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Assessing students' writing through blogging activities

An elective workshop for pre-service teachers

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

Para optar al grado de Licenciado en Educación y al Título de Profesor de Inglés

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Primer Semestre 2014

“Technology adds dimensions to the already multifaceted domain of second language learning, requiring new knowledge and skills for those who wish to incorporate it into their professional practice or understand its impact on the language teacher and learner.”

(Hubbard, 2009, *Computer Assisted Language Learning: Vol 1*, pp. 1).

Abstract

This Graduation Project seeks to provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to assess their students' second language writing through blogging activities.

Accordingly, it presents a series of lessons in which the teacher is guided to develop competences for establishing a platform for students to engage and assess the students' writing outcomes.

Keywords: Assessment – Blog – Writing



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Introduction

Assessing second language writing is a challenging activity because too many variables need to be considered, the quality of the piece in terms of accuracy, fluency, use of context-specific vocabulary, creativity, engagement, relevance, among others. Moreover, this challenge increases as very little has been explored in the field of assessment when using new technologies. Blogging, for instance, has been considered to be a useful educational tool for helping both L1 and L2 learners develop writing, but who and how do scholars assess the language used in these sites? This is a question that researchers are asking nowadays, since comprehending the role of these kind of platforms is becoming crucial for assessment (Gruba and Clark, 2013). The concept of “Blog” is used differently depending on the pedagogical purpose. For instance, a personal blog is an online journal that promotes self-expression and self-reflection (Lee, 2010), whereas collective blogs (or collaborative blogs) involve an entire class or small groups in which interaction and collaborative learning are promoted (Lee, 2009).

As newer technologies are constantly penetrating language learning, it is crucial to study these tools in order to understand up to what extent they have an impact in language learning. Accordingly, Pennington (2004) argues that the use of online platforms like blogs, has many advantages. For instance, Kessler (2009) argues that when communicating in online platforms, learners tend to focus on meaning rather than on form – learners also demonstrate improved fluency and accuracy (Elola & Oskoz, 2010) and they also appreciate the opportunity to share peer-revision (Ware & O’Dowd, 2008). Additionally, Pennington (2004) argues that the impact that these new tools have in the student’s attitude towards writing is positive. Nevertheless, as blogs are a new educational platform, it still has some disadvantages.

Elliot (2008), establishes three main aspects or stages in the integration of new technologies in the classroom. In the first stage, new technologies are absent and individual assessment is the main focus. In this stage, as new media is absent, all assessment is conducted through pen and paper. Within the intermediate stage, new media is present but in a controlled environment, meaning that the instruments used in this staged are specially designed for the

occasion. These instruments include online quizzes, speech processing evaluations, and large-scale examinations (e.g. Chapelle & Douglas, 2006; Chapelle & Chung, 2010). Finally, Elliot (2008) argues that in the last stage, the emerging stage, technology and assessment designs allow the learners to demonstrate language proficiency through social media platforms. Elliot (2008), proposes an integration or use of new technologies in the classroom not as matter of having students working on the computer throughout the whole class, but instead as gradual and purposeful process that initiates in a stage in which pen and paper are still necessary, leading then, to a gradual integration of technology with a clear purpose.

In Chile, teachers are trying to implement these tools in the classroom in an effort to address the students' interests. As Ministerio de Educación, Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional (CASEN, 2011) report shows that a 96,4% the Chilean population ranging from 19 to 29 years old, access the internet to search for information, and more relevant to this project, the 90,6% of the Chilean population within the same age access the internet for written communication. According to the statistics, and to the efforts made by the teachers to implement new media, Chile is growing towards a more technological era. The problems comes when assessing writing employing technological tools, because when revising the three stages presented by Elliot (2008), the emerging stage do not seem to be reached yet in the Chilean classrooms.

This graduation project seeks to provide opportunities for L2 teachers, to move from the intermediate stage to the emerging stage. Accordingly, they will be trained to assess the language that 11th graders produce in the blogging tasks that are proposed in this project. It is addressed to pre-service teachers in their last year of their undergraduate program.

This graduation project report is divided into two main sections, the theoretical framework and the pedagogical proposal. In the theoretical framework, topics such as writing in a second language and technology aided writing are discussed. Similarly, assessment is another concept that is discussed since it is a key factor for the purposes of this project. The second section presents a pedagogical proposal that has been planned for 11th graders with a higher-intermediate level of English.

This pedagogical proposal aligns to the Nivel 6 of the Mapas de Progreso de Expresión Escrita (2008), described as “Escribe textos breves relacionados con temas conocidos, con propósitos descriptivos y narrativos. Organiza sus oraciones en torno a un tema específico incorporando información complementaria...” (p.5). Also, there is a link with the Objetivos Fundamentales Transversales, since this project pursues to strengthen Desarrollo del Pensamiento, Crecimiento y Autoafirmación Personal, Tecnologías de Información y Comunicación y la Persona y su Entorno (Ministerio de Educación, 2009).

The pedagogical proposal consists of four progressive units designed using an eclectic syllabus, meaning that a combination of task-based and content based syllabi is used. The first unit works as an introductory unit as the main purpose is to review the history of writing and written communication. The second unit integrates relevant aspects to consider when building up these tasks, for instance, students’ interests, settings and configurations of a blog, and the engagement in the writing of a blog entry. The third unit covers what assessment is, and the differences between online and paper-based assessment. Lastly, the fourth unit, is a practical unit since teachers are going to build up their own rubrics for assessing online writing.

Literature Review

This literature review is divided into two parts. The first part describes the approaches to writing that have been used throughout time, and collaborative writing since it is a relevant and key for this graduation project. The second part discusses technology aided writing, which is subsequently presented into five different sections: An overview, blogs, students' attitudes, Chilean context, and assessment.

Communication has always been one of the most important processes in every human society. From ancient cave drawings 40.000 years ago, to modern communication (Olson, 2009), writing has always found its ways to be involved in the evolution of humankind. This is not surprising at all since human beings wanted and needed to transcend and leave a register of what they were and what they did to future generations. These are the foundations of writing, making it evolve in many ways up to these days.

Second Language Writing

Writing approaches

Nowadays, when knowledge and society are in a constant and rapid change, the writing paradigm is also under change. However, in order to understand the different approaches that writing has, it is necessary to be familiar with the definition of writing. Olson (2009) provides a clear and comprehensive definition of writing, which serves as the foundation for some writing approaches. Olson (2009) defines writing as the use of created visual marks or other artefacts for communication and expression.

