This artifact revealed that the information the learner had consigned on her notes helped her construct an organized and well-structured paragraph:



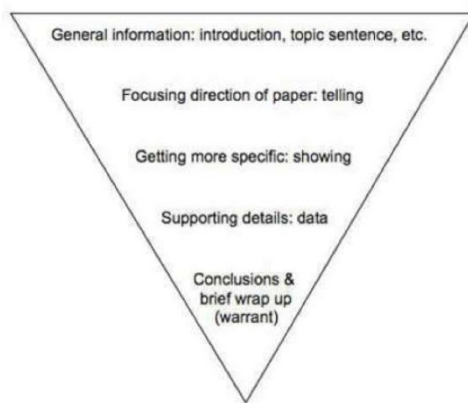
[S3: Student's artifact. Fourth Composition "Article's Introduction", March 9th, 2015]

As observed in this composition, the learner states an opening sentence that tries to call the attention of the reader. Afterwards, the author concentrated on the contextualization of the topic, providing a comparison of the situation in different countries. Additionally, the writer

encourages the reader to become interested in the topic by asking a series of questions, to finish with a strong thesis statement to be developed throughout the rest of the text.

Going back and forth on one's notes can help to follow instructions accurately, determine relevant information for the specific task, and monitor the elements the task is supposed to include. This can also be achieved through the effective use of models that besides providing the framing elements of a given task, also serve as an example in content and organization.

Looking at students' artifacts, the data showed that learners used effectively models that helped them focus on specific aspects of their writing process. The models provided by the teacher and by other sources had an impact on learners' writing configuration:



According to the figures produced by the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), in 2014, women's workload in Bogotá was about 66.4 hours a week, including non-paid work time. Meanwhile, the men had 61.1 hours of workload each week. Likewise, whilst in average the women spent 22.8 hours a week performing domestic non-paid activities, men in Bogotá only worked around of 11.2 hours in the same kind of labor.

Historically, Society made invisible this kind of women's economic contribution, maintaining the *status quo* by ignoring their labor participation conditions: the equal redistribution of domestic family duties between women and men, as well as the economic and social recognition of this work, is still a utopic situation. Moreover, the gender stereotypes maintain labor-market segmentation.

[S5: Student's artifact. Fifth composition "Article's Body Paragraphs", March 13th, 2015]

Learners found ways to go from general to more specific information by following the proposed model. In most of the cases, the models were effective tools that allow students to identify important features of the task they had to complete. Although in some cases learners struggled with models because it was the first time they used them, in the end, they learned to use them as reference points, and even sources of vocabulary, expressions and forms.

In this same area, the data revealed changes related to the frequency in which learners used certain strategies. The following table shows that at the beginning of the study the most used strategy was note taking, which had four students who always used it and one who almost always

used it. Repetition, on the other hand, was the least used strategy, only one student expressed to almost always use it, other two used it sometimes, and two almost never. The other two strategies, translation and research of complementary materials had similar results framed between sometimes and always.

Table 10

Participants’ use of strategies for remembering information – Entry 1

Criteria	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost never	Never
I take notes in class and about the materials I read and listen	4	1			
I use repetition to remember information about the language		1	2	2	
I use translation	1	2	2		
I research materials to complement what I learn in class	2	2	1		

[First questionnaire, February 11th 2015]

For the second take of the questionnaire, interesting results came up. On the one hand, in note taking, one student went from always using the strategy to almost always using it. Such a change might be explain, given the fact that learners became more open to express their actual performance in the different aspects from the class. Additionally, it was observed that no strategy had students in the never and almost never levels, which demonstrated an important progress in the use of strategies.

Table 11

Participants’ use of strategies for remembering information – Entry 2

Criteria	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost never	Never
I take notes in class and about the materials I read and listen	3	2			
I use repetition to remember information	1	3	1		

about the language		
I use translation	2	3
I research materials		
to complement what	2	3
I learn in class		

[Second questionnaire, April 17th 2015]

Something that emerged from the comparison of data was the fact that in one of the cases, a learner moved from always using translation to almost always using translation. This feature calls the attention because learners still recognize the important role that this strategy plays in their learning process. Despite the fact that in some moments teachers and even institutions punish the use of Spanish as a strategy for learning, learners continue to open a place for these kinds of techniques.

Another aspect that the questionnaire revealed is the search for materials that help learners complement what they learn in class. According to what learners expressed at the end of the research period they had become more prone to look for materials in English, both for practicing and for feeding their productions.

Certainly, the different techniques learners use to remember information helped them to accomplish their goals; in this sense, having learners reflect upon the effectiveness and appropriateness of these strategies is a way of leading them in the path to identify the best and most convenient tools for their learning. This cognitive process is also connected to the next sub-category related to the ways in which learners interconnect concepts and information that is presented in the following section.

“Through the force things you will see, other places, the future, the past... Old friends long gone”: **Building and interconnecting concepts and information.** The second sub-category included in *Control over cognitive processes* is connected to building and interconnecting

concepts and information. This responds to the third aspect contemplated in the psychology of the autonomous learner, namely, the metacognitive knowledge. In this study, the processes of building and interconnecting concepts and information are related to all the actions taken by learners in order to organize, group, connect, induce and deduce, infer, and elaborate concepts and information.

When exploring the students’ artifacts it was found that learners used organizing strategies such as idea-control, outlining, and organizing diagrams, amongst others. The following artifact shows how this learner used the information she had researched to prepare her paragraph using an outline:

My Outline	
<i>Try applying this structure to your own writing: write sentences for the corresponding elements of your introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion in the space provided below.</i>	
Introduction:	
Begin your paper with a opening sentence or “hook” about your topic that catches the reader’s attention. Reference the list on the front for ideas.	In 2014, professional women in Colombia earned 20% less wage than men did, having the same education and experience
Include context : provide the information the reader will need to understand the topic.	Although women study average 3.34 years more than men do, for each 100 COP earned by a man a woman earned 80.
State your thesis , your arguable position on the topic. <i>What side will you take? What will you prove in your paper? What are you going to explore?</i>	Despite women's educative level and their labor market in the last decades have increased, they continue to perform most of the non-paid responsibilities.
One Practice Body paragraph:	

[S5: Student’s artifact. Fourth composition “Article’s Introduction - Outlining”, March 7th, 2015]

This exercise allowed the learner to have a more comprehensive idea of what she wanted to display through her composition:

According to the figures produced by the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), in 2014, women's workload in Bogotá was about 66.4 hours a week, including non-paid work time. Meanwhile, the men had 61.1 hours of workload each week. Likewise, whilst in average the women spent 22.8 hours a week performing domestic non-paid activities, men in Bogotá only worked around of 11.2 hours in the same kind of labor.

Historically, Society made invisible this kind of women's economic contribution, maintaining the *status quo* by ignoring their labor participation conditions: the equal redistribution of domestic family duties between women and men, as well as the economic and social recognition of this work, is still a utopic situation. Moreover, the gender stereotypes maintain labor-market segmentation.

[S5: Student's artifact. Fourth composition "Article's Introduction", March 10th, 2015]

This artifact illustrates how this learner went from having a general idea of what she aimed at expressing through her work, to actually accomplish the goal of coming up with a clear composition. Such exercise entailed the construction of a bridge between the information related to the content and information about the form of the text.

According to what the theory related to the control over cognitive processes asserts, through the use of strategies such as the latter, the learner has the opportunity of developing "a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning" (Little, 1991, p.4).

Learners found different ways to establish this connection. The following excerpt, for instance, illustrates how the strategy outlining helped the learner to be more accurate when organizing the information he wanted to include:

11. **S2:** el crear el outline me permitió saber qué información quería incluir en mi composición.
12. Saber como establecer un orden logico hizo que mi hotel recommendation estuviera
13. mejor estructurada y llena de información.

[Third reflective journal, March, 4th, 2015]

Similarly, this learner points out that the use of mapping was fundamental for organizing information, this because at the beginning she did not know how to give a logical order to what

she had researched. In her opinion, by grouping the information under categories she could identified the items that were relevant for the movie review:

6. **S3:** para mí el uso de los mapas mentales fue fundamental para organizar la información ya
7. que al principio no sabía cómo debía poner cada cosa que había investigado. Al agrupar la
8. información por categorías pude saber que era relevante en la escritura del movie review y
9. en donde ponerla.

[Second reflective journal entry, February 21st, 2015]

In this learner's opinion, the individual creation of an outline provided them with a mental structure that allowed them to make decisions and identify the significant aspects in a composition:

12. **S38:** cuando ya tuvimos un outline más elaborado fue un poco más fácil organizar la
13. información, sin embargo, creo que fue muy útil que nosotros lo diseñáramos en la
14. actividad anterior porque nos dio una idea de cómo se debe hacer un artículo y cómo
15. podemos saber qué debe ir en qué sección. No es solamente seguir el modelo pero ser
16. capaz de crearlo de acuerdo a lo que uno necesita, por eso yo hice modificaciones que
17. me permitieran incluir más información relevante en mi outline.

