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DEVELOPING THE SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING PROCESS THROUGH SOCIAL  
MEDIA-BASED INTERACTION TASKS

BY

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THESIS

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## AFFIDAVIT

I, Julian Esteban Zapata Gómez, hereby declare that this master's thesis has not been previously presented as a degree requirement, either in the same style or with variations, in this or any other university (Article 92 Advanced Education Student Code, Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana).

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right. The signature is written over a faint, illegible watermark or text.

**JULIAN ESTEBAN ZAPATA GOMEZ**

## **Abstract**

This paper depicts the results from a qualitative research study focused on finding out the effect of interaction through social media on the development of second language learners' written production from a private school in Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia. The study was framed within concepts such as *social interaction*, *digital literacy*, *content communities*, and creation of identities in the online world, among others. Data was collected through a survey, an open-ended questionnaire, an interview to students, a teacher's journal, and assessment of students' artifacts. The analysis of the data was done through a Constant Comparison and categorization; results showed an increment in the development of learners' written production, as well as the disposition to socially interact in the written form.

**Keywords.** Written Interaction, Social Interaction, Social Media, and Writing process.

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## **Chapter One:**

### **The Development Of The Written Competence And Interaction As One Of The Main Problematic Issues For High School Students**

This paper depicts the results from a qualitative study carried out at a private school in Medellin, Colombia. The study aimed at describing the effect of implementing social media-based strategies for the development of 7<sup>th</sup> graders' second language written production and interaction.

The Colombian 115 General Law of Education issued by the Colombian Ministry of Education on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1994, establishes matters of academic and administrative labors for both public and private educational institutions in the Country. Among these regulations, second language policies are outlined by the Common European Framework (Council of Europe, 2002), structure adopted by the Colombian Ministry of Education and from which the *Basic Standards for the Foreign Language Competences in English* were defined (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2005). In this sense, and as part of the bilingual strategies for Antioquia, the local Government has formulated the *Antioquia Bilingüe (Bilingual Antioquia) Project* in order to promote the learning, teaching and actual use of English through the implementation of a series of activities, events and courses open to both students and teachers who can participate.

In this sense, schools have promoted the learning and actual use of English, not only because it is a requirement, but also that it is included in the P.E.I. (Institutional Education Program), and due to the fact that families have the economic resources to help them travel to other countries. However, instructors are focused on developing learners' oral production and the writing process is left aside or becomes another assignment for students.

Since students can interact with native speakers or people who have lived abroad for a long time, there is the need to raise awareness on the importance of learning to interact in the written form, which is also a way for communication. As learners from 21<sup>st</sup> generation have been raised with technology, they use it for most communications they need, hence, it is relevant to explore the effect of integrating social media with the development of production and interaction.

The strategy, consisting on the collective creation of written texts through Facebook, Facebook chat, Google Docs and social networks, was implemented for 5 months in order to analyze the development of students' written production, as well as the disposition towards writing about something more meaningful and close to their reality.

A survey, a questionnaire, students' artifacts, and journal, allowed the collection of information, which, once analyzed, showed an increment in students' production, as well as interaction.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In order to comply with the Colombian policies in second language teaching and learning, educational institutions, in this case specific private schools, have implemented different plans in order for the students to meet the required standards established by the Ministry of Education ([http://www.colombiaaprende.edu.co/html/mediateca/1607/articles-115375\\_archivo.pdf](http://www.colombiaaprende.edu.co/html/mediateca/1607/articles-115375_archivo.pdf)). English teachers have, then, to implement a series of strategies operationalized in a countless number of activities, which have raised queries and inquiries about writing, writing process and interaction, during their own and their colleagues' classroom experience, recorded and evidenced through different assessment and evaluation instruments implemented by the teacher-researcher's, other teachers and the school administrators as well. The development of the written competence and interaction has arisen as one of the main



problematic issues for high school students (Ariza, 2005; Mendoza, 2005), since there is little time to implement specific strategies.

Authors such as: Aldana (2005), Mora (1999) and Viáfara (2008) state the writing process poses issues like complexity and difficulty to students in Colombian schools. They also suggested learners could easily approach a specific written task, including the exploration of all kinds of written texts when they were asked to work cooperatively. Additionally, a diagnostic study carried out by the teacher researcher about the use of some online applications in the development of English written competence (Zapata, 2010) showed that written interaction is not an easy task for students. Most of the times they do not seem understand why they have to produce texts and interact in the written form with others if the actual language use demands from them, mostly, oral interaction with foreigners when traveling abroad or interacting with people from other countries.

Social media is becoming widely used by high school students in order to communicate in various contexts and situations. Bull and colleagues (Bull, Thompson, Searson, Garofalo, Park, Young, & Lee, 2008), mentioned,“(…) The Pew Internet and American Life project reports that the majority of all teens are now engaged in active creation of online content. The rise of social media reflects new opportunities and outlets for creativity” (p.100). This study was intended to explore if there could be a development of students writing process and interaction by means of the implementation of different social media-based strategies and activities.

**Research question**

What is the effect of the implementation of social media-based interaction tasks on students' second language writing process?

**Main objective**

To determine the effect of the implementation of social media-based interaction tasks on students' second language writing process.

**Specific objectives**

- To design and implement writing process social media-based strategies in the classroom
- To foster the production of collaborative written texts through social media in order to promote student - text - teacher interaction.
- To monitor students developments on text construction through social media.

## **Chapter Two:**

### **Social Interaction, Social Media, Content Communities and Writing**

Paradigmatic novelty in literacy research and practice, as proposed by Lankshear and Knobel (2006), frames theoretically and methodologically an “alternative to intra-individual psycholinguistic approaches” to literacy. Through online text-based interaction, helping a development and a construction of identities and communities – through social interaction – in and out of the classroom. Here, Language is used as the vehicle for communication, reflection and interaction, linking learners’ own life experiences to the one shared in and out the classroom. (Whitmore and Goodman, 1996).

According to Thorne and Black (2011), Internet-mediated interactions might mainly occur through as:

- a. Indexical linkages to macro-level categories (such as nation state affiliation, cultural/linguistic/ethnic affiliations).
- b. Functionally defined subject positions (such as student, youth, author, editor, expert, and novice, among others).
- c. Fluid shifts in language choice, stance, and style that enable participants to personalize, make relevant, and move forward a variety of social actions (p. 259).

These dynamics and the language developed and constructed on the Internet through interaction, in diverse online contexts, are closely connected to the capacity of the learner to create and construct ‘functional selves’ on the virtual world (Gee, 1999).

The social aspect of language learning and teaching supports interactions as an underpinning for meaning construction. Salomon and Perkins (1998) and Celeste Kinginger

(2013) explain in social learning, students go from an individual or close work to a social, collective, participatory process of knowledge activation. They use a social interactive language, which constructs and emphasizes context, interactions, cultural aspects of language, and 'situatedness learning' (Rohlfing, n.d.; Illeris, 2001, 2003). At the same time, all this helps the learner in different aspects, such as: thinking about some critical conditions learning deals with, activating group mediation from an individual learning, creating a social and group mediation accomplished by means of cultural scaffolding following the theories from Vigotsky (1978).

Social Interaction is one of the basic concepts to be addressed in this research study. It frames and presents, clearly, the kind of interaction and its different forms this study promotes. It also allows learners and the teacher- researcher to be aware and open to provide and receive opinions, likes, feedback, expanding and improving their own texts via Internet. This interaction can be generated and promoted through different forms and means, aided by the fundamentals or bases of some concepts such as: Digital literacy.

### **Digital Literacy**

Digital Literacy (D.L.), according to Jenkins (2009), is the capacity to steer, assess and produce information using a range of "digital technologies" in an effective and critical way. It also "recognizes and uses that power, to manipulate and transform digital media, to distribute pervasively, and to easily adapt them to new forms of based Literacy." Becta (2010) argues that, D.L. is the mixture of the abilities, knowledge and comprehension students need to learn in order to face "fully and safely" the digital world they are living in, embracing and combining: "functional technology skills, critical thinking, collaboration skills, and social awareness".

D.L. can be assumed from two different perspectives, instrumental and epistemological. The former is understood as the use of technology (devices, equipment, Internet and software) in order to teach and learn Literacy itself, dealing only with the issue of access, quantity and availability of the tools or apparatus for the learner. The latter, on the other hand, holds the idea that D.L. is an instrument to promote a critical, easily shared and more elaborated form of understanding reading, elaborating pieces of writing and conveying meaning making. All these conceptions imply new kinds of abilities and new levels of competence to cope with the skills and processes mentioned previously. They are different from the basic views practiced before by teachers, authors and pedagogues, (Mora, 2011; Mora Vélez, 2010,). Here, reading was conceived as understanding texts, writing as producing words and meaning making as the action restricted to talk about students' ideas (Abdallah, 2008 p. 1-17; Hargittai, 2001, p. 1-17)

Now, seen from the epistemological perspective, D.L. implies, beyond their instrumental use, there are internal and external variables that can positively or negatively influence the development of writing process (Mora, 2011; Mora Vélez, 2010). That is the reason why, D. L., its perspective about the use of technology and “digital technologies” for methodological purposes are important, helping to carry out activities that engage learners in reading and writing. They are developed in different ways and through different formats and applications; among them, they have been widely used on Social Media

## **Social Media**

The above, takes us to the concept of Social Media stated by Ahlqvist et al. (2008), who considers them as a combination of three elements: *Content or User Created Content (UCC)* where there are “web citizens” that have their “home locations on the web” and that carry out

and complete many of their daily tasks and duties in the web. *User Communities*, where there are groups and people that communicate directly or via “media objects” collecting and sharing information and knowledge they have already created, transformed or updated. And, *Web 2.0*, which are digital technologies for “content creation and sharing”, web technologies and applications. Furthermore, the concept of Social Media refers to the means of interactions among people, in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks.

Kaplan and Heinlein (2010), expanded the concept of Social Media defining it as “A group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0. It allows the creation and exchange of User-Generated Content.” As a consequence, applications and software are neither created nor published individually anymore; instead, these tools are uninterruptedly nor frequently updated and modified by all users and participants that can access them. Social Media is a technology based on interactive platforms (Gmail docs, blogs, Content Communities—YouTube and Slide Share—and Networking sites—Facebook—), where individuals, groups, and communities “share, co-create, discuss and modify User Generated Content (UGC).” (Kietzmann et al, 2011, p. 241-251).

Undoubtedly, social media has opened a door for community construction and interaction. They are easy “opt-in / opt-out” (Ahlqvist et al, 2008, p. 6), mechanism and “collaborative and collective intelligence,” but, especially, because they are free, easy accessibly and with a high amount of applications people can utilize. This has allowed individual and social activities - creating and maintaining contact with others, and personalizing profiles, likes and expectations. (Ahlqvist et al, 2008, p. 6). This ‘connection’ through social media is facilitated by interactive platforms and applications. Some examples are featured below.

**Content communities.** According to Kaplan and Heinlein (2010), the main objective of Content Communities is to “share media content between users” (p.61). One of their main characteristics is that users are not obligated to create a profile page, but if they do, it can be done with basic information. One of their disadvantages is the risk of using copyright protected materials.

