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University of Southampton

Faculty of Humanities

School of Modern Languages

**Academic Digital Literacy trajectories of online senior undergraduate ELT  
students in Mexico**

by

**Patricia Núñez Mercado**

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

January 2021



# University of Southampton

## Abstract

Faculty of Humanities  
School of Modern Languages

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics

### **Academic Digital Literacy trajectories of online senior undergraduate ELT students in Mexico**

by

**Patricia Núñez Mercado**

Online learning environments have been acknowledged as a promising option in higher education (Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley, 2010; Kim and Bonk, 2006; Simpson, 2018). However, a major drawback in virtual communities is dropping out (Kim et al., 2017; Wladis, Conway and Hachey, 2017). The pressure of writing a dissertation in L2 to obtain a degree may increase this possibility of dropout. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to investigate the experiences of online students navigating academic writing practices in L2, especially when these determine if they complete their Higher Education studies or not. The present qualitative case study explores the academic digital literacy (ADL) trajectories of a group of three students of an online BA in English Language Teaching (ELT) as they write a research paper in L2 to obtain their degree in one major Mexican state university.

The study approaches students' writing from an Academic Literacies Framework (Lea and Street, 1998; Lillis et al., 2015), which involves understanding literacy as a social practice (Barton and Hamilton, 2000), digital literacies also as a social practice (Mutta et al., 2014), and, to some extent, the concept of multiliteracies as embracing new challenges and affordances in reading and writing due to the virtual environment (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000; Street, 2000). By drawing on a virtual literacy ethnography and narrative inquiry in order to construct the students' stories of their experiences in their research writing journey, the study brings together data from a wide variety of sources, such as digital academic records, informal talks with BA facilitators, online activity in the institutional platform, interaction with their *Research seminar* facilitator, supervisors and the researcher, artefacts (drafts and final versions), written feedback from facilitator, supervisors and examiners, and interviews.

Findings challenge the celebratory discourses around e-learning by shedding light on the complexities of the ADL practices that the students engage in while writing a dissertation in L2 and on how they experience them, validating their choices. Emotions emerged as more significant dimension in the pedagogical field than it already is. The study also demonstrates that, despite the great challenge they pose, dissertation writing practices remain highly significant in online undergraduate programmes. Empirically, the study highlights the value of narrative inquiry and reflexivity in linguistic ethnographic research.



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## Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Patricia Núñez Mercado

Title of thesis: Academic Digital Literacy trajectories of online senior undergraduate  
ELT students in Mexico

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated  
by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this  
University;

Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other  
qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;

Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;

Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of  
such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;

I have acknowledged all main sources of help;

Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly  
what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;

None of this work has been published before submission

Signature: ..... Date: 07/05/2021 .....



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And finally, to my mother, who was the reason I kept going on. This may not be the kind of doctor you expected, but I promise to be a kind of doctor that will make you proud.



## Abbreviations

ADL	Academic Digital Literacy
AWO	Academic Writing Online
BA	Bachelor of Arts
CEFRL	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
COAPEHUM	Initials in Spanish for the <i>Accreditation Committee for Higher Education Programmes in the area of Humanities</i> in Mexico
DL	Digital Literacy
ELT	English Language Teaching
L2 AL	L2 Academic Literacy
LMS	Learning Management System
NLS	New Literacy Studies
NNES	Non-Native English Speakers
RL2C	<i>Research in the L2 Classroom</i>
RS	<i>Research Seminar</i>
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language



## Chapter 1 Introduction

There is an increasing recognition of online learning environments as a promising option in higher education (Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley, 2010; Kim and Bonk, 2006; Simpson, 2018), which can be mainly explained by the exponential growth of Internet users worldwide (Leu et al., 2011; Yañez et al., 2015) and the fact that these technologies have inevitably influenced how we learn (Erstad, 2013). Nevertheless, withdrawing and dropping out are still considerably a major drawback in virtual communities (Kim et al., 2017; Wladis, Conway and Hachey, 2017). Dropout rates are usually higher at the initial stages of a course or programme, especially when students are experiencing online learning for the first time (Salloum et al., 2019). Consequently, and on the grounds of all the benefits and affordances that have been claimed for e-learning, research on this field has focussed on improving the quality of online students' experiences in order to maintain high levels of satisfaction and motivation (e.g. Al-Samarraie et al., 2018; Cidral et al., 2018; Haythornthwaite et al., 2016; Martin and Bolliger, 2018; Panigrahi et al., 2018; Uppal et al., 2018; Salloum, 2019).

Another high-risk dropout moment in the life of any university student, whether in online or face-to-face programmes, could also come at the end of their studies: the writing of a dissertation to obtain a degree can be a daunting task to complete. If this paper must be written in a foreign language, it is likely that the chances of dropout increase considerably, as it is widely acknowledged that academic writing frequently poses a great challenge for L2 students, whatever their field is (Bitchener and Basturkmen, 2006; Braine, 2002; Ferenz, 2005; Seloni, 2012; Wahiza et al., 2012). In an online Higher Education programme, dropping out at the final stages is quite a critical issue. It is simply devastating for such programmes that students who have managed to endure the online learning environment all along quit at the very last moment. Not being able to complete their dissertation may very well constitute a reason to make such a decision.

The research context of the present study is an online BA in English Language Teaching (ELT) offered by a major state university in the south east of Mexico. The great majority of the students in this BA are Mexican, and most of them are mature people with family and job responsibilities. Also, a good number of those who enter the BA are already English language teachers who do not have a degree in the field, which is very common in the Mexican context, but who now want or need the degree to have

better chances to improve their life by enrolling at a university course. Some of them have already another BA degree when they enter the BA, or unfinished BA studies in ELT or completely different areas. Some have never had any ELT experience, and a few are young adults who have just finished or recently graduated preparatory school.

There is thus quite some heterogeneity among the students accepted in the BA, but they all must have in common at least one thing: a certified English B2 level by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL). How they have acquired this level has again a quite heterogeneous array of possibilities. Some people lived in the United States as legal immigrants during their childhood and/or adolescence attending school there, and some others lived there as illegal immigrants and picked up the language in their jobs and daily life experiences. Others have attended extra English courses apart from the compulsory English programme in state secondary and preparatory school in Mexico, or private schools with a stronger English programme. Their experiences learning the language are thus also very varied and therefore may have implications in their performance in ‘academic’ English, especially in the writing tasks required along the BA in ELT. It is fair to say that students interested in this BA see in this degree the promise of better employability, but in order to obtain their degree they have to submit, in English, what is called a research paper rather than dissertation, although it contains the same general structure.

There are thus three main issues here, one referring to **academic** writing, another to writing in **English as a foreign language**, and the last one to writing **online**, each of them posing a challenge of their own. It is common knowledge that academic writing has always been challenging for most students, whether they are writing in L1 or L2. They have to deal with not only the corresponding conventions, style, or register, for example. They also need to learn and adapt to discourses, behaviours and expectations of a specific discipline, considering their institutional contexts (Lea and Street, 1998; Murray, 2016). This implies an **academic literacies** approach to student writing, as every student has a variety of social, cultural and educational background depending on the contexts in which they have experienced them, and these will influence their understanding of their own literacy and meaning-making practices (Lea and Street, 1998). In order to better understand this variety of contexts, life histories, resources and experiences embedded in literacy practices, it is necessary to observe what people do with reading and writing, spend time with them and interview them so as to make sure their own perspectives are understood (Tusting and Barton, 2016).



This academic literacies framework distances itself from the ‘deficit model’, a model that reinforces the idea that it is those **non-native speaking students** the ones in deficit, wrongly assuming native speakers can more easily succeed in developing the necessary academic literacies because they already have the language skills (Murray, 2016). Although the field of academic literacies emerged in the early 1990s (Lea, 2016), it is this deficit notion, however, the one that has prevailed in that writing is still widely regarded only as a skill to be learned, and it is still considered a skill for which non-native speakers need more support because they most likely lack, in one way or another, the necessary language skills. In fact, both native and non-native speaking students need support to develop the necessary academic literacies in their disciplines. Nevertheless, inherent to their native language and culture, as well as other type of backgrounds and settings, some understandings and meaning-making practices of non-native speakers are admittedly different from those of native-speakers, and they should not be considered in deficit either.

Last but not least, the challenge of a **fully online learning environment** also needs to be paid attention. Digital affordances are continuously evolving and this influences how we may perceive academic literacies (Kiili et al., 2013). Accessibility and connectivity preventing exclusion, and developing both formal and informal learning strategies are some of the most salient issues when it comes to online learning environments (Yáñez et al., 2015). As mentioned before, quality and satisfaction are also common factors considered as crucial in this type of contexts. But how do students actually experience online learning? It is fair to say that, despite the many similarities that there might be between face-to-face and online learning processes, students in a fully online learning environment will experience some specific challenges and will then have some specific needs, different from those studying in a traditional face-to-face context, or even a blended-learning environment. They are commonly part time mature students who need to deal with occupational, social, personal, and family commitments. Admittedly, the nature of online learners may evolve as digital affordances in e-learning do, and its heterogeneity may continue to increase. Nonetheless, from the experience as a facilitator in the BA in ELT, one can tell that online study will always require from learners very good time management and organisational skills, learning autonomy, computing skills, and at the same time both willingness to work collaboratively and the ability to cope with isolation.

The research context of the present study involves these three aspects, as it focuses on **student academic online writing in L2**. The context in which students

perform is key in order to understand the processes they engage in while ‘writing academically’, since “academic writing takes place in many sites, across extended periods, interwoven with other activities” (Kaufhold and Tusting, 2020, p. 358-359). Thus, it is of paramount importance to better understand how undergraduate students experience and navigate this journey, especially when they are writing their dissertation, because what they write is not only being used to assess them, but to determine if they successfully complete their higher education studies or not. This is relevant not only to higher education online programmes offering a degree in ELT, but practically any higher education programme, in which English is likely to be the main means of communication and also very likely a second or foreign language to those who want to undertake these studies.

Therefore, for the present study, I give an account of **how mature students** in an online ELT BA programme **experience** the L2 writing process of their research paper to obtain their degree: the ways in which they navigate the structures that the institution proposes, the decisions they make, how they solve problems they face, what resources and strategies they draw on to do it, and explain why they do it this way. To do so I documented a group of three online students’ navigation of their academic digital literacy (ADL) trajectories. I identified and analysed practices that emerged when dealing with the activities within a course, the *Research seminar*, addressing the development of the research paper that students need to write in order to obtain their degree. These practices involve decision-making and problem-solving, constituted by a series of literacy events occurring around the process of writing their research paper within digitally-mediated environments.

In order to document the ADL trajectories, I had to challenge my research skills and become a virtual literacy ethnographer (Gillen, 2009), as “ethnography offers a particular theoretical perspective which connects the micro-events of academic writing and the emic perspectives of participants with broader and structural conditions” (Kaufhold and Tusting, 2020, p. 364). This implied collecting data from a diversity of sources, taking into consideration all observable activities within the framework of the *Research seminar*, which constitute literacy events so as to infer the students’ literacy practices around their research paper writing. I then had to look into the students’ actual perspectives of this experience by interviewing them and even interacting with them personally, as a peer in a very similar situation, so as to be able to construct their stories using narrative inquiry (Barkhuizen et al., 2014, Patiño-Santos, 2018). Within this inductive research process that I followed for each of the case studies, **emotions**

emerged as a significant dimension to be considered, bringing to the fore that, as Han and Hyland (2019) suggest, positive emotions may lead to unsatisfactory outcomes and negative emotions could actually lead to enhancing learning.

I was able to conduct this type of study to a great extent because of my strong insider position in the research context and the fact that I would be facing a similar process to that of participants (writing a dissertation in L2 at a distance). It was also mainly because of my insider position that I developed a personal interest in the research topic.

### **1.1 Personal background, motivation and epistemological transformation**

I have been a facilitator of the online BA in ELT programme for over 13 years, a teacher at the same university that offers the programme for over 20, and started working as an English teacher more than 22 years ago. Teaching English and training students to become English teachers has been a very important part of my life. As a matter of fact, I remember wanting to be an English teacher since I was in secondary school. A year after graduating from the BA in English, I started giving courses at the same BA, one of them an English writing workshop, which is why I became more interested in this area. My MA in TEFL dissertation, a few years later, was actually about teachers' perceptions of their writing assessment processes.

At the same time that I was writing my MA dissertation, I became involved in the project of the online BA in ELT design. We took courses to be online facilitators and to design online courses. I helped designing an introductory course to language teaching and learning, and I designed myself the course called *Language as a System*. The year the BA was offered for the first time, apart from *Language as a System*, I was the facilitator of the course *Curriculum Analysis and Syllabus Design*. Then, for the second term, I became the facilitator for the course I helped in the design, *General Aspects of Language Teaching and Learning*. All of these are courses with a strong written component along the process (forum participations, reflective reports), where the main products to be assessed were a type of academic text (an essay, a reading report, a syllabus).

Almost 8 years later, I became the facilitator of the course called *Research seminar*, which I helped to update. The final product of this course is the research report students present to obtain their degree. By then, I had been supervisor and examiner of many BA and MA students at the university, helped in the redesign of our BA in English and MA in TEFL programmes, and became a member of a research group with

whom I have published several articles and book chapters. Nevertheless, and even with only 4 students enrolled in the *Research seminar* of the online BA, I realised it was not easy for the students to make progress or for me as a facilitator to help them do it. One of the students dropped out the course because of personal problems, but managed to return the following year and complete the course and the research paper with a different facilitator. The three students I was responsible for completed their research papers at different moments, facing different challenges and experiencing different journeys.

It was then that I started wondering what could be done to improve the students' experiences in this *Research seminar*. Admittedly, along the years, very few students who have managed to get to this point of the BA have failed, and those who have passed and graduated actually speak very fondly of their BA student experience. That is why most of my facilitator colleagues and I have always been proud of being part of the programme. But it was not until that moment that I started to pay attention to the fact that the somewhat natural struggling in writing a dissertation had other dimensions and implications when doing it in an online programme.

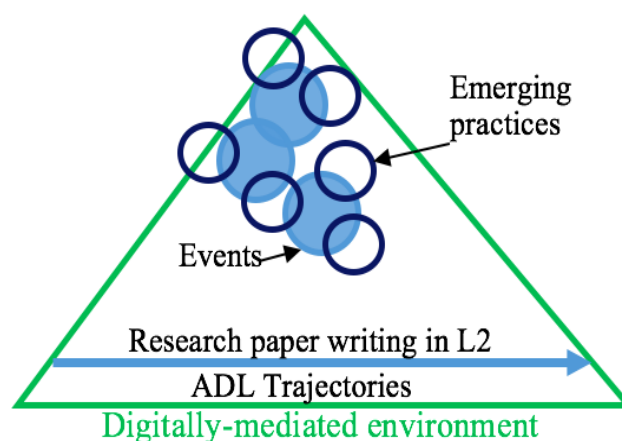
In my original research proposal, I meant to identify the students' participation in different Communities of Practice (Wenger, 2011) as they were writing their research paper, and understand their perceptions of how this participation helped them in the writing process. I wanted to tell their stories, and thus from the beginning I was interested in a narrative inquiry methodology. Then, I was introduced to the literacy as a social practice notion (Barton and Hamilton, 2000). This meant and still means an ongoing epistemological transformation for me. As a language learner and then BA and MA student, I was taught and learned, and thus understood, writing as a skill. Furthermore, as a teacher, this is the way I have been approaching it. This new notion for me of literacy as a social practice opened my mind to a wider array of possibilities to understand and approach literacy, which I continued to learn and embrace during my research study and will continue to develop.

Thus, this changed the focus of my research to aiming at understanding how the students of this online BA in ELT experience the journey they embark on when they are writing, in L2, their research report. It led me to following and documenting their trajectories and constructing their stories by interacting with them, and even to becoming one of them, hence the narrative inquiry methodology remained an essential component in my study, as well as taking an ethnographic stance gathering data from a wide variety of sources, mainly digital. As a facilitator of the online BA programme I

had full access to the institutional platform that hosts this virtual learning environment. Gaining access to the *Research seminar* where students develop their research paper was not an issue either, since as the regular facilitator of that course, I always have access to it whether I give the *Research seminar* or not. Given my personal background, I held a privileged position as a researcher in my study, and becoming a student in a distance programme writing a dissertation in L2 to obtain my PhD degree allowed me to connect with my participants all along their process and become a participant myself.