[Fourth reflective journal, March, 10th, 2015]

The data also revealed that learners started to establish connections and comparisons between the information they found in their research and the real situations they lived. Such processes demonstrated that the participants started to develop a series of mental operations that went beyond the repetition of information, but they started to identify relationships that allowed them to understand their topic of interest from a more holistic perspective:

On the other hand a long period of paid maternity leaves may make it harder for women to maintain their job and advance in their career especially in Colombia. Long leave periods may carry employers to view women as temporary workers and refrain from hiring, training and promoting them. Consequently some women think that maternity leaves may impede progress towards gender equity in the labor market. Also if the paid leave is extended into the second and third year of child's life the risk could be that women would become too separate from the job market with adverse consequences for their own careers and for those of other women. Possibly for that reason the birth rate in Norway was last reported at 12.60 while in Colombia was last reported at 19.4 according to a World Bank report. The future mothers should think before they get pregnant that the birth of a new child and the first year of the child's life is the time when the tensions between the obligations of work and child rearing are strong.

[S1: Student's artifact. Fifth composition "Article's body paragraphs", March 13th, 2015]

The previous artifact demonstrates that the learner explored hypothesis of what could happen if women in Colombia had an extended maternity leave, which could be associated to her personal or other people's experiences. An additional feature observed in this composition, is related to the fact that the learner tried to see the issue from different points of view that allowed her to have a dialogical approximation to the topic.

Going on the same track, the following author tried to look for different sources to complement and support her discussion:

GENDER WAGE GAP IN COLOMBIA. María Elena Villamil Peñaranda. Skills 3.

In 2014, professional women in Colombia earned 20% less wage than men did, having the same education and experience than them, according to the Colombian Labor Ministry¹. Although women study average 3.34 years more than men do, for each 100\$COP earned by a man, a woman earned 80². Despite women's educative level and their labor market participation in the last decades have increased, they continue to perform most of the non-paid responsibilities in the society.

Because of the non-paid duties (for instance, domestic labor), many women have to work less hours in their paid jobs. Therefore, a large number of them received less payment for their entire work and saw their promotion possibilities reduced at their workplace: the additional workload constrains their options to apply for more demanding (and better paid) positions.

[S3: Student's artifact. Seventh composition "Final Article", March 25th, 2015]

Analyzed in detail, the composition tells the use of figures, cites and different voices to support and illustrate claims. This shows how the learner found connections with the ideas she had and other people's and institutions' assertions.

In summary, there are relevant issues to be explored in these two artifacts. On the one hand, it is observed that learners used figures that could help them to establish claims and support arguments. Additionally, they went beyond their local frame to analyze the issue from a wider perspective, such analysis provided the authors to see the problematic from a more holistic point of view. The different sources used by learners showed their capacity to elaborate concepts and construct ideas.

During the period of the implementation students were also inquired about the mental procedures they used when dealing with new information. The data collected revealed that learners saw the need of adopting strategies that helped them to manage the new information. Most of them went from never and almost never using strategies such as grouping in the early stages of the research, to sometimes and almost always using them. This change may be due to the fact that the writing of the article included deep periods of planning and pre-writing, which

encouraged students to find the best possible sources, and to identify the possible relations amongst them.

Table 12

Participants’ building and interconnection of concepts and information – Entry 1

Criteria	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost never	Never
I group concepts to understand them			1	3	1
I understand new concepts and find connections with previous ones	1	2	2		
I use inferring to understand concepts		1	2	2	

[First questionnaire, February 11th 2015]

The results from the first questionnaire displayed that strategies such as grouping and inferring had a low frequency in use. It can be observed that one learner even expressed never to use grouping, whereas other three said they almost never used it, only one used it sometimes. Inferring, on the other hand, revealed to have a low frequency in use. Two learners said to almost never use it, and two to sometimes use it, the highest frequency was expressed by one learner who admitted to use it almost always. All these results can be contrasted with what was gathered through the second take of the questionnaire.

Table 13

Participants’ building and interconnection of concepts and information – Entry 2

Criteria	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost never	Never
I group concepts to understand them		3	2		
I understand new concepts and	2	2	1		

find connections with previous ones I use inferring to understand concepts	4	1
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[Second questionnaire, April 17th 2015]

As the table displays, learners experienced changes in the frequency of strategy-use. Grouping in this take moved from never and almost never to sometimes and almost always. The second strategy of establishing connections between concepts only had a slight change of one student moving to always using it. Inferring, on the contrary, showed a great change. Students expressed to have moved from almost never and sometimes to sometimes and almost always.

The results found in the data collected through the questionnaires was illustrated also in the articles students wrote, since they showed they established connections between the knowledge they previously had and the new knowledge they found in their research for resources, which contributes to demonstrate the psychological relation Little proposes between the content and the learning process. In the building of this relation, certain attitudes emerge, some of which are critical thinking, detachments, creativity, and others. In this sense, the experience students went through, not only helped them to identify and acquire strategies that allowed them to build stronger control over their cognitive processes, but also, they promoted other abilities that can help learners with in several other mental processes.

So far, the control over learning management and cognitive processes has been explored through the data analysis. In the last category discussed in this study, I go through the control over content, which accounts for the tools and actions used by learners in making decisions related to the topics they want to learn and the ways in which they consider appropriate for their carrying out the process.

3. Category 3: Control over content

The third category that is provided by the theory is the one on control over content. This category is certainly the most challenging one for students and demands a great deal of decision-making abilities and willingness. For Kenny (1993), autonomy is not a process of allowing learners to be involved in the tasks they develop while learning, or transferring responsibilities to them in controlled contexts, but it is more associated to being able to “express who they are, what they think, and what they would like to do” (p.440). Despite the fact that this seems to be part of learning management, the theory of the levels of control discusses it separately because control over content is, on the one hand, fundamental to autonomy; and on the other hand, social and political, which in a way tests the preconceived ideas related to decision-making on content aspects inside institutions.

Having this in mind, the third category in this study is understood as the ways in which learners decide what they want to learn. Nevertheless, these management procedures shall not be seen as separated elements from the social and cultural contexts learners belong to. As it is stated by Littlewood (1999), control over content is related to reactive autonomy, seen by the author as “the kind, which does not create its own directions but, once a direction has been initiated, enables learners to organize their resources autonomously in order to reach their goal” (p.75). From this perspective three sub-categories have been identified within this category. Firstly, there is the one related to use of external sources to practice and learn, called in this paper “*In a dark place we find ourselves, and little more knowledge lights our way*”: Use of external aids for practicing and learning, which explores the use of external elements that contributed to improve and reach learning goals. Secondly, “*Always two there are, no more no less, a master and an apprentice*”: Seek for external support, which accounts for the external social interactions learners have and that contribute to their learning objectives. Finally, I analyze the information

found related to the critical evaluation upon procedures, comments and suggestions, which I have decided to name *“Truly wonderful the mind of a child is”*: Negotiations and critical evaluation. In this subcategory negotiations made with students and the students’ evaluation on the procedures followed throughout the course is explored.

***“In a dark place we find ourselves, and little more knowledge lights our way”*: Use of external aids for practicing and learning.** Using external aids in this study is seen as the different activities learners do outside the classroom and that respond to their personal learning needs and interests. In this sense, activities such as watching videos, TV or movies, reading books, magazines, comic books, or listening to music are some of the ways learners resort to to have access to the knowledge they are truly interested in. The data revealed learners constantly use these strategies, and they are a great source for learners to improve inside and outside the institutional learning context.

To illustrate, the following excerpts and artifacts provide an overlook of the procedures learners resorted to in order to increase their vocabulary and management of linguistic units. One example of this is the use learners gave to the online tool youtube and other websites, which helped them to understand grammatical functions, as well as vocabulary and information related to the topic they had selected for their article:

15. **S5:** cuando comenzamos a escribir en clase me di cuenta de que lo que escribía a veces no
16. tenía sentido porque estaba teniendo problemas con el uso de estructuras gramaticales
17. que habíamos visto en cursos anteriores. Sentí que para poder tener un buen desempeño
18. en la clase y para poder usar el idioma en mi trabajo, necesitaba tener esas cosas claras
19. en mi mente. Por eso fui a páginas web como youtube y otras de gramática que me han
20. ayudado a comprender lo que es difícil para mí, afianzando lo que ya sé.