As mentioned before, some approaches base their principles in this simple definition, but there are others that do not do it. For instance, one common approach to writing, is to consider this human expression a product, in which its constituents, like words, clauses and sentences are just a coherent arrangement of parts structured according to a set of rules (Hyland, 2003). This particular orientation was created by the dominant structural linguistics and the behaviorist learning theories of second language teaching in the 1960s (Hyland, 2003). According to Hyland (2003), in this product-oriented approach writing has a direct

connection to the writer's grammatical and lexical knowledge, which are also related to the strict imitation of the model of the teacher. Moreover, Hyland (2003) expresses that writing is seen just as an extension of grammar, and that it is used only to reinforce language patterns.

In order to assess writing when working under the product oriented approach, the criteria focuses mainly on *accuracy*, while the communicative part of the text is left aside to be dealt with later. For particular grammatical purposes this is a very efficient practice, however, Hyland (2003) argues that when students face other writing situation, it can lead to confusions since the students are only accustomed to work with short sentences and not with real texts.

On the other hand, Hyland (2003) states that an important part of writing as a process lies within *meaning*, or the *communicative intention* behind the writing. In order to highlight the importance that this aspect has, the writing process and language teaching in general, is now seen from a functional approach, in which a set of linguistic forms serve a specific function in language, for instance apologizing, commanding, requesting, among others.

Hyland (2003) argues that among the many purposes that the process oriented approach has, one that outstands the most is that it helps students to go through a series of steps that allow the writer to produce effective paragraphs. Topic sentences, transitions and supporting sentences are some of the steps that the writer goes through in order to effectively create a paragraph. Hyland (2003) adds that this technique can not only be applied in the paragraph level, but also at the text level so the student can have a general view of the textual cohesion and coherence, the transitions from one paragraph to another, and that the message the writer is trying to convey is well designed and structured.

This transition from focusing only on accuracy to highlighting relevance of the meaning that writing carries has generated a sort of revolution regarding language teaching, especially in the teaching of writing.

Collaborative writing in an L2

Considering the previous review of writing approaches, and how the functional approach and the process-oriented approach to writing have been conceived as the new horizon for what language teaching is, is relevant to mention that there is another characteristic that is added to the list, which relates particularly with collaboration (Elola & Oskoz 2010).

The term collaborative writing was coined from the sociocultural perspective of language learning (Storch, 2005). Storch (2005) states that in collaborative situations writers make decisions about the language that is used, about the structure and organization of the writing and the platform in which the composition is going to be presented as they write the text together. Elola and Oskoz (2010), note that “Knowledge is created and re-created in the discourse between people doing things together” (p.71). That is, knowledge is created and modified as the students (writers) negotiate meaning while engaging in the collaborative writing process. Basically, and as Wells (2000) presents it, it is the “joint attempt to construct common understanding” (p.74).

Storch (2005) notes, however, that one of the downsides of collaborative writing and peer reviews is that the students tend to focus on the correction of grammatical aspects mainly, which directly connects to the product approach, which focuses on accuracy and not in the process of writing (Hyland, 2003).

Blogs

As Hubbard (2009) notes, technology provides plenty of opportunities and dimensions for teachers and learners to engage in, particularly in writing. Work on word processors was at the beginning very common in Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Then, dedicated CALL programs included aspects of vocabulary, grammar and composition, like *Systeme-D*. In the 1990s, student-designed webpages were developed and became an important option. Nowadays, blogs and wikis bring opportunities for students with lower writing and technical skills to have their work written for the online community (Hubbard, 2009). In fact, Hubbard (2009) adds relevant information regarding newer technology, like Google Docs, since it provides opportunities for simultaneous writing among several participants.

As mentioned before, blogs and wikis present new opportunities for students to engage in online writing (Hubbard, 2009). In fact, positive expectations were expressed early by Campbell (2004) and Pinkman (2005) regarding the use of this particular tool in the classroom. Nevertheless, Miyazoe and Anderson (2009) argue that it will take a few more years for blogging to become a stable platform for teaching practices.

Several studies have used blogging platforms to help learners improve their writing skills in an L2. For instance, Wu (2006) used blogs for peer review and teacher feedback in low-intermediate EFL compositions. The researcher concluded that there was little progress in the student's writing skills, but that might be linked to the activities that the students had to perform, because those were only feedback related. Newer research, such as the one reported by Kessler (2009) and Elola & Oskoz (2010) partially contradict Wu's findings. They argue that there is a relevant improvement in the language development of the learners. In other situations, for example Wang (2009), used blog for providing electronic feedback (e-feedback). In this study the learners used blogs for essay writing and for peer feedback. The submissions were assessed in term of functions (Functional Approach) and in term of accuracy (Product Approach). Similarly to what happens in paper-based instruction, Wang (2009), concluded that the attention was unbalanced, since the students paid more attention to the lexical and grammatical level, than to the organization and content of the compositions.

The findings described above do not seem to support the use of blogging tasks to aid second language learning, but there are other gains that have not been discussed. According to Carney (2007) and Elola & Oskoz (2008), blogging technology has been used to boost cross-cultural communication. In other words, blogging tasks afford the students the opportunity to enhance their cultural knowledge through the interaction with bloggers from other cultures. This written exchange between the students and foreign bloggers also provides opportunities to foster the student's second language acquisition since these platforms can be directed to the interaction of the learner with English speaking writers. In addition to this, the interactions can also help stimulate the student's high order thinking skills (Carney, 2007).

Pennington (2004), notes that when working in computer assisted writing, the student's attitudes were positive. This had an effect in the length of the texts that were written, the quality and quantity of the texts and in some cases the quality of the revisions, showing a particular interest in the work with new technologies.

In other research areas regarding the student's perceptions of blogs, interesting relations and associations were formed between concepts like "myself," "write," and "blog.

As mentioned before, according to Miyazoe & Anderson (2009), the associations made between blog, myself, and write stablished by the participants in the study show that blogging

is seen as a personal task that necessarily has to be written. Moreover, learners showed interest on writing in this platform, perhaps because they could write about topics of their interest, possibly leading to a lack of negative perceptions among students. (Miyazoe & Anderson, 2009).