**Social network (networking).** Social Network is defined as “software products developed to ease mutual interaction between individuals and groups and to provide various options for social feedback and support the establishment of social relationships” (Boyd, 2003, p. 210-222). They are characterized by the possibility of sharing, participating in the creation and exchanging of materials by readers and writers, the access to the information and feedback of other users, and “as a way of enabling students to see learning as going beyond the narrow confines of courses and programs to incorporate experience from a variety of contexts.” (Albion, 2007; Bartlett, 2006, p.13).

Social networks opens collaborative spaces “that are created by the personalizing of content and sharing of information that has been recognized as the basis for the human social dimension.” They are based on organizational culture (the persistence in the support for ongoing use of “social software and collaborative networks),” individual / learner inhibitors. The possibility of a confidence management which reduces the “engagement and commitment in its use”, as well as pedagogical inhibitors - the attitude that fosters “continuing guidance”, without reducing independence from the learner, which is both “challenging and rewarding”. (Bartlett, 2006, p. 13).

This Social Networks are the frame for the applications and software, which become the vehicle and the mean (activities and tasks,) that will favor the interaction and the work of learners to use their writing.

**Facebook.** Facebook is defined as, “A social utility that helps people share information and communicate more efficiently with their friends, family and coworkers” (Horton, 2009). This platform allows users to create “personalized profiles” that include general and specific information such as: education background, family background, work background, and favorite interests and concerns. It also lets people to add, share, comment and recommend links, videos, photos, games and song clips from people, webpages and from their favorite music and actor bands and TV shows or movies, respectively. Some of its most important and common uses are: posting messages on friends' pages, profiles and posting and tagging pictures and videos from friends and from the users themselves, among other things (Rosmarin, 2007; Zywicki & Danowski, 2008).

It also allows users from the same network to view each other's profiles, unless a profile owner has decided to deny permission to those in their network.” However, they cannot make “their full profiles public to all users.” (Ellison & Boyd, 2007, p. 210-222)

**Gmail Docs.** Gmail Docs that is an application in which users can share written products, write collaboratively and correct papers from other users. Besides, members of this web mail can share other kind of files such as pictures, images and PowerPoint presentations.

Among its different applications, Gmail Docs allow its users to create, edit and upload papers to Internet quickly; to access and edit papers from anywhere just by using an internet search engine, saving them safely on-line and sharing and updating them on real time.



Gmail Docs have been used before as a technological application for education, one of the best examples is the TLT group<sup>1</sup>, which is a community of people who has used technology for teaching and learning by explaining how to use Google docs and documents with educational purposes. They provide lesson plans, activities, conferences, forums and prompts that can be used and useful for teachers via Gmail and Google docs about a wide variety of topics and themes connected to education.

**Blogs.** Blogs that are websites where people can write and share their ideas, or according to Chris Brady (2009), it is the place where you can “translate your thoughts into words.” (n.p.). They are characterized for features such as chronological publishing, constant content update, feedback possibilities, and interaction trackbacks and pingbacks.

Blogs have been used before as a technological tool for teaching and learning, one of the best examples is the DigEnt: Digital Entrepreneurship is as “an individual who uses the Internet as a tool to create commercial opportunities, disseminate information, and collaborate with clients and partners.” (DigEnt, n.d.). This blog allows members to interact and to talk about similar interests, education and business in this case. That is the one of the main purpose of a blog. It is also defined as *collaborative webs* (Johnson, 2008), which are applications that help people to share interests and ideas, work collaboratively, get help, contacting other members to elaborate new projects, in real time, with the aim of getting a collective and communitarian progress.

After having explained the different platforms and applications used to create connection on the Social Network; it is important to mention the reasons people have to do it and through what means or activities they can create it.

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<sup>1</sup> TLT: non-profit organization affiliate of the American Association for Higher education; its mission is to motivate and enable institutions, improving teaching and learning by using available technology.

## Why Writing

According to Ferris and Hedgcock (2005), writing, “as a transactional activity, represents a process that must be undertaken with the reader’s background knowledge, needs, interests and ideologies in mind.” (p. 23). Writing is a process that requires and involves a close relationship between the writer and the audience, creating a real perspective of a “social situation” that leads to a closer and more real empathy and desire to help and work together with and to others.

Writing can become a successful meaningful activity to students in a classroom. It should enhanced and be based “on the needs, worldview, and sociocultural background of the learner;” creating learning environment to learners and to “their social realities that results in greater interest, involvement, and confidence in language learning.” (Boas, 2011, p. 26) Besides, people can use writing as a tool to learn from and to/in the language, making the former process a way to learn and think on the language and the latter as a means to practice it.

**Learning to write vs. writing to learn.** According to Sedita (2013), teachers should implement alternative proposals to build up and carry out writing processes in the classroom, having provided students with models of good writing and having collaborated them at various stages of the process. Here, we can talk about two different, yet completely connected processes: *learning to write* and *writing to learn*.

The former is defined as: the process that requires two sets of main skills: Composing skills using the writing process (pre-writing, planning, drafting, and revising), and transcription skills (punctuation, capitalization, spelling, handwriting/keyboarding). A foundational composing skill is the ability to apply knowledge of text structure to write sentences (i.e., knowledge of grammar), paragraphs, and longer passages of text. (Sedita, 2013, p. 7).

According to Sedita (2013,) the latter involves “(...) writing as a tool to promote content learning; when students write they think on paper. Content teachers assign writing activities to help students learn subject matter, clarify and organize their thoughts, and improve their retention of content.” (Sedita, 2013, p. 7). In order to promote these practices in the students, and as a way of helping them to interact (virtually ;) it is necessary to engage them in their practice through some means or forms, for instance, Social Media.

**Engaging student interaction on social media through writing.** In order to foster development of written texts while promoting interaction through social media, it is necessary to consider strategies to engage learners in the second language use. Brady (2009) suggests that teachers can create a Facebook page where learners can “like” and post updates and comments in the target language, among other actions the “social utility” allows (facebook.com). They can also create a YouTube account, where pupils can record a video blog, or 'vlog', about their interests, leisure time activities, opinions and even stories, only using the second language. Also, they are able to create a blog or “Tumblr” where pupils can publish second language self-authored contents and actively interact with others by posing questions and providing feedback.

When students construct online writings and messages based on their experiences, desires, likes, interest, etc., a situation that differs from the compositions or papers they usually create in the classroom, they define their personal constructed identities. Those distinctiveness are based and presented on the school syllabus. All these kinds of artifacts can be shared through blogs, social media, social networks, etc. (Alvermann, 2008, p. 8-19).

The online world “Provides virtual spaces for experimentation with language, as well as with identity, and where there is a purposeful manipulation and projection.” (Rowell & Abrams, 2011, p. 2). This means students may feel more freedom to express themselves online and to use

the language they know, control and like: writing, sharing, commenting, interacting and uploading to the different platforms, networks or software they belong to or are registered. In fact, Burke & Hammett (2009), and Sanford and Madill (2007) corroborate the assumption that students feel more textually engaged when they are outside the classroom than when they are dealing with traditional text used, usually, in the standard school curricula, syllabi and programs.

For The National Council of Teachers of English (Center for the Collaborative Classroom, n.d.), social interaction is one of the keys to become a writer, since writing is a social activity stimulated and that stimulates the context where the writer participates. Learners can write about their daily life and experiences in order to be engaged in different, varied and multiple learning experiences in which young writers can develop their own personal voice and improve their abilities to write about a range of different topics (Center for the Collaborative Classroom, n.d.).

In the case of elementary literacy, which develops “students' linguistic and cognitive abilities through the explicit integration of reading, writing, speaking, and listening” (ASCD, 2010). These activities in class sessions should include all content areas and tasks, it is the teacher who creates and provides the ideas and the exchanges that lead to an interactive writing and that turn this process into a social activity. There is social interaction supported by oral language and interpersonal relationships (Voltz, Sims, & Nelson, 2010) in which their own peers and instructors are the audience.

In the case of academic writing, Hyland (2000) proposes de idea that students or academics do not only produce texts that “plausibly represent an external reality,” they use the language as a vehicle that facilitates, creates, recognizes, and negotiates “social relations.” There, they convey and exchange their feelings and considerations when they write either for an

academic audience or for their own peers or colleagues. These texts can be academic and non-academic and they can be created in or outside the classroom (in moments different from the class).

**Non-academic digital literacy practices in and outside the second language classroom.** According to Amicucci (2014, p. 483), teachers have started to promote practices in which students use multimodal digital compositions, writings and texts on blogs and wikis, and communications through networking platforms. When educators bring that technological tool, either to be used in, or outside the classroom, students are able to express and communicate themselves, critically and reflectively, in the social context (Canagarajah, 2002). This happens because the “writing and language” used by learners in the digital world, differs from the strict, rigid and academic writing that is expected to be produced in the school and in the classroom.

In that sense, “non-academic digital and literacy practices” (Amicucci, 2014, p 483) framed in a specific “social and historical context” are highly valued (Street, 2003). They allow a better understanding on how “digital literacy activities outside school may hold rich potential for fostering their development of school- related literacies, the rhetorical contexts in which writing occurs and the ways such contexts shape language use understanding the role of an audience and the position of an author in shaping a written text.” (Amicucci, 2014, p 483; Aristotle, 1991).

Some of the examples of the use of these non-academic digital literacies that engage learners in a “critical literacy” (Amicucci, 2014, p. 483) and a “complex array of literacy moves that take into consideration the rhetorical situation created by the learners themselves.” (Lankshear and Knobel, 2011, p. 38) are instant message conversation (Haas, Takayoshi, Carr, Hudson, & Pollock, 2011, p. 378), social networking activity on Facebook (Brand et al., 2011;

Lankshear & Knobel, 2011, p.38), and online chatting for students' discussion of written ideas (Sweeny, 2010, p.128).

The efficacy of social learning is supported on the fact that it immerses learners in processes of induction into the 'ways' of becoming 'full practitioners'...[and] getting hands-on practice with their mental and material tools within authentic contexts, appropriate to the meaning-making in, which students are engaged. (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011, pp. 38).

## **Chapter Three:**

### **Methodology**

The present research is qualitative exploratory-interpretive study. Qualitative studies cope with “real-world situations,” which are not manipulated or controlled, and with a sample who are chosen because they provide “information rich (...) of the phenomenon of interest.” It uses qualitative data, where the researcher has an explicit contact with the sample under study and students are not judged but observed for “vicarious understanding.” There is also a deep attention to the process and changes subjects develop, where data shows details and specificities to “discover important patterns and (...) interrelationships.” It is understood the whole event as a “complex system” that presents contextualized results (social, historical and temporal), from a reflective perspective (Patton, 2002, p.40-41). Furthermore, in a qualitative study, due to its nature, instruments such as participant observation and open-ended questionnaires and interviews are used to collect data. Here, the participants of the study can express themselves freely, besides, it answers questions like: where, when, how and under what circumstances actions or behaviors come into existence, in an inductive form. (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011).