## 1.2 Rationale

What I embarked then was on investigating how the students of an online ELT BA experience their academic digital literacy (**ADL**) **trajectories** during the L2 writing of their research paper, which implies unfolding the complexities within ‘textual’ trajectories without concentrating on the text alone (Tusting, 2017). These ADL trajectories locate at the end of their BA studies, while they are writing an academic document similar to a dissertation, their research paper, in English, within an online learning environment. In Figure 1.1, the trajectories are represented by the arrow at the bottom, and usually take 7 months and up to 1 year for those who succeed in completing and presenting their research paper. The slightly bigger circles in the figure represent the **ADL events** that can be observed within the writing process. The circles around them in dark blue are the emerging **ADL practices** that the students engage in while they are writing their research paper. These can be inferred from the observable events, and may overlap or intersect, that is to say, students may engage in certain practices that emerge around the different events observed, practices that may occur outside the digitally-mediated environment of the *Research seminar* and the whole BA.



**Figure 1.1** Online students’ ADL research paper trajectories and emerging practices and events.

Studying these students' experiences is important because it allows a better understanding of how they, as online non-native English speaking students, carry out their research writing trajectories, how they construct meaning, and how they make decisions and solve problems. In this way, we could validate some of their choices which might not seem to comply to preconceived conventions, rather than dismiss them as 'incorrect' or 'deficient'. The exclusively online setting is also particularly of interest, since the activities within the trajectories to be studied do not involve or support any physical space. This means that the learning community where these practices and events emerge develops mainly through digitally-mediated interaction, rather than only including the use of digital resources as support for face-to-face learning environments, which is where most research in this area has focused on.

Fully online programmes have admittedly become an asset for people who would not have access to education otherwise, for example, mature students, who have already a way of making a living and many everyday life responsibilities to deal with, but are interested in becoming professionals in their area or a new one. As mentioned before, this accessibility and connectivity is one of the main affordances of this type of learning environment. Nevertheless, as the inductive research process of my study progressed, I became aware that my study challenged the mainly celebratory discourses around e-learning. I do not mean to say that there are more disadvantages than advantages in online settings, but from studies like mine one can learn that more attention needs to be paid to the challenges that being an online student poses, which might have always been acknowledged to a certain extent, but has not been addressed in depth.

This was precisely one of the main contributions of my study, which has gained relevance during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, better known as COVID-19, that the world is living at the moment, as everyone is becoming more aware than ever of the challenges of online learning. The significance of this study is also that of portraying the complexity behind the way online students engage in their research paper writing journey in L2, unfolding aspects that require more attention such as communication, trust and emotions. The role of narrative inquiry to analyse data was of particular value for the co-construction of the participants' stories, as well as the triangulation of the wide diversity of data collection sources.

### 1.3 Development of research aim and questions

Once I decided to embrace the literacy as a social practice notion, I originally formulated my research aim and questions focussing on the students' ADL trajectories and practices, rather than on the text they were producing. The research paper was merely an artefact to be considered within the data collection methods. Hence, the objective I stated was 'to investigate the academic digital literacy trajectories of online ELT BA students during the L2 writing of their research paper'. Nevertheless, as I would come to realise in the process, my focus should not be, and never actually was on the ADL trajectories and practices themselves, although they were invariably the first step to approach. In this sense, my first research question remained the same, as its purpose was to identify the ADL practices within the trajectories:

*What ADL practices do the students of an online BA in ELT engage in while writing their research paper?*

The problem I did not see at the beginning with the wording of the research aim, and my second research question, was that I failed to address the main issue within the stories of which I was giving an account, that is, the students' experiences. My second research question was:

*How do these ADL practices shape the students' writing process of their research paper?*

My third question attempted then to address their decision-making and problem-solving processes, but was stated in terms of 'considering' practices rather than engaging with them in order to make decisions and solve problems:

*What academic digital literacy practices and events do students consider to make decisions and solve problems in their writing process and why?*

Once I realised I was missing the most important issue in the wording of my research aim and second and third questions, I first restated my main research aim to include it. The first question, as I mentioned, remained the same, because in order to give an account of the students' experiences of their trajectories, I had to identify their ADL practices, for which I had to document the observable events. Thus, I decided to

state first my objectives considering the actual focus of my research study, to then proceed to re-word my second and third questions.

The **research aim** of my study is then ‘to investigate **how** the students of an online ELT BA **experience** their ADL trajectories during the L2 writing of their research paper’, and my **objectives** are:

- to explore ADL practices and events the students of an online BA in ELT engage in while writing their research paper,
- to study how the students engage in these ADL practices,
- to examine how students make sense of these practices and events to shape their writing process,
- to examine what practices the students engage in to make decisions and solve problems in their writing process.

My **research questions and sub-questions** can then be expressed as follows:

- 1) What ADL practices do the students of an online BA in ELT engage in while writing their research paper?
- 2) How do the students engage in these practices during this process?
  - 2a. How do students make sense of the practices in which they participate?
  - 2b. What practices do students engage in to make decisions and solve problems in their writing process?

The answer to the first question, the ADL practices that the students engaged in while navigating their trajectories, is part of the preamble to the stories, which I include in Chapter 5. The answer for the second question and its sub-questions are part of the students’ stories I constructed, for which I gave an individual account.

The **focus** of the present study is then the students’ experiences navigating their **ADL trajectories**, and thus the **concept of trajectories** is essential. Along this thesis, the idea of trajectories takes various forms. One of these forms is that of the students’ **academic** trajectories, which refers to how the students have performed in their BA courses, the outcomes and grades they have attained, and how long it has taken them to achieve the learning objectives established in the courses and the programme. A successful academic trajectory would then be that of students with an outstanding performance in their courses according to their teachers’ perceptions, and with high



grades all along their studies, which do not take longer than necessary. On the contrary, an unsuccessful academic trajectory is that where the student does not perform according to the teachers' expectations and repeats courses to pass them, which in turn translates into low grades. For this study, I took into consideration the academic form of trajectories so as to include among the participants at least one successful, one average and one unsuccessful example.

A second form of the concept trajectories is that of **institutional** trajectories, which in this specific context refers to how the students engage with the institutional platform of the university in order to complete the tasks they are required for each of the courses. This type of trajectory is particularly important as it involves how the students make sense of the virtual reality they are emerged in while completing the BA courses in order to obtain their degree. A third type of trajectory is the **textual** trajectory, in this case, that of the students' research paper. For this textual trajectory, I documented the students' writing process of their final research paper, or dissertation, from the moment they enrolled the *Research seminar*, considering they had previously developed a proposal, to the moment they submitted their final version, after presenting their research study orally before three examiners. In this sense, the text in question, the students' research paper, is considered a *text-in-context* and not a *text-in-itself* (Tusting, 2017), as the focus goes beyond the text alone involving all what happens around its development.

We could then talk about a fourth type trajectory comprising all the previous ones, which would be the **account** itself of my participants' experiences, engaging in literacy events and practices within the framework of a fully digitally-mediated learning environment. In other words, the students' **ADL trajectories**.

#### 1.4 Thesis structure

**Chapter 1** of my thesis is the introduction, where I have established the field of my research, which is academic digital literacies, following a literacy as a social practice approach to student writing in L2 situated in an online learning environment context, with emotions emerging as a noteworthy component. I also included my personal background where relevant with regard to my interest to investigate my research topic, and how my epistemological views about literacy were transformed as I embarked in my own journey. Finally, I briefly discussed the rationale of my research and presented

the development of my research aims and questions as well as the different forms taken by the concept of trajectories in my study before describing the thesis structure.

In **Chapter 2**, I present the theoretical underpinnings of my study, discussing first how I approached student academic writing and then the notions of academic literacies and literacy as a social practice, including the concepts of literacy events and practices. I then discuss the understanding of digital literacies also as a social practice, and briefly explain how the concept of multiliteracies is related to my study even when it is not its focus. Finally, I briefly present the relevance of emotions as it emerged in the study. **Chapter 3** revises the empirical research related to my study, comprising the fields of L2 Academic Literacy in Higher Education, Digital Literacy, Academic Digital Literacy, Academic Writing Online, and Literacy Trajectories, where there is a clear gap not only in bringing to the fore the challenges of online learning, but also in studying them independently rather than as support for face-to-face learning contexts.

**Chapter 4** presents the methodology I adopted, explaining first my ontological and epistemological positions, and then the type of study which is a virtual ethnographic case study. Next there is a description for each of the following aspects: the research context, the process of the pilot study, the participants, and the purposive sampling to select them. I then explain how I analysed data using narrative inquiry and content analysis. At the end, there is the description of the data collection and analysis procedure.

In **Chapter 5**, I include what is called a preamble to the stories, since there is more information about the *Research seminar* where the stories take place, all the participants including students, teachers and myself, the ADL practices the student-participants engaged in, and how the analytical chapters referring to the stories of each student are organised. **Chapter 6** tells Xareni's story, an unexpected failure, **Chapter 7** tells Jackie's story, the ideal trajectory?, and **Chapter 8** tells Brigitte's story, a pleasant surprise... in a way. In **Chapter 9**, I challenge the celebratory discourse around e-learning, which I was able to do by virtue of the use of an ethnographic approach to document the trajectories and of narrative inquiry to construct the stories. I then connect my participants' stories and my own around the emotions experienced, and conclude this chapter with an epilogue of my student-participants' stories and the *Research seminar* itself.

Finally, **Chapter 10** is the conclusion of the thesis. I first summarise the research study, its aims, methodology and main findings and contributions, and then present the limitations of the study and possible further research areas. I decided to

include as the last section for the conclusion a pedagogical implications section; after all, I did originally embark in this research because I was interested in improving the students' experiences when writing their research reports, and there are a couple of things to be said that could do so.



## **Chapter 2      The theory behind the study**

This chapter discusses the theoretical underpinnings of the present study. There are three main aspects presented: student academic writing, digital literacies and emotions. The first aspect deals with non-native English speaking (NNES) students' L2 writing and the expectations that usually emerge towards it. In the online ELT BA programme where the study was conducted, just as in most programmes of this nature, students' academic writing in English is a major concern, especially because they are expected to produce a research paper to obtain their degree. This study attempts to approach the students' academic writing from an Academic Literacies Framework, and that is why Academic Literacies is the concept subsequently developed. As this framework involves understanding literacy as a social practice, this is the succeeding section, followed by one explaining literacy practices and events. Then, the second main aspect of this theoretical framework, digital literacies as a social practice, is explained, and the concept of multiliteracies briefly presented, as it relates to the new challenges and affordances in reading and writing due to the virtual environment of the study. Finally, the most relevant issues related to emotions, which emerged as a significant dimension in the study, are included in the last section.

### **2.1      Approaching student academic writing**

Student academic writing, including L2 writing, is implicitly expected to be similar to the writing found in an academic journal article (Lillis and Scott, 2007). The online BA in ELT where this study takes place is not the exception. We tend to assess what students write focusing on the characteristics their writing presents according to how similar it is to published research in English, even when the genres the students are asked for are not exactly the same. In other words, these academic journal articles apparently dictate the desirable characteristics and conventions to be met, not only by L1 writers, but also by L2 students, even in other similar academic genres, such as their dissertations, or, in this case, their research papers.

Although the importance of such conventions must be acknowledged, it is necessary to go beyond and consider how NNES students are making meaning when they have to write an academic text in English. Their texts cannot be written using exactly the same academic language style and rhetorical conventions as in this highly valued academic journal article, since their social, cultural and linguistic contexts and

experiences, just to mention a few, are different from those writers'. This is because their texts involve "a variety of academic discourses using various language choices [revealing their] diverse individual, educational and social background and experiences" (Wahiza et al., 2012, p. 8).

This does not mean that English native speakers have all the same backgrounds and do not struggle acquiring the literacy conventions required for research writing, but the conventions in question have been established according to certain rhetorical features inherent to the language they share in common. It does not mean either that, as speakers of English as a foreign language, we should stop all at once trying to follow such writing conventions valued in our field of knowledge, especially in academic contexts such as the online ELT BA in question. However, given the status of student writing as the main form of assessment in higher education (Lillis and Scott, 2007), we should acknowledge our NNES students' processes as they are aiming to write an academic text in L2, especially if obtaining their BA degree primarily depends on it, as is the case of the research paper the students of this online BA in ELT have to write. These processes provide the students' BA research paper with special characteristics, different from the expected conventions, and the former should be considered as valuable as the latter.

What do the online NNES students do when they are in the process of writing their BA research paper in English? How do they do it? Why do they do it? What are the resources/strategies they draw on? What are the main challenges they face? These factors shape their writing, and even when they may not exactly reproduce the above mentioned conventions, we should not dismiss it as something 'incorrect' or 'deficient'. On the contrary, we should embrace it as an essential part of their writing, as they are conveying through it who they are, how they understand reality, and what and how they are learning, both as NNES and online learners. This is why this study adopts an **academic literacies framework**, as presented by Lea and Street (1998), as a starting point.

Lea and Street (1998) proposed this framework as an approach to better understand the nature of student writing in higher education through their writing practices. Their research addressed student writing as a complex process composed by practices taking place at this level, rather than from a deficit model perspective focused on developing a skill. They also acknowledge the importance of considering the students' understandings of their own literacy practices without any preconceptions about the effectiveness or appropriateness of these practices.

This framework is thus in line with the conception of literacy as a social practice, which will be discussed in more detail later, as writing is not meant to be judged as ‘good’ or ‘bad’. Therefore, the present study initially adopts this academic literacies framework precisely because it attempts to approach the online ELT BA students’ practices around the writing of their research paper without making any assumptions or judgements regarding the appropriateness of these practices, so as to better understand how they navigate this journey. In the following subsection this approach and what it entails is presented.

### **2.1.1 Academic Literacies**

The concept of academic literacies mainly emerges within the area of New Literacy Studies (NLS). NLS come from different disciplines (linguistics, rhetoric and composition studies, education, and cultural psychology, among many others) seemingly converging on a shared view of literacy which opposed to its then traditional approach as a mental or cognitive process that only happens inside people’s heads (Gee, 2015). This traditional approach regarded literacy as either a skill to be learnt (a study skill approach), or a process where the norms and practices within are to be learnt (academic socialisation perspective) (Lea and Street, 1998). The NLS view instead argues that “reading and writing only make sense when studied in the context of social and cultural (...) practices of which they are but part” (Gee, 1999, p. 3). In other words, literacy is something that people do in the world, within specific contexts, and does not only happen in people’s heads (Gee, 2015).

This view primarily arose from the opening of higher education institutions, mainly in Europe and the UK, to a more social, cultural and linguistic diversity of students (Lillis, 2003; Murray, 2016), where the presence of international students poses challenges over higher education practices. Thus, this view can also embrace those contexts where students need to perform in a language different from their own even when they reside in their own places of origin. This type of situation has become more common around the world, since many university students who live in their non-English speaking countries are now being required to use English as the main means of communication for their academic lives, as it is the case of the setting of the present study: an online BA in ELT offered in Mexico.

The concept of academic literacies contrasted with the term ‘academic literacy’ (in singular), which often implies inducing students into writing practices thought to be common in university, whilst ‘academic literacies’ (in plural) focuses on the socially

situated nature of these practices, whatever they might be and wherever they may come from (Lea, 2016). Therefore, an academic literacies approach privileges practices above text, paying also attention to the participants' perspectives of their own practices (Lillis and Scott, 2007), and emphasises the role of literacy research and instruction in university students' knowledge construction (Lillis et al., 2015). This is particularly relevant within the context of the online BA in ELT in the present study, as the research paper that students have to write in L2 to obtain their degree is expected to be, to a certain extent, a demonstration of 'everything' they have learned along the BA.