Assessment within 2.0 technologies

In Chilean classrooms technological platforms are being introduced in different aspects of the teaching process. Blogging, as many other online tasks, is considered to be a valid option when working on the writing skill. According to Elliot (2008), technology aided assessment is divided into three main stages. The first one is a stage in which technology is absent and all assessment focus on individual performance. For this first part, all assessment is conducted through pen and paper. These kind of assessments is similar to the one that students usually take, in which their individual performance is assessed at a specific time and using pen and paper. The second stage in the Elliot's proposal, is a stage in which new media appear but in controlled and secure environments only, this means that the use of computers and online platforms is controlled by the teacher. The kind of assesment that are taken by the students in this second stage are online quizzes, or large-scale examinations. Finally, in the third stage, or the emerging stage called by Elliot (2008), the student navigates without restraint across global network in ways that resemble the authentic use that is given to these platforms. In this stage is when the free usage of the technology is assessed, and it is also in this stage only in which the teacher can see if the student is technologically and linguistically competent to work in this environment. Interactions with real people only take place in the emerging stage, so the student's communicative competence will only be seen in this final phase of the process. That is the problem in the Chilean English classrooms, the transition from the second stage to the emerging stage is not being done keeping students from using all the opportunities that these platforms and tools provide.

Viability of implementation of technology in the Chilean context

There is a lot to describe about how technology has been constantly penetrating the Chilean society, and specifically, the educational reality of the country.

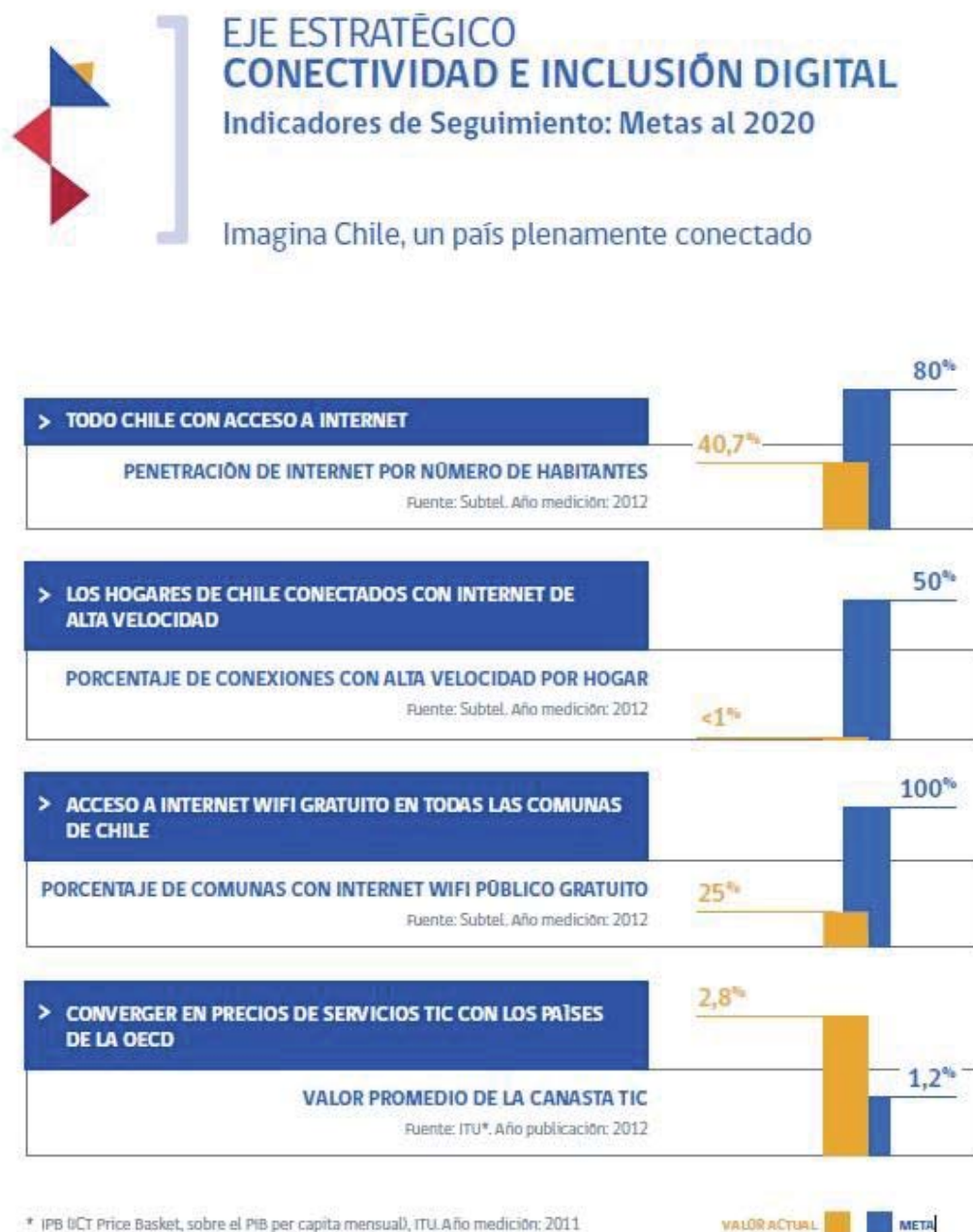


Figure N°2. Eje estratégico, Conectividad e Inclusión Digital, Indicadores de seguimiento: Metas al 2020.
Retrieved from: Agenda Digital Imagina Chile, 2013-2020, Secretaría Ejecutiva de Desarrollo Digital.

According to the Secretaría Ejecutiva de Desarrollo Digital (2013), 40.7% of the Chilean population has access to Internet, meaning that almost half of the population is able to surf the web. The expectations for the year 2020 are that an 80% of the Chilean population has access to Internet connection. Other aspects like High-speed internet connection, free wifi for every city, and TIC prices are important but not so relevant since the basic internet connection is covered in the first aspect of the chart.

The educational scenario in Chile is also very promising regarding the directions in which it is going. A more technological educational practice is what it is wanted in the Chilean school system. As reported by Secretaría Ejecutiva de Desarrollo Digital (2013), 30% of the teaching resources are digitalized, and the expectations for the year 2020 are that the 100% of the educational resources get digitalized. These expectations are closely related with the conception of improving the educational system by implementing more technology in the classroom. As it can be seen in the first aspect, it talks about “contenidos digitales para una nueva educación” (Agenda Digital Imagina Chile, 2013-2020, Secretaría Ejecutiva de Desarrollo Digital.)