[First reflective journal entry, February 11th, 2015]

In this excerpt the learner points out that departing from acknowledging he had difficulties with specific aspects of the language, he could look for external tools that could complement and expand what he was learning in class. Especially because he noticed that when

he expressed his ideas in external contexts he was also having certain issues to communicate. In this particular case, the learner saw the need of looking for an additional aid, not only because he needed this knowledge for the class, but also for his job, which represents an authentic need of communication. As Benson (2001) explains, every act of effective learning begins from the need of solving an authentic problem, providing a solution is the way in which new knowledge is integrated into the previous set of information.

In addition to this, during the data collection stage, learners expressed that what they had learned externally and sometimes even with no intention, the things they had learned had also contributed to their writing and learning processes. The following excerpt accounts for the use of new vocabulary that the learner had acquired through listening to a song.

12. **S1:** me gusto que pude usar vocabulario que había aprendido en una de mis canciones
13. favoritas. Eso me hizo sentir muy bien, porque es evidente que puedo aprender de
14. diferentes formas y usar lo que se en diferentes momentos.

[Third reflective journal, March, 4th, 2015]

From what the learner expressed in this excerpt, it can be observed that the capacity of transferring knowledge from one context to another made the learner feel happy. She understood that she could learn through different sources and that she could use what she learned in several contexts and moments.

This learner demonstrated she had used self-determined methods in order to achieve a self-determined goal. This means that she had selected the ways in which she learned new information, because she had the particular interest of acquiring specific vocabulary. This is supported by what Benson (2001) asserts when he says that “it is the interplay between self-determined goals and self-determined methods that gives autonomy a dynamic and developmental character” (p.100).

Such self-directed goals are directly related to the learners' lives and interests. Norton (1997) says that motivation is directly dependent on the extent to which learners feel "ownership" of the language, which is connected to the identity learners build around their idea of language users.

23. **S1:** durante toda esta experiencia tuve la oportunidad de aprender que lo que estaba
24. estudiando era para mí, para poder hacer cosas con el idioma en la vida real y no solo en
25. el salon de clase. Por ejemplo, pude comprender las letras de algunas caciones que me
26. gustan mucho, y esto hizo que en mi vida cotidiana utilizara cosas que me ayudaban a
27. aprender más como practicar la pronunciación de las caciones y el vocabulario que
28. aprendía.

[Sixth reflective journal, March 20th, 2015]

This learner perceived the study she was part of as an opportunity to see her own learning as a personal and authentic process. She says that she learned from this experience that all the things she did were for herself and for being able to use the language in real life. She says that she could understand new lyrics and vocabulary that are part of her daily basis, which represents something truly beneficial for any learning process.

This reflection is relevant for understanding the importance of having control over content, since this opens the possibility for learners to become more successful when using the language in real communicative acts. In these regards, the theory on the levels of control says that "learners who successfully master the prescribed content of language –learning curricula are not necessarily the best users of the language of in practical communicative contexts" (Benson, 2001). Therefore, having learners become aware of the impact of being able to transfer their knowledge from and to real and controlled communicative contexts is fundamental for their learning process.

The process of reflection and the discussions learners had with their peers increased the interest for exploring new sources for learning. It was observed that learners decided to get

involved with new tools and made decisions with regards to the type of strategy they used. Some learners preferred to watch videos online, some others decided to listen to the music they liked in English. No matter the strategy each individual learner decided to adopt for practicing, it had to be interesting and fun.

Questionnaires also provided data related to the activities done outside the classroom. The following table illustrates the information collected at the beginning of the study:

Table 14

Use of external aids for practicing and learning – Entry 1

Criteria	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost never	Never
I watch or listen to audiovisual materials in English	1	1	3		
I read books, magazines, and other printed materials in English			2	3	

[First questionnaire, February 11th 2015]

The first criterion related to the use of audiovisual aids shows to move between sometimes and always. According to the table three students used them sometimes, whilst one used them almost always, and another student always. The criteria related to the reading of books and printed materials, on the other hand, did not show the same results. Here, learners expressed to move from almost never, with three students, to sometimes, with two. This is contrasted with what was found in the second take of the questionnaire:

Table 15

Use of external aids for practicing and learning – Entry 2

Criteria	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost never	Never
I watch or listen					

to audiovisual materials in English	1	3	1	
I read books, magazines, and other printed materials in English			3	2

[Second questionnaire, April 15th 2015]

The results from the second take reveal learners were more interested in exploring other practicing and learning spaces. It is observed that in this take only one student expressed to use these tools for practicing sometimes, whilst three expressed to use them almost always. In addition to this, a slight change was observed in the second criteria as only one student moved from almost never to sometimes, having a result of two students almost never exploring reading materials, and three sometimes using them.

It is observed in the data that learners began to use other sources for learning from the ones they were used to use. This dynamic shows there was proactivity in the learners, their starting to explore new tools and possibly new contents, illustrates how they confirm their individuality and as Littlewood (1999) says “sets directions in a world which they themselves have partially created” (p.114). Hence, observing students trace their own goals in learning, separated from the institutional demands is perhaps one of the greatest proofs of learners becoming more autonomous.

“Always two of them there are, no more, no less. A master and an apprentice”: **Seek for external support.** The second sub-category identified within this category is the one related to the search for external support. In the previous part, the relationship learners have with aids was explored here the aim goes towards a more social dimension. In this sense, the subcategory is understood as the mechanisms learners use in order to complement their learning in the institution, with outside experiences. Learners were inquired about their participation in study

groups, their look for assistance from experts in the area, teachers and more advanced language users, and even online communities. In this context, a differentiation must be made from the use of social strategies in the first category, which is framed within the institutional context; here on the contrary, learners are the ones who seek spaces in which other people can contribute to their learning process.

7. **S1:** Al buscar información acerca de mi tema tuve que recurrir a mis profesores de la
8. universidad para que me guiaran en la forma en la que debía presentar mi texto.

[Fifth reflective journal, March 14th, 2015]

This learner, for example, resorted to the knowledge of teachers who have more information on the field than the one she did. She used their guidance for knowing the way in which she needed to present her text. The learner here shows how looking for external support was beneficial for her learning process.

6. **S2:** Una amiga que es sicóloga me ayudó a buscar artículos que fueron muy apropiados para
7. poder escribir mi texto, ella me mostró que podía encontrar fuentes que me ayudaban a
8. hacer un texto más completo.

[Fifth reflective journal, March 14th, 2015]

In this case, the learner found the assistance of a friend of his as a positive way to find more information related to the topic he aimed at writing about. Having the opportunity to discuss with more advanced learners and even experts provided learners with more confidence to develop their tasks. It was observed that these relationships were chosen by learners as a way to enrich their learning process. This has two important aspects to be considered. One, that by providing learners with tasks that depend entirely on their interests, they are very likely to establish relationships that can help them reach the objectives, they themselves have traced. Second, learners find ways that do not depend on the institution in order to comply with their tasks.

Nevertheless, not only when students are given a specific task will they look for these kinds of relationships. It was observed, that because of their particular interests learners had identified spaces in which they could share, practice and learn.

11. **S3:** Por ejemplo, una de las cosas que hago para practicar es hablar con personas de otros
12. países acerca de películas, me gusta leer los comentarios, y eso me ayuda a entender y a
13. aprender nuevo vocabulario.

[Sixth reflective journal, March 20th, 2015]

This reflective journal, for example, shows how this learner uses his interest in reading about movies in order to practice the language. He says that he shares with people from other countries, and that by reading the comments on the movies he can learn vocabulary.

From a similar perspective, another learner asserts:

12. **S2:** Cuando estoy jugando video juegos siempre tengo que hablar con gente de otros países
13. que también juega. Eso es chévere porque puedo usar lo que ya sé y aprender cosas
14. nuevas.

[Third reflective journal, March 4th, 2015]

According to this participant, playing video games is a great tool for sharing and learning. He says that he gets to use what he already knows and to learn new things, especially in the interaction with other people.

From activities, such as sharing with people in different contexts, interesting elements also emerged:

13. **S5:** Mi tema surgió de una conversación que tuve con una mujer americana en un bar que
14. visitamos el otro día, al haber conversado cosas relacionadas con el género, yo pensé que
15. podía ser una buena idea para un artículo.

[Fourth reflective journal, March 10th, 2015]

It can be observed through this excerpt that the learner found the exchange with other people as a source for her task. She discussed her interest with a person in a different context from the classroom and this motivated her to write about gender issues.

Learners found ways in which they could establish relationships to practice with others. Some students attended to bars and restaurants because the participation in these activities helped them to become more fluent, to find new topics to get familiar with, and even to elaborate their tasks. Such actions are examples of learners’ willingness to learn, interest in specific knowledge, decision making and the capacity to get involved in social interactions, as asserted by Benson (2001), control over content “requires that learners develop their own capacity to participate in social interactions concerning their learning” (p.102), not necessarily within the institutional context.