The plural-singular debate (literacy vs literacies) prevails to this day (Lea, 2016), probably unnecessarily. Although in different ways, both approaches mean to support university students' writing, and they actually both do it. In fact, the academic literacies framework, rather than excluding, incorporates both the study skills and the academic socialisation approaches, privileging a focus on the social practices that constitute literacy and which lead to meaning-making (Lea and Street, 1998). Thus, it would be fair to say that focusing on linguistic and text features to teach literacy is part of the process, but if we really want to make a difference, research on the students' actual literacy practices (what they do around a text, and how, when, where and why they do it) is essential to ensure genuine knowledge construction. This notion embracing what individuals do with texts considering their backgrounds, contexts and embedded purposes is precisely that of literacy as a social practice, which is discussed as follows.

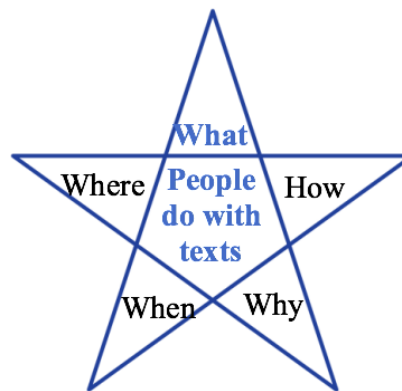
### **2.1.2 Literacy as a social practice**

Literacy, as defined by Barton and Hamilton (2000), is a set of changing and emerging social practices inferred from events mediated by written texts and associated with different domains of life: social, such as a shopping list or a WhatsApp conversation; academic, such as an argumentative essay or lecture notes; and work, such as a job application letter or memorandums. Hence, people engage in reading and writing as part of broader social and cultural practices entailing the interaction not only with texts but also with other people (Gee, 2000). Moreover, literacy practices are also part of social institutions and thus involve power relationships, and the practices in which people engage with a certain purpose are embedded in a specific socio-cultural context historically situated (Barton and Hamilton, 2000).

Therefore, "literacy is *situated* and embedded in local activities, and can never be pulled out and captured as a separate and unvarying thing", as the learning taking place within occurs on a daily basis anywhere (Hamilton, 2010, p. 8). This is why

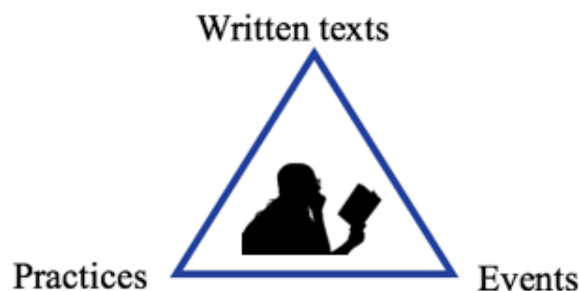


literacy should be understood more than as a discrete set of skills. In other words, understanding literacy as a social practice entails paying attention to what people do with texts, considering their everyday life; their own personal goals to get involved in these activities mediated by written texts; their linguistic, social, cultural, economical and political backgrounds; the diversity of contexts in which they are interacting with texts; the power relations they establish or are imposed as part of society, and thus their interaction with other people; the moments in which the activities take place, which have roots in the past but are constantly changing; and the way they are making sense of it all and constructing knowledge. This can be expressed in terms of what people do with texts contemplating as well how, why, when and where they do it, as I have represented it in Figure 2.1.



**Figure 2.1 Literacy as social practice**

Moreover, literacy involves a process of meaning-making which draws upon not only textual sources, but also audio-visual and spatial, for example (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000). This is particularly relevant when it comes to online environments, which is why digital literacies are also part of the framework of the present study and are discussed in section 2.2. All things considered, it is certainly not an easy task to pay attention to all the elements intertwining around literacy, but it could be said that the meaning-making process is central to it. And central to meaning-making, there are decisions to be made and problems to be solved. In order to approach these processes of meaning-making, decision-making and problem solving within a specific literacy activity, it is therefore necessary to delve into three basic elements that entail all what literacy encompasses: written texts, and the practices and events around it (Barton and Hamilton, 2000). Therefore, Figure 2.2 is another way to represent literacy as a social practice.



**Figure 2.2 Literacy as a social practice (simplified)**

Although apparently a simple representation, using the terms *practices* and *events*, not losing sight of everything the ‘human component’ adds to the ‘equation’, still displays literacy as a complex concept. In the following section these terms are defined and exemplified.

### **2.1.3 Literacy practices and events**

A simple definition for **literacy practices** could be what people do with literacy, including how they talk about it and how they make sense of it (Barton and Hamilton, 2000). This definition is admittedly very abstract, but the concept of literacy practices is actually an abstraction itself. It has commonly been related to people’s behaviours regarding reading and writing and how they understand the way they use them (Hamilton, 2010). But what does this mean? There are two main elements here: **behaviours**, and **understandings of such behaviours**. From behaviours, however, several other elements are originated; as they can be understood in this case as *social practices* performed in global or general patterns of people’s participation in and interaction with reading and writing activities, comprising use of time, space and resources, as well as people’s goals, all of which are socio-culturally situated (Ivanic, 2004). Once again, the *what, who, why, when* and *where* elements of literacy as a social practice emerge.

The second element, understandings of such behaviours, refers to considering *participants’ perspectives of their own practices*, which is essential when researching literacy practices (Lillis and Scott, 2007). Otherwise, we could not fully grasp the values, attitudes, feelings, purposes, and social relationships involved in these practices which, according to Barton and Hamilton (2000), are part of this behaviour. This is why, despite giving importance to people’s perceptions, literacy practices are better understood within socially situated contexts rather than within processes occurring in

isolation in individuals' minds (Barton and Hamilton, 2000). But how can we study such broad, abstract, general patterns? As Tanner (2017) points out, the 'locally situated literacy events' and the literacy practices they are part of are intrinsically related; thus, being locally situated, literacy events are helpful in the study of literacy practices.

**Literacy events** can be defined as 'activities where literacy has a role' (Barton and Hamilton, 2000, p. 8), or as 'observable occasions in which literacy plays a part' (Hamilton, 2010, p. 10). Therefore, a literacy event arising from a literacy practice entails an observable activity in which a written text is central, and which might also involve talk around the text (Barton and Hamilton, 2000). As an *activity* around a written text, a literacy event then refers to who is using it (*participants*), where (*settings*) and how (*artefacts*, including the text itself) (Hamilton, 2000). This means that literacy events are actions involving people, texts, and talk, but also non-verbal resources, all of which people use to interact with others creating in this way shared meaning in different social contexts (Tanner, 2017), and thus constructing knowledge by making sense of literacy.

As literacy events are observable, it is from them that literacy practices can be inferred (Barton and Hamilton, 2000; Ivanic, 2004), but at the same time literacy events are shaped by the literacy practices they emerge from (Barton and Hamilton, 2000). Moreover, as literacy events can be observed, they constitute the unit of analysis to be recorded and documented in order to study the literacy practices they belong to (Ivanic, 2004). However, a criticism to this concept of literacy event is presented by Kell (2011), who suggests that in order to describe and analyse this observable local activity, it is implied that a boundary can be drawn around the literacy event, and this in turn would mean that the people interacting in it share the same time and space. She presents this as a problem especially since technologies have made it possible for people to communicate across contexts and over time.

Nevertheless, although the settings within the concept of literacy events were originally described as physical circumstances (Hamilton, 2000), the concept still remains helpful firstly in that "it enables researchers, and also practitioners, to focus on a particular situation where things are happening and you can see them happening" (Street, 2000, p. 21). Secondly, literacy events are not studied independently from the literacy practices; the relationship between them is undeniable. Literacy practices entail a global perspective of the local observable activity that the literacy event represents. As previously established, the broader, more general perspective of literacy practices involves different interpretations, domains, purposes, values, understandings and

feelings. All of these are brought to the literacy event in order to give it meaning (Street, 2000), and thus the literacy event remains a useful unit of analysis. Thirdly, it is true that new technologies have emerged and have contributed to the development of new literacies, but it is also true that the concept of literacy as a social practice is not a static one; thus, the physical settings in which literacy events were originally conceived have evolved as well in order to fit the new digital settings that have emerged.

Different authors provide different **examples of literacy practices and events** they have studied. Hamilton (2010) talks in general about keeping a class register or ordering takeaway food as literacy events, while Mannion and Ivanic (2007) mention checking the exam time table, reading a newspaper, sending an e-mail and doing coursework. The latter mention that keeping a diary, being on the internet, and using e-mail are examples of literacy practices. Other examples of literacy events in specific studies are desk interactions (Tanner, 2017); a tutorial between a graduate student and her dissertation supervisor (Salter-Dvorak, 2017); using the twitter website (Gleason, 2016); students' out-of-class conversations, e-mail exchanges and casual conversation (Seloni, 2012); screen events (Seror, 2013); and the comments area on Flickr (Barton and Lee, 2012). As literacy events only make sense within the literacy practices they belong to, Table 2.1 shows the literacy practices in which the literacy events in some of the studies mentioned above were embedded.

Based on Hamilton (2000), it can be said that the examples of literacy events in these studies are presented as visible local activities where we can observe who is interacting with texts, where, how and what they are doing; and the examples of literacy practices constitute more abstract concepts from which information can be inferred based on the literacy events that were observed.

<b>Literacy Events (visible local activities)</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Literacy Practices (abstract general patterns of behaviour)</b>
Tutorial (MA student in English literature and her dissertation supervisor)	Salter-Dvorak (2017)	Dominant institutional discourses about how to write (in a UK university)
Students' out-of-class conversations E-mail exchanges Casual conversations	Seloni (2012)	Academic socialisation Elaborating arguments Correcting grammatical mistakes
Screen events	Seror (2013)	Online writing composition
Comments area on Flickr	Barton and Lee (2012)	Deploying languages (using different languages)

**Table 2.1 Examples of literacy events and practices**

In Table 2.2, also based on Hamilton's (2000) concepts of literacy events and practices, there is a more detailed explanation of the literacy events and practices presented in Salter-Dvorak's study. The event observed by Salter-Dvorak was a tutorial between an MA student in English literature and her dissertation supervisor (see Table 2.1).

Events (observed)		Salter-Dvorak (2017)	Practices (inferred)	
Participants interacting with texts	MA student and her supervisor	<b>WHO</b>	A first marker, other people the student has discussed her dissertation with, authors the student has read,...	Other people involved in the production, interpretation, circulation and regulation of written texts
Settings where interactions take place	Supervisor's office	<b>WHERE</b>	Institutional educational context	The domain of practice
How artefacts (including texts) are used	Master's dissertation, written feedback	<b>HOW</b>	Student and supervisor's perceptions	<b>How</b> values, understandings, feelings, skills and knowledge intervene
Actions performed by participants	Discussing feedback (face-threatening acts)	<b>WHAT</b>	Avoiding plagiarism Writing accurately	Structured routines and pathways that facilitate or regulate the actions
		<b>WHY</b>	Obtaining a master's degree	Social purpose

**Table 2.2 Events and Practices in Salter-Dvorak (2017) as defined by Hamilton (2000)**

In this event (Table 2.2), the participants were the student and the supervisor, the setting was the supervisor's office, the artefacts observed were the MA dissertation and the supervisor's written feedback, and the actions performed by the participants on which Salter-Dvorak focused were face-threatening acts when discussing feedback. On the other hand, from observing this event and its elements, there are practices that can be inferred, such as the interaction with other people in the students' dissertation writing process, the impact of the institutional educational context on this process, how the

student and supervisor perceive it, and the structured routines that emerge, such as talking about avoiding plagiarism and writing accurately, all in order to achieve one social purpose: to obtain a master's degree.

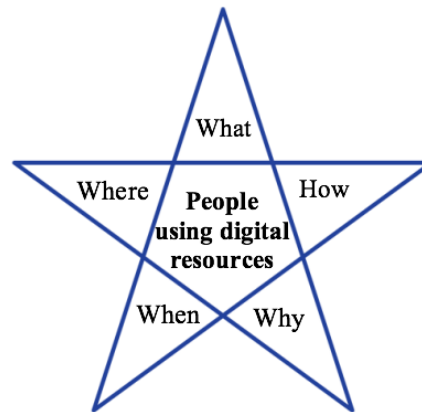
An important remark for Hamilton's literacy events and practices concepts is that settings have evolved into digital ones, as it is the case for the present study, where I observed and documented a variety of online literacy events in order to construct the students' stories around their ADL trajectories as writing their research paper. This is why digital literacies as a social practice is the second theoretical concept of the present study, which is explained as follows.

### **2.2 Digital literacies as social practice**

A second central approach to this study, given its online learning environment, is that of digital literacies. Digital literacies, within a language teaching context, could be referred to as "the sets of language and literacy skills needed in order to function in such digitally mediated contexts" (Hafner et al., 2013, p. 813). This definition seems to reduce the concept of literacy to a set of skills which can be acquired through some training. Nevertheless, the authors' intention was to include a more complex series of abilities: the search and critical evaluation of digital information, the construction of meaningful reading paths through hypertext documents, the production of suitable comments on others' online writing, the collaborative construction of knowledge through online platforms, the creation of multimodal texts merging different types of information (visual, aural and textual), the creative combination of online texts, and the appropriate online interaction with others. Thus, Hafner et al.'s definition does embrace a new literacies perspective in that it involves the construction of a variety of different meanings taking into consideration more than just the language in the texts themselves. Similarly, and more accurately, Kiili et al. (2013) define digital literacies "as situational and diverse meaning-making practices wherein digital tools and multiple digital sources are used to make sense of the world, build new knowledge, and exchange ideas within and across communities" (p. 225).

Mutta et al. (2014) move a step forward and manage to express this more concisely as "the critical assessment and use of digital technologies and the competencies in digital communication and discourse" (p. 227). The definition considers a complex process, a purpose and a context for those using digital technologies. It is not only about knowing how to use digital technologies (any

technology-related resource to access information and interact with it and other people), but about assessing what to use, how and why in order to communicate something as it has been understood, all this within a specific context. It is in this sense that digital literacy can be conceived as a social practice, as it is represented in Figure 2.3.



**Figure 2.3 Digital literacy as a social practice**

The online ELT BA students, the users of digital technologies of the present study, go through an ongoing process of making sense of digital texts (texts that have been accessed and manipulated within a digitally-mediated environment) to create another (their BA research paper), all of which is embedded in the framework of an online course, the *Research seminar*, accessed through an institutional platform with its own digital affordances. In this way, they create new knowledge, as embedded in an academic digital context, while interacting with and producing digital texts, as well as interacting with other people, conveying their own cultural, educational and social backgrounds. The fact that digital resources and means are constantly changing represents a challenge and an influence in how academic literacies are perceived (Kiili et al., 2013). This evidently has had an impact not only within online learning environments, but has also influenced face-to-face contexts, where most research has been carried out, as it is exposed in the following chapter. And this is precisely why a framework for Academic Digital Literacies within online higher education degrees would be a contribution to this field of study.

Virtual environments entail a series of implications on literacy practices as they bring to the picture different ways to read and write, and therefore, another important concept related to NLS within digital literacies is that of **multiliteracies**. Succinctly presented, the concept of multiliteracies emerges from two main arguments, one involving the increasing variation of significant meaning-making modes, and the other,

the increasing scope of both globalization and local diversity (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000). In other words, multiliteracies may be associated with different channels (eg. computer) and modes (eg. visual) of communication, or with different cultures which can be connected to different literacies (Street, 2000).

Clearly, the concept of multiliteracies is a very complex one and would need to be developed more in detail, but it is not the focus of my study, and it is not an area into which I am making a contribution. However, it is closely related to my research context in that it deals with a virtual environment which has enabled to a great extent these emerging channels and modes of communication, “where the textual is also related to the visual, the audio, the spatial, the behavioural, and so on” (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000, 5). The present study also entails NNES students writing academically in English, which implies both a cultural diversity (of the students in question), as well as a global connectedness, as they are trying to construct knowledge, make meaning and communicate it through a very specific academic genre in the lingua franca that English has become.