Another aspect that is very important for this matter is the last one, which talks about the amount of teachers that are prepared to use ICTs in the classroom. Only 17.1% of the teachers are prepared to use this kind of resources, and the expectations for the year 2020 are that at least 50% of the teachers are prepared to use these technologies (Agenda Digital Imagina Chile, 2013-2020, Secretaría Ejecutiva de Desarrollo Digital). Considering these statistics, it is clearly seen that Chile is going towards a more technological society, and in particular a more technological educational system. Fortunately, this plan, aligns with the international teaching updates that also incorporate the use of technology in the classroom.

Since these updates in the teaching methodologies are general to all the educational system, they also affect in some way the English classrooms. Technology, without a doubt, has penetrated in the English classrooms too, but up to what extent is the use of these technologies been applied as it should?

Pedagogical Proposal

Course Syllabus

Name of the course: Assessing students' writing through blogging tasks.

Length: 12 sessions (90 minutes each)

Total number of hours: 18 hours

Audience: Pre-service teachers coursing their senior year.

Teacher: Rodrigo Pérez Valdés

E-mail address: ralejandro70@gmail.com

Course description

This 18-hour elective workshop is intended for senior pre-service teachers. Pre-service teachers are expected, by the end of this workshop, to elaborate rubric to successfully assess their students' writing. In the same way, pre-service teachers are expected to develop full mastery of what setting up a blog means. According to a needs analysis (Appendix A) performed among pre-service teachers, the topic that they would use to assess students writing is entertainment. In terms of class organization, pre-service teachers will work individually.

Course Organization

The lessons are designed using an eclectic syllabus, since it is composed by aspects of content-based and task-based syllabi, in other words, teachers enrolled in this workshop will be part of theoretical and practical lessons. Throughout this workshop teachers will be involved in a progressive development of their competence, going from the most simple and concrete, to the most abstract and complex.

Course Structure

When designing the structure of the course, the units were conceived bearing in mind Bloom's taxonomy, so that the units have a logical increase in the high-order thinking skills, going from the most basic to the most advanced.

The course is presented into four units:

Unit 1: Provides the necessary background knowledge to understand what we know about writing nowadays. Also provides information about the relation between writing and technology. The objectives are that pre-service teachers understand how writing has evolved throughout time and how using technology for writing has affected their lives.

Unit 2: Provides the necessary information about several aspects that are important to consider when working with online platforms, for instance the students interest, the blog as an online platform, the criteria, among others. The objective for this unit are that pre-service teachers understand the basics of blogging, its setting and configurations and to engage effectively in writing an entry in a sample blog.

Unit 3: In this unit pre-service teachers will review the necessary information regarding assessment in paper-based and online platforms. The main objective for this unit is that pre-service teachers identify the similarities and differences between paper-based and online platforms and to elaborate one criteria for the future rubric.

Unit 4: In this unit pre-service teachers will put to practice what they covered in unit 3 by elaborating a complete rubric for assessing students' writing. The objectives for this units are to assess the criteria to establish the more relevant to their particular context and the elaboration of a rubric.

General Objective

At the end of this elective workshop pre-service teacher will be able to assess 11th graders' writing.

The description of each unit is presented as follows:

Units	Objectives <i>At the end of this unit students will be able to...</i>
<i>1° Unit: Writing over the years.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how written communication has changed through time. • Discuss and express opinions based on personal experiences regarding the use of technology for writing.
<i>2° Unit: Aspects to consider.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the basics of blogging, its settings and configuration • Identify students' writing interest. • Set up a sample blog
<i>3° Unit: Assessment.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify similarities of online and paper-based writing. • Identify differences of online and paper-based writing. • Establish the main criteria to be used in online writing.
<i>4° Unit: Hands on!</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the criteria to establish the more relevant to their particular context. • Elaborate a rubric to assess students writing in your teaching context.

Assessment

By the end of this course, the final assessment will correspond to the elaboration of rubrics for assessing their students writing. This part of the course is different for each of the course participants since they have to elaborate the rubrics depending on their particular classroom context. Other graded moments of the workshop are homework assignments, class participation and a self-evaluation conducted at the end of the workshop. The percentages are described as follows:

Homework: 15%

Class Participation: 20%

Rubric: 60%

Self-evaluation: 5%

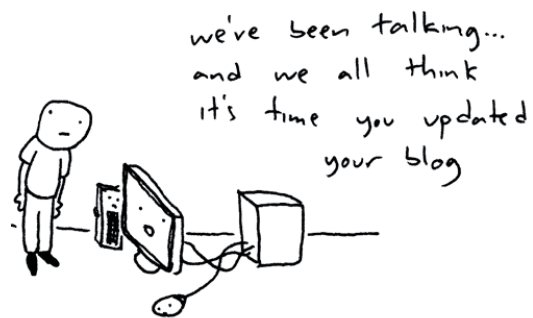
Sample lessons

The following sample lessons correspond to Units II and III of the pedagogical proposal. In these units pre-service teacher, through tasks, will apply the knowledge they have acquired throughout the whole workshop by working on the setting of a sample blog, and working on some of the criteria they are going to use to elaborate the rubrics.

Unit II: Aspects to consider

Topics:

- Students' interests
- Platform (Blogs)
- Rules and instructions
- Writing and entry



Objectives: By the end of this unit pre-service teachers will be able to...

- Understand the basics of blogging, its settings and configurations.
- Identify students' writing interest.
- Set up a sample blog
- Write and entry for their sample blog

Lesson 3: Settings and configuration

Objective: Pre-service teachers will be able to understand the basics of blogging, its settings and configurations.

PREPARATION

Activity 1: Think about the following questions, then share your answers with your partner.

Have you ever read or participated in a blog before?

If you have, what kind of blogs were you involved in? If you haven't, explain why.

Activity 2: To clarify your ideas, let's watch this video!



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjwUHXoi8IM>

****** Think about the following questions!

Have you ever heard/read the concept of "class blog"?

Can you tell the difference between a regular blog and a class blog? Share your answer.



PRACTICE

Working on my own blog!

Activity 4: The basics

As you may know, blogs are platforms that need identification for posts and comments, so the first thing we need to do to start blogging is to create an account.