Even though in the reflective journals learners expressed to look for social interactions to practice and learn more, the results from the questionnaires showed that there were no changes in their behavior throughout this process. In the first take, it was observed that three learners sometimes look for external people to practice, and two learners did it almost always:

Table 16

Seek for external support to practice and learn – Entry 1

Criteria	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost never	Never
I look for people who can help me learn more in different contexts from the CCA (e.g. teachers, experts, study groups, more advanced learners)		2	3		

[First questionnaire, February 11th 2015]

These behaviors did not show any change as in the second take from the questionnaire, the same number of learners said to do it sometimes and almost always:

Table 17

Seek for external support to practice and learn – Entry 2

Criteria	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost never	Never
I look for people who can help me learn more in different contexts from the CCA (e.g. teachers, experts, study groups, more advanced learners)		2	3		

[Second questionnaire, April 17th 2015]

The responses to the questionnaires revealed that, even though in many cases learners decide to look for external support as a way to learn, these behaviors are also associated to the learner’s personal interests, which might not necessarily be to share and work along with others who are not part of their context.

This sub-category showed us that the participants from this study used different mechanisms to establish social relations within contexts that can be beneficial for their learning. The actions taken here are linked to what Benson asserts in regards to the control over the methods used by learners, which for him “necessarily involve the learner in social interactions regarding the right to determine and implement their own learning goals” (p.102). These types of negotiations help learners become more involved in their learning by making the learning process more evident and explicit, as well as, more in the hands of the learner himself or herself.

***“Truly wonderful the mind of a child is”*: Negotiations and critical evaluation.** Despite what might be assumed, even when learners are somewhat in charge of the content they learn, they still have to go through a series of negotiations with peers and institutions with regards to the way they “determine and implement their own learning goals” (Benson, 2001 p.102). Having this in mind, the negotiations and critical evaluations are understood here as the forms in which learners determine the contents they want to learn, and the ways they have to assess the paths to achieve them. From this point of view, it is evident that this specific category has a very strong political dimension, not just because of the power that is invested in learners to make decisions in regards to content, but also to the capacity they have to question the decisions made by the institution they belong to.

In this sense, the subcategory aims at exploring the ways in which participants from this study questioned the decisions made regarding activities, strategies, feedback, ways of publishing, and all the doings carried out within the institutional context. The data revealed that throughout the reflections, learners criticized the activities done in class, evaluated the feedback they received from a critical perspective, and provided suggestions for having a more successful and learner-friendly approach. This sub-category is probably the greatest contribution of my study, as it displays the true essence of autonomy in language learning, and it is a characteristic that has not been completely explored in other studies (Cabrales, Cáceres and Marrugo, 2010).

The data collected through the reflective journals started to show evidence of these behaviors from the very beginning of the implementation. Learners started to question some of the activities developed in class, because they thought some of them could have been done in a different context:

14. **S4:** Me parece que el escribir en clase me pone aún más nervioso, le dije a la profesora que no
15. me pidiera sentarme a escribir ahí porque eso me desconcentraba y me hacía sentir
16. presionado. Yo creo que es bueno hacer actividades en clase, pero hay otras cosas que

17. son más fáciles en casa.

[First reflective journal, February 17th, 2015]

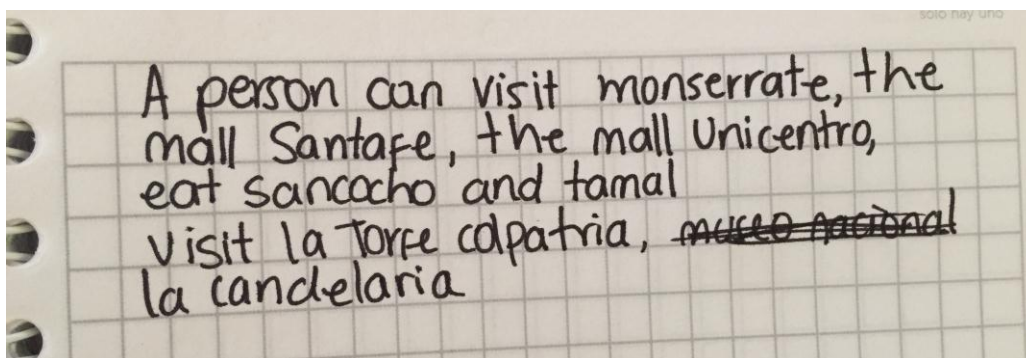
This excerpt reveals that the learner did not agree with the procedure carried out for various reasons. On the one hand, he considered that it affected his emotional wellness, as he says, he felt pushed to do the activity and also he got nervous. Bearing in mind the third sub-category from the first category related to the emotional aspects of the learning process, this is presented as something concerning. The learner saw the need of expressing his unconformity through his reflective journal, as it was one way in which he could be heard. A negotiation process was then concerted with the student; here he decided to do the pre-writing exercises in class and the text at home, something that, for him, proved to be more appropriate and effective:

7. **S4:** en esta composición me fue mejor porque me sentí más tranquilo, pude sentarme
8. en mi casa y pensar en las cosas que quería decir. Creo que no me sentí tan
9. presionado como la vez anterior que tuve que trabajar en el salon con todos mis
10. compañeros al lado.

[Fourth reflective journal, March 10th, 2015]

While comparing his performance from one task to another, the learner saw that the best way for him to develop the activity was by sitting by himself and doing the task without the pressure from the context. It was effective for him as he had the opportunity of doing the task at his own pace and with the necessary conditions for being successful.

The first paragraph written by the student in class shows how he felt in that specific moment:



[S4: Student's artifact. First composition "Tips for a visitor to Colombia", February 16th, 2015]

This first artifact illustrates that this learner was not completely interested in writing a paragraph in class. He wrote a list of places that he considered to be important in Bogotá. He did not show to be interested in writing a coherent, fluent and well-structured paragraph, maybe because he felt pushed to do it.

This is contrasted by his second composition "Movie Review", which he prepared in class and wrote at home:

Body

The film has a talented director who is Zack Snyder, a man who has directed many movies; among them are Sucker Punch, Man of steel, Guardians of Ga'Hoole, besides he has been the producer and the writer too in films like 300: Rise of an Empire. Zack has been nicknamed for some people like the wizard. The movie has also good actors like Gerard Butler, a Brazilian actor and a voice actor who has won a total of eight Best Actor awards; he has performed in films like Rio 2, Stuart Little 2 (Brazilian version) and Charlie's Angles: full throttle, and like Rodrigo Santoro, a Scotland actor, singer and a film producer, who has performed in movies like Dracula 2000, Laura Croft Tomb Rider: The cradle of life and the two films of how to train your dragon. On the other hand 300 try to show how was life and wars in Greece, in a fantasy way. It was filmed in 2007 and principally based on the 1998 comic series of the same name.

[S4: Student's artifact. Second composition "Movie Review", February 20th, 2015]

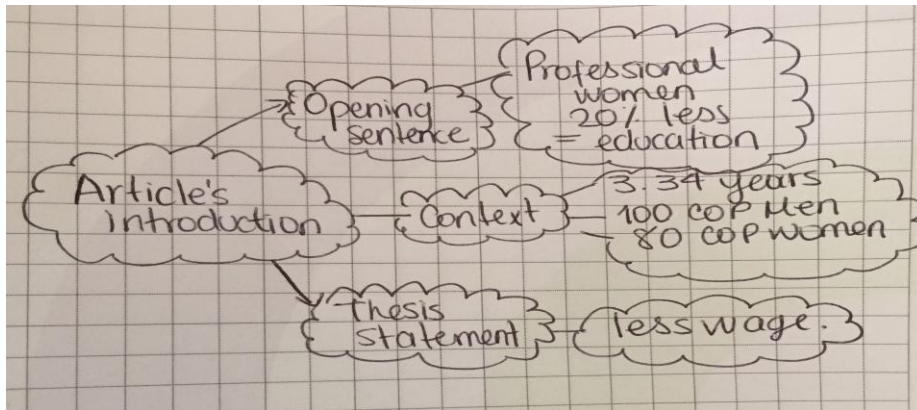
This last artifact illustrates how this learner worked harder to come up with an organized, more fluent and full-of-information composition. The decision he made of writing at home helped him to be more successful in his writing process. The negotiation with this learner proved to be convenient because it allowed him to participate in the decision-making process and in the identification of the best options for his learning process.

Other learners also expressed their opinions on the ways the pre-writing tasks were developed. In some cases students considered that, for their particular case, other strategies could have been more effective, than the one proposed:

5. **S3:** yo creo que si hubieramos usado mapping para escribir el hotel recommendation a
6. mí me hubiera ido mejor porque esa estrategia me parece muy útil y fácil de usar
7. que el outline. Sin embargo, creo que aprender a usar esta estrategia también fue
8. positivo.