Framed in a qualitative study, an exploratory study allows to know more about the phenomenon, attempting to “lay the groundwork that will lead to future studies, or to determine if what is being observed might be explained by a currently existing theory.” Here, the research comes with either “a new topic or a new angle,” the former comes from an attempt to find generalizations while the latter comes from “new ways of looking at things” -either theoretical or practical- (Kowalczyk, n.d.). The exploratory research also helps to create distinctions among the concepts or suggest relationships that explain them, through qualitative data obtained via

informal discussions, in-depth interview and other data collection instruments (Shields & Rangarjan, 2013).

Meanwhile, an interpretative study searches for symbols and personalities that appear from interaction of members of a community or society, emphasizing the context and the participants where the study takes place (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011). Furthermore, interpretive studies are “informed by realist-objectivist ontological and epistemological presuppositions, rather than the more constructivist-subjectivist presuppositions.” This leads to forms where human beings can produce and generate knowledge of the world they interpreted through the definition and redefinition of the meanings they constructed (Yanow & Peregrine, 2009, p. 29-38; Stake, 2010, p. 36).

Accordingly, this exploratory – interpretive study was conducted with a sample of chosen purposefully randomly from a group of 13 students. Data was collected by means of interviews, questionnaires and observations, in order to explore issues “with varying levels of depth,” that had been little or no previously studied - or studied through a different angle- (Brown, 2006). It’s exploratory – interpretive nature provided basis for future research (Singh, 2007, p.64), and because its objective was to tackle an (p.43,) without providing a final or conclusive answer. It is interpretative because it relied on the researcher who was also an observer that had the role of “defining and redefining the meanings of what he saw and heard,” having perceptions of “objects and events and relationships,” interpreted simultaneously. (Stake, 2010, p. 36).

### **The context**

This qualitative study was carried out at a religious private school located in the City of Medellin, Colombia. Most students in this school come from a high socio-economic status. The



school's aim is to educate integral human beings through a holistic formation in order to serve others in the historical moment they are living in.

The Institution is seated in two different locations: the Children's section and the main section which has a big library, five labs (one for English), three chapels, three auditoriums (150-200-1.200 people) five audiovisual rooms, five computer labs with Internet many sport fields and courts, free use Wi-Fi, classrooms with TV, DVD, REC, and sound console. For English classes, all rooms are equipped with video beam, and an English resources library. There are 2 soccer fields, one gym, and two synthetic soccer fields, plus 3 patios, two playgrounds, two enclosed natural spaces (gardens) and 2 cafeterias where students can interact and share with others during recesses times.

The School's syllabus for English focuses on producing oral and written texts in diverse and concrete historically and socially situated communicative tasks. The school has adapted the Communicative Approach and tutors prepare learners for taking the Saber 11 (State General Tests) and international tests such as FLYERS, KET, and PET AND IELTS. In 1996 started the International Immersions in countries like England, United States and Canada. Students have the chance to travel to the latter when they are either in fifth grade or in seventh, eighth or ninth grades. Sometimes, they also travel to Australia or New Zealand for 3 months.

### **The Sample**

Thirteen seventh-grade students (3 girls and 10 boys) were selected as the sample. They were chosen from a group where most of the students like English and English classes, and where more than the 75% show good level of oral production, yet a low level of written production.

Even though these students are used to taking their English classes with almost no use of Spanish, some of them refuse to interact with their classmates, sometimes letting classmates with a higher level to participate or answer the teacher's questions. During the regular classes (3 times a week), they always use Spanish in order to ask for materials (the textbooks or study guides they use), to arrange groups, to organize the different steps of an activity, and when they need clarification or further explanation to carry out any task.

### **Data Collection**

For this study, five different data gathering techniques were used: a survey, an interview and a feedback questionnaire for students', artifacts and a teacher's journal. The survey (see Appendix I,) was aimed at exploring students' ideas about the perception and motivation they have towards writing and interacting in English, their commitment, engagement, ideas, reasons, and goals while writing and interacting in the second language. The interview (see Appendix II), that was carried out in the English lab, intended to deepen on the information provided by the students in the survey and to further explore their opinions and feelings towards writing, interacting and using Social Media. The teacher's journal was devoted to systematically record the process of using and interacting through social media, including attitudes and behaviors, allowing reflection on the way the strategy was being developed, as well as the adjustments needed in order to carry out the process.

A feedback questionnaire (Appendix III) to students was applied at the end of the process; here, learners were asked to assess the whole process and to provide their opinion about the social written interaction they did, as well as the perceptions on their written production at

the end of the study. This instrument gave the opportunity to the students to self-assess their process in terms of both their written production and the interaction in and outside the classroom.

Regarding students' artifacts, they were developed through, Gmail Docs, the blog, the Facebook group and chat; they included several publications, comments, uploading and updates of members' writings, plus commentaries to those publications. Here, all students participated: some of them published their papers, opinions, ideas, and comments while some others made comments, updates, references, corrections, likes etc.

The implementation of the strategy lasted for more than five months. Initially, a Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1391910484415714>) was created, so that, all the students could upload messages and images and where their classmates could make comments and or suggestions to those publications. Afterwards, a chat on the same platform was opened, in order to allow all students to participate by giving their ideas and opinions (they wrote, interchanged and made posts, comments and ideas about different topics and situations that happened in their daily lives) at any time. – They did it in and out of the school; they continued participating, even after the study was concluded.

Next, the creation of a blog (<https://seventha2014csi.blogspot.com>) for the group allowed students to upload their written texts, especially some compositions they created at the English lab, based on positive and negative aspects of their school. Then, a final 465-word text – The Best School Ever – was elaborated collaboratively during two lab sessions using Gmail docs (<https://docs.google.com>), included the ideas, opinions and thoughts of all the learners on the elements of a perfect school should have. In this instance, learners contributed by correcting each other, expanding ideas, making comments and interacting through the platform. Once the text

was completed by learners and revised by the teacher, it was uploaded to the Group Blog. Also, feedback two questions were posted, in order for students to evaluate the strategy.

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected was analyzed in different steps through some procedures. First, coding the information by “setting it according to topics, themes, and issues important to the study” (Stake, 2010). This helped to organize the information based on the research question, objectives and some groups of areas (relationship among the three main elements: writing, interaction and social media), to be then recoded and reclassified. (p. 123, 151).

After the coding, triangulation was used in order to validate the information set and organized. Multiple points of view of the researcher were considered, based on the theory, and the differences and similarities among the information found through the data collection procedures. However, there was always a consideration of the relation among the main elements of the study, (Flick, 2002).

Subsequently, coding and triangulation were processed by Constant Comparison in order to frame relation among writing, interaction and social media, (Straus & Corbin, 1998). It also allowed the researcher to look for the interrelations among the categories. (Weber, 1990).

The categories found through the analysis are:

*Table 1.*

*Categories and Subcategories*

CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES
Social Media	Usefulness, interactivity and easiness. Possibilities and variety (the use).
Interaction	Interaction with the task Social Interaction
The Writing Process	Frequency to write Typology of the discourse: (naturalness, contextualization and complexity) Reasons

**The Role of the Researcher**

As it is stated on the bases of the Qualitative Study, the role of the researcher in this particular study will be to monitor the process and changes subjects develop, understanding the whole event as a “complex system” that presents contextualized results (social, historical and temporal,) from a reflective perspective. (Patton, 2002, p.40-41). Some of these roles include: Planner, Catalyzer, Designer, Listener, Observer, Synthesizer, and Reporter.

## **Chapter Four:**

### **Relationship Among Social Media, Interaction And Writing**

Through the use of the chat, the commentaries and creation of text collaboratively in the different online applications, both learners and researcher understood the interactivity and easiness of such means, (Survey and Short Questionnaire). For instance, in the teacher's journal, it was mentioned: at the end of the class, and after having used Gmail docs, students thanked the teacher and said the activity had been very nice, "students many times asked the teacher when they were going to continue with the creation of the text in Gmail docs" (Teacher's Journal). Similarly, students liked using Gmail docs a lot, from the beginning to the end of the process with examples like: "Some students have approached me and asked me if they could use the Facebook group to remember activities and school responsibilities and duties." "Students participated frequently in the Facebook group and page and when they are asked if they liked the activity, all of them answered positively." "Students can interact because the application allows it to." And "they have mentioned and realized they liked the activities, and now they are looking for new forms of practicing English Online" (Teacher's journal). There were also some comments made by the students, in the different data gathering instruments: survey and short questionnaire, which reflected the understanding of the applications and advantages and how they could use them to share ideas, feelings and many other subjects. (See appendix IV).

Other examples of the interactivity and easiness of these applications, expressed by learners, were found in the short questionnaire, where they answered: "I think writing in English in the social media is better and more awesome than before." "I think all the people like showing to the others they know English because it is an important language in this moment of our lives"

and all your life.” And “you are going to meet some people and you are going to try to read, speak and write in English through Social Media” (Short questionnaire). (See appendix V).

Furthermore, in the questionnaire, at the beginning of the process, apprentices only used social networks in English 50% of the time and 15% had once used a blog (sharing or publishing;) after this intervention, it was 100% of learners who used both social networks and blogs regularly in English (Short Questionnaire). And in the interview, learners also mentioned and confirmed the understanding and enjoyment towards using these applications: “These writing texts help me because, we can interact altogether and eventually one will get to know people that you want to keep talking:-Facebook, -Twitter, -Snapshot.” “I like more using computer for English than before.” And “we learn faster than before and it is better not to work with paper and pencil, since it is better typing and students are more accustomed to do that” (Interview)<sup>2</sup>.

And, the possibilities and use of these Social Media tools are very big and varied. First, they can provide the interactivity and motivation the virtual word offers and which students love to use in their regular lives and contexts. Second, there are many activities and tasks that can only be built up, done and developed through virtual world like sharing, updating, commenting and editing simultaneously. Third, learners prefer typing than writing and they are more accustomed to do it every day in their cellphones, intelligent mobiles and laptops. Fourth, apprentices get tired easier when they are writing than when they are typing, and usually they used to count the words they were asked to write, but when they are typing, most of the time they develop their ideas and then, at the end, they sum the words, which are usually more than the one requested for the instructor. Besides, they feel more confident to write on the virtual world, since they know there is a word processor and corrector that checks spelling and even some grammar

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<sup>2</sup> See Figure 1: Usage of Social Media in the English Class

mistakes they make or doubt about. And fifth, most of the students (95%) are registered in minimum one social network and many times they are in more than one and although most of the students know how to do a blog, they do not usually do it or participate on it. However, they saw the practicality and usefulness of this application after the implementation carried out.

The social network was the mean that contributed to generate and develop interaction. At the beginning of this process and before the intervention, students almost never interacted (orally or written) among them in English, and they rarely interacted with the teacher in that target language, as shown in the teacher's journal and in the first questionnaire. Most of them interacted with the teacher in Spanish, and when they talked or wrote to each other, they always did it in the mother language, even when they were asked to intervene in the second language (Teacher's journal and questionnaire). All this, because they felt fear to participate or because, even knowing the language pretty well, they did not have the willingness or disposition to do it. Even more, they did not know that writing in English was an excellent mean of interaction (Teacher's journal and interview).