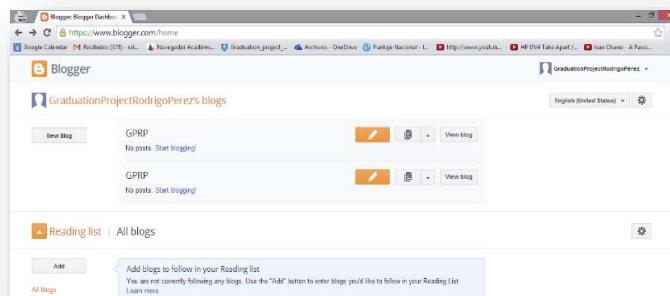
Go to <https://www.blogger.com/>

...and you will find this sign up page!



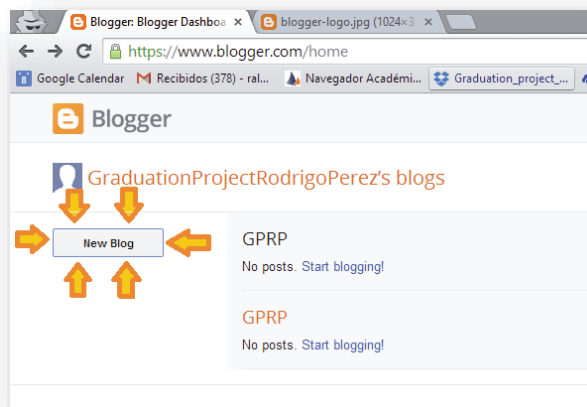
Activity 5: Logging in!!

After creating your account, log in and you will be redirected to a page like this one ----->



Activity 6: Creating the platform!!

There are plenty of things you can do now that you have your account ready, but in order to actually create your blog you want to press the “New Blog” bottom on the left side of the screen.



Activity 7: Let's reflect for a while

Have you ever asked your students about what they think about working on social network sites? Can you imagine what would they think of it?

Write down your predictions!!



Now let's watch a video in which American students provide some thoughts about working with class blogs!!

***Compare your predictions to what the students say!**



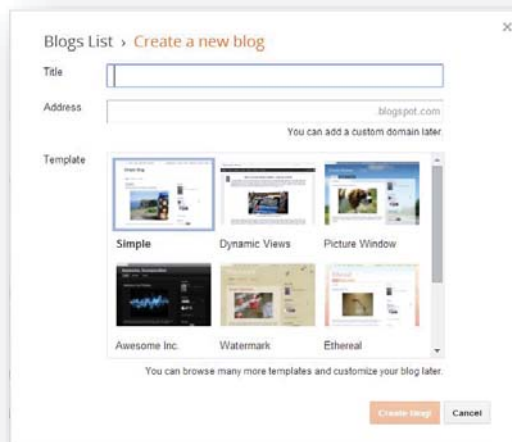
Juniors Reflect on the Class Blogging Experience

Activity 8: Let's get back to work!

Now, you just have to choose a template for your blog and you're almost done!!

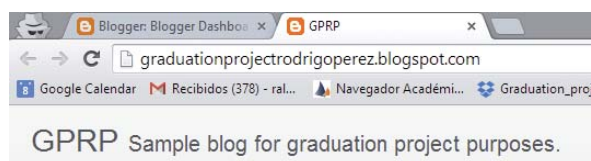
You can always check them out before picking one up, this way you can make the template align with the content of your blog.

In this part, you also have to name your blog and create an address for people to visit the page.



Activity 9: Almost there!!

At this point, the creation of the blog is almost done. We have the foundations, what's left is the configuration of the layout and the participants!



Here is our blog, we have the address, but we haven't written anything yet. Do not hesitate because we will get there soon!

FOLLOW-UP

Activity 10: Reflection

Think about what we have learned today, and how it will impact on the interest of the students.

We can consider the template, the address and the name of the blog as important features that can play a decisive role when appealing to the student's interests.

Can you think of anything else that might be relevant for students? Write it down and share it with the class.

Watch the students' video again so you can get a clear image of the reasons for considering blogging an important tool. Write those reasons down if you would like to have a faster access to them.

Lesson 4: Setting up a sample blog.

Objective: Pre-service teachers will be able to set up a sample blog.

PREPARATION

Activity 1: Let's remember what we studied last class!

Do you remember what we covered last class?

Work with a partner and try to write down all the steps we saw last class.

Activity 2: Did you remember all of them? Well, here are several concepts and steps related to blogging, organize them in the order we saw them last class. There are more than enough so be careful!

Post, sign up, www.blogger.com,
write the title, layout configuration,
sign in, new blog, write the address



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Activity 3: Listen to Sarah Summers talking about her blog teaching experience.



Sarah Summers talks about teaching with blogs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y34xit6hIbU>

Mention three ideas you think are relevant or useful from the video to consider for your upcoming work with blogs.

PRACTICE

Activity 4: Now is your turn to create your sample blog!

Your time has come, so get to work and create your sample blog.

Remember these important steps:

- 1.- Sign up in www.blogger.com
- 2.- Sign in using the account you just created
- 3.- Press "New Blog" to choose:
 - The template
 - The title
 - The address



Activity 5: Set it up the way you want!



When you first access your blog it will look like this.

←-----

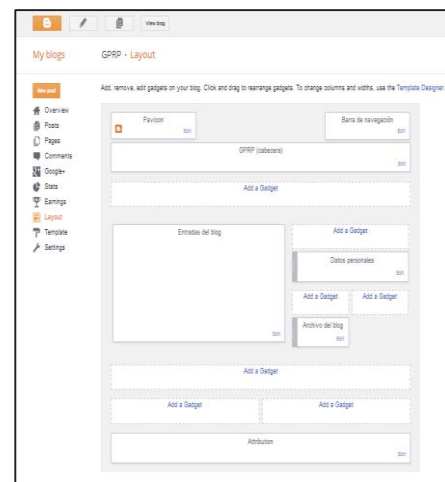
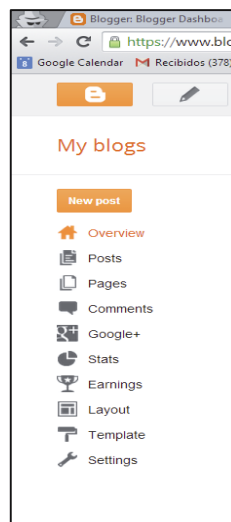


One of the most important parts of the blog is the sidebar on the left.

----->

In this sidebar you can find everything to set up your blog the way you want.

For example, in the **layout** you can change and adapt the design of the front page of the blog.