### **2.3 Emotions and online academic writing**

Emotions are widely acknowledged as an important dimension in education and learning. As regards to e-learning, several emerging learning theories include the emotional state as a key component (Mayer, 2019). When designing an online course, students’ motivations and backgrounds must be considered, and students’ emotions are precisely the point of intersection between these (Kahu et al., 2015). Whether within online or face-to-face learning environments, academic writing is one of the most common ways to assess the students’ learning outcomes, especially at Higher Education level. Academic writing is also a particularly emotionally laden process, especially for second language writers, who have to cope with heavy demands on language use (e.g. Han and Hyland, 2019; Langum and Sullivan, 2017). Hence, unsurprisingly, academic writing has been identified as a major source of anxiety for many students (Kahu et al., 2015).

Although negative emotions do not necessarily imply failure (Han and Hyland, 2019), novice academic writers are known to struggle with emotions along the challenging process that academic writing entails (Cameron et al., 2009). The online BA in ELT students of the present study can be considered novice academic writers when it comes to writing a dissertation in L2, or a research paper as it is referred to in this



programme. Generally speaking, within the writing process of a text of this nature, tensions between students and supervisors are commonly expected to emerge (Cotterall, 2013; Yu, 2020), and emotions triggered by feedback is particularly an area that has not been paid sufficient attention (Olave-Encina et al., 2020). Considering there is a wide range of emotions that can be experienced by any human being when writing under these circumstances, and which can influence whether positively or negatively the writing process (Janke et al., 2020), it is of paramount importance to look into the emotions dimension in both face-to-face and online contexts.

The purpose of the present study was not to investigate the online ELT BA students' emotions during the writing process of their research paper in L2. Nevertheless, and in the light of its relevance and significance as explained above, emotions emerged as a dimension that has even more pedagogical implications in online learning environments that may have been attributed to it. In this case, experiences in online research writing were the focus, but emotions permeate the trajectories of the students all along their online university study programmes, and especially in their research paper writing stage, as we will be able to see in the participants' stories in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

#### **2.4 Concluding notes**

This chapter presented the theory behind the study. As its purpose was to tell the stories of three online BA in ELT students navigating their research paper writing in L2 journeys, the first theoretical underpinning was that of student academic writing, which was approached from an Academic Literacies Framework (Lea and Street, 1998), thus embracing literacy as a social practice (Barton and Hamilton, 2000), as well as digital literacies as such (Mutta et al., 2014). Emotions emerged as a more significant dimension than it could have been expected, and thus it was also briefly discussed, acknowledging its already prominent status within the field of education. By recognising its theoretical underpinnings, the complexities of the ADL trajectories, practices and events in the students' stories can be better appreciated.



## Chapter 3      Research to date

In this chapter, I review empirical studies related to my research topic: the academic digital literacy trajectories of online undergraduate ELT students while they are writing their research paper in L2 (English). The students' trajectories of the development of their literacy in L2 certainly precede the moment in which they start writing this research paper. They may very well precede the moment they entered the BA program. Nevertheless, in this study the focus is placed on that part of the trajectories at the exit point of the participants' undergraduate studies, as they are usually in their last term. In this part of their trajectories, students are expected to produce an academic text in L2 which resembles a dissertation but is more similar in length to an academic journal article. Therefore, the research literature that will be reviewed first refers to **Academic Literacy in L2**, especially at the level of Higher Education.

The second type of research literature that is reviewed is that of **Digital Literacy**. As the students are enrolled in an ELT BA program in which the learning environment develops exclusively online, it is important to consider the digital literacy practices they engage in. What, how and why people use digital resources is an area of study that has increasingly been given attention in the last decade within literacy research. Digital Literacy has also been commonly related to the field of second and foreign language learning. Hence, it is these two types of studies that will be addressed, since they cover the areas that are most directly related to the present research.

In recent years, the combination of the previous two areas has also come to the attention of researchers. What, how and why the online undergraduate student-participants of this study resort to digital resources during their research paper writing process in L2 is one of the main aspects to be studied in the present research. Therefore, the **Academic Digital Literacy** studies that will be reviewed are those focussing on the use of online resources in order to develop academic literacies. We can then see that the area of online learning is without a doubt an important element of this study, especially when it comes to developing **Academic Writing Online**. Research on this specific area will also be presented discussing one synchronous and several asynchronous affordances.

It is also fundamental to consider how **Literacy Trajectories** have been studied in order to define the trajectories that are addressed in the present study. Thus, the research literature in this area that is revised comprises studies from early to higher

education literacy trajectories. It is in this latter aspect that the gap in the research area of the present study is made more evident, leading to the last section of this chapter: bridging the gap, which mainly refers to the study of exclusively online learning environments at a Higher Education level.

### **3.1 L2 Academic Literacy (L2 AL) in Higher Education**

The development of L2 AL in Higher Education has been studied from both the perspectives of NNES studying in universities in English-speaking countries (L2 contexts) and those studying in their own countries (L1 contexts). It is fair to say that both contexts involve advantages and disadvantages regarding L2 AL development. As a disadvantage, NNES in an English-speaking environment, for example, need to engage in peer-collaboration with other NNES outside the classrooms in order to learn how to become part of the learning community in which they are immersed if they seek to understand what it means to produce an academic text in English (Seloni, 2012). This is not an issue for those studying in their own country. However, a disadvantage for those in the latter environment is that they are not compelled to use English as a means of communication as much as in the former, and thus will need different strategies to develop their L2 AL (Braine, 2002). Nevertheless, students may also face similar challenges regardless of the status of the L2 in their learning environment.

In the following studies, the possibility of common difficulties to develop L2 AL in these two contexts is illustrated. Most of these studies were conducted using a qualitative perspective, which is common when studying literacy practices since this allows to follow a process more in-depth. Regarding L2 learning contexts, Salter-Dvorak (2017) conducted a case study during an EAP course in order to identify discourses and practices in a dissertation tutorial between one NNES master's student and her supervisor in a UK university. After analysing the data gathered through several collection methods (student's written texts with lecturer feedback, semi-structured interviews, course documents, and the recorded dissertation tutorial), one of her conclusions was that NNES students in English-speaking countries may be interested in different aspects of their academic writing from what their supervisors focus on. This could very well be an issue for NNES studying in their own country.

Hirvela and Du (2013) combined thinking-aloud protocols and text-based interviews to understand the paraphrasing learning practices of two Chinese undergraduate students in a mid-western university in the United States. The analysis of the texts produced by the students (research papers drafts and eventually the final

versions) was essential in order to identify changes involving decision-making and problem-solving. This analysis made it possible for interview questions to emerge, for both students and supervisors, regarding the practices and events surrounding this writing process. Some real difficulties encountered were the purposes and functions of paraphrasing, especially when students were asked to perform research paper tasks. However, even if studying in China, paraphrasing could still have posed a challenge for Chinese when writing an academic text in English.

In another case study, Salter-Dvorak (2014) compared two NNES graduate students' experiences (a Chinese and an Iranian) at a UK university in order to contrastively analyse "dominant discourses and language, power relations, agency, identities and affordances on two master's courses" (p. 850). Findings showed unequal support for the two literacy events identified in the early stages of writing assignments, which involved discussing the topic and preparing the proposal. Yet, wherever NNES learners are studying, differences in the support they receive may be a problem.

On the other hand, research carried out in the NNES students' L1 learning environment show areas of concern that could also be considered problematic for NNES students in English-speaking countries. Following a qualitative methodology, Bilikozen (2015) used mainly frequent in-depth interviews to explore the challenges of six undergraduate Arab students in an English-medium American university in the United Arab Emirates to successfully develop the required academic literacy in English. The findings of the study pointed to a perceived considerable significance of grades, weakness in reading and writing skills, and a lack of contribution of academic literacy requirements to the students' general academic and professional development. These three factors may also affect the NNES students' perceptions of the development of academic literacy in English as they study in an English speaking country.

In another qualitative case study, Wahiza et al. (2012) explored the academic literacy practices of 21 undergraduate Engineering students in Malaysia at the exit point of the two English courses they were required to take up. To gather their data, they draw on focus group and individual interviews, observation field notes, and written summary sheets from the participants. Their findings indicate that students struggled with their proficiency English level, especially in terms of grammar and vocabulary. This contributed to creating a pessimistic outlook on their own competencies in the language and their ability to engage in the required academic literacy practices. It would be fair to say that language proficiency can create this type of situation whether NNES students are in their L1 or an L2 learning context.

Langum and Sullivan (2017) conducted a narrative inquiry to study NNES doctoral students' experiences, self-perception and needs in relation to academic writing in English, especially since they are pressured to publish in this language, which represents a great challenge for most NNES graduate students. Langum and Sullivan's participants were six first-year Sweden doctoral researchers in a Swedish university. Data were collected through written narratives about their journey into English academic writing. Their findings indicate that students experience several difficulties: insecurity when using English to communicate their ideas, research results and information consulted in their L1; unawareness of different writing expectations in English or misconception of such; inability to relate to their research when writing in English; and perceived weakness in writing academically not only in English, but also in Swedish.

Last, but not least, there has also been some research conducted in Mexico in relation to L2 AL. Domínguez and Camacho (2014) conducted a quantitative study to mainly explore the perceptions of 45 undergraduate teachers and students of an English BA in a Mexican university about what 'good' academic writing in English entails. Using a questionnaire, they also enquired into their opinions about the use of rubrics and feedback, and their importance, frequency and effectiveness. The main implications suggested by Domínguez and Camacho refer to the importance of incorporating rubrics to assess the written assignments as a common literacy practice. Undoubtedly, the use of rubrics for written work is also relevant for NNES students in an L2 context, where they may also find it challenging to understand what is expected from them and how they will be assessed. Despite its quantitative nature, it is clear that this study just as the previous ones considers that challenges encountered by students are a key issue in the development of academic literacy practices.

Also in Mexico, Roux (2012) conducted a qualitative case study analysing the academic literacy practices of a Mexican undergraduate student of applied linguistics. Data were mainly gathered from texts written by the student (a thesis and other academic texts related to it), semi-structured interviews and researcher field notes during 8 months. Roux presents the difficulties faced by the student as those of a legitimate peripheral participant, given her experience with both English and Spanish from an early age. The researcher concludes that the role of the tutor is crucial for the student to overcome those difficulties. Once again, all these challenges can be also experienced by NNES students in an English speaking country. Furthermore, when it comes to NNES students, it has long been pointed out that their identities, goals, and

access to supportive social and academic environments should be considered in their expected L2 academic literacy achievement, whether they are studying in their own country (Ferenz, 2005) or not.

### ***Reflective remarks***

In Mexico, little research has been conducted in the field of L2 AL. The present study attempts to contribute to research in this country dealing with the development of L2 AL for students surrounded by their L1, the challenges they encounter as they write a research paper in L2, and the decision-making and problem-solving processes regarding these challenges. However, it also concerns a learning environment that takes place exclusively online; and although a qualitative approach is evidently the most appropriate methodology to explore this area, this means that certain methodological sources, such as direct observation of the participants will not be possible as it is in face-to-face contexts. Moreover, the institutional platform that is used may also limit or give access to certain type of data, which should definitely be considered to establish what events can actually be observed. Therefore, the context in which a study is developed must be considered, not only because of the area of concern to be researched, but also because of the methodological and ethical implications that carrying out research entails, as well as the contribution that is expected to be done in the subject area.

### **3.2 Digital Literacy (DL)**

Digital literacy can be studied in terms of what kind of digital resource people use and how they use it, thus entailing why they use it (e.g. Albers et al., 2016; Barton and Potts, 2013; Cassany, 2016; Jones and Lea, 2008; Lea and Jones, 2011, Liege et al., 2016). An important area of study is the nature of contexts in which users engage in DL, that is to say, whether it is within a personal or an academic sphere (Jones and Lea, 2008).

However, one of the most significant differences established among users refers to how they use digital resources. Some use them mechanically and uncritically or only to hang out, and there are others who actually explore and assess the resources, consciously choose what to use, use several strategies while using them and find themselves engaging in new DL practices in order to accomplish something (Barton and Potts, 2013; Cassany, 2016).

The latter is the type of users that online students would definitely be expected to be, including the online ELT BA students of the present study. However, even when we should pay more attention to these more autonomous and critical meaning-making DL practices, sometimes the influence of authorities in institutions (teachers, tutors, administrators) may limit the way digital resources are accessed and used (Lea and Jones, 2011). This could imply that the very same online platform that an institution has established as the means of instruction and communication may be determining to a certain extent how students develop their digital literacies. Whether this is or not the case, the online platform is part of the learning environment context, and thus, should be paid attention to.

Another area to which DL has been commonly associated is that of foreign or second language learning. Approaches to this relationship between DL and L2 language learning include the use of digital resources inside the L2 classroom. Guth and Helm (2012) report the implementation of telecollaboration tasks between EFL teacher trainees at a university in Germany and EFL undergraduate students at a university in Italy, using English as a lingua franca. Based on their results, they maintain that the use of this digital resource is useful for both language learning and research, since it creates a permanent record of interactions. Similarly, Hafner (2014) claims that the use of video-projects, which he used in an English for science course at a university in Hong Kong with 67 students, has potential benefits in language learning as it helped his participants to develop problem-solving skills related to rhetorical challenges regarding audience and appropriate discursal identity. In an exploratory, small case, qualitative study conducted in an American research institution, Thoms et al. (2017) investigate the challenges and benefits of using eComma, a digital annotation tool, to improve students' reading skills in an undergraduate Chinese (L2) language course. They also conclude that, despite the encountered difficulties, this digital resource allowed students to "co-construct meaning and scaffold their learning while engaged in close readings of the Chinese literary texts outside of the physical classroom" (p. 38).

There are also studies with a more quantitative approach in this area which aim to measure the impact of using digital resources in the language classroom. In a study to explore the impact of electronic dictionaries in promoting autonomy and students' perceptions of these e-technologies regarding the development of their Chinese literacy skills, McLaren and Bettinson (2015) administrated an open-ended questionnaire to 39 students of Chinese at a Western university, and subsequently conducted focus groups to further clarify responses. They found that the students will very likely use other more



traditional resources to reinforce their learning, but they do perceive digital dictionaries as a useful tool and were motivated to use them. Oz et al. (2014) also investigated students' attitudes towards digital resources in language learning. They used two questionnaires with 126 undergraduate students at a Turkish university to measure attitudes towards foreign language learning and towards computer-assisted learning, finding a positive co-relation between the results to both questionnaires.

All the previous studies focus on an expected effectiveness of the use of digital resources in the language classroom. In the Spanish speaking world, again in a qualitative study, Cassany (2016), on the other hand, explores the actual digital literacy practices, both inside and outside the language classroom, of 59 secondary school students in Barcelona. From 30 in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted in pairs, he found that, in contrast to what teachers recommend, the students' most used digital resource is the translator in L2 reading (English and/or French), and L1 (Spanish and/or Catalan) / L2 writing situations, and identified different levels of users among the students. Cassany emphasises the importance not only to allow, but also to train the students in the use of varied digital resources for formal instruction, so that they become critical autonomous users: knowing what to use, when to use it, how to use it, and why. It is thus implied that a critical use of digital literacies enhances learning, including language learning.

However, most DL studies in foreign language learning with a focus more on the process and practices rather than in the outcome have been conducted in L2 contexts. Some have specifically addressed online reading strategies. Park et al. (2014) investigated the information-seeking strategies and decision-making processes of seven Asian undergraduate students at a US research university when reading two online texts in L2. Data were mainly gathered through observations, think-aloud protocols and interviews. Practices related to prior knowledge, self-regulated reading strategies to construct meaning, and the L1 were found to be resorted to by the participants in their reading process. The researchers suggest that an effective combination of these allowed the emergence of new literacy skills regarding problem-solving processes in relation to the non-linear manner in which the unlimited resources and information are presented in an online text.