However, similar to the previous section, there was an improvement and increase in students' interaction with the teacher, among themselves, and with the task itself, through collaborative work. This amelioration was done by the mean of explaining, correcting, editing, giving and adding ideas to and from their classmates' writings, messages and comments revealed in the different tasks and activities carried out, as recorded in the last questionnaire and survey. It is important to remark, in this intervention, the teacher did not make grammar, vocabulary or stylistic corrections in apprentices' writings, unless the student asked or had asked for an explanation, or in the case of the final products that would be uploaded to the group's blog<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> See Figure 2: Reasons to interact in English



The improvement in the interaction occurred from the very beginning of the process when students understood they could interact not only with the teacher but also with their classmates, and with the tasks themselves as recorded in the interview and in their artifacts (blog, Facebook page and group). This shows how learners' interaction is an underpinning for meaning construction as stated by Salomon and Perkins (1998) and Celeste Kinginger (2013). An example of those interactions and that meaning construction was found in the teacher's journal, where it was seen the improvement of the collaborative work and the pupils synergy in examples like: "the paper students wrote had a higher quality and its extent was far beyond the regular length papers usually have on seventh grade", also because "all learners felt they were participating actively in the different activities and tasks proposed" and because all of them felt and understood they were contributing to a good final product (Teacher's journal). In all the activities and writings created, every single student wrote at least one idea and most of them intervened many and several times in the activities, tasks and texts.

Moreover, related to the correction, edition, and additions of ideas as a mean of interaction, which constructs and emphasizes 'situatedness learning' as stated by Rohlfsing (n.d.) and Illeris (2001, 2003), in the teacher's journal, it was written: some students asked the permission to correct their peers mistakes and errors, many times during the elaboration of their writings, some learners requested to go back to their text and to add ideas, comments or examples to previous sections, in order to make it more precise. Most of the times, when any of the classmates used Spanish, there was always another student who reminded him/her to use only English in their texts. Another instrument, which presented students' correction and edition in their writing, was the Facebook group. Here, they corrected each other without making them feel bad, but as a mean of interaction, and where the peers, who were corrected, felt very thankful

with those adjustments or commentaries (Questionnaire, Teacher's journal and Students' artifact). For instance, students wrote these corrections in the Facebook group: "hahaha, in English is with H;" (See Appendix VI) there were even conversations in the group with interactions that showed those improvements like:

- Conversation 1.

(Student 1) "We (are) going to make the presentation on the English lab right? So can I go to the school with my work in a power point presentation?"

(Student 2) "Yup, you can,"

(Student 1) "Can you please tell me what I have to do for English? "What, please", or "can you tell me (Student 3)"

(Student 3), "a presentation"

(Student 2,) "I told u, the rules, prohibitions, duties, etc...etc"

(Student 1) I have to say the things that I don't like about the school???

(Student 2) "No..."

(Student 1) "Sooooo"

(Student 2,) "Only talk about your ideal school"

- Another conversation:

(Student 1) "What is yup?"

(Student 2) ""It means "yes""

- And also, the following interaction:

(Student 1) and "I CANT NOT SEE IT!!"

(Student 2) "You want to say can't or cannot." (See Appendix VII).

Similarly, in the short questionnaire, students had the opportunity to present and express how they perceived their advances and improvements in their interaction by being corrected and edited, and by receiving or being given ideas to improve or to make their writings, texts and messages better. For example, students mentioned in this instrument: “Now, I can chat with many people, even if I make mistakes;” “when in games somebody else asks me something, I feel confident to answer him/her,” “It think it has been a great experience because we can help each other to write better” (Questionnaire to students). The first and last example belongs to the first part and last part of the process respectively. (See Appendix VIII and IX).

Likewise, through the use of Gmail docs, Facebook page and group and the blog; students could increase their Social Interaction, by socializing more and more frequently with both: their teacher and among themselves (as proposed by Lankshear and Knobel 2006). They exchanged feelings, ideas and likes in the different applications and in the different kind of texts and writings they created, a process they did not use to do, before, in the English class and in the classroom as recorded in the questionnaire and in the interview.

Before this intervention, students did not interact frequently among them in the classroom and they never interacted socially outside the classroom (Questionnaire and Interview) but this situation changed and students, from the very beginning until the very end of the process, felt they could social interact through the different applications and social networks provided by the teacher-researcher in class and at home (Survey, Short questionnaire and Teacher’s journal)<sup>4</sup>.

At the beginning of the implementation, in the teacher’s journal, it was mentioned: Gmail docs allowed a better students’ interaction and their active participation while creating the papers and having fun at the same time. This was stated in the journal through examples like: “all students were part of the composition created through Gmail docs in one of the sessions or in

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<sup>4</sup> See Figure 3: Frequency of Interaction

both of them” (Teacher’s Journal). Then, in the interview, learners confirmed they felt they were expressing their feelings and ideas more habitually and repeatedly than before. For instance: “I thought English was only for classes, or something like that,” also “before, I didn’t talk too much in English with my friends, now I usually do it” and “Before, I interacted in English but not always, now I do almost always” (Interview). Then, in the Facebook page and group, students also expressed and re-confirmed their perceptions and thoughts about their advances and improvement in their interaction with examples such as: in the former: “Yes you're right” and “my (I am) nothing I lack of ambition;” and in the latter: “Jajajajaajajajajaj-sorry- I hate you,” “calm down my friend,” “I need help,” “dreaming is free,” “God please,” and “who want to see a satellite dog”. (See Appendix X).

Moreover, there was an increase, encouraged and enhanced in the social interaction connected to the publishing, uploading and sharing of texts from the beginning until the end of this intervention, as proposed by Thorne and Black (2011). It helped students to express their ideas and opinions by using Gmail docs, blog and Facebook page and group; as it was stated in the information gathered (Survey and Short questionnaire). For instance, in the Facebook group, students expressed themselves frequently, almost one or twice a week, with ideas and sentences like: “Who knows about Meredith Grey or who has seen Grey's anatomy?” and “Nah it was only luck, the luck doesn’t exist, I don’t know.” Also, in the teacher’s journal, there was an improvement of students’ interaction when they provided their judgments and notions about the different text they created. For example, the educator observed students gave their view in all the different applications used, and students expressed their ideas and thoughts every time they got into the Facebook page and group. In the creation of the text in Gmail docs, every single student provided his/her opinion, valuing and accepting their peers comments and ideas in order to

continue expanding and making the texts and compositions better. In the questionnaire, learners as well, commented and confirmed they were able to express themselves more and more regularly than before: “We need to know other language or culture to speak the language,” we have to handle a second language to be smarter, also when you interact you practice the language and “I am traveling to Canada, so I need it.” (Questionnaire). In the interview, it was similarly expressed by the learners this improvement through the whole process through opinions and ideas such as: I can talk to people in other countries,” “if I interact in English I will speak (write) more fluently and learn more English,” “when I write I learn new words, learn the language quickly and I can communicate with others” and “This writing texts help me because, we can interact altogether” (Interview). And In the short questionnaire, which was proposed at the end of the process, apprentices stated they had provided ideas and thoughts in the different applications through examples like: “I like to interact in English with more people than before...” Now, I chat with more people in English,” “we can participate and talk more with clear ideas.” “My friends also participated more than before,” and “activities were good because I can (could) leave my old scare (fear) feeling about talking (writing) in English” (Short Questionnaire).

Correspondingly, there was another outcome of this intervention, which was a higher disposition, willingness and desire to interact (social interact,) and to be interrelated with other people (different from the teacher.) This reflected a tendency towards “interactional and social dynamics” as stated by Merchant (2006) and Miller and Slater (2000). All this process occurred after using Gmail docs, blogs, Facebook page and group. There, students participated and contributed written, without feeling the pressure to make mistakes, the restrictions the classroom provides, the formality and rigidity of the lesson or lecture, or the different constrains students feel to interact, such as: fear, shame, shyness, difference in the linguistic levels, reputation in the

classroom and even laziness to write as recorded in the questionnaire and interview. However, after the learners started interacting and writing in English, they felt it was easier and they could do it frequently and properly. They understood most of the limitations they used to have were more connected to their laziness and attitude towards writing and English, not to the difficulty of the language or to the lack of practice they could have (Survey and Short questionnaire).

Some of the examples connected to the improvement in the enthusiasm and desire to interact written in English, after this intervention, were: In the teacher's journal: almost all the students had an active participation and interaction in the Facebook group frequently, sometimes more than twice a week, while at the beginning of the process only half of the group interacted with a certain frequency (once a week or twice a week maximum). In the interview, apprentices also mentioned, they felt, they had more motivation and enthusiasm to regularly, interact in English. Some of the examples found in the interviews that show this are<sup>5</sup>:

- I thought to interact in English was only an activity in the classroom, now I think you can do it every moment.
- I could talk (chat) and interact with many people.
- To interact helped me communicate with my friends and my parents, and sometimes, I chat in English with my friends and parents.
- Before I didn't talk (interact) too much in English with my friends, now I usually do it.

In the short questionnaire at the end of the process (See Appendix XI), students mentioned:

- I think now, I like to interact in English with more people than before...

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<sup>5</sup> See Figure 4: Willingness to interact in English

- I think the activities worked because I could leave my old scare felling about talking and writing in” English.
- I think that interact in English is cool because we can learn more.
- I have learnt more about my friends and I know them better.
- I think it has been a great experience because we can help each other.

Using social media to develop interaction (social interaction,) learners could develop and improved their writing process: as a result of the implementation of the strategies, an increase in the frequency and amount of texts, posts, notes or remarks students wrote. It is likely to say learners are writing more than before and with more frequency (interacting more). For instance, most of the students participated in the Facebook group once or twice a week, compared with the 50 percent that only used to write, every day or once or twice a week at the beginning of the process (according to the questionnaire.) Some of students, also, wrote in Spanish in the same data gathering instrument, while in the short one (at the end of the process), all students wrote and answer to questions and prompts, properly and correct, in English (Teacher’s Journal). In the interview students also pointed out “I am writing more in English than before,” “I am writing more frequently” and “some of my classmates who never used English are using that target language recurrently and appropriately”. This also shows how “students collaborate at various stages” to create meaningful and better compositions and texts as stated by Sedita (2013, p. 7)<sup>6</sup>.

Moreover, connected to the increase in the naturalness, spontaneity and fluency of the compositions, messages and comments students used to write before this implementation, learners are creating more natural, spontaneous and fluent texts than before. For instance, learners, at their own will, composed and interacted in many different topics and issues through

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<sup>6</sup> See Figure 5: Frequency of writing

the Facebook group as detailed in teacher's journal. Some of the comments in the page and the group were: guys, remember, there are interclasses competition tomorrow, and "I am going to silence the group for one hour, because I can't learn math." This show there was a discussion of their ideas to improve all those variables (Sweeny, 2010, p. 128).