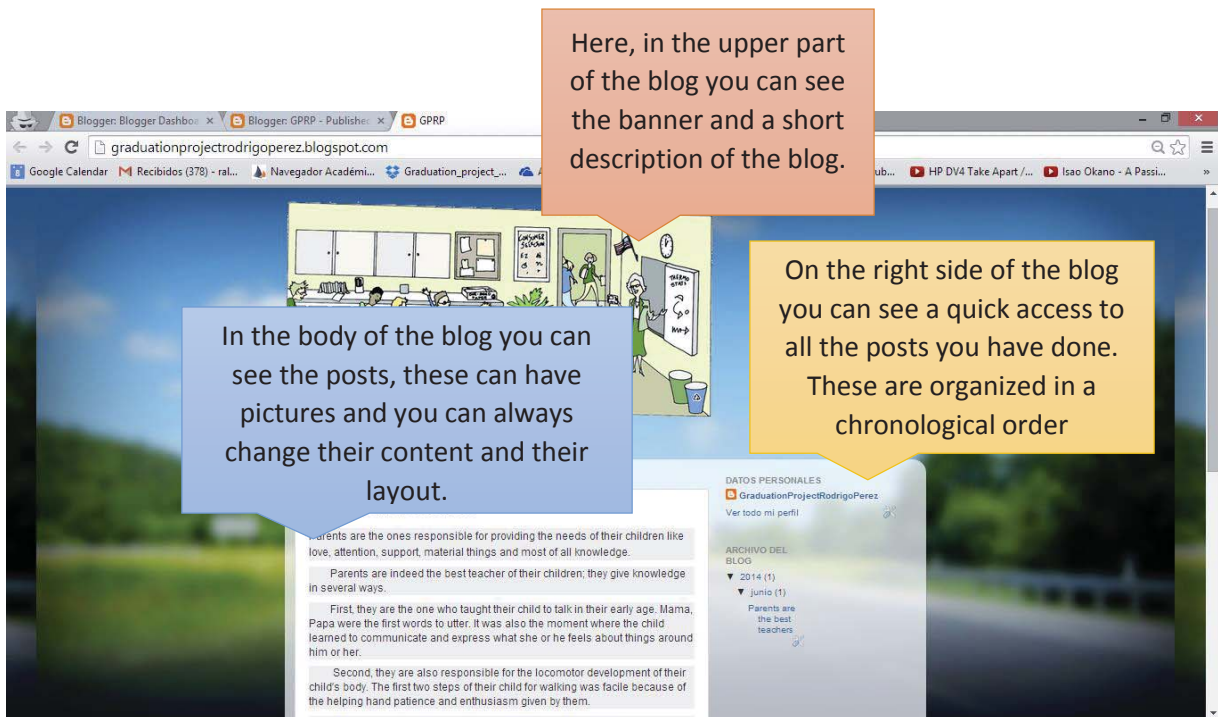
In the layout you can put a **banner*** for your blog, you can change the title, add personal information, change the way the post are shown in the front page, etc. Basically, you can change everything you would like!!

*A **banner** is a graphic image that announces the name or identity of a site and it is often spread across the width of the webpage.

Activity 6: Here it is!

After you finished setting it up, it should look like this.

This is my sample blog, there might be some template differences, but the work is done and you are ready to post.



*Reminder: All the features of the platform can be changed, even the posts after being published can be changed.

FOLLOW-UP

Activity 7: Reflection

In the previous class we discussed about the differences between a regular blog and a class blog. Now that you know the differences, discuss with your partner which is more useful for your teaching purposes. After that write down short instructions that you think you will use when presenting this class activity to your students. Consider the following processes:

The account-creation process, the writing process and the post configuration.



Lesson 5: Writing an entry

Objective: Pre-service teachers will be able to write an entry for their sample blog.

PREPARATION

Activity 1: Writing time!

In order to get familiar to what assessing blog writing is, let's write a blog entry!

First, you have to establish the topic that you are going to write about. Think of entertainment as the field to choose your topic. This field is wide enough to find something that is appealing to your interests.

Write your topic here!

Activity 2: Brainstorm your ideas!

After choosing the topic, think of at least three different constituent points you would like to write about. Brainstorm your ideas!

- 1.-----
- 2.-----
- 3.-----
- 4.-----

When you are finished with that, go ahead and organize those ideas or points in a logical order (if possible).

- 1.-----
- 2.-----
- 3.-----
- 4.-----



PRACTICE

Activity 3: It's time to write your own introduction!

Introduction

Remember that texts are commonly divided into three parts: **Introduction, body and conclusion.**

Remember that starting your introduction with a catchy sentence is a good idea to engage your reader!

Activity 4: Continue writing the body of your entry!

The Body

This is usually the longest part so take good care of the cohesion and coherence of the text.

A large blue rectangular area with horizontal dashed lines for writing.

Another tip:
Remember the order in which you organized the points you are going to talk about. It is a good idea to link them if possible.

Activity 5: Finish your entry by writing the conclusion

The conclusion

A blue rectangular area with horizontal dashed lines for writing, labeled "The conclusion".

This is the part in which you can summarize, state your reflections, or write anything that provides a closure for your entry and topic.

FOLLOW-UP

Activity 6: Putting your entry together!

Now, you have to put your writing together.

Put the three parts in one single document and make connections among them to make it just one consistent piece of writing, and not just three different parts joined together with no logical connection.



Do you remember anything about transitional sentences? Well, those provide some sort of connection between paragraphs, so this is a good moment to use those devices.

Activity 7: It's posting time!

Let's post the entry!

Go to your blog account and press the orange button showed on the image below.

 Blogger

 GraduationProjectRodrigoPerez's blogs

New Blog

GPRP

36 pageviews - 1 post, last published on Jun 12, 2014



View blog

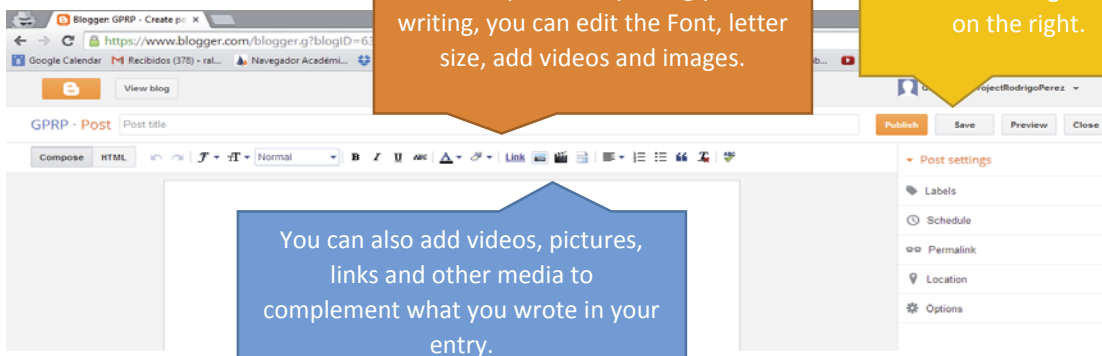
Create new post

Once you have done that you will get to this page, in which you can put the complete writing.