A comparison between L1 and L2 online reading strategies was addressed by Kang (2013) in an experiment to investigate L1 and L2 online reading patterns of 18 graduate students (nine as L1 readers and nine as L2 readers) in a Midwestern university in the United States. Using eye-tracking technology, Kang concluded that L1

and L2 readers have a very similar level of reading competency when it comes to fluency in terms of speed, purposefulness and comprehension, especially when language proficiency is not an issue. In contrast, when Taki (2016) compared L1 and L2 metacognitive online reading strategies using two questionnaires, L1 readers - Canadian university students - perceived themselves as high strategy users following a top-down approach when performing three-reading tasks on the Web; while Iranian university students considered themselves medium-strategy users choosing a bottom-up approach both in their L1 and L2. Interestingly, the correlation between perceived use of strategies and reading scores was statistically significant. This suggests that cultural factors must also be considered when attempting to study the use and development of DL to enhance foreign learning language processes.

L2 writing and the affordances that DL provides have not been ignored. It is undeniable that digital technologies have had an impact on writing and its forms, genres and purposes (Zheng and Warschauer, 2017). In a case study, Cho (2017) focused on collaborative writing among three Asian learners of English at a Canadian university. She analysed their interactions while collaboratively writing a summary using digital resources. From the data gathered through debate summaries, screen recordings, stimulated recalls, and a survey questionnaire, findings indicate that primary factors which mediated the interactions include a variety of modes of communication, task representations, different and similar ways of participants of perceiving themselves and others, as well as their perception of peer feedback. Cho's study ultimately seeks to provide an insight on how to use web-based collaborative writing activities effectively in the L2 classroom.

Christiansen (2017) also argues that it is important to incorporate digital literacies to foster L2 academic writing. She examined how including a multimodal digital project in an advanced ESL composition class at an American university may complement and facilitate an argumentative research assignment. She claims that the project did help students to better understand the writing process and favoured the development of a sense of multimodality in student writing, which is important to make them competent writers in a digitally mediated era. Shepherd (2018) also argues in favour of multimodal writing experiences. In his study, collecting data from 60 surveys and 10 interviews with first-year university students in an American university, he attempted to better understand the connection between previous digital and multimodal writing experiences and their writing classroom practices. He concluded that unless students are encouraged to make this connection, they will be missing opportunities for

a more engaging participation in multimodal literacies within and beyond the classroom. Elola and Oskoz (2017) concur with this incorporation of digital literacies in the curriculum to enhance L2 learners' writing practices, recognizing the affordances of social tools to this end.

Given this importance attributed to digital literacies in education and L2 learning processes and outcomes, Guikema and Menke (2014) sought to explore the attitudes of 32 FL teacher trainees in an American university towards addressing digital literacies in their teaching practice. Based on the presentations of the participants about instructional technologies in a videoconference, they report that despite showing enthusiasm about using digital resources in the language classroom, the future FL teachers did not address the development of digital literacies themselves. It is admittedly of paramount importance to promote congruence between the emphasis given to DL within the foreign language learning processes and outcomes, and the incorporation of its development within the language classroom.

The findings and methodological digital resources in all these studies are of significant relevance for my study. The research interest that seem to dominate the field are related to perceptions, attitudes and practices around DL affordances in L2 reading and writing. Despite positive perceptions and attitudes, including studies where an implementation took place, there are usually difficulties when integrating digital resources in foreign language learning. The development of online reading strategies and possible DL affordances in writing have occupied an important place in these studies, which demonstrates that it is important to pay attention to what students do with digital resources when reading and writing, how they do it and why they do it that way.

### ***Reflective remarks***

Most research on DL has been carried out within face-to-face learning environments, and little has been said about exclusively online learning contexts, especially when it comes to higher education, such as the BA in ELT of the present study, which uses an institutional platform with specific digital resources of its own. Therefore, one of the main contributions of the present research addresses this existing gap of DL within online higher education programs. Moreover, as it is higher education we are talking about, and thus academic literacies are involved, the present study aims to look into the development of **academic digital literacy**. Studies like those conducted by Christiansen (2017) and Cho (2017) on L2 writing and DL affordances, and Park et al. (2014), Kang

(2013) and Taki (2016) on online reading strategies already address this issue. In the following section, more research specifically on this field is discussed.

### **3.3 Academic Digital Literacy (ADL)**

The present research project aims to explore and explain meaning-making, decision-making and problem-solving processes experienced by online undergraduate students writing their research paper in L2. This means that both academic and digital literacies are involved. There is still little research on ADL, which is, for the purposes of the present study, research directly addressing the development of academic literacies using online resources.

In primary and secondary education, it has been researched, for example, how digital social media, such as blogging (Shin, 2014) or YouTubing (Haugsbakken and Langseth, 2014), intervene in the development or future development of academic literacies. Shin's ethnographic study aimed at analysing how blogging could shape the L2 academic literacy development of a Spanish-speaking second-grader in the United States. This student was in a class where the teacher had incorporated a blog in the writing lessons, and he had no internet-related computer experience, which allowed Shin to better study this development. After analysing multiple data sources (written texts, blog postings, videotaped classroom interactions, informal conversations, interviews, instructional materials, and school documents), she claims that the implications of her study support the use of Web 2.0 tools to foster emergent literacy development and conceptualisation of digital literacies. Similarly, in Haugsbakken and Langseth's case study with 15 ESL secondary school learners in Norway in their second year, the use of YouTube, another Web 2.0 tool, in formal education is claimed to potentially enhance students' competences. They argue that YouTube allows students to develop self-organisation in social contexts which they can transfer to formal education contexts, and teachers can draw on this ability to guide students in their academic literacy development.

There has also been interest in researching digital writing processes. In a comparative case study with twelve-graders in the United States, Smith (2017) examined the responses and analysis of three students with regard to literature in multimodal composing projects. She suggests that allowing students to 'travel across modes' (including audio-visual and other digital resources) during the writing process fosters their academic literacy development. Apart from the multimodal products used

for the projects, data included screen capture, video observations, student design interviews, and written reflections. Research on this subject area could thus clearly contribute both theoretically and methodologically to the field, especially regarding digital resources. Yim and Warschauer (2017), for example, provide an extensive account of how the use of text mining tools, such as SCAPES or DocuViz, facilitate research capacity to analyse web-based collaborative writing processes in L2 contexts.

Regarding Higher Education, Mutta et al. (2014) studied digital literacy in academic language learning. Their experiment employed screen capture in order to compare online information-seeking strategies in L1 and L2 of 20 French university students (L1) and 30 Finnish university students (L1 and L2). The results showed that even when information was more rapidly found in the case of L1 students, students seeking information in L2 used more keywords and formulated more queries, and both groups of students developed information-seeking strategies, including multilingual search strategies. The researchers firmly believe that information-seeking competence is an essential part of digital literacies in an academic context. Thus, an element that academic and digital literacies have in common is this information-seeking competence, especially when it comes to conducting research.

Khadawardi (2016) also studied online reading processes, but was interested in the on-screen L2 academic reading interactions of 20 Saudi graduate students in the United Kingdom so as to be able to propose pedagogical practices that foster reading comprehension practices and strategies in the digital world, especially considering digital universities. This interpretive qualitative study used demographic questionnaires, think-aloud protocol, field notes, stimulated recall and interviews to collect data. Findings suggest that the newly identified digital academic strategy literacy is part of the multiple literacies needed in effective on-screen reading. Although the study was not carried out in an online learning context, it acknowledges the importance of this type of education.

Some studies have focussed specifically on academic writing in English as a foreign language and how online resources can help develop it, reporting successful results. Widyaningsih (2018), for example, investigated the efficiency of online corrective feedback via e-mail to improve the writing skills of 11 fourth-year undergraduate students in an Indonesian University, compared to 11 other students who did not have this support during a writing course. Also in Indonesia, using questionnaires and interviews, Nasution (2018) explored the perceptions of 42 fourth-

year university students about the use of two online corpora systems to improve their academic writing skills.

In Botswana, Magogwe and Jaiyeoba (2019) examined the perceived usefulness, ease of use and attitudes towards the use of WhatsApp to develop writing skills administering 70 questionnaires to students from two universities. Hosseinpour et al. (2019) implemented the Edmodo mobile application to improve academic writing proficiency with an experimental group of 60 Iranian university students in a writing class. And Dugarstsyrenova (2019) examined the implementation of an online academic writing tutor with 38 undergraduate students in a Russian university taking a writing course.

Academic writing is not only a concern within the EFL community. Forsythe et al. (2019), for instance, investigated the impact of a student blog in supporting the development of undergraduate students' writing and literacy. They analysed the anonymous feedback of 40 students from 4 UK universities part of this academic-student partnership and identified high levels of positive emotion, concluding that this type of non-academic context provided students with a motivating environment to engage with academic literacy practices.

Returning to the topic of EFL, in the Latin American context, a study that addresses this connection between digital literacies and academic literary practices is that of Guzmán-Simón et al. (2017). Based on the answers to self-report questionnaires given to 786 undergraduate teacher trainees in a Spanish university, the results indicated that digital competence was scarcely developed even in informal learning contexts and thus they were not commonly incorporated into academic literacy practices. Guzmán-Simón et al.'s main concern is that future teachers will then experience difficulties regarding their professional development. It is evident then that a high value has been placed on the development of ADL.

Furthermore, in an exploratory qualitative case study, after analysing hypertextual L1 reading and writing practices of 32 teacher trainees in Chile on the basis of their written answers to six open-ended questions, Figueroa et al. (2013) maintain that there is a change in the process of reading and writing academically when technology is used, and this change needs to be studied in depth. Thus, it is important to study ADL practices in online higher education, as well as the processes in these practices, as their nature changes.

Despite the importance placed on ADL, most research has been conducted focusing on the effects of specific online resources in face-to-face programmes. Peterlin

and Botschon (2015) did approach this online learning environment perspective with their cross-cultural collaboration project between American and Slovenian university students. They particularly examined the Slovenian participants' views of the collaborative wiki writing assignment of the project, which attempted to develop their academic literacy skills. They assert that "the wiki is clearly and efficient tool for promoting academic literacy" (p. 149) even when participants were reluctant to fully engage in the required editing. Although the purpose of the present study is not to assess the digital affordances that the institutional platform offers the students in their research writing process, the nature of the site plays an essential role in the way the people experience literacy (Tusting, 2012).

### ***Reflective remarks***

In summary, it is clear that ADL is considered an area worth researching, and this comprises both face-to-face and online learning environments. Nevertheless, there is a lack of more research on ADL within higher education online programmes, where, just as in any tertiary education environment, writing "is the principal way [students] demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have acquired during their studies, and their fitness for accreditation" (Goodfellow, 2005, p. 481), and especially within the aforementioned context, "computer-mediated communication provides a space for more critical approaches to university writing practices" (Goodfellow, 2005, p. 493).

### **3.4 Academic Writing Online (AWO)**

Literacy has been covered so far in terms of 1) L2 Academic Literacy in Higher Education for NNES studying in L2 and L1 contexts, 2) Digital Literacy especially in terms of digital resources used in order to learn a foreign language, including reading and writing processes and practices, and 3) Academic Digital Literacy referring to the use of online resources in the development of academic writing. This section, Academic Writing Online (AWO), covers studies where the development of academic writing in university is the focus of online environment learning contexts, whether referring to the online component in blended learning, or fully online academic writing courses. Both types of online learning contexts have been acknowledged as technologically-afforded opportunities to improve students' academic literacy despite limitations such as time constraints, interpersonal issues, and difficulties in providing honest peer-to-peer feedback (Scott et al., 2017).

Fully online learning environments most commonly involve asynchronous interaction to provide anywhere-anytime access for students who self-regulate their learning at their own pace. Online learning affordances, however, do not necessarily limit to asynchronous activities. For instance, Ebadi and Rahimi (2019) studied the impact of an online dynamic assessment model with synchronous one-on-one individual sessions using Google Docs to write and edit an academic writing task. Six Iranian undergraduate students in face-to-face programmes, preparing for the IELTS exam, participated in these sessions. They were given a writing task and at the same time that they wrote it, they were receiving observations on academic writing in terms of task achievement, coherence and cohesion, lexicon and grammatical range and accuracy. Their writing developed in all these four areas but had difficulties to transfer these skills to more challenging contexts.

This online synchronous instance seems to have obtained mostly successful results, but it is asynchronous affordances that are more widely used and thus most commonly researched. Tang et al. (2020) report the unsuccessful case of an online writing community created for undergraduate students in a face-to-face English education programme in a university in Hong Kong, and studied the reasons behind its failure. The researchers intended to create an autonomous learning environment for them to improve their writing skills through peer feedback and collaborative learning within this online writing community. All 105 students (four cohorts) in the programme were invited to participate, but only eight did. Among the reasons not to participate provided by students were lack of time, heavy workloads, and the fact that participation was non-compulsory and attempted no credits. Those students who did participate attributed low interaction in the community to lack of commitment of members, little rapport built among them, no space for directly responding to peer-feedback, and non-user-friendly features of the platform that was used. In my experience as a facilitator in a fully online learning environment, it is actually fair to say that time, workload, commitment, rapport, interaction opportunities and ease of use are crucial to be considered.

Despite high probabilities of failure, as it occurred in Tang et al. (2019) case, the value of asynchronous online learning environments to develop academic writing is not questioned and new projects for this type of support in higher education are still constantly emerging. In Indonesia, for example, Perpisa et al. (2019) and Turmudi (2020) present two developing proposals in different universities to enhance their student's academic writing in English. Perpisa et al. present the design of an online



platform where undergraduate students attending face-to-face writing courses would also need to access the Perpisa Academic Writing platform with three main sections, one where teachers upload the instructional material they want their students to revise, another where students can develop writing assignments and discuss about them, and the last one to receive feedback on their achievement in academic writing. Turmudi also proposes support for undergraduate students in face-to-face EFL writing classes through web based instruction focussing on different academic genres. For each academic genre students could access the Online Academic Writing Quest and then sequentially access the sections for Learning Objective, Instructional material, Models of drafting, Exercises on drafting towards the writing of a 250-to-350-word essay, Self-editing, Peer-editing, Final editing, Teacher feedback, Final version, and Publishing to outsiders. Both of these proposals were developed considering the needs and context of their student population, which is undoubtedly an essential part in the design of any online learning environment.

There are also asynchronous online learning spaces created for students in face-to-face programmes, but independently from any face-to-face course. That is the case of the recently created Academic Writing Toolkit for the incoming master's students in two Education programmes at an Irish university in 2017. O'Dowd (2018) studied the interaction and perception of 315 students with regard to this Toolkit, which comprises different academic writing issues such as challenges, language errors, punctuation, style, formatting, referencing and so forth. Depending on the nature of each issue, students can access Moodle quizzes, audio podcasts, Moodle books, Moodle pages with other resources, PDFs, videos and presentations. O'Dowd's findings indicate that students prefer online content where the teacher presence is strong, such as videos, audio podcasts and presentations. Students also expressed preference for a scheduling approach acknowledging the workload of distance-learners. Teacher presence and flexible scheduling thus seem to play a very important role in the success of fully online learning contexts.

An example of a successful asynchronous online writing programme is that reported by Boyle et al. (2019). The Academic Writing Skills Programme was created over 12 years ago due to the increasing number of international students in their UK university, both undergraduate and graduate. It is offered for approximately 12,000 incoming students every year. It consists of three stages: a diagnostic online quiz on general writing issues with immediate feedback explaining why students were right or wrong, a diagnostic essay writing assignment for which students receive pre-determined

but tailored feedback, and then, depending on their results, students are suggested to continue improving their academic writing skills with one of the following: independent study, an asynchronous online course, or face-to-face writing sessions. Their success is due to ongoing reflection and development of the programme, sufficient and appropriate technological resources, ongoing institutional support, as well as the dedication of staff and team of markers. Therefore, institutional, technological and human resources are all crucial to the successful implementation of an online writing programme.

There is also fully online training considering fully distance-learners, as it is the case in Northcott et al. (2016) and Luna et al. (2020) studies. In UK, Northcott et al. explored the perceptions of 53 distance and face-to-face international graduate students about formative feedback in online academic writing courses offered by the English Language Teaching Centre at their university. On a weekly basis, students who voluntarily enrol in these online writing courses receive feedback on their written assignments from their academic writing tutor, whether via e-mail or a specific online system for such purpose, so that they can improve their final versions to be sent to their content course tutors. Students also provide feedback to their academic writing tutors. As a result, apart from student satisfaction and perception of improvement in academic writing skills, Northcott et al. noticed that students and tutors seemed to be engaging in feedback practices that promoted a dialogue rather than passive feedback correction, which fostered academic writing development. Admittedly, feedback is a central element in writing development, but the focus on feedback practices in this study raises awareness of the importance for two-way communication to take place.