The improvement on students writing process (naturalness, contextualization and fluency) was also presented through the development they had on five practices: First the focus: they learnt how to answer properly and correctly to questions, prompts and comments created by them in the different social media applications and networks based on the "topic/ subject" they were writing and commenting on (Teacher's journal, interview, Feedback questionnaire). Second, they developed a higher text organization in both the Facebook Group, Chat and the text build cooperatively through Gmail docs (Teacher's Journal and Feedback questionnaire). Here, they showed "progression, relatedness, and completeness of ideas (...). They exhibited a constancy of purpose through the development of elements forming an effective beginning, middle, and end," in all the composition, texts and messages they uploaded or created through social Media (Gmail docs, Teacher's Journal and Feedback Questionnaire). Third, they showed higher support and elaboration of ideas and texts; extending and developing the "topic/subject," providing "sufficient elaboration to present the ideas and/or events clearly," both in the text they created, and in the comments they elaborated, built and upload along the whole study. They were supportive – "focus of the response," – and showing relatedness – "relationship between the information and the subject matter"– at the same time (Teacher's Journal, Feedback Questionnaire). Fourth, apprentices improved their style, showing a better handle of the language, and considering the objective, "audience," and context of the writing, topics and task. They had better "word choice" –precise vocabulary– and "sentence fluency" –variety of styles–



(Teachers Journal, Students' artifacts, Gmail Docs and Feedback Questionnaire). And fifth, they improved the use of "conventions" since they evidenced "correctness in sentence formation (grammar), usage, and mechanics", above all dealing with little mistakes, either in structure or in the use of certain words or expressions, which did not affect their understanding of the message (text) nor the answer they had to provide to. (Bowen & Cali, n.d.). (See Appendix XII & XIII).

Similarly, there was an improvement in the writing (naturalness, spontaneity and fluency) related to the technical development students had. They understood the requirements of the different tasks, in order to design and develop, appropriately, the answers and comments they had to produce, answering or remarking properly to their classmates messages, uploads, states or reflections. Then, they reviewed both their creations and their classmates, considering the grammar, lexicon, coherence, appropriateness, contextualization and cohesion of their texts to then finalize and upload new commentaries, texts or observations; mentioned by students and teacher- researcher (Feedback Questionnaire, Teacher's Journal).

Also the blog constituted an important artifact, which showed not only the improvement in learners' attitudes towards writing, but also de production of texts with a wider range of lexicon and structures (more complex, appropriate and better structured,). Now, most written texts developed through virtual means were, at least, 100 words, in comparison to the ones produced at the beginning of the study, in which, learners used no more than: 70 words for tasks proposed in classroom activities (Teacher's journal). These texts presented more accurate and precise vocabulary related to the different topics students wrote about, based on the lexicon they had interchanged and shared in the different interventions and text uploaded. Additionally, a text cooperatively produced through the blog, reached up to 500 words, showed the use of complex

and more appropriate structures by students, depending on the task and activity posed by the teacher-researcher (Theme and context)<sup>7</sup>.

And most of the students confirmed they had improved their writings and discourse, in both, the interview and the short questionnaire providing examples like: I have and had improved my grammar and the quality of my compositions in length, complexity and level. Also, in the teacher's journal, it appeared some entries where this improvement was mentioned. For instance: "learners were able to identify and apply different appropriate grammar structures and registers depending on the requirements and the nature of the text written; being formal for the blog, Facebook and blog entries and being informal in the Facebook group and Gmail chatting (an application Gmail docs provides)" (Teacher's journal). (See Appendix XIII).

The creation of spontaneous contextualized texts influenced learners' willingness to participate on teacher – learner - task interaction in the second language, as shown in the contrast between the answers provided to the first and to the second questionnaire. In other words, students modified their perception towards as to why writing in the second language: From merely complying with school assignments or requirements, as expressed in the first questionnaire, to other reasons that were not necessarily academic but more related to their lives, interest and needs (Questionnaire, Teacher's Journal).

During the interview, students started showing they had found those incentives, reasons and interests for writing in English, as evidenced in both the interview and the sort questionnaire: "I want to learn more languages," "I consider than writing in English is fun" (Questionnaire to students). "I do not make so many grammar and vocabulary mistakes as before because I know how to write better" and "I understand the esthetic and style of the language better." (Questionnaire to students).

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<sup>7</sup> See Figure 6: Length of Compositions (lexicon and structures)

Additionally, in the blog and the Facebook page and group, students share their writings, so that, others could read them compositions and texts to make comments: “learners wanted other people to make comments, opinions, provide information and make suggestions” (Teacher’s journal) to their texts and written pieces and messages. (See Appendix XIV).

And, students also found those incentives to write in English based on their desire and willingness to express their ideas, opinions and feelings, situation that occurs natural at their age but which is not commonly promoted or developed in the English classroom<sup>8</sup>.

### **Answering the question**

The study showed that the use of different online applications, as a means to collaboratively build spontaneous and contextualized texts, actually, leads learners to a more active students-teacher-task interaction, resulting in a certain level of development of their written production. In fact, students and teacher researcher appreciated the advantages of the implementation of the strategy (conjoined production) proposed in terms of the spiral character of the process as explained in the methodological design.

In this sense, the collaborative activities articulated the students’ needs and interests with the reasons they had for writing and interacting in English; learning more about and from others (and about themselves), increasing and improving the development of their written language.

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<sup>8</sup> See Figure 7: Reasons to write in English

## **Chapter Five:**

### **Reflecting On This Research Process Itself and Its Implication As A Teacher And Researcher For The Present And Future Academic And Personal Life**

Sometimes, when carrying out a research, investigators find out the question they posed and the results they obtained went in different ways, showing those results were not the ones expected. But in this study, on the other hand, the whole process showed a clear, systematic development in which the results, findings, analysis and conclusions drawn from the implementation matched perfectly the intention, objective and purpose stated in the research question. This means, there were not any conflict or opposition between the questions -to what extent does interaction through social media impact second language learners' written production? - And the process, the findings and the results (lessons learnt). The expected results from the research question were the ones obtained after carrying out the data analysis collection and interpretation; showing a clear, steady and evident relationship between these two sections and then, among them and the rest of the study.

The question was always the main base and underpin of the study; it contributed and favored to have a horizon that was constantly permeating the research, its objective, collection instruments, data analysis and interpretations. This also means, the question was always present through the whole process and it was well developed until the statement of the conclusion in which it and the objectives (main and specific) were fully accomplished and developed. Both the questions and the objectives were fully achieved and accomplished in this study that was looking for the enhancing and improving of interaction through social media that had an impact in learner's written production.

## **Lessons Learned Vs. The Literature**

For this specific research, the literature and the lessons learnt, with and through the implementation and the further investigation carried out based on it, did not go one against the other. On the contrary, they complemented each other and the theory that was the support at the beginning of this project has become new theory that will be nourished by the findings, results and conclusions drawn from it. This means, there was not any conflict between the theory, the practice and the process of researching that was developed in this study.

The theory that supported this study (conceptual framework and literature reviewed) stated clearly the possibility of generating interaction (Lankshear and Knobel, 2006; Thorne and Black, 2011), which could be developed and enhanced by the use of social media (Ahlqvist et al, 2008; Kaplan and Heinlein, 2010). This was one of the main conclusions drawn from this research, bearing in mind that writing (Boas, 2011; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Sedita, 2013) was the vehicle that allow the creation, development and production of the interaction and the collaborative work carried out. At the same time writing was greatly and positively impacted, as it was also stated in the findings and conclusions of the study.

And another similarity between the theory and the lessons learnt deals with the practices teachers have started creating and developing, both inside and outside the classroom. They are connected and related to academic and non-academic matters, subjects, practices and tasks (Amicucci, 2014; Aristotle, 1991; Haas, Takayoshi, Carr, Hudson, & Pollock, 2011; Lankshear and Knobel, 2011). They dealt with interaction, contextual learning, students' needs, likes, requirements and social learning (Illeris, 2001, 2003; Kinginger, 2013; Salomon and Perkins, 1998).

## **Implications**

This study can have and bring many possible implications, diverse possibilities and a great impact for the researcher itself, the institution he is working on and for the academic community in general, in different aspects and teaching processes. These implications deal with the theoretical, pedagogical, didactical and epistemological teaching procedures, development and practices.

Second, this study can shed some lights on problems related to knowledge that replicated the process of enhancing interaction among students in high schools. They improved the linguistic level of its students, and generating, at the same time, an increase and a development in their motivation, like and attitude towards this target language. This interaction should be developed through social media or some other software and applications and can have, as a vehicle or mean, speaking and even the writing process (as in this study).

Finally, for the academic community, this study can become a source of knowledge and information. They can help researchers, professors, new, incoming, practitioner and experienced teachers (and the academic community in general) to know and learn about the advantages of using technology (social media) and some online applications. They promote interaction among students, and students and teachers (professors) in the target language. They can understand the epistemological conceptions and bases behind the use of this software to promote the use of the language both inside and outside the classroom in academic and non-academic practices.

## **Limitations**

When carrying out and developing a research project, there are always some constraints and limitations the researcher has to experience and face both external and internal. They can affect, bias or interfere with the normal development and execution of the implementation and work, at the same time, they might affect either the process, the results and/or the conclusions themselves.

In this project, as a researcher, there was an internal limitation that had to be faced and it was a previous, systematic, well supported study carried out some years ago in the same setting, connected to a similar topic, but with different actors, processes and elements than that project. Furthermore, as having that study as an initial support for the statement of the problem, it was clear, this situation might become an issue, specially, if it were not considered the new variables and elements that were part of the current study. However, with the help of the advisor, some classmates and colleagues, the issue was solved and it was possible to move forward from this situation in order to avoid biases neither in the process nor in the findings and conclusions, but it is necessary to mention, this was always a limitation through the whole study.

There were many external limitations: at the beginning of the implementation, the school did not agree on giving access to the subjects the researcher asked them to be with nor with the request. However, they accepted the proposal and allowed him to carry out the study in the institution. Secondly, there were many difficulties when he asked the coordinator to elaborate the consent letter to be sent to the parents, since the study will be developed with teenagers underage. It took more than a month doing drafts, making corrections and adaptations to the letter; to end up having a very simple consent letter signed down by the school and sent to the parents (all of them allowed their children to participate). And finally, during the

implementation, there were some technical problems at the beginning such as: Some students did not have a Gmail account, or some of them did not have much access to their Facebook. However, after using the school lab and remembering parents the intention of this project, all these situations were solved and the implementation was done as planned and expected.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

While the use of social media to improve English writing process and interaction has been the object of research worldwide, there is still the need for more research on the contributions of all these interactive platforms for second language educational and linguistic practice and enhancement both in our country and worldwide. Both, in the classroom and outside of it, and not only in English, but also in other areas of knowledge and in other school and university subjects. The emphasis on the creation and participation components along with other elements, theories and practices that permeate social media provide potential topics for inquiry. Those elements, in addition to the tangible contribution to the development and creation of texts elaborated collaboratively, and its consequent interaction and writing process upgrading, it might also be through other processes and skills, provide another important area to expand second language research.