[Third reflective journal, March 4th, 2015]

This learner displays her preferences when it comes to strategy-selection, she asserts that in her opinion mapping is more useful and easier-to-use than the outline. For this reason the learner decided to use this strategy in some of her compositions and in some of her pre-writing exercises:



[S3: Student's artifact. Fourth pre-writing exercise "Article's Introduction", March 9th, 2015]

In a different composition this learner found it useful to use a different strategy from the one proposed in class. This demonstrates that she felt encouraged and confident enough to use the strategy she found most convenient, which demonstrates a great deal of autonomy and self-determined strategies.

In addition to this, other learners perceived the use of discussions and negotiations in class as something positive because they felt that their opinion mattered in the decisions made in class:

8. **S5:** es importante que en todos los cursos que tomemos tratemos de discutir acerca de lo que se
9. va a hacer en clase, porque no podemos simplemente hacer lo que dice el profesor, siempre
10. tenemos que participar de los temas que se tratan en clase, el tiempo que se dedica a ciertas
11. actividades, etc.

[Sixth reflective journal, March 20th, 2015]

As asserted by this learner, participating in the decision-making process within the class allows the learners to be more involved in the process, to make their voices be heard and to develop a higher degree of autonomy. Certainly, transforming the institutional environment into a

more negotiated and dialogical space in which all participants get to contribute to the development of curricula, the methods implemented, the strategies proposed, and the goals reached, might signify an advance in the dynamics traditionally developed. In this area, Benson considers that “autonomy necessarily involves the social and political domains of learning” (p.103).

In the following table, it is observed the perception learners had of their participation in decision-making processes with regards to content and methods within the institutional context:

Table 18

Negotiation and critical evaluation – Entry 1

Criteria	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost never	Never
I participate in decisions related to the content to be learned in class, and the ways to achieve those learning objectives inside the institution			2	3	

[First questionnaire, February 11th 2015]

It is evident that learners perceived that their participation in these kind of activities was in a way limited, only two students expressed to sometimes participate in the selection of content and methods used within the institutional context. This shows that learners felt detached from these processes, and might have considered that the opportunities to be part of these procedures were restricted.

Nevertheless, this presented changes in the second take of the questionnaire, in which learners expressed to be more involved in such actions.

Table 19

Negotiation and critical evaluation – Entry 2

Criteria	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost never	Never
I participate in decisions related to the content to be learned in class, and the ways to achieve those learning objectives inside the institution	1	4	1		

[Second questionnaire, April 17th 2015]

The second take reveals that learners moved from sometimes and almost never to participate in the decisions made with regards to content and methods, to almost always and always. This might be due to the fact that learners had the opportunity to express their opinion about the actions taken within the institutional context. Such opinions were actually taken into account to make adjustments in the procedures followed.

This sub-category revealed that learners went from not participating in decision-making processes, to actually becoming active participants, which empowered them to make critiques to the procedures being followed. Additionally, it was observed that learners made informed decisions with regards to the contents they wanted to learn, as well as the ways in which they aimed at learning them. These behaviors show that reflection activities represented a useful way of showing learners their right to participate in the decision-making process, which entails the authentic exercise of autonomy.

In this chapter I presented the analysis of the data that was collected and the role of reflection on the levels of control of autonomy. In order to finish the document of my research

study, in the next chapter I present the conclusions of the study based on the data analysis, the implications it had to develop it, the limitations of the study, as well as some considerations for further research.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents the main conclusions of the study based on the findings; the implications of the project for the ELT community in Colombia and the field of autonomy, the institution as the place where the project was conducted, and the participants in the research; the limitations of the study; and finally some suggestions for further research.

Conclusions

The purpose of this research study was to contribute to the understanding of the concept of autonomy. The purpose was achieved through the exploration and description of the role of reflection activities on the exercise of the levels of control of autonomy, when producing diverse types of texts following a process writing approach. This was achieved by answering the questions of the study: What is the role of reflection activities in the exercise of the levels of control of autonomy proposed by Benson when producing diverse types of texts following a process writing approach? And how do reflection activities upon the development of writing tasks have an impact on the political involvement of EFL adult learners in the classroom decision-making process?

On the one hand, data revealed that learners started to observe learning from a more objective and critical perspective, becoming more aware of their own process. Having a wider overview, they could identify their strengths, as well as their weaknesses, which contributed to make decisions with regards to the strategies that were more convenient for them in specific moments, and that were more appropriate given the participants' individual characteristics. In addition to this, the data showed that learners used several different strategies for planning,

organizing, and assessing more frequently, and they also felt more empowered to resort to the repertoire of strategies they had.

From a social perspective, the data revealed the importance of social strategic cooperation within the institutional context. It was found that learners perceived asking questions to peers and the teacher as a beneficial, valuable and useful practice, which was translated into improvement. Furthermore, the constant social interactions encouraged positive and proactive reactions, which enhanced the products of the writing process. In addition, social skills for learning progress promoted empathic relationships through dialogical encounters, which was observed through the consideration of the other in the written compositions and the reflective activities. Learners became more assertive and tried to take into account the audience that read them.

The implementation of reflection activities also had an impact on the emotional side of learning. According to what the data showed, the reflection process contributed to the reduction of anxiety and negative feelings. Besides, learners recognized the importance of using strategies such as laughter, relaxation, deep breathing and others, which helped them to cope with the situation, observe the process from a more objective perspective, and encourage themselves. Indeed, throughout the implementation, the frequency in the use of positive statements increased, as well as the different mechanisms to overcome fear.

On the other hand, through the data analysis it was also observed some changing behaviors related to cognitive processes. One example of this is the attention learners gave to certain aspects of their learning and writing processes. The data displayed learners started to use strategies such as repetition, note taking, and models, amongst others. The use of these strategies demonstrated that learners resorted to new mechanisms to remember information that was relevant for them.

Besides, the reflection activities exhibited to have helped learners in the process of building and interconnecting concepts and information. It was observed that participants identified ways of organizing the information they aimed at learning; some of these strategies were idea-control, outlining, and a series of diagrams. The use of such tools represented a bridge between the content of the writing exercise and the form of the text. In addition, learners became more prone to make comparisons and connections; it was observed that there were associations built between the information researched and the real events in the participants' lives. Such behaviors were also evident in the way statements were supported; constantly learners used figures, cites, and dates to support their claims coherently. With regards to the frequency, it was found that the use of strategies such as grouping, inferring, and establishing connections had an increase.

In relation to the control over content, the data revealed there were important changes in the way learners exercised control in this area. On the one hand, it was found that participants continuously looked for external aids for practicing and learning, such as watching videos, TV programs, and movies, reading books, magazines, and comic books, and listening to music. Certainly, the use of these external resources was mainly related to the participants' personal needs and interests, which encouraged the learning of new information. The fact that learners acquired new knowledge through these sources had a great impact on their language learning, since they constantly transferred the new understandings to other contexts. In this area, reflection activities were configured as positive ways of identifying and selecting the most appropriate means of self-determining methods to reach self-determined goals, which were mainly concerned with the use of new knowledge in real life situations.

Within the area of control over content, there is also a more social perspective, which I have associated to the search for external support. As mentioned in chapter V, this type of social

interaction is not framed under the institutional bounds, but it goes beyond them. In this sense, the data showed that learners looked for assistance outside the institution because they found it beneficial and enriching for their learning process. Such relationships were configured as ways that could help students reach their objectives, especially because these external social interactions were mainly developed in contexts where particular interests were shared. Nevertheless, despite the fact that through the reflective journals learners expressed to actually resort to these mechanisms the frequency in their use appeared not to have had any relevant changes.

Added to that, the control over content was also exercised by learners through negotiation and critical evaluation. In this context, the reflective activities showed that learners became more willing to determine and assess the content they learned, as well as the mechanisms used in order to achieve those learning objectives. This change in the participants' behaviors had a great political impact, which provided them with the power to make and question decisions. In this regards it was found that learners openly criticized the activities proposed, and they provided feedback to improve them. In addition, learners had the necessary tools to question the feedback they received from partners and the teacher.

From this discussion rises the answer to the research question related to the role of reflection activities in the exercise of the levels of control of autonomy. In this regards it can be asserted that reflection activities played an important role. Firstly, related to the control over learning management, it was found that from reflection learners developed a more critical and objective perspective of their learning process, which encouraged them to use metacognitive, social, and affective strategies, and made participants more involved in aspects that are under their control.

Secondly, reflection also influenced the mechanisms learners used to exercise control over cognitive processes. Most importantly, it was found that learners used strategies to remember information and establish connections between the information they acquired and the knowledge they already had.