In Spain, Luna et al. (2020) designed and evaluated a virtual training guide for 32 undergraduate students in a Distance Learning university. The instructional material and activities aimed at supporting students to write integrative and well-structured arguments. The training involved video lectures and practice exercises with immediate feedback using open online resources like Moodle. Luna et al.'s results revealed that student written products did improve both in terms of structure and integration of opposing arguments, although the level of integration in their conclusions was not as high as expected, and that most students found the virtual guide useful recognising its value.

### ***Reflective remarks***

The field of fully online learning, especially regarding academic writing, is particularly relevant to my study. As we can see, research on this area also focuses on face-to-face

programmes taking advantage of the affordances of online learning resources and outcomes of taking advantage of online learning environments to develop academic writing. The use of online systems may be assumed as equally valuable for both face-to-face (blended-learning) and fully online contexts. Admittedly, several elements are consistent in both types of environments, and the objective remains the same: promoting students' meaningful learning. Nevertheless, ignoring or downplaying all the possible features in which distant or online learners may differ from those students in face-to-face most common contexts in Higher Education might be contributing the higher drop out rates in the former, to give an example. Moreover, focussing mainly on outcomes limits the understanding of how they are obtained, and most importantly, of how students experience the process.

### **3.5 Literacy Trajectories**

Last, but not least, as the present study aims at exploring academic digital literacy trajectories, it is necessary to examine recent research carried out on the subject of literacy trajectories, and define the trajectories that are being studied in the present research. Interestingly, little research has focused on literacy trajectories within online formal learning environments. Even when the Internet is a “defining technology for literacy and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Leu et al., 2011, p. 5), most education research regarding literacy, not only literacy trajectories, has been developed within face-to-face contexts, in which, if that is the case, technology including the Internet is used as a tool that attempts to enhance learning.

Even though it is not the context of the present study, early literacy trajectory is considered an important research area, and it has typically been approached from a quantitative perspective given the impact it is thought to have on subsequent literacy achievement. Whether it is within L1 (Ogg et al., 2016), L2 (Quirk et al., 2016) or bilingual (Lonigan et al., 2013; Sparrow et al., 2014) learning environments, this type of studies aims to predict possible difficulties during these early literacy development stages and find possible ways to overcome them.

For primary, secondary and tertiary education, qualitative studies have addressed literacy trajectories focusing on emerging practices that contribute to the individuals' learning. Lenters (2016) drew on a wide variety of data sources in a case study with fourth graders in Canada: observational field notes, interviews, audio recordings of students' performances, photographs, samples of students' individual work, children's

literature selections, and the digital scrapbook produced by the class using a web-based photo album application. Her purpose was to provide an example of how introducing affect in multiliteracies instruction enabled new trajectories for literacy learning. Erstad et al. (2012) tracked individual learning trajectories of upper secondary students since the first years of primary school in Norway. Using an ethnographic approach, they report their findings on the trajectory of one student. Their data also came from several sources: interviews, video-observations, field notes, photos, diaries and maps; and they focused on how the students' identities were constructed and negotiated by connecting and delimiting different learning practices.

Regarding tertiary education, Arshavskaya (2017), Brown et al. (2016) and Navarro (2013) focused on university students in the United States, Africa and Argentina, respectively. Arshavskaya's case studies of two pre-service teachers' blog writing trajectories towards teacher transformation obtained data drawing on the participants' blogs, interviews at the beginning and at the end of a semester, video-recordings, and follow-up e-mail exchange. She concludes that sometimes students will need more support concerning the use of digital literacies in order to enable their transformation into language teachers. This implies that a combination of digital and academic literacies during the students' trajectories is important for their future professional development.

Similarly, in Brown et al.'s digital ethnography, digital literacy practices to create content online were explored in order to describe the students' trajectories during their university life, showing that these digitally-mediated literacy practices provided future professionals with better opportunities. In order to gather the necessary data for this study, they resorted to a series of video interviews, a focus group video, self-documented videos of ICT use at home, videos of mobile phone use, videos of social media and internet use, videos of university software use, screen grabs of Facebook use, and texts of the institutional researchers' reflections.

Finally, in the Spanish-speaking world, Navarro's study is concerned about how effectively university teachers of degree programmes in humanities in Argentina include reading and writing instruction within the teaching of their own disciplines, which has an impact on undergraduate student trajectories and curriculum materials. Using interviews, assignments and instructions, he concludes that despite rhetorical competencies being evaluated, it is not a common practice to actually teach them. This may indicate that in such cases, teachers only see academic literacy as a skill that

students should possess, and not a process that encompasses multiple practices enabling students' academic literacy trajectories to develop successfully.

### ***Reflective remarks***

In all the qualitative studies on literacy trajectories discussed, the importance of this process and the practices within is acknowledged as an essential part of the development of academic literacy, and they are researched in one way or another. Therefore, their understanding of trajectories is not that of a linear path with a beginning, a middle and an end. It rather implies a 'continuous motion' where past, present and future are connected, as if it had a life of its own, which corresponds to Wenger's (1998) definition of the term. For the present study, this understanding of trajectory is adopted, applying it to the online students' trajectories in the writing of their research paper in L2, as embedded in their literacy trajectories during their undergraduate studies, but also connecting them to their future professional development as language teachers once they finish their BA.

Methodologically speaking, the study of trajectories entails to conduct qualitative, and often ethnographic, case studies in which data come from several different sources seem to be an effective approach to literacy trajectories. However, the gap also in this particular issue of trajectories continues to be the formal learning environment. Not even those studies involving digitally-mediated interaction (Arshavskaya, 2017; Brown et al., 2016; Lenters, 2016) refer to online education.

### **3.6 Bridging the gap**

It is thus clear that whether it is L2 AL, DL, ADL, AWO or literacy trajectories related-research, there is a gap when it comes to considering the learning environment context. And, despite the importance that technology has been given within literacy education, little has been done regarding online higher education. Therefore, the significance of the present study not only rests on the theoretical contribution it attempts to make to the field of literacy studies, but also on the contribution it expects to be made methodologically speaking in that the context is a fully online learning environment BA programme and thus I gathered data from a distinctive variety of digital sources provided by the affordances of the institutional platform of the online BA in ELT, and how I documented them to construct the students' stories of how they navigated their ADL trajectories as they were writing their research paper in L2 to obtain their degree.



## Chapter 4      What I did, How I did it

In this chapter, I present the methodology designed for the present study. To begin with, I explain the ontological and epistemological position of the study, and then the type of qualitative case study I conducted, which is a virtual literacy ethnography. Afterwards, I describe the research context of the study in general terms, considering first the institutional platform the programme uses, and the BA programme itself. Subsequently, I include a section dedicated to the pilot study conducted during the previous term to the data collection process, that is, February – July 2018. Then, the next section corresponds to the variety of data collection methods I drew on to document the trajectories, and the following two sections present the type of participants in the study and the process of purposive sampling in order to select them. Next, I explain the type of data analysis that I used to be able to construct the students' stories. Lastly, I include a section dedicated to the description of the data collection and analysis procedure.

### 4.1      Ontological and epistemological position

Ontologically speaking, the present study falls into an anti-foundational view, as it goes along with Grix's (2010) assumptions that reality is socially and discursively constructed by human actors. This implies a large number of variables and factors integrating different ways of perceiving reality, and those are more important to focus on than one single reality. My position thus involves studying the different ways of perceiving a phenomenon (the online writing of a research paper in L2 to obtain a BA degree), in that those different perspectives are enacted in the way the participants interact with others and with different types of texts in order to write their paper. A text, for the purpose of this study, is understood as any 'object' that people instil with meaning in order to achieve a particular purpose (Draper and Wimmer, 2015). This means that the texts could be written, oral, or multimodal, that is to say, texts where characteristics such as "color, sound, image, position, comment boxes, hyperlinks, and sharing options", among others, need to be taken into consideration for meaning-making (Draper and Wimmer, 2015, p. 254), as well as any other interactive Internet affordances (Villanueva et al., 2010). This is the case of digital texts, which for the present study particularly were a source of data.

In terms of the epistemological position, the study is interpretivist, as it considers people and their contexts in order to understand a phenomenon, which is

constructed from several variables, and entails the grasping of subjective meaning of social action (Grix, 2010). This means that the present study approaches academic digital literacy by focusing on practices around a written text, rather than only on the features of such text, in this case, a research paper in L2. It focuses then on the academic digital literacy trajectories of a small group of online undergraduate students as they write an academic text, from different perspectives: the students' themselves, their supervisors', *Research seminar* facilitator's, and the researcher's. Lillis and Curry (2010) offer a text-oriented approach to literacy trajectories, in which the trajectory of academic text production can be studied. This framework includes the literacy practices and events around this text production, and thus, I considered it emphasising the literacy practices and events that students engaged in rather than only the text they were producing. Furthermore, the research paper the students produced was the artefact to be observed, and this text-oriented framework also helped me define the period of time I would consider to set the boundaries of the trajectories of the students that I documented and gave an account of: the starting point is the moment students begin the *Research seminar* in which they have to develop their research paper, and the finishing point is when, after presenting their research paper, they submit their final version. Although my study did not mainly focus on the features of the text the students were producing, analysing the students' drafts and final version of their research paper was fundamental in order to see the big picture.

## 4.2 Type of study

Considering my ontological and epistemological positions, one way to approach the phenomenon I studied was as an **explanatory interpretive qualitative case study**. My research was **qualitative** because it studies a variety of experiences that explain decisive moments of the students' final research paper writing process, which involve interconnected interpretive practices in context so as to better understand the phenomenon (based on Duff, 2008). It is a **case study** because it "provides a unique example of real people in real situations" – online undergraduate students' academic digital literacy trajectories while writing their research paper in L2 – and "recognize[s] and accept[s] that there are many variables operating in a single case" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 289) – all of the different variables intervening in the practices and events engaged in during process. Also, it is a case study because its purpose is "to enhance



our understanding of a person, process or group, not to compare, experiment and generalize to other populations” (Pearson Casanave, 2010, p. 67).

It is an **explanatory** case study because I intend to understand how events are experienced and why, not only define questions of subsequent studies to be tested later to create models or theories, or only describe the phenomenon within its context (Duff, 2008). It is **interpretive** because understanding how and why events are experienced (how students navigate their academic digital literacy trajectories, how and why they make decisions and solve problems during the online process of writing their research paper in L2) entails a subjective, interactive and social construction of multiple realities, considering different perspectives, especially those of the participants (Cohen et al., 2011).

However, the present study is mainly an **ethnographic case study**, as it attempts to study and gather data from the ‘naturalistic’ setting where the members of a community (an online learning community in this case) have developed patterns of social interaction (Cohen et al., 2011). Ethnography offers the possibility to connect the literacy events observed and its emerging practices with the emic perspectives of the participants, supporting the resistance to the ‘skills discourse’ around student writing (Kaufhold and Tusting, 2020). Moreover, as we are talking about an online setting, then the umbrella term ‘**virtual ethnography**’ also fits the study, since it refers to the ethnographic research of online environments (Uzun and Aydin, 2012). There are other terms that have been coined, for example that of *digital* ethnography, but when using this term, the emphasis is more on the digital affordances to carry out ethnographic research (Atkinson, 2016; Underberg and Zorn, 2013). The present study places emphasis on both the online context in which it takes place and the digital methods used to gather data, this in order to have access to the student-participants’ life stories (Linde, 1993). Therefore, the umbrella term *virtual* ethnography is more appropriate. Virtual ethnography involves the use of mixed interpretive methods “to explore the dynamic culture of online communities” (Gillen, 2009, p. 66). This implies the researcher’s continuous participation in the virtual environments where the practices to be studied are developed (Ruiz and Aguirre, 2015).

Thus, the present study is a **virtual literacy ethnography**, the specific virtual community being that to which three Mexican online ELT BA students belong, three students who are writing a research paper in L2 so as to obtain their degree. In this type of studies, the researcher is committed to explore the meaning-making practices and events of a virtual community, considering the participants’ own perspectives, and

applying a variety of interpretive methods in order to develop an understanding of the phenomenon, without losing sight of his own role in the process (Gillen, 2009). The variety of methods I resorted to for the present study in order to achieve such interpretive understanding can be found in the data collection section further ahead (4.5), and how I analyse them to construct the participants' stories (Narrative inquiry and content analysis) is found in section 4.8. But first, it is important to describe the research context in which this **case study with a virtual literacy ethnographic stance** was conducted.

### 4.3 Research context

The research context where I conducted the study is the online BA programme in ELT offered by a major state university in the south east of Mexico, for which I have worked for the last 21 years. More specifically, the context is the *Research seminar* that students take at the end of the BA, in which they develop the research paper to obtain their degree. The *Research seminar* will be described more in detail in the following chapter (Chapter 5, section 5.1). In this section, I will first briefly present the institutional platform that is used to deliver the online programme, and then the BA programme in ELT itself.

#### 4.3.1 The institutional platform *Eminus*

The institutional platform of the university where this online BA in ELT is offered is called *Eminus*. This platform is a Learning Management System (LMS) developed by the university in order to expand the coverage of education offered by the institution through both blended and online learning. It was launched in 2004 and has had several versions; at the end of the year 2020, it launched its version *Eminus 4*. At the time the present study was conducted, however, the version being used was *Eminus 3*. Every student and teacher (referred to as facilitators when using the platform) at the university has access to this LMS through their institutional accounts. The LMS homepage has clear links to videos about the structure of the platform, manuals for students and facilitators that show how to use the institutional platform, as well as shortcuts guides also for both students and facilitators about the most salient *Eminus* affordances, and assistance in case there is a question or a problem regarding the platform.

Once the users access with their institutional account, they can see the current courses to the left and the main menu for each course to the right (Figure 4.1). They can

also access finished courses, and when the start day of the following period is coming closer, they can access the courses they will be taking as well. Facilitators can also edit, copy, search, organise, eliminate and create courses. The main menu for each course has nine main sections: Content, Events, Messages, Activities, Evaluations, Forums, Members, Classroom, and Collaborative space. At the right bottom, there are links for Assistance and Ideas and comments. At the upper right margin, by clicking on the user's name, they can edit their profile and sign out from their *Eminus* account.



**Figure 4.1 Main page for institutional account Eminus**

Within each course, all users can visualise links to all the sections at the top of the page, being the main ones Content, Activities and Evaluations, and two extra ones, Progress tracking and Assistance. As a facilitator, the user has the option to edit the sections for Content, Activities, Evaluation, Forums, Members, and Events, and has access to a Repository section and an Exam Items section, also appearing at the top, and also with an editing option. The platform is supposed to be designed for both asynchronous and synchronous activities. Nevertheless, according to the online ELT BA academic staff experience, both synchronous tools, Classroom and Collaborative space, stop working when two or more people are connected.

Content can be organised using not only text, but also images, links to web pages, Word and PDF documents, audio files, and videos, among others. Facilitators can also create activities, evaluations and forums, which have several tools to make it easier for them to organise and track students' progress, and edit the Events section, which consists in a calendar where facilitators can register all activities students have to

perform and all evaluations they have to submit, in which case, students will be reminded when it is time for any of those. Users can send collective or individual messages through the Messages section, which can be linked to their institutional e-mail accounts. All in all, it is the general opinion of the online ELT BA academic staff that *Eminus* is very effective for asynchronous work, which is why all the courses were originally organised this way, using other means for synchronous communication, such as Skype, when they have considered it necessary.

### **4.3.2 The online BA in ELT**

The participants of this study are a part of a small learning community consisting of 55 students doing their online BA in ELT during the term August 2018 – January 2019 in one of the largest state universities in the south east of Mexico. This BA was first offered in 2007; the enrolment since then has varied every year between 42 and 68 students, and up to the February – July 2017 term 38 students from 8 cohorts had graduated. It is the only online BA programme to hold the national quality certification by *COAPEHUM* (Accreditation Committee for Higher Education programmes in the area of Humanities).