When you finish pasting your writing, you can edit the Font, letter size, add videos and images.

If you think you are done editing, go ahead and press publish!!

That's the orange button on the right.



Compose HTML

Normal

Link

Image

Video

Embed

Table

Table of contents

Post settings

- Labels
- Schedule
- Permalink
- Location
- Options

You can also add videos, pictures, links and other media to complement what you wrote in your entry.

Unit III: Assessment

Topics:

- Assessing Writing
- Assessing online writing and paper-based writing
- Defining the criteria



Objectives: By the end of this unit pre-service teachers will be able to...

- Identify similarities of online and paper-based writing.
- Identify differences of online and paper-based writing.
- Establish the main criteria to be used in online writing

Lesson 1: Online and Paper-based assessment

Objectives: Identify similarities of online and paper-based writing, and identify differences of online and paper-based writing.

PREPARATION

Activity 1: Think about your experience!

Go back few years ago and think about your English tests and how you were assessed in school.

Is there any difference between school and university in terms of assessment?

Share your thoughts with your partner, then with the whole class.

Now, think specifically about social network sites. By Social Network Sites I mean blogs, Facebook, forums, wikis, etc. The purpose of you writing in those sites was...

-Handing in an article, a paper or a summary of a reading?

- Expressing ideas or thoughts and communicating with other people?

Think about these questions and share the answers with your partner.

On the other hand, we have paper-based writing, which is the regular writing we do at school and at University. So, the same questions for this kind of writing. The purpose in this case was...

-Handing in an article, a paper or a summary of a reading?

- Expressing ideas or thoughts and communicating with other people?

Share your answers with your partner

PRACTICE

Activity 2: Classify!

Classify these activities depending on the platform in which they are more suitable to be performed. Write an "x" in the chosen category. Some activities can apply for both categories.

1. Get in touch with foreign people
2. Write an article
3. Comment on piece of news
4. Exchange ideas with another person
5. Write a paper
6. Give opinions regarding a certain topic

Online Platforms	Paper-based platforms
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

Activity 5: Can you spot any difference?

Have you ever heard the terms “fluency” and “accuracy”?

What comes to your mind when facing these two concepts?

Write down your ideas and then share them with your partner.

Activity 6: Read the following text box to clarify your ideas!

In Chilean classrooms these two concepts are related as follows:

Accuracy is generally related to paper-based writing, in other words the regular classwork you do in school in which grammar is sometimes the most important aspect of your writing.

On the other hand, fluency (written or oral) is generally related to the message and the way you give that message to be understood by the receiver. This is closely related to the interactions that people have over the internet, because sometimes you do not need perfect grammar to deliver a message and engage in communication.

Activity 7: Brainstorm ideas of activities!

Since we are focusing our attention in online platforms (blogs) our attention will also be directed to fluency more than accuracy.

Following this line of thought, now you have to think of activities and opportunities for students to engage in a blog in which interaction between people is the major goal. Write your ideas down here and share them with the class.

FOLLOW-UP

Activity 8: Implementation of activities!

Go back to the sample blog you created the previous classes, and try to apply the ideas and activities you came up with in your blog. Take into account that this sample blog can be used in real educational situations, so make it as if you would be creating material for your classes.

Lesson 2: Criteria Selection

Objective: To establish the main criteria to be used in online writing.

PREPARATION

Activity 1: Think about your experience!

Remember when you were assessed at the University?

Think as if you were your teacher and imagine what would be your focus for assessing your students.
Brainstorm ideas and write them down here.

- 1.-----
- 2.-----
- 3.-----
- 4.-----
- 5.-----
- 6.-----



PRACTICE

Activity 2: Read the text below and think!

The focus of your assessment is called criteria, and it defines the main points you are going to look at when assessing your students writing. This is going to be oriented depending on the approach you are going to use for the task. For example, if you work with a process-oriented approach you will focus on communication and fluency rather than grammar. On the other hand, if you work with product approach, you will focus your attention to grammar and accuracy.

After reading and commenting on this with your partner, think about what approach you are going to use, because that decision will define the kind of criteria you are going to use!

Write your approach down here.



Activity 3: Read the text again and think about your teaching context!

A survey conducted on pre-service English teachers provided some very interesting information regarding the criteria selection.

Pre-service English teachers showed a very important inclination to choose grammar as the most important criteria to assess students' writing.

Now, considering your reality and the ideas you have for your students to work on, would you use grammar as the most important aspect?

Think about your answer and then share it with your partner.

Activity 4: Read the text and complete the chart!

In order to keep on going with the criteria, let's go back to the choices you mentioned in the first part.

An important aspect of the criteria is that they have to be defined very clearly, this means that if you are going to consider organization, it must be clearly stated what you expect regarding organization in the students' writing.

That's why we are going to work on the criteria you chose previously.

Pick two of the criteria you chose and define them, writing clearly what you mean by that particular criteria.

Criteria	Definition

Activity 5: Share and complement!

Exchange your work with your partner and complement his work.

Criteria	Comments

Give your comments to your classmate and receive his.

Now see how can you apply the comments in your criteria description and write a revised a description down here.

Criteria	Description

FOLLOW-UP

Activity 6: Use your previous work!

Use the blog entry you did previously and see how the criteria you defined fits your work. When doing this, consider the level of accomplishment of your work and try to come up with at least four levels to classify it.



Appendix A: Needs Analysis

Survey Sample



PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD
CATOLICA
DE VALPARAISO

Facultad de Filosofía y Educación
Instituto de literatura y Ciencias del Lenguaje
Pedagogía en Inglés
Trabajo de Titulación



Needs Analysis

Objective: The objective of this needs analysis is to know the beliefs and conceptions that pre-service teachers have regarding the use of computers for educational purposes. This information will help us know how willing the teachers are when it comes to use computers for blogging activities.

Respond to the statements choosing one of the following options. Mark your choice with an “x”.