Finally, reflection activities also played a significant role in the different decisions made with regards to content. These activities opened doors for learners to question and criticize the content studied in the course, as well as, the methods to approach this content. Learners were certainly empowered to exercise control and participate, in the institutional context, and outside of it. In relation to this, the data revealed that learners were more motivated to find external resources and social support, which made them more autonomous and politically involved.

Implications

There are a number of implications that arise from the development of this project. In the first part of this section, I focus on the ELT community in Colombia and the field of autonomy; then, I present possible implications for the institution, which is the institution where the study was carried out. Finally, I concentrate on the implications this study had for the participants and myself as a teacher and novice researcher.

Carrying out a project that has as its core the process of reflection and its role in the different levels of control of autonomy implies promoting a new perspective of the teaching and learning practices. Through the development of my project I realized that writing texts and reflecting upon them and the learning process that accompanies it, became a new perspective of understanding the roles learners and teachers have. Transforming such roles implies encouraging a new set of power relations, which provides spaces for dialogical encounters and cooperative construction.

This perspective of the learning and teaching endeavors calls for a change in the traditional dynamics of teaching and learning. In the first place, the constant reflection in the educational context should be promoted, as it encourages learners to become more critical, analytical and concerned with their own learning process. In addition, it provides the learners with a great repertoire of strategies and mechanisms to become more successful in reaching their learning objectives, since they are motivated to make decisions and evaluate the effectiveness and usefulness of such strategies. In this sense, the Colombian ELT community has the responsibility of motivating learners to become, as Freire (1970) says, active participants in meaningful learning experiences.

With regards to the field of autonomy, this project has a number of implications, too. First, it is necessary to promote an approach in which the learning tasks such as writing are seen as continuous processes, that are fed through constant reflection and mulling. This action needs to involve changes in several aspects of the pedagogical plans and objectives. One way of doing this is by providing learners with the chance for speaking and making their voices be heard, encouraging critical thinking and participation. Focusing on promoting autonomy has several implications that go beyond the instrumental use of language. One the one hand, motivating learners to reflect upon their learning, their participation in decision-making processes, and several current and local issues that might affect, contributed to develop a more critical vision of the world and their realities, which ultimately could lead them to transform it.

Now I will turn to the possible implications that my study may have for the institution, the setting where I developed the research. It is important to highlight that this study may contribute to the integral formation of learners within this context. Despite the fact that the focus of this study is on the development of writing skills, the process of constant reflection has an impact on other areas that allow learners to be empowered to participate in spaces where before it was

harder. In this sense, paying especial attention to developing autonomy may bring changes in other areas of human development.

At the same time, with regards to the courses, it may be useful to share my study with the teachers in charge of these courses for a number of reasons. On the one hand, knowing about this project could bring insights for new ways of promoting and studying autonomy at the institution, more specifically by designing new strategies and concentrating on specific aspects of the learning process, such as writing. In addition, fostering the use of reflection strategies especially for writing practices could give teachers and students a more elaborated perception of the writing process. It could be, then, interesting to replicate this study with other levels at the institution, possibly another level that is also concentrated on promoting writing skills as in further courses. In other words, framing pedagogical actions within a perspective in which the participants are active subjects not only in carrying out the different tasks, but also in designing and assessing them. Changing this paradigm might encourage students to become more involved in the learning process, turning these experiences into more significant and valuable.

As to the participants of the study, it is important that the construction of autonomy through reflective practices is maintained, especially in writing endeavors, and if possibly transferred to others. Continuing with these habits may be beneficial to students' formation as autonomous learners and reflective thinkers; this may encourage students to become more interested in their own learning process and the decisions made throughout it that could affect them. Besides, by taking part in the dynamics of the course can also empower them to build their identity as subjects who participate in the pedagogical practices they are involved in, which could make them become more politically active in educational matters, as well as, in other unrelated matters.

The final implications have to do with my role as a teacher and novice researcher. Through a deep process of self-reflection and analysis of my doings in these two areas, I had the chance of identifying a number of aspects to promote change in my own practice. One aspect to take into account is related to the sessions devoted to provide individual feedback to each writer. It is important to identify more opportunities to guide learners, especially in their writing process. In this respect, scheduling meetings within and outside the class time with each participant needs to be considered. Opening possibilities for learning to receive more sessions of feedback may be useful to solve individual issues and track each learner's progression.

Finally, I consider that working harder on peer and group evaluation could also bring more benefits to promoting autonomy and reflection. Despite the fact that learners had the opportunity of reading the others' work, I think it would be beneficial for them to get together in groups and discuss the progress each text has had, providing comments and a general assessment. Promoting these spaces contributed to have a more holistic perspective of the tasks and the success each learner has had throughout the experience. In addition, allowing learners to participate more in these kinds of exercises can also bring empathic relations to the classroom, making the learning experience even more significant.

Limitations of the Study

Now I will turn to the challenges that I faced during the implementation of the research study. This experience for me was rewarding and enriching both personally and professionally; nevertheless, there were certain limitations that I faced related to time constraints, student issues, feedback, and activities.

During the three months of implementation I had some difficulties with time. Firstly, learners had limited time to write the texts; given the characteristics of the course, students had

only four days to write a composition, make corrections, submit final versions, and record their reflective journals. As a result, the participants had to do many of the activities in a very short time, which could have limited the quality and the impact of the reflecting process. Besides, there were some compositions, which took more time than others, for instance, the body paragraphs of the magazine articles. Not having enough time to provide feedback also affected the learners' progression.

A second limitation my study had was related to students. As explained in Chapter III, the institution has a moving population. The learners who begin a course at a certain schedule might not continue the following months while implementing this study I had to face this situation. Even though this class started with 17 students, only 5 continued with the process and completed all the activities designed for the research study. Certainly, this limited the scope of the study, which could have benefited from more participants and a more robust corpus of analysis.

The third limitation was in a way related to time constraints and feedback procedures. Even though learners had the opportunity to receive feedback every week, the fact that there was no time for arranging specific moments for feedback represented a drawback. In this regards the institution needs to design spaces in which learners can be guided and attention to the individual process is paid.

Further Research

This research study provided relevant insights to understand the role of reflection activities in the exercise of the levels of control of autonomy. Despite the fact that this project contributed to understand the dynamics of autonomy and the importance of reflecting within and outside the institutional context for enhancing writing practices, there are other areas that also need to be explored.

To begin with, taking into consideration the importance of reflection in the field of autonomy, it would be interesting to take this type of research study beyond the bounds of writing, exploring perhaps speaking, reading and listening. Furthermore, analyzing competences that are detached from the instrumental use of the language, researchers might be able to concentrate on aspects like intercultural communicative competence and bring together these different concepts.

On the other hand, researchers may explore the construction of autonomy from a more critical and socially situated perspective. Here, literacy may be the channel through which the world may be analyzed. In this way, learners could integrate aspects related to the local issues they are involved in, as well as, problematic situations related to oppression and abuse.

Finally, a study more concentrated on the benefits that may bring the use of more peer and group feedback to the reflective process, could also be interesting in order to continue understanding the features of autonomy and the impact that reflection activities may have upon them.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

COORDINATOR COSENT FORM

Coordinator

SAMUEL REALES

Coordinator of the Adult English Program

Centro Colombo Americano

Bogotá

Dear Coordinator,

I am currently doing a Master's Degree in Foreign Language Teaching at Universidad Pedagógica Nacional. My research Project is titled "PROMOTING AUTONOMY THROUGH REFLECTION ACTIVITIES: EXPLORING THE LEVELS", and its main objective is to describe and document the role that reading and writing tasks may play in students' construction of autonomy when it is understood from its political perspective, and having a view of reading and writing as situated social practices.

Through this format, I intend to ask for your consent to apply a set of reading and writing tasks in the *Skills 1-3* courses that I am currently teaching in the Adult English Program. This will allow me to collect important information for my project. Students will take part in reading and writing tasks every week, dealing with topics that may concern them socially and culturally. The main techniques used to collect data will include the use of a teacher's journal, students' artifacts and interviews. If students agree to be part of this study, I will use video recording or voice recording, so their responses can be analyzed in detail.

The findings in the project will be presented at professional events as part of the Master's Degree requirements and possibly published in journals. This is why I ask for written consent so I have their permission to use their texts or the answers they give to the interviews, keeping confidentiality at all times. It will be made clear that choosing to participate or not in the project will not affect their grades in any way, nor will it have any incidence in their results throughout the course.

It is important to mention that my classes in the Skills course selected will not only be based on reading and writing, and that the syllabus already designed will be followed in the most part. The reading and writing tasks will be developed during the time regularly devoted to tasks, and the topics of the class will be dealt with according to what is stated in the course program.

Should you have any doubts or questions about the project, do not hesitate to contact me.

Statement of the consent: I have read the information provided above, and I consent to allow teacher Paula Andrea Becerra Salcedo to carry out this study with the course of Skills 1-3 of the Adult English Program at the Centro Colombo Americano.