The majority of the students who enrol in this online BA are already Mexican teachers of English who seek to obtain the degree that corresponds to their professional lives in Mexico. They do not have this degree because teachers of English in Mexico had not been required to hold a degree in the corresponding field until recently, and only for higher education. To apply, for instance, for an English teaching position in a state high-school, this according to the last official call for teachers by the Ministry of Education in Mexico (SEP, 2017), the requirement is to hold a bachelor degree in any area, as long as the applicants submit a language certification accepted by CENNI as a level 12. CENNI is a national certification system of language level in Mexico, which accepts a wide variety of national and international language certifications, and classifies them into one of their levels, 0 to 20, in which 12 corresponds to a B2 level from the CEFRL.

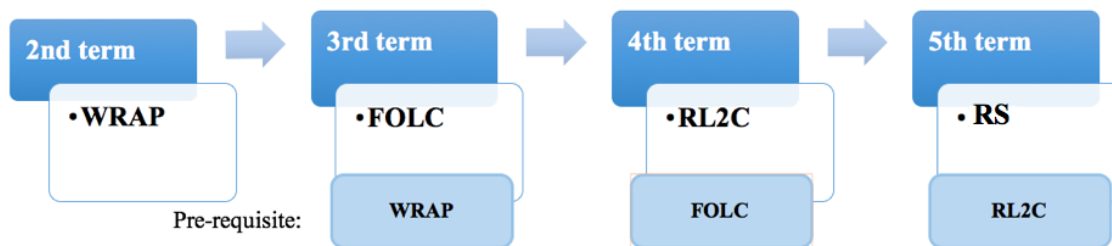
The majority of the BA in ELT students are non-native English speakers (NNES), as well as the majority of their teachers in the BA, living in a context where their L1, Spanish, is the main means of communication. All students must have at least a B2 level, according to the CEFRL, to be admitted. The language certifications accepted to demonstrate this level are mostly international, such as TOEFL IBT, IELTS, Cambridge ESOL examinations, among others. The specialist module for the Teaching

Knowledge Test – Knowledge about the language (TKT-KAL) is also accepted as an evidence of the minimum required B2 level, even if it is a module no longer offered by Cambridge. The only national language certification that is accepted to demonstrate a B2 level in English is EXAVER III (minimum B). EXAVER is the university test developed with the support of the British Council in Mexico and the University of Cambridge in England, as a language certification exam. This means that these students that are admitted can perform their academic tasks in English.

The online BA programme is expected to be completed in two years and a half, but this is flexible and students can take up to four years and a half to finish. Students have to obtain 344 credits to graduate. As in all the bachelor degrees in the university which offers the programme, the courses are organised in five main training areas: General Basic, Initiation to the Discipline, Disciplinary, Terminal and Elective. In this BA, however, the only courses that can be taken in Spanish are: Elective ones (which can be in any area they want to, including arts and sports, and the number of courses may vary depending on the number credits for each course taken), three General Basic courses related to Spanish writing, critical and creative thought, and computing (which are the same for all the university undergraduate programmes), and some of the optional Disciplinary courses they can choose from, of which they need to take two (such as *Introduction to Spanish as a Foreign Language* or *Education Management*). All the other courses, related directly to English language teaching and learning, are taken in English. Students have to interact in English using the institutional platform among them and with their facilitators, and all their tasks must be submitted in this language.

Within the courses students must complete, there are those related to writing and research. The first course of this type is called *Writing and Reading for Academic Purposes* (WRAP in Figure 4.2), which is usually taken during the second term. This course is a pre-requisite for *Finding Out about the Language Classroom* (FOLC in Figure 4.2), usually taken during the third term. *Finding Out about the Language Classroom* is the pre-requisite for *Research in the L2 Classroom* (RL2C in Figure 4.2), which is commonly taken during the fourth term, and is a pre-requisite for a course called *Experiencia Recepcional*, which will be referred to as *Research seminar* (RS in Figure 4.2). The *Research seminar* is then typically taken during the fifth and last term of the BA, in case students have followed a ‘flawless’ trajectory, that is to say, they have taken and passed all the courses as projected in the standard trajectory. This course belongs to the Terminal Area of all the undergraduate programmes of the university.

The sequence and the strongly recommended but not compulsory pre-requisites for the aforementioned courses in the online BA in ELT are presented in the following figure.



**Figure 4.2 Online BA in ELT academic writing and research related courses**

The *facilitator* of the *Research seminar* in the BA in ELT supports the students in the development of their research project. This includes guidance regarding the selection of the topic, keeping an organised record of what they read for the literature review, selecting relevant sources, introducing different methodological paradigms and qualitative data analysis procedures, and general recommendations to organise all the information. The research project needs to be submitted as a written report and presented orally to three *examiners*, who are normally teachers from the the same programme; but teachers from other programmes, whether from the same or other universities, can also be examiners. One of the examiners is the students' *supervisor*, who is in charge of guiding the students in the development of the research project, the written report and the oral presentation. The other two examiners are chosen according to the topic of the students' research project, and they evaluate the written report in terms of content and form to determine if it is ready to be presented. The *Research seminar* facilitator can be one of the examiners. Once the students have presented their project, the examiners assign a grade, which allows the the students to obtain the 12 credits for the *Research seminar* in case it is a passing grade.

In the online BA in ELT, the written report and oral presentation need to be performed in academic English. There is an internal handbook with the guidelines for the written report of the research project (Giles and Núñez, n.d., both facilitators of the BA, handbook last edited in 2016), which include the general formatting, sections and chapters of the paper, quotations and references, and the submission process. This written report, usually called ER final paper, should be around 5000 words (with a margin of plus or minus 10%), excluding the list of references and appendices. However, most students have exceeded this limit without any repercussions; that is why

there are modifications to this handbook in process, including this word limit specification. The structure that must be followed is that of a dissertation (Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results and Findings, Discussion, and Conclusions), but the expected length is more similar to that of an academic journal article, which also consists of sections alike. It could be said then that the paper is a hybrid genre, in terms of structure and register, of a dissertation and an academic journal article. As mentioned before, for the purposes of this study, this text will be referred to as **research paper**, but it is important to mention that students refer to it as their **thesis**. For this reason, the term ‘dissertation’ or ‘thesis’ between inverted commas was also used a few times to refer to the research paper.

The most popular topic among the students who have presented the research paper is related to the development of the speaking skill. Reading and motivation are also recurring areas of research, but students have chosen a wide variety of topics including the development of the other skills (listening, writing and reading), grammar and vocabulary learning, the use of L1 in the L2 classroom, ICTs in the language classroom, and classroom management, for example. Intriguingly, it is not uncommon that the titles students give to their research paper do not entirely correspond to what was actually done in the study. Most of the studies are qualitative, and some follow a mixed method approach; only one study has been of a quantitative nature. Case studies and action research are the most recurrent type of studies; however, in many cases there seems to be no clarity regarding the type of study that is being conducted. Interviews and questionnaires are the most frequently used research instruments, but observations and documents are also common. The researched contexts are varied, from primary to higher education, including language institutes as well, but higher education is by far the most studied; and there is a balance between the private and state contexts.

The main means of interaction in the BA is *Eminus* (the institutional platform), in which students and facilitators can send email-type messages to each other, participate in forums and chats, and have access to the contents and activities sections of the courses. They also interact with each other via digital means such as personal or institutional email accounts, WhatsApp, Skype, and Zoom, these two latter used mainly for the research paper oral presentations. There is hardly ever any face-to-face contact; it is not a requirement, and it would be difficult to have it since most students live in different cities or states of the country. Some of them have even lived out of the country at some point during their studies. Thus, the interaction between the students and their research paper supervisors is also mainly through the aforementioned digital means.

Hence, in general terms, this is the *Research seminar*, that is, the specific setting for the online students' ADL trajectories that I will document so as to construct my participants' stories around their experience writing their research paper in L2. The seminar will be described in more detail in Chapter 5 (section 5.1). Before presenting my participants and my data collection methods, I will describe the pilot study I conducted in the following section, as it contributed to becoming more familiar with the data collection and data analysis procedures that would be necessary to consider.

#### 4.4 The Pilot Study

In order to gain familiarity with the fieldwork and test some of the data collection instruments and data analysis procedures, I conducted a pilot study with one student from the prerequisite course for the *Research seminar*, that is, *Research in the L2 classroom*, during the term February – July 2018. I decided to use this course for the pilot study mainly because the *Research seminar* is offered only once a year in the BA, and thus, it would not have been possible to wait until the following year and gather the data during the time allotted to conduct and conclude the study. Given the importance of assessing the methods proposed to gather the data, I chose the most similar course to the *Research seminar*, but there were certainly some considerations to be made in relation to **the nature of the courses** and **the students taking the *Research in the L2 classroom* course**, which will be explained as follows. I will also present the **participant**, the **data collection** procedures, and the **data analysis** in the pilot study, as well as the **contributions** of the pilot study to this research project.

The research questions guiding the pilot study were the original main questions of the research project, but adapted to the main and final writing task of the *Research in the L2 classroom* course:

- 1) What ADL practices do the students of an online BA in ELT engage in while writing their research proposal?
- 2) How do these ADL practices shape the students' writing process of their research proposal?
- 3) What academic digital literacy practices and events do students consider to make decisions and solve problems in their writing process and why?



The first consideration has to do with the nature of the courses, and thus, the nature of the data to be gathered. The purpose of the *Research seminar* is to guide the students in their research project and the writing of their research paper, while the purpose of the *Research in the L2 classroom* course is to help them develop a research proposal. Therefore, the students do not develop a complete research paper in this course, as they have to do for the *Research seminar*. This means that despite addressing research writing, the courses involve different types of assignments. In order to address this issue in the pilot study, I focused on the assignments which would imply the most similar processes to those in the *Research seminar* course. In this way, although I gathered and classified all the data around the students' writing process during the *Research in the L2 classroom* course for the pilot study (activity materials, interactions and texts produced by the student), I paid special attention to the practices and events surrounding those activities that implied writing tasks related to **a)** a draft of the literature review of the topics the students were interested in researching, and **b)** the research proposal (the final task of the *Research in the L2 classroom* course).

A second consideration had to do with the students taking *Research in the L2 classroom*, as they were the same that would be taking the *Research seminar* from where the participants for the actual study would be chosen. To begin with, the students participating in the pilot study would not be considered for the actual study later on, so that they would not have any preconceptions about the study once the actual data collection took place during the *Research seminar*. Furthermore, they would not be undertaking the exact same process as in the *Research seminar*.

Having in mind these two issues, I chose as the participant of the pilot study a student who had uncommonly already taken *Research seminar*. The prerequisite of taking *Research in the L2 classroom* before the *Research seminar* is internal, and students can actually take most of the BA courses regardless of the internal prerequisites. In most cases, however, they do follow the recommended trajectory, and the case of the student chosen for the pilot study was unusual, but successful, as he had passed the *Research seminar* course the previous term. This meant that he would not be enrolled in the *Research seminar* at the time the actual study would be conducted, and thus this would allow to include all the students that could enrol for the *Research seminar* in the purposive sampling process for the actual study. Moreover, the fact that he had already written his research paper would contribute to having access to a more similar experience of this process. The next section describes the participant in more detail.

#### 4.4.1 Pepe at the self-access centre

The student I chose for the pilot study taking *Research in the L2 classroom* had no experience teaching English or any other subject before entering the BA, and his only language teaching experience was that of the teaching practices required for some of the BA courses. **Pepe**, the participant's name for pilot study purposes, was carrying out these teaching practices in a self-access centre of the same state university that offers the online ELT BA, but in a different campus, that is, in a different city, where he resides. He had uncommonly taken the *Research seminar* prior to the *Research in the L2 classroom* course because he wanted to finish his BA as soon as possible. Although he was still young (25 years old), he had already started another degree in physiotherapy which he did not complete and felt he had no more time "to waste". So, he made progress with all the possible courses offered in each school term from the moment he entered the BA. Very few go against the recommended pre-requisite, and for good reason, as they are most likely to fail the *Research seminar* if they have no idea of a research proposal and how to carry it out, which is introduced in the strongly suggested pre-requisite course. Nevertheless, there are always exceptional cases, such as Pepe, who successfully completed the *Research seminar* without having previously taken *Research in the L2 classroom*.

I contacted Pepe via e-mail once the *Research in the L2 classroom* facilitator had granted access. I provided him with all the necessary information about the pilot study (including what would be required from him) in the e-mail. I summarized the information in the Participants Information Sheet (Appendix 1) I designed for the actual study, and explained that this was the pilot stage. Pepe accepted to be part of the pilot study without hesitation; actually, he seemed very pleased to have been chosen, and said to be willing to cooperate in any way that would be required. Pepe had what could be considered a successful academic trajectory in the BA: he had a high GPA, and, according to the Head of the BA, who was also the facilitator of *Research in the L2 classroom*, he was considered an outstanding student, as all his current and previous facilitators saw him as a responsible, committed student who delivers high quality tasks and papers.

Interestingly, Pepe's professional interests did not originally include becoming a teacher, but a translator; yet, he always demonstrated great commitment to the BA and admitted to be enjoying the teaching practice required by the programme. In fact, after the time dedicated to the BA, and his current experience in the self-access centre where

he was carrying out his teaching practices, he did not rule out the possibility to continue in the teaching field, without losing sight of his interest in becoming a translator or interpreter. He had been learning English all his life, whether in private schools since his early childhood, private language institutions, or on his own. He entered the BA with the required B2 level according to the certification (EXAVER III) he presented, but all his facilitators agreed that he performed at a higher level than B2 in his courses. For him, speaking is the most difficult skill to develop, while he finds writing and grammar the easiest.

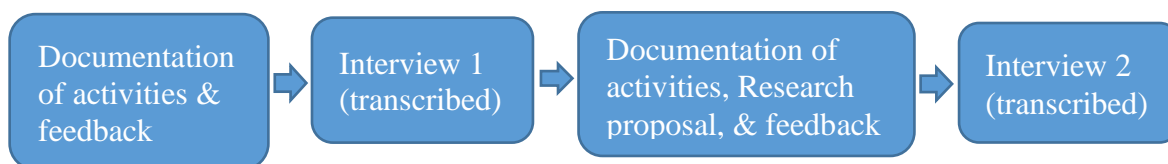
#### 4.4.2 Collecting data for the pilot study

For the pilot study, I first developed a **table of the *Research in the L2 classroom course*** (Appendix 2) where all the activities, their type (e.g. forum, brief written reflection, pair discussion), due dates, and needed materials for the activities were included. Then, after revising the type of all activities in the course, the data I mainly considered for completing the guide for the **first semi-structured interview** that I conducted with Pepe were related to the writing of a literature review draft on the topic he had selected for his research proposal, which was *Exposure to English outside the classroom and its impact on second language acquisition from the teachers' perspective* (for the script of the first interview see Appendix 3). He was particularly interested in this topic because of his own experience learning the language; he considers himself an autonomous learner and thus believes exposure outside the classroom is essential in learning a language.

The first interview took 40 minutes 41 seconds. It took this long because there were three interruptions during the Skype conversation, since I was using a free version of the screen recording software *Screencast-O-Matic 2.2.26*. This version only allowed 14 minutes of continuous recording and did not allow to continue with the interview until the recording file had been saved, which took several minutes. I let Pepe decide when and what time to meet for the interview, and we were both at our own houses when we connected to Skype. I decided to focus on the activities related to the literature review draft for the first interview because they were related to the work students have to do for the *Research seminar* that would be the context for the actual study. These activities consisted of **(a)** a pair discussion activity, **(b)** a brief reflection after such discussion, **(c)** the literature review draft, **(d)** the written peer-revision of such literature review, and **(e)** a recorded skype tutorial with the facilitator of the course.