The use of social media that favors interaction in both, inside and outside the classroom for practicing English in academic and non-academic written tasks (and other kind of task such as speaking, listening and reading,) activities and practices is still a topic that can be inquired and future researched. In the context of the school and in the university level in Colombia and worldwide; above all, because the use of this application by both the students and teacher is still



being used, in order for them to talk about their interests, needs, likes and many other matters among others frequently and as an activity that has become part of their routine and school life.

### **Future Directions for Pedagogy**

Pedagogy defined as “a highly complex blend of theoretical understanding and practical teaching skills” (Lovat, ACDE, p.11 2003), and not only as the simple “stuff of teachers’ daily lives” (Smith, n.d.). They deal with the art of teaching, the responsive, creative and intuitive teaching aspect, the craft of teaching skills and practice, the science of teaching, the research-informed decision making and the theoretical underpinning of teaching practices. They can have a number of implications after a study like this.

First of all, this study showed how to promote, create, build, generate and carry out processes in which learners use, practice and improve the use of the target language or some parts of it as the written competence.

Another possible implication deals with the conception of technology and its epistemological use to teach a target language in a high school, since some of the myths and biases teachers might have about its use were modified and systematically transformed into a positive tool and instrument both educators and students can use. These applications contributed to a major, better, more natural and accurate use of the language by students and even by the teacher.

Furthermore, based on this study, it is possible to see the interaction in the second language in a different way from the manner it has been seen for a long time, in the second language classroom. Through the use of these applications, students can feel more confident and free to express themselves and to use the language in a safe space and environment (virtual), an

aspect that it is not easy to handle or promote in the regular class sessions with learners who do not want to use the language and who feel ashamed, shy and restricted to either speak or write.

And the final implication for the pedagogy deals with how there was a symbiotic relationship among three elements: interaction, social media and writing, which could be used to improve students' written competence and performance. Here, it was stated the possibility to use the three components at the same time, or by duos - interaction and social media, interaction and writing, and social media and writing- improving, at the same time, students linguistic performance and competence.

## **Recommendations**

From the results of this study, it is possible to the use of social media more productive for other English teachers. It could be done since these strategies allow teachers to use them with learners in different grades and language level, of course, considering group differences, and making some arrangements (done by each teacher that tries to implement them).

The strategies mentioned below for making Facebook page and group, Gmail docs and blog more productive should be used in any single activity. They take into account the way students write, the reasons they have for writing, their level and that they have to be articulated with the school syllabus as well:

- Ask students to create a Facebook Gmail docs and blog account
- Create the Facebook group
- Look for a fast Internet connection.
- You have to be the owner of the Facebook group, blog and the Gmail doc browse students are only members, collaborators and followers of the applications.

- Blogs have to be colorful and beautiful designed to call the attention from the students.
- Upload images, pictures, comments, surveys and files to the blog and to the Facebook group so students can be more motivated to enter and can also make comments about them.
- Look for the configuration of Gmail doc and Facebook group set it up allowing that all students could check or add ideas to the articles. In the blog, just allow members to make comments.
- Always look for interesting and appealing topics for students to write, specially, topics connected to their present lives and future.
- At the beginning, pay more attention to the interaction, ideas expression and participation than its grammar, it could be checked later or before uploading the articles it can be proofread.
- Always reward students` work and give credits to the creators when it would be the case in the blog or in the Gmail doc.

### **What Did This Study Mean To Me?**

This study means a lot to me, because, first, it is the second part of a previous, systematic, well supported study I carried out some years ago. Second, because I could make the research on a topic I have always been interested in. Third, because I could improve my current teaching practices and classroom activities (using applications,). And finally, because I learned and improve a lot my skills as a researcher; something I expect will help me in the future for my academic life and job.

This study was the second part of a previous organized, systematic, well referenced and supported study I carried out some years ago about the use of Gmail docs and Blogs to enhance motivation towards writing in English. It means, through this Master's thesis, I could learn more and use what I had learnt before, in order to carry out a proper intervention in which I could apply and practice everything I had learnt in my experiences in research and as a researcher up to now, especially, some of the theory and procedures I followed in previous studies.

As a researcher, I have always have some interests that have evolved through the time and through the undergraduate and postgraduate programs I have studied. In the first part of my professional formation, my interest were lead to motivation, collaborative and cooperative work towards language learning. Then, in the postgraduate program, my interest dealt with the use of some online applications to enhance motivation towards English writing. And now, in this Master's research, it was combined elements from all those two previous studies: the collaborative work, the interaction and the technology (applications) aimed at improving linguistic learner level and competence.

An important outcome of this Master`s research was the improvement of my research practices and the change of some class activities and tasks, who are now, more permeate of the use of technology and online applications that create and enhance interaction and English writing. In the past, it was very hard to promote interaction among my students and even, sometimes, among them and me as their teacher. However, after this project; I have leant how to use technology to favor the improvement and increase of the interaction and written level and production in my students, regardless the grade or level they are in, at the same time, they have fun chatting and making texts on the online world.

And, I have improved my skills as a researcher, something that would favor the process I want to continue developing in teaching and learning of and about the languages in the academy and university field and level respectively. With the experience this implementation has provided me with, I know, it would be possible to continue expanding this research, making more researches connected to the topic, advising some people on the same field and collaborating others and myself, with a higher experience and knowledge about how to plan, elaborate and carry out a research.

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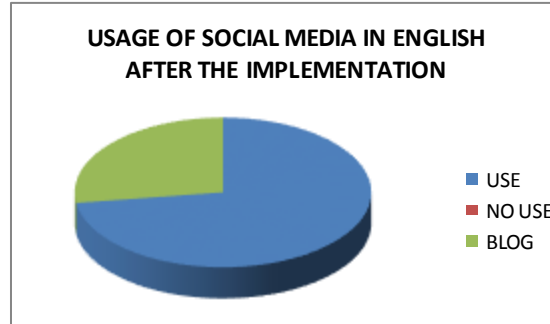
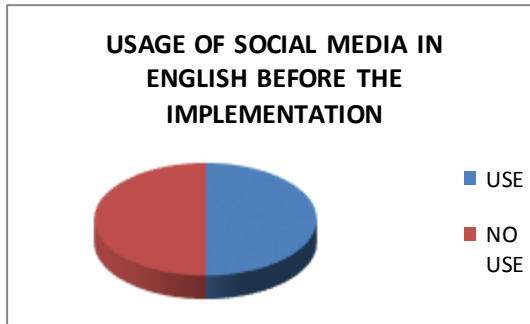
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Zywica, J., & Danowski, J. (2008). The faces of Facebookers: Investigating social enhancement and social compensation hypotheses; predicting Facebook and offline popularity from sociability and self-esteem, and mapping the meanings of popularity with semantic networks. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, (14), 1–34.

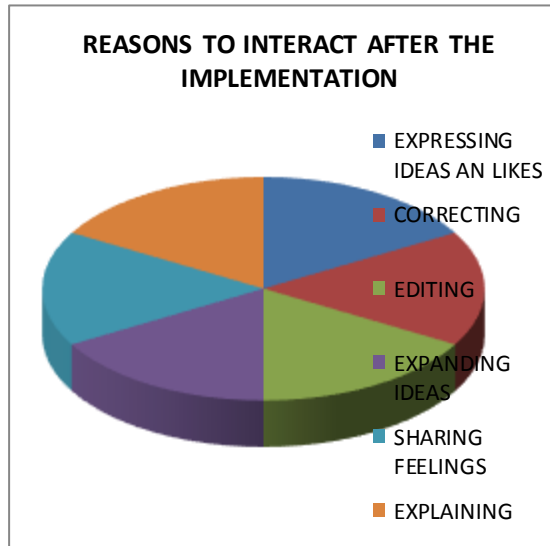
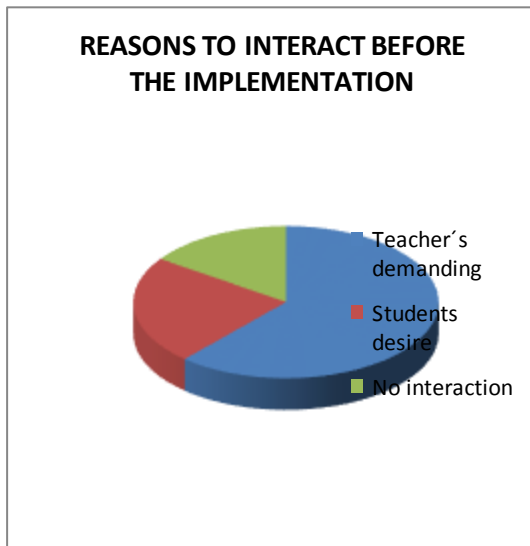


## Graphics

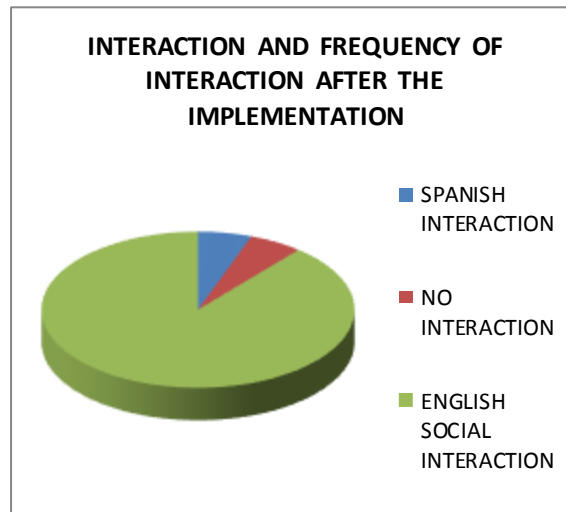
### 1. Usage of Social Media In the English Class



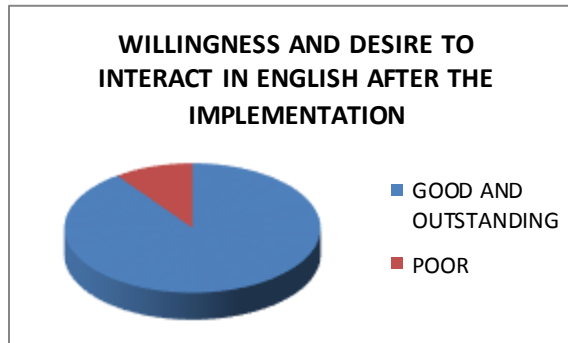
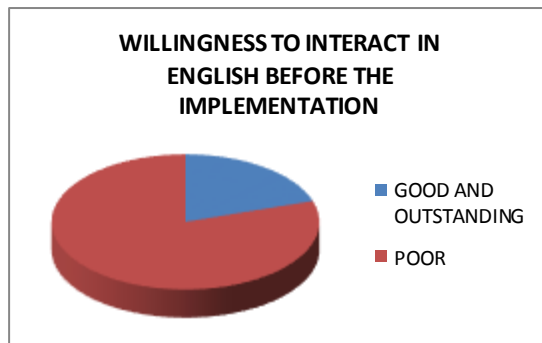
### 2. Reasons to Interact In English