Your signature: _____

Your full name: _____

Date: _____

Thanks for all your help and consideration.

Cordially,

Paula Andrea Becerra Salcedo

Teacher of the Adult English Program

Phone: 3003425972

E-mail: paulabecerrasalcedo@gmail.com

Appendix 2

FORMA DE CONSENTIMIENTO DEL ESTUDIANTE

Apreciado estudiante del curso de Skills 1,

En este momento me encuentro cursando la Maestría en Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras en la Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, y como parte de la culminación del programa estoy desarrollando un proyecto de investigación llamado "PROMOTING AUTONOMY THROUGH REFLECTION ACTIVITIES: EXPLORING THE LEVELS". El principal objetivo de esta investigación es documentar y describir el rol que juegan las estrategias de reflexión en la construcción de autonomía de los estudiantes pertenecientes al bloque de *Skills 1-3* del Programa de Inglés de Adultos en el Centro Colombo Americano.

Usted como estudiante de este bloque, está cordialmente invitado a participar voluntariamente en la investigación. La siguiente información le ayudará a tomar una decisión frente a si desea participar o no en el desarrollo de esta investigación. Le será solicitado realizar tareas de escritura semanalmente. Dichas tareas serán realizadas dentro y fuera, de la clase y formarán parte de los datos a analizar, por lo cual las muestras escriturales serán recogidas por la docente. Estas tareas estarán relacionadas con sus percepciones y opiniones frente a las actividades y procesos llevados en las clases, las estrategias de aprendizaje usadas por usted y los resultados de este trabajo. Durante el desarrollo de estas actividades la docente tomará notas de sus comentarios, reacciones y opiniones relacionadas con el tema. Adicionalmente, se desarrollarán una serie de entrevistas con usted a lo largo del curso, por este motivo, y con su aprobación, se usarán cámaras de video o dispositivos de grabación de manera que sus respuestas puedan ser analizadas en detalle. Es relevante mencionar que este curso no estará enfocado únicamente en las tareas escriturales, y que el programa diseñado por la institución será seguido en su mayor parte, así como los temas propuestos por el mismo.

Los hallazgos de esta investigación serán presentados en eventos profesionales de la maestría como parte de los requerimientos para la finalizar mis estudios, y posiblemente en revistas académicas. En cualquier caso, su identidad se mantendrá confidencial y todas las grabaciones y muestras de sus textos serán usadas únicamente para propósitos académicos y bajo su consentimiento.

Si está de acuerdo con formar parte de esta investigación, puede contactarme en cualquier momento para resolver las dudas o preguntas que pueda tener. Adicionalmente, usted puede desistir de la participación en la investigación en el momento en que usted lo considere pertinente y no tendrá que explicar sus razones. Es muy importante aclarar que la decisión de participar en este estudio no afectará de ninguna manera los resultados durante o al finalizar el curso. Agradecería tener su permiso para utilizar citas de sus textos, las respuestas a las entrevistas y las observaciones hechas por mí en eventos académicos, como también en el documento que presentaré para culminar mis estudios en el programa de la maestría y en posibles publicaciones. Su nombre real no será usado en los reportes o artículos si usted no está de acuerdo. Si usted así lo prefiere un nombre ficticio será usado para proteger su privacidad, por favor escriba el nombre de su elección: _____

Consentimiento informado: He leído la información presentada arriba, y estoy de acuerdo con formar parte de la investigación.

Su firma: _____

Su nombre completo: _____

Fecha: _____

Cordialmente,
Paula Andrea Becerra Salcedo
Profesora del Programa de Inglés de Adultos
Centro Colombo Americano - E-mail: paulabecerrasalcedo@gmail.com

Appendix 3

CUESTIONARIO

Apreciado estudiante,
 El siguiente cuestionario busca recolectar información que ayudará a comprender sus hábitos de estudio durante el curso. Por favor responda a cada criterio de acuerdo con su propia experiencia de manera objetiva. Recuerde que no hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas.

I. Control de la administración del aprendizaje					
Criterios	Siempre	Casi siempre	Algunas veces	Casi nunca	Nunca
Organizo mi tiempo					
Controlo mi atención					
Identifico mis problemas de aprendizaje					
Autoevalúo mi aprendizaje					
Automonitoreo mi trabajo					
Coopero con otros estudiantes					
Uso técnicas de relajación					
Hago declaraciones positivas					
Uso un diario de aprendizaje de lengua					

II. Control de los procesos cognitivos					
Criterios	Siempre	Casi siempre	Algunas veces	Casi nunca	Nunca
Tomo notas en clase y fuera de ella					
Uso la repetición para recordar información					
Uso la traducción					
Busco materiales para complementar lo que aprendo en clase					
Agrupo conceptos para comprenderlos					
Comprendo nuevos conceptos y los relaciono con otros que ya conozco					
Infiero conceptos					

III. Control del contenido					
Criterios	Siempre	Casi siempre	Algunas veces	Casi nunca	Nunca
Veo o escucho materiales en inglés					
Leo libros, revistas y otros materiales impresos en inglés					
Uso la traducción					
Busco personas con las que puedo aprender fuera del CCA					
Participo en la toma de decisiones relacionada con los contenidos a aprender y las formas para alcanzar ese conocimiento					

Appendix 5

SAMPLE ARTICLE

GENDER WAGE GAP IN COLOMBIA. María Elena Villamil Peñaranda. Skills 3.

In 2014, professional women in Colombia earned 20% less wage than men did, having the same education and experience as them, according to the Colombian Labor Ministry². Although women study an average of 3.34 years more than men do, for each 100\$COP earned by a man, a woman earned 80³. Even though, women's educative level and their labor market participation in the last decades have increased, they continue to perform most of the non-paid responsibilities in the society.

Because of the non-paid duties (for instance, domestic labor), many women have to work less hours in their paid jobs. Therefore, a large number of them receive less payment for their entire work and see their promotion possibilities reduced at their workplace: the additional workload constrains their options to apply for more demanding (and better paid) positions.

According to the figures reported by the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE)⁴, in 2014, women's workload in Bogotá was about 66.4 hours a week, including non-paid work time. Meanwhile, the men had 61.1 hours of workload each week. Likewise, whilst in average the women spent 22.8 hours a week performing domestic non-paid activities, men in Bogotá only worked around of 11.2 hours in the same kind of labor.

Historically, Society made invisible this kind of women's economic contribution, maintaining the *status quo* by ignoring their labor participation conditions: the equal redistribution of domestic family duties between women and men, as well as the economic and social recognition of this work, it is still a utopic situation. Moreover, the gender stereotypes maintain labor-market segmentation.

In many cases, women working possibilities and interests are focused in professional fields and in qualified areas that have, in average, the lower salaries of the labor market. Because of the gender stereotypes, for instance, domestic-work, nursing, child-care, and teaching are labor areas where women are the majority and, at the same time, these are the fields with the low economic recognition in the work-market in Colombian.

The labor-market is other of the social fields in which the gender inequality is far from being an issue of the past. At first glance, the analysis of the work market could show us that the women conditions now are very different from two or three decades ago: many women participate in areas, that historically, were occupied by men and have higher education levels. While women continue earning lower salaries, assuming the majority of non-paid responsibilities, and being affected by stereotypes and symbolic violence in her jobs, the inequality will persist.

² <http://www.elcolombiano.com/en-colombia-las-mujeres-ganan-20-por-ciento-menos-que-los-hombres-LY472296>. Consulted on March 3th.

³ *Ibíd.*

⁴ "Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares" DANE 2014

Appendix 6

SKILLS 1-3 COURSE PROGRAM

Centro Colombo Americano Bogotá
 Skills 1-3 Courses
 A2 to B1
 Course I.D: SK152

Teacher: Paula Andrea Becerra Salcedo
 Email address: paulabecerrasalcedo@gmail.com

Overall Objective:

In Skills 1-3 students will face new challenges as language learners. These challenges will help them acquire new knowledge and skills, as they consolidate attitudes of commitment and awareness of their central role in their learning process. Learners will be guided through the use of the process writing, which will be complemented by reflection activities aiming at helping learners become more critical, objective and politically involved in their learning and writing processes.