For the **second and final interview** with the participant, the data I mainly considered referred to **(a)** the final task, that is, the research proposal, **(b)** one of the unit portfolios (written reflections on certain activities carried out per unit of the course), and **(c)** the facilitator's written feedback to both tasks. I conducted this interview also on the date and time suggested by Pepe, and we were also at our own houses when we connected to Skype. The interview took 26 minutes and 21 seconds, but by then I had already acquired a one-year subscription for the full version, and thus, there were no interruptions (for the script for interview 2, see Appendix 4).

The interviews were conducted in Spanish, and only the extracts included hereinafter were translated into English. I made **transcriptions** of both interviews using *Express Scribe*. During the interviews, although I did follow the script I designed, I asked additional questions whenever it was necessary depending on Pepe's answers. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to deepen on issues identified as relevant to the study, including questions regarding the student's experience writing his research paper in the *Research seminar* that he had already taken. The following figure illustrates the data collection methods for the pilot study.



**Figure 4.3 Data collection methods and tools for the pilot study**

#### **4.4.3 Data analysis in the pilot study**

I reiteratively read the data gathered (student's writing tasks, peer-feedback, facilitator's feedback, and student's interviews transcriptions) in order to analyse it. Then, through an inductive approach, in the interview transcriptions I coded with different colours the patterns I found regarding the student's academic digital literacy (ADL) practices focusing on the student's problem-solution and decision-making processes, and taking into account all the types of data collected, so that triangulation would take place. In order to exemplify this analysis, I decided to use extracts based on Copland (2015), and thus as follows I will present:

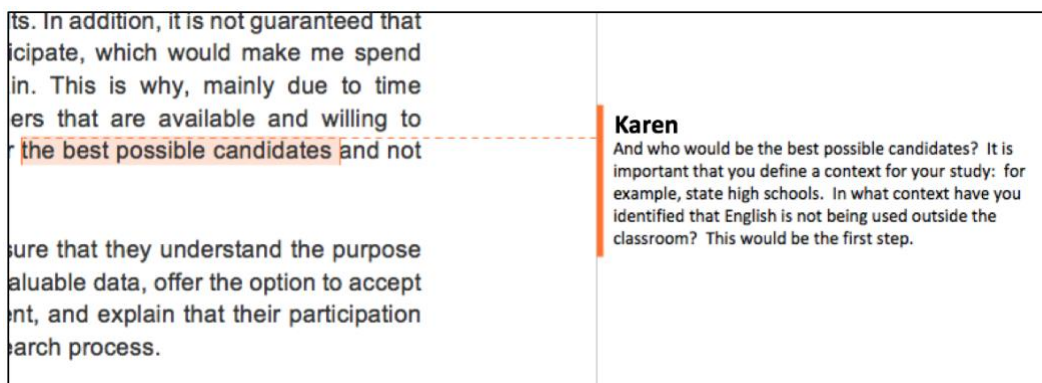
- 1) some of the ADL events that I observed and the ADL practices that emerged from them within Pepe's writing process
- 2) Extracts from:
  - a. facilitator's written feedback
  - b. Pepe's research proposal
  - c. Pepe's final interview

The following table presents two of the ADL events that were observed, and the practices that emerged after analysing the data. There were two practices identified in relation to the facilitator's feedback, while there were four practices with regard to the participant's response to this feedback.

<b>ADL Events</b>	<b>ADL Practices</b>
Facilitator's written feedback	a) Correcting language and style b) Commenting on missing information
Responding to facilitator's feedback in the Final research proposal	a) Re-reading (as many times as necessary to avoid redundancy or eliminate unnecessary information) b) Looking for recent research (from the perspective intended for the study) c) Leaving information out d) Asking other people (experienced relatives and/or friends)

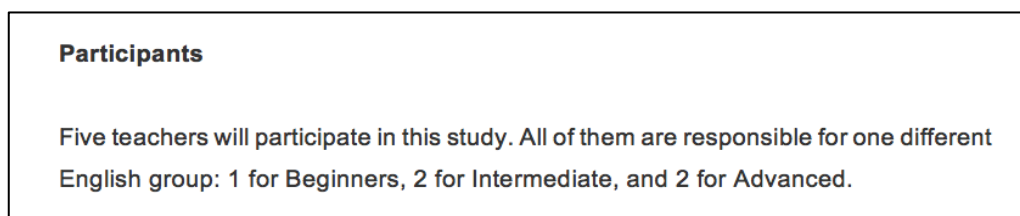
**Table 4.1 Some ADL events and practices in the pilot study**

The ADL practices that emerged were inferred analysing observable data (ADL events). For example, in one of Unit 3 portfolio activities for *Research in the L2 classroom*, consisting in writing a description of how to select participants, the facilitator commented that it was necessary to better describe the context in order to establish who would be the best candidates to participate in the study (Figure 4.4). In order to maintain anonymity, I substituted the personal information information in the extracts I used.



**Figure 4.4 Facilitator's feedback, Extract 1 (Pilot study)**

The ADL event here is the facilitator's feedback, and the inferred practice was labelled in the previous table as *Commenting on missing information*. Nevertheless, in his final task, the research proposal, another observable event (responding to facilitator's feedback), Pepe did not include any information about it (Figure 4.5); he actually only included a couple of lines stating the number of participants and the level they were teaching, which is why the facilitator gave him 3 points out of five for participants' selection in the rubric provided for the final task.



**Figure 4.5 Pepe's research proposal extract 1**

This ADL practice was labelled as *Leaving information out*. Another example of this practice also inferred from Pepe's research proposal was the fact that he did not include any other data collection method apart from semi-structured interviews (Figure 4.6), even when the facilitator suggested using another method for triangulation (Figure 4.7) at the end of his Unit 3 portfolio. This did not actually affect Pepe's final task grade; the facilitator gave him 5 points out of 5 for data collection in the corresponding section of the rubric. All *Research in the L2 classroom* students had access to this final task rubric, and had the facilitator's feedback on their unit portfolios before sending his research proposal. Despite this, Pepe decided to leave out the information about the participants' selection and the data collection methods.

**Research methods**

Schostak (2006, p.54) defines an interview as “an extendable conversation between partners that aims at having an ‘in-depth information’ about a certain topic or subject, and through which a phenomenon could be interpreted in terms of the meanings interviewees bring to it” (Alshengeeti, 2014). Therefore, a semi-structured interview will be used to allow more flexibility from the interviewer or the interviewee to add any information that may be relevant that was not included in the original questions.

**Figure 4.6 Pepe’s research proposal extract 2**

<p>It is worth mentioning that the interviews, and the overall focus of the research, will be based on the research I already carried out on the students to find out how much exposure to English they get outside the classroom and how they use it, as well as their views on how teachers promote it, so that information will be very valuable in the creation of questions.</p> <p><u>As we learnt in FOLC, it is generally recommendable to use more than one data source, for triangulation purposes. In the case of your study, it occurs to me that observation could be one option. Another alternative could be to ask the students of the teachers you interview to fill out a questionnaire regarding what their teacher does.</u></p>	<p><b>Karen</b> Con formato: Fuente:Sin Negrita</p>
--	---

**Figure 4.7 Facilitator’s feedback, Extract 2 (Pilot study)**

In order to understand the reasons behind Pepe’s decision to leave the information out, I directly asked him about it in the final interview. Regarding the participants’ selection section, he decided to be concise and provide only an example, since there was a word limit requirement, as can be seen in the following interview extract:

Interview extract 1, Pilot study

...it was partly the fact that I felt I had to be too concise, and it was one of the examples that I thought would not be necessary to explain, that it would be enough with that.

Regarding the data collection methods, he decided to leave the information out because the final task was a proposal, and he did not consider necessary to provide further details as a proposal is not expected to be perfect:

Interview extract 2, Pilot study

...because as it is a proposal I admit I did not pay too much attention as I did with the research paper in *Research seminar*. I admit, yes, that I kind of just thought it is only a proposal, it is expected not to be well- defined, to have mistakes, so I relaxed a little bit, and I did not really got into much detail.

Therefore, Pepe made assumptions about what could be left out considering there was a word limit and his understanding of a proposal. The later seemed to be an accurate assumption, as it did not affect his grade. The word limit constraint was a bigger issue for him. In relation to his lowest mark in the final task rubric (the importance of his research), he said:

Interview extract 3

...in part also influenced by the fact that I had little room in my opinion to explain myself better, so this did put a little of pressure on me as to how to develop that.

This is consistent with what he stated to be one of his biggest challenges, which was to be concise, as he felt he was too limited to include more information by the number of words allowed for the whole research proposal (800-1000 words).

Interview extract 4

I had problems in saying what I wanted in the number of words allowed, well, I considered that it was too little room to define everything that was required well, with all the required aspects. I personally felt it that way, so I had to try to summarise it somehow, because it has been one of my greatest problems when I write a text, I find it difficult to be concise.

In order to analyse the transcriptions so as to obtain this information, I colour-coded the aspects related to challenges (green), problem-solving (grey) and reasons behind decision-making (different colours depending on the reason). The transcription would then look as Figure 4.8. This type of content analysis helped with the necessary researcher's reflexivity, in that it made me aware of my own preconceptions, whether positive or negative, of what students should be doing or not as they develop an



academic text, and thus I could “develop a reflective attitude to the research site and to my data” (Copland, 2015, p. 102). Narrative inquiry would help me to give an account of the students’ experiences based on the documentation of their ADL events and practices, and on my interaction with them, and thus reflexivity was also a key component to approach the data. At this pilot stage, however, I did not go as far as to construct Pepe’s narrative account because it was not a research paper that he was writing.

P:	Uhhmmm... pues los mayores retos fueron, creo que primero llegar con una idea definida de qué hacer. Si, lo que más me cuesta en este tipo de trabajos es hacer mi tema lo más específico que pueda, siempre es la observación que más resalta cuando me checan mis trabajos, que el tema lo haga más específico, más específico, que es muy amplio, que tiene que ser más específico, más y más y más, este, eso es lo que siempre batallo, incluso cuando hice mi final task, ya mi último trabajo, y la revisión al final que ya con calificación todo, pero seguía diciendo eso, que un poco más específico, eso es lo que siempre me ha costado.
R:	Pero ¿sí logras un nivel de especificidad o cómo resuelves o cómo has resuelto este problema, o cómo le haces ahí para solventarlo?
P:	Bueno, haciendo caso de todas las observaciones que me hacen, especialmente en la de Experiencia de que pues me mandaban a cada rato esa misma observación, ya tenía que empezar a pensar, y también con la ayuda necesaria de mi mamá, por ejemplo, que ella estuvo un chorro con las tesis, con otra maestra que es amiga de mi mamá, me asesoró un poco, de cómo podría hacerlo un poco más específico, igual me explicaban por ejemplo de que un poco más amplio suele ser, este, que, las investigaciones de empresas ya más grandes, que se dedican más a un ámbito más grande, más regional, mientras, a mí, a lo que me debería enfocar es algo más chico para digamos simplemente demostrar mis conocimientos en investigación, no que realmente vaya a hacer algo, así, poco a poco llegué a ese punto.
R:	A lo mejor era también que eras un poco ambicioso...
P:	Sí, un poquito.
R:	¿Y algún otro problema que hayas tenido?
P:	Uhhmmmm... Pues, mmmm..., ah, sí, ya me acordé, en el último, en el final task, tuve un poco de problemas, creo que se relaciona un poco con esto, porque, tuve problemas en hablar de lo que quería en el número de palabras que me permitía, bueno, consideraba que era muy poco espacio para tener bien definido todo lo que quería, con todos los puntos que pedía, yo en lo personal sentía así, entonces tuve que intentar a ver cómo lo resumía, porque igual siempre es de mi más grandes problemas cuando hago un texto, me cuesta trabajo ser muy breve, creo, eso suele ser una ventaja cuando tengo que hacer un texto largo y no tengo muchas ideas porque suelo extenderme, pero cuando lo tengo que hacer corto es cuando sí me cuesta trabajo.
R:	Compartimos el mismo mal... sufro cuando son menos palabras... ¿Y entonces cómo le haces para lograr esa brevedad, o que sea conciso como te lo piden?
P:	Pues ando releendo y releendo mi propio escrito y ando viendo ahí qué le puedo quitar para hacer las oraciones más compactas, más pequeñas, y este, y así, pero es que sí me he dado cuenta que cuando leo otras cosas o ya el producto terminado, que una cosa podría ser bastante simple, nada más decirlo, tal vez ni siquiera explicarla, si no nada más decir que así es y ya, este, pero sí es mucho trabajo para mí.
R:	Ok. Bueno, tengo unas preguntas más específicas sobre tu final task. Este... en algunas de las actividades anteriores te había hecho la maestra una observación acerca de cómo seleccionar a los participantes y a la hora de tu propuesta final no incluiste eso. ¿Se te pasó o por qué no lo incluiste? Eso de que tenías que ser un poco más específico a cómo ibas a select your participants.
P:	Ah, sí ya me acordé. Pero es que en parte fue el hecho de que como que tenía que ser demasiado breve, y eso era uno de los ejemplos que creí que no era necesario explicar, que con eso bastaría, pero sí tengo más la idea de cómo, pero yo creí que ya estaría bien.

Figure 4.8 Colour-coded transcription sample (Pilot study)

#### 4.4.4 Contributions of pilot study to the research project

The most salient contributions of the pilot study to the actual data collection procedures were in relation to

- 1) the amount of data to be collected,
- 2) the necessary software to collect some of the data,
- 3) the way to address the student-participants in interviews,
- 4) the appropriateness to use content analysis to analyse data, and
- 5) the possible practices and events that would be more significant within the ADL trajectories of the students in their research paper writing process in L2.

Regarding the **amount of data** to be collected, the table with the calendar and type of activities (Appendix 2) proved to be very useful to have a general view of what would be done, and when and how it was meant to be done. This was particularly helpful when organising of the considerably large amount of data I would be collecting from the *Research seminar*. This, in turn, would be also useful to decide on what to focus the attention when analysing data, as there would be more participants in the actual study and I would include all the activities of the course in question, the *Research seminar* (not only some of them as in the pilot study), which would significantly increase the amount of data.

In reference to the **necessary software** to collect some of the data, I conducted several trials using different programmes to record Skype video calls, as this was the most appropriate means for interviews since most participants reside in different cities. I experienced several problems with the free software trialled, including the one that was used for the Skype tutorial between Pepe and the *Research in the L2 classroom* facilitator, where the voice of the facilitator could not be heard. In the end, the one I found to be the most user-friendly was *Screencast-O-Matic*. However, as the free version allowed the recording of only 15 minutes at a time, the first pilot interview had to be interrupted three times so as to be able to record it all. Therefore, for the second interview, it was necessary to purchase a one-year subscription to have access to the professional version with unlimited recording time, which I used for the interviews

during the actual study. Another programme that I used in the pilot study was *Express Scribe*, which is transcription software that facilitates this process. Nevertheless, using this software did not make much difference, at least in my case, from only playing, pausing and rewinding the mp4 interview files directly from the computer in order to transcribe them, and so for the actual study I decided not to use this software.

Another important insight gained from the pilot study is the **way to address the participants** regarding issues that could be sensitive for them. During the first interview, the peer-revision that Pepe had received for his literature review draft included feedback pointing out several areas of improvement. Yet, when I asked in different ways about this activity, Pepe expressed that he had had no problems with it, and that he had found it quite easy. Here, as an interviewer, I failed to address this issue directly as I did not want to make the student feel uncomfortable. For the second interview, I was able to address similar issues more effectively. This was possible because I had already established a relationship with the student of being ‘on the same boat’ (students experiencing a similar situation), and then I was able to directly ask him, for example, about his decision not to include certain aspects on his research proposal that had been previously indicated by the facilitator. It is important thus to establish this relationship from the beginning in order not to make students feel judged or under scrutiny.

One of the most important reasons to carry out the pilot study was to corroborate that **content analysis** would be suitable for my study. Although it was only one participant, and the analysis in the pilot study was admittedly incipient, I certainly felt reassured that content analysis was an appropriate option to analyse some data, as it was for most empirical research studies reviewed in Chapter 3. Content analysis would allow me to identify data within the ADL events from which ADL practices would be inferred. This would then be helpful when constructing the students’ case studies into stories through narrative inquiry, provided both case study and narrative inquiry