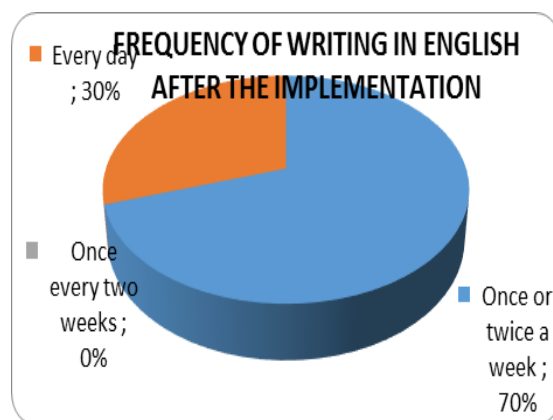
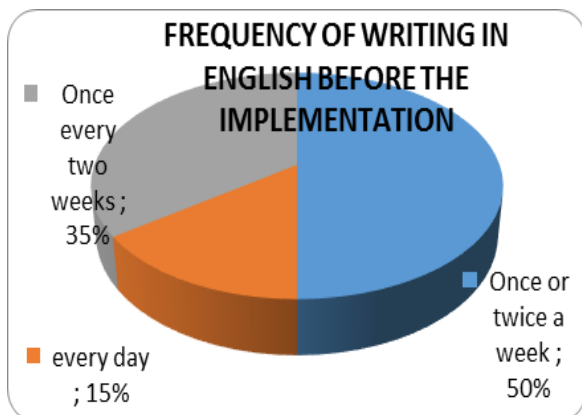
### 3. Frequency of Interaction



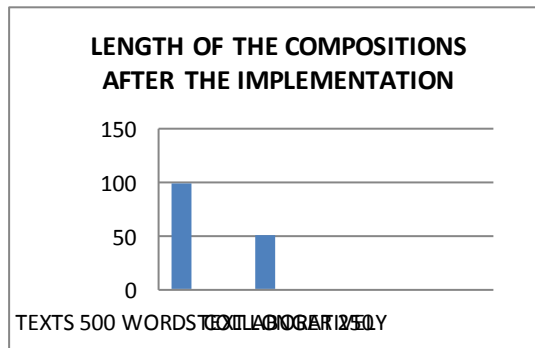
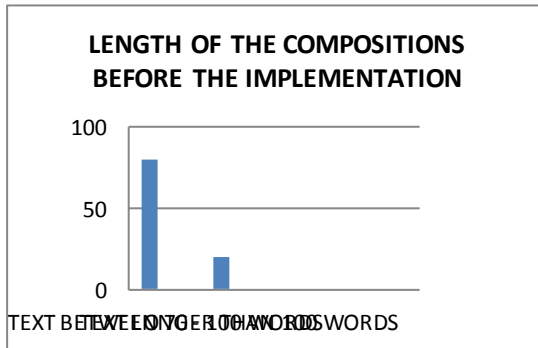
### 4. Willingness to interact in English



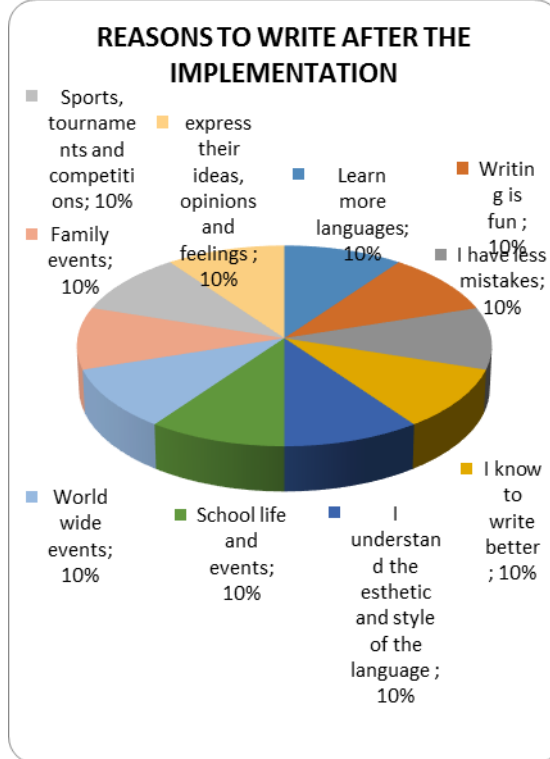
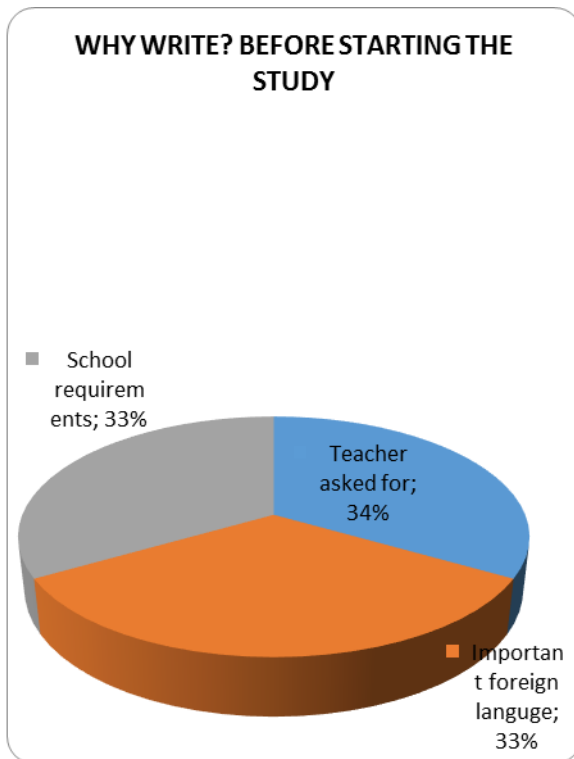
### 5. Frequency of Writing



## 6. Length of compositions (lexicon and structures)



## 7. Reasons to write in English



## Appendix I

### Questionnaire

1. Is It Important To Interact In English In This Moment Of Your Life? Yes/No
2. Explain Your Answer?
3. Is It Important To Write In English For Your Life? Yes/No
4. Explain Your Answer?
5. How Often Do You Interact Inside The English Classroom
  - Everyday
  - Twice A Week
  - Once A Week
  - Once A Month
  - 3 To 5 Times A Week
  - Never In A Month
6. How Often Do You Interact In English Outside The Classroom?
  - Everyday
  - Twice A Week
  - Once A Week
  - Once A Month
  - 3 To 5 Times A Week
  - Never In A Month
7. How Often Do You Write In English?
  - Everyday
  - Twice A Week
  - Once A Week
  - Once A Month
  - 3 To 5 Times A Week
  - Never In A Month
8. How Often Do You Write In English Outside The Classroom?
  - Everyday
  - Twice A Week
  - Once A Week
  - Once A Month
  - 3 To 5 Times A Week
  - Never In A Month
9. What Are The Most Important Aspects For You When Writing In English? You Can Choose More Than One If Necessary?
  - Grammar

Organization  
Style  
Interaction (Audience)  
Vocabulary  
Length

10. When You Have English Written Interaction. You

Practice The Language In Class

Practice The Language Outside The Class

Communicate In The English Class

Communicate Outside The Classroom

Share, Feelings, Needs

Share Opinions Ideas And Comments

11. Is It Difficult For You To Interact In English?

Yes/No

12. Explain Your Answer?

13. Is It Difficult To Write In English?

Yes/No

14. Explain Your Answer?

15. Which Of The Following Social Media, Do You Use In Order To Interact In English?

Chatting And/Or Commenting

Internet Accounts

Social Networks (Facebook-Tweeter-)

Creating Blogs

Researching

Watching Videos

Downloading Software

## **Appendix II**

### **Survey Questions**

1. Has the experience of writing texts through social media helped you...
  - a. Find new interests or reasons for writing in English? If so, which?
  - b. Find new interests or reasons for interacting in English? If so, which?
  - c. Changed your idea of writing and interacting in English? How?
  
2. How do you evaluate the experience of constructing texts (writings, papers, chatting) in community

## **Appendix III**

### **Evaluating the Activity... Based On the Activities Done**

What Has Been The Effect Of Using Social Media In?

- A. Your English Written Production
- B. Your English Written Interaction?

## Appendices IV to XIV

### Screenshots

#### APPENDIX IV



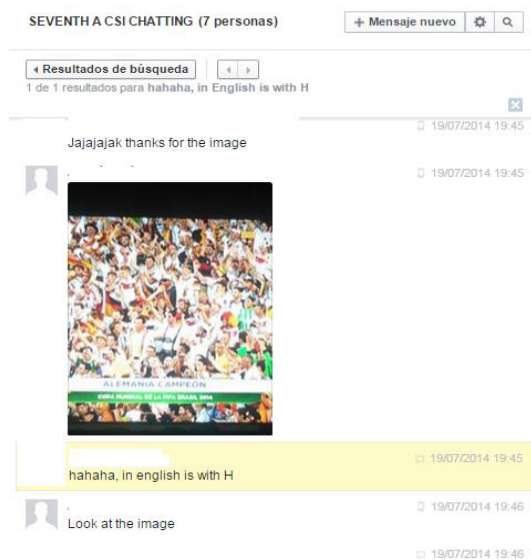
Taken from: [seventha2014csi.blogspot.com](http://seventha2014csi.blogspot.com)

#### APPENDIX V



Taken from: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1391910484415714>

#### APPENDIX VI



Taken from: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1391910484415714>

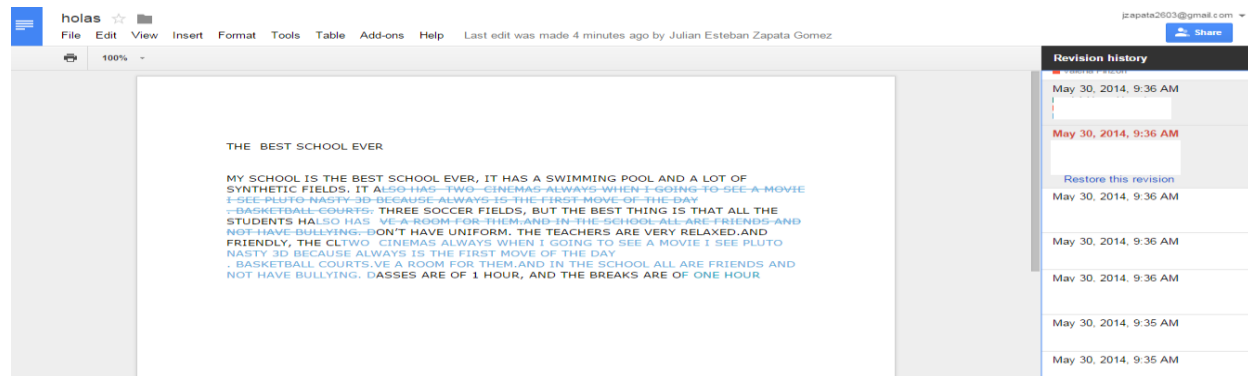


## Appendix VII



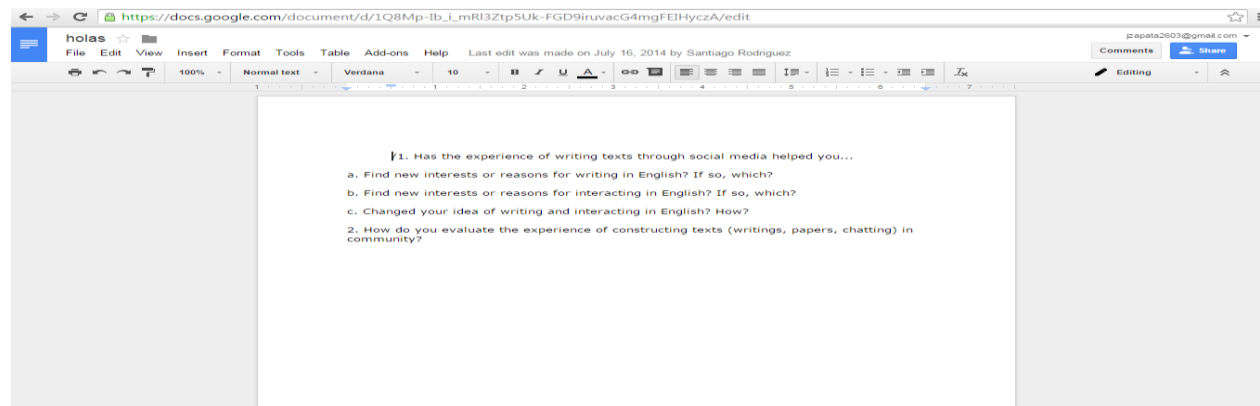
Taken from: <https://docs.google.com>

## Appendix VIII



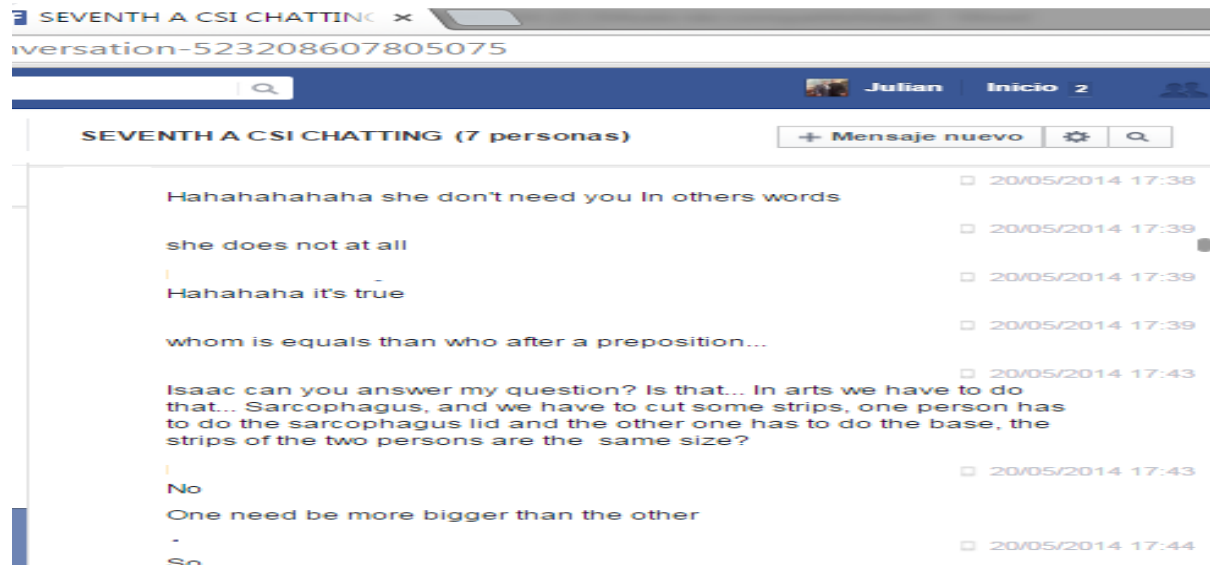
Taken from: <https://docs.google.com>

## Appendix IX



Taken from: <https://docs.google.com>

## Appendix X



SEVENTH A CSI CHATTING (7 personas) + Mensaje nuevo [Settings] [Search]

Hahahahahaha she don't need you In others words 20/05/2014 17:38

she does not at all 20/05/2014 17:39

Hahahaha it's true 20/05/2014 17:39

whom is equals than who after a preposition... 20/05/2014 17:39

Isaac can you answer my question? Is that... In arts we have to do that... Sarcophagus, and we have to cut some strips, one person has to do the sarcophagus lid and the other one has to do the base, the strips of the two persons are the same size? 20/05/2014 17:43

No 20/05/2014 17:43

One need be more bigger than the other 20/05/2014 17:44

So...

Taken from: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1391910484415714>

## Appendix XI

18/07/2014 10:57

This poem, written by an African child was nominated for the Best Poem of 2005.

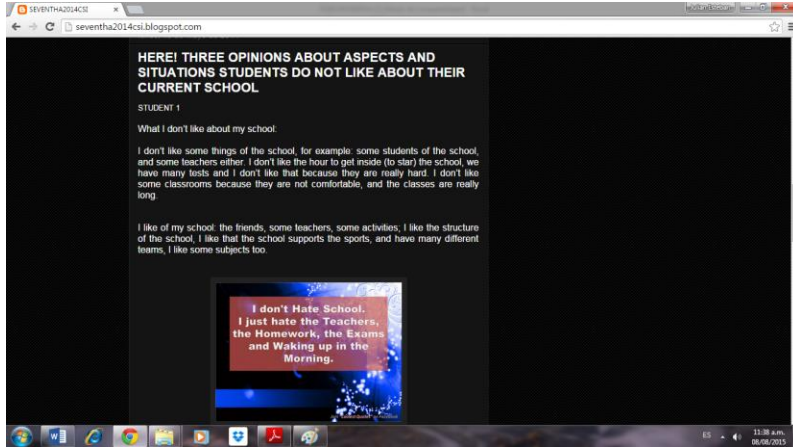
**Colour**

When I born, I black;When I grow up I black;When i go in sun I black;  
When I scared, I black;When I sick, I black;  
And when I die, I still black;  
And U White fellows;  
When U born, U pink;  
When U grow up, U white;  
When U go in sun, U red;  
When U cold, U blue;  
When U scared, U yellow;  
When U sick, U green;  
When U die, U grey;  
And U call me coloured



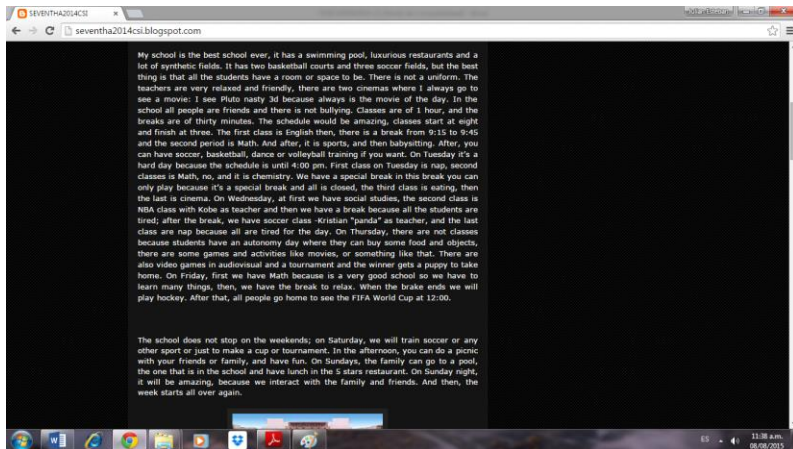
Taken from: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1391910484415714>

## Appendix XII



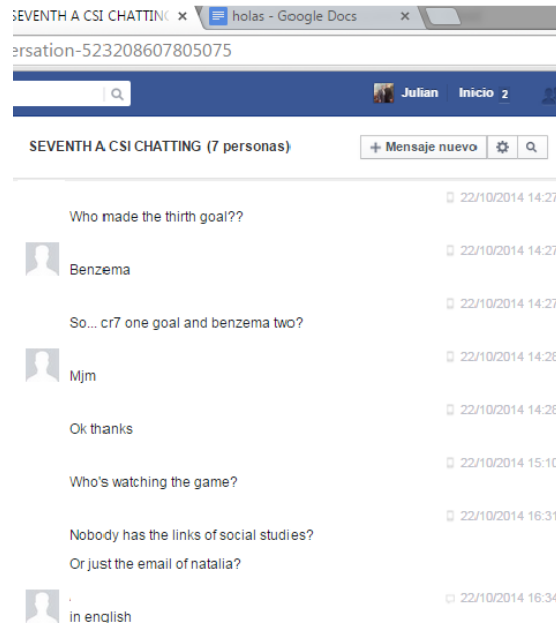
Taken from: [seventh2014csi.blogspot.com](http://seventh2014csi.blogspot.com)

## Appendix XIII



Taken from: [seventh2014csi.blogspot.com](http://seventh2014csi.blogspot.com)

## Appendix XIV



The screenshot shows a browser window with two tabs: 'SEVENTH A CSI CHATTIN...' and 'holas - Google Docs'. The address bar contains 'ersation-523208607805075'. The page header includes a search bar, a profile picture of 'Julian', and the text 'Inicio 2'. The chat interface is titled 'SEVENTH A CSI CHATTING (7 personas)' and features a '+ Mensaje nuevo' button and a search icon. The chat history consists of the following messages:

- Who made the thirth goal?? (22/10/2014 14:27)
- Benzema (22/10/2014 14:27)
- So... cr7 one goal and benzema two? (22/10/2014 14:27)
- Mjm (22/10/2014 14:28)
- Ok thanks (22/10/2014 14:28)
- Who's watching the game? (22/10/2014 15:10)
- Nobody has the links of social studies?  
Or just the email of natalia? (22/10/2014 16:31)
- in english (22/10/2014 16:34)

Taken from: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1391910484415714>

### **Author's Biography**

Julian Esteban Zapata Gomez was born on June 17, 1985 in Medellin, Antioquia (Colombia). Belonging to a small, united and supporting family that had his roots and heritages in San Pedro de Los Milagros, Antioquia; he started his primary school education in a public school called Clodomiro Ramirez, in Medellin. Then, he studied at a private institution called Salazar Herrera, where he received the secondary education. After, he held a B.A. in Foreign Languages from Universidad de Antioquia and a Graduate Specialization in ELT from UPB. He is currently an English teacher at San Ignacio de Loyola School, an adjunct instructor at the Language Center and English Specialization program at UPB and at the Fundación Universitaria Luis Amigo. He is also affiliated as a teacher-researcher with the Literacies in Second Languages Project. His research agenda combines his interests about technology with problems related to learning and teaching processes. He has published some of his work as grey literature on the ERIC databases and recently published an article at Revista Textos UPB.