Statement	I strongly disagree	I disagree	I agree	I strongly agree
1) L2 learners cannot maintain their attention in one particular task when working on the computer, leading them to use the computer for other purposes in class.				
2) Writing is one of the most important skill to develop in English classrooms.				
3) It is practically impossible for teachers to find a topic that is appealing to all the students when it comes to writing.				
4) Certain aspects of writing are left aside when writing on the computer, for example, handwriting.				
5) When writing in the computer people feel more				

secure and willing to state their opinions.				
6) Human interactions do not only consist of face-to-face interaction, blogging for instance, is another way to interact with other people.				
7) Blogs are an opportunity for students to interact with people from other countries, like English speaking ones.				
8) Blogging can make the students get into meaningful discussions.				
9) Blogging gives students the opportunity to enhance other skills besides writing, for example, their argumentative skills.				
10) Students produce more refined texts in blogs, because they know that their mistakes can be spotted by other people apart from their teacher.				
10) Feedback becomes a faster process when it is done through a platform like Blogs, since comments can be written as soon as a post is made.				
11) Through blogging tasks students can get feedback from their classmates.				

Objective: This part of the needs analysis aims to see the attitudes that teachers have particularly towards writing in Blogs.

Answer the following questions

- 1) What is your attitude towards having your students participate in Blogs as part of the class activities?

2) Do you think that practicing writing in the L2 through Blogs is a valid educational practice?

Yes, no, Why?

3) Name 3 criteria you would use to asses blogging.

4) If you were to use Blogs to assess your students' writing, which topics would you use? Write a tick next to your choices. You can pick more than one.

- Music
- Movies
- Sports
- School life
- Fashion trends
- Social groups (e.g. Metal Heads, Punks, Skin Heads, Otakus, etc.)
- Other:_____ (name it)

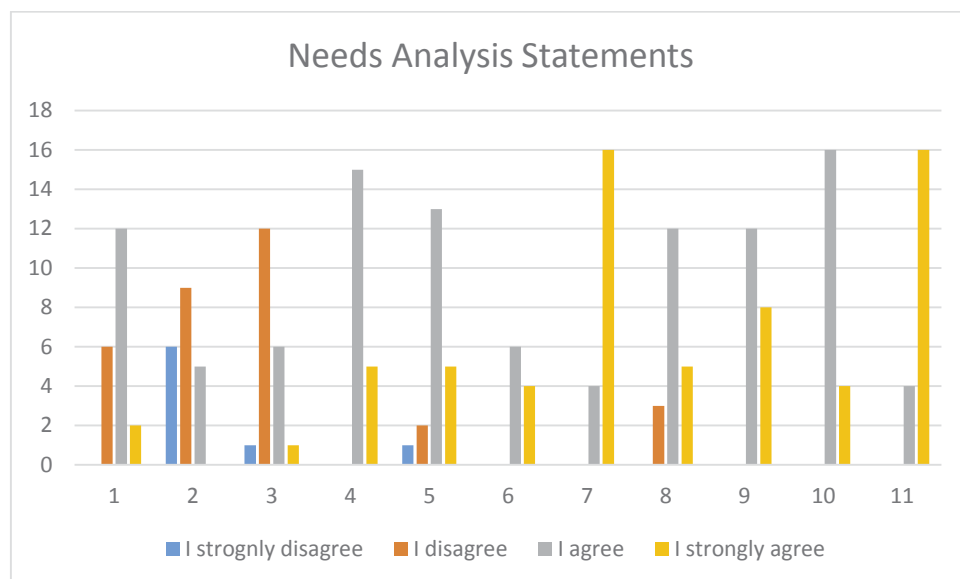
Appendix B: Needs Analysis Results

The needs analysis was conducted requesting twenty pre-service English teachers from different universities from the fifth region to answer a survey. The pre-service teachers answered different types of questions being the first part of the survey the beliefs and conceptions that they had regarding the use of technology in classroom and writing. The second part were open-ended questions in which pre-service teachers had to provide answers related directly with the use of blogs for educational purposes.

The data collected is presented as follows in the form of graphics and the corresponding interpretation.

Statements

- 1) L2 learners cannot maintain their attention in one particular task when working on the computer, leading them to use the computer for other purposes in class.
- 2) Writing is one of the most important skill to develop in English classrooms.
- 3) It is practically impossible for teachers to find a topic that is appealing to all the students when it comes to writing.
- 4) Certain aspects of writing are left aside when writing on the computer, for example, handwriting.
- 5) When writing in the computer people feel more secure and willing to state their opinions.
- 6) Human interactions do not only consist of face-to-face interaction, blogging for instance, is another way to interact with other people.
- 7) Blogs are an opportunity for students to interact with people from other countries, like English speaking ones.
- 8) Blogging can make the students get into meaningful discussions.
- 9) Blogging gives students the opportunity to enhance other skills besides writing, for example, their argumentative skills.
- 10) Students produce more refined texts in blogs, because they know that their mistakes can be spotted by other people apart from their teacher.
- 11) Feedback becomes a faster process when it is done through a platform like Blogs, since comments can be written as soon as a post is made.



From the first section the statements seven, eight and nine are of most importance and relevant to this project.

Statement number seven says “Blogs are an opportunity for students to interact with people from other countries, like English speaking ones.” The answers showed that four people agreed, and sixteen people strongly agreed with the premise that students can interact with English speaking people by using blogs. This statement basically says that besides of giving the opportunity to practice their writing skills, students are also able to receive and interact with native English speakers, receive their input, and communicate using their target language.

Statement number eight says “Blogging can make the students get into meaningful discussions.” The answers showed that three people disagreed with the premise, twelve agreed and five strongly agreed, showing that there is a tendency to the belief that engaging in blogging tasks is an opportunity not only to enhance writing in the L2, but also to enhance critical thinking by taking part in meaningful discussions.

Statement number nine says “Blogging gives students the opportunity to enhance other skills besides writing, for example, their argumentative skills.” Closely related to statement number eight, statement number nine tendencies show that there is a tight relation between the use of blogging, and the improvement of several areas of learning, since this platform provides several opportunities for enhancing other skills, apart from writing.

Regarding the answers for the second part of the survey, the majority of the pre-service teachers expressed their interest in using grammar and accuracy as one of the most important part of the criteria for the rubrics. This tendency shows some important and relevant information for the pedagogical proposal since criteria selection and rubric elaboration are key concepts in this project.

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