Skills 1	Week 1-2-3-4	Getting into writing
Skills 2	Week 5-6-7-8	Writing my article
Skills 3	Week 9-10-11-12	Launching the magazine

Stage 1 Getting into writing	Week 1	Review		
	Week 2	Greetings and small talk	Tips for a visitor to Colombia	Strategy: Listing Reflection: My first composition
	Week 3	Movies and entertainment	Movie Review	Strategy: Clustering Reflection: Working on more information
	Week 4	Staying in hotels	Hotel Recommendation	Strategy: Generating ideas Reflection: Developing a complete text
Stage 2 Writing my article	Week 5	Cars and driving	Article's Introduction	Strategy: Brainstorming and providing reasons - Outlining Reflection: Introducing a topic and stating a thesis
	Week 6	Personal care and appearance	Article's Body Paragraph # 1	Strategy: Contrasting Models Reflection: Supporting a thesis
	Week 7	Eating well	Article's Body Paragraph # 2	Strategy: Using a pyramid graphic – Outlining Reflection: Supporting a thesis
	Week 8	About personality	Article's Conclusion	Strategy: Compare and Contrast Reflection: Wrapping up ideas
Stage 3 Launching the magazine	Week 9	The arts	Revision of the Article	Strategy: Re-evaluation and re-writing Reflection: The experience
	Week 10	Living with computers	New Revision – Partners and Teacher	Strategy: Re-evaluation and re-writing Reflection: How others perceive my work
	Week 11	Discuss ethical choices	Presentation Rehearsal	Strategy: Listening to others' perceptions – making adjustments Reflection: What others see in my work
	Week 12	Presentation	Presentation	Reflection: Final presentation, the whole experience

Appendix 7

PROPOSED LESSON PLAN FOR WRITING A BODY PARAGRAPH

INSTITUTION: Centro Colombo Americano

PROGRAMME: Adult English Program

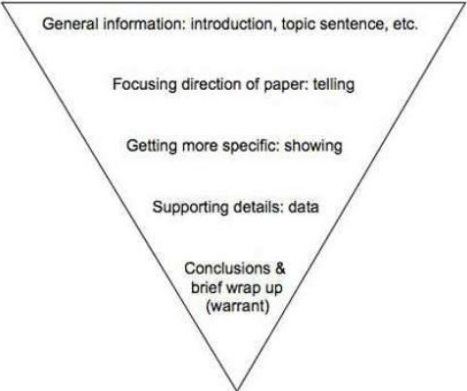
LEVEL: Skills 1-3

TEACHER: Paula Andrea Becerra Salcedo

OBJECTIVE: Students evaluate the relevance of the ideas proposed in the outlines for their body paragraphs and they will use a graphic organizer (pyramid) to show the cohesion and natural flow of their body paragraphs.

TOPIC: Unit: Eating Well – Writing Exercise: Free-chosen by students depending on their preference.

ESTIMATED TIME: 110 Minutes

Description	Students will work on the body paragraph of their texts as they explain in detail each one of the subtopics mentioned in their outlines in unit 4. Each one of the two paragraphs will have a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentences. Students will explore and analyze models to understand the importance of transition markers to give coherence and a natural flow to their texts.
Writing Exercise	Students work on a writing pyramid (see strategy) to organize the ideas that will be included in the body paragraphs of their articles. They will exchange pyramids in order to give and receive feedback on the relevance those ideas can have to build the body paragraphs. Ss will write that feedback down in the assessment format suggested. If time allows, they can exchange opinions orally.
Strategy	<p>Using a pyramid graphic organizer to outline topic sentences and supporting ideas.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>At this point, learners have already worked on the general outline for their article. This exercise requires a more detailed explanation of what they want to include in each body paragraph.</p>
OUTCOME	A new graphic organizer that illustrates the sequence of ideas to be included in the body paragraphs.
ASSESSMENT	<p>Provide students with the following questions:</p> <p>Are the topic sentences clearly related to the main thesis statement? Y/N</p> <p>Do the supporting ideas relate to the topic sentences? Y/N</p> <p>Are all the supporting ideas relevant to explain the topic sentence? Y/N</p>
HOMEWORK	Keeping in mind their classmate’s comments, Ss will modify their outlines by including more information, samples. Next session they will start writing their paragraphs after approval of their outlines by the teacher and peers.

Appendix 8

DATA COLLECTION PLAN: MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION

WEEK	DATE	INSTRUMENT	PARTICIPANTS	TIME
ONE Feb 11 - 14	February 11	Questionnaire	5 students	20 min
TWO Feb 16 - 20	February 16	Students' Artifact	5 students	Between 60 to 90 min
TWO Feb 16 - 21	February 17	First journal entry	5 students	Between 60 to 90 mins
TWO Feb 16 - 21	February 20	Students' Artifact	5 students	Between 60 to 90 min
TWO Feb 16 - 21	February 21	Second journal entry	5 students	Between 60 to 90 min
THREE Feb 23 - 27	February 26	Students' Artifact	5 students	Between 60 to 90 min
FOUR Mar 2 - 6	March 4	Third journal entry	5 students	Between 60 to 90 min
FIVE Mar 9 - 14	March 9	Students' Artifact	5 students	Between 60 to 90 min
FIVE Mar 9 - 14	March 10	Fourth journal entry	5 students	Between 60 to 90 min
FIVE Mar 9 - 14	March 13	Students' Artifact	5 students	Between 60 to 90 min
FIVE Mar 9 - 14	March 14	Fifth journal entry	5 students	Between 60 to 90 min
SIX Mar 16 - 20	March 19	Students' Artifact	5 students	Between 60 to 90 min
SIX Mar 16 - 20	March 20	Sixth journal entry	5 students	Between 60 to 90 min
SEVEN Mar 23 - 28	March 25	Students' Artifact	5 students	Between 60 to 90 min
SEVEN Mar 23 - 28	March 26	Seven journal entry	5 students	Between 60 to 90 min
EIGHT Apr 6 - 10	April 10	Eight journal entry	5 students	Between 60 to 90 min
NINE Apr 13 - 17	April 17	Questionnaire	5 students	20 min

Appendix 9

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES SAMPLE

Third Written Exercise – Hotel Recommendation		
Session 1	Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about types of hotels. Come up with a list of the best you know. • Use <i>simple present</i> and <i>if/when</i> to describe a hotel. • Brainstorming to gather information.
	Description	Learners start the lesson by exploring the objectives and getting familiar with the strategy they will use. At the beginning of the lesson students do an exercise to activate previous knowledge related to hotels and vacations. They are asked to write as many words related as they know. Then learners explore the pictures from the book and listen to a conversation that takes place at the front desk of a hotel. They identify new expressions and do exercises to practice using them. After, they explore some vocabulary and grammar (simple present, if and when).
	Strategy	Learners are encouraged to think about a hotel they have visited or one they would like to visit. Using <i>brainstorming</i> they are suggested to write information about the hotel they selected.
	Reflection	Students are asked if the strategy was useful, if they would use it again, and if they can think of any other strategy to accomplish the same goal. Additionally, learners are asked to see if they had enough information about the hotel and if they could improve in this exercise.
Session 2	Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about services in hotels and their importance. • Use <i>will</i> to indicate the services one will find in case of visiting a given hotel. • Design an outline to make content decisions.
	Description	Learners start the class by remembering some vocabulary acquired in the previous class. In this opportunity, learners explored new vocabulary related to services in a hotel, as well as, they use of <i>will</i> to indicate services. They read a conversation and practice pronunciation and intonation.
	Strategy	For the writing exercise, learners are asked to get together in groups and discuss the aspects they consider important to be included in the hotel recommendation. Afterwards, all the group shares their thoughts and the whole group comes up with the last version of the outline.
	Reflection	Learners are asked about the things they took into account to come up with the outline. Also, they were inquired about the usefulness of an outline and if they would use it. They were asked to consider their accuracy in the exercise and to identify the things they could have improved.
Session 3	Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss hotel amenities and facilities. Identify the ones your hotel has. • Use new vocabulary related to hotels. • Color coding to identify sections in a paragraph.
	Description	Learners start the lesson by reviewing the sections of the outline they created. They explore new vocabulary they may use in their composition. In this session, learners are asked to write the first paragraph of the hotel recommendation using both their outline and what they had learned about the topic sentence, supporting details, and conclusion.
	Strategy	In this lesson, learners use color-coding to identify the sections: topic sentence, supporting details, and conclusion.
	Reflection	Learners are asked to re-read the paragraph they wrote and identify the things they considered they could improve. As homework learners make corrections and write the body paragraph of the hotel recommendation.
Session 4	Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about the general assessment of a hotel. • Use new expressions to describe a hotel. • Rewriting as a strategy for improvement.
	Description	In this sessions learners continue exploring vocabulary and expressions to talk about and describe hotels. They think of the information they decided to include in the conclusion of the hotel recommendation and they write it taking into account the topic sentence, supporting details and conclusion.
	Strategy	Learners re-read their texts and other learners' texts in order to make corrections and identify difficulties, inaccuracies, coherence and clarity problems, etc.
	Reflection	Learners reflect upon the importance of re-reading and having external outlooks in order to improve. They are asked about the problems they had, and the aspects that were more difficult. As homework, learners wrote the reflective journal making a general assessment of the whole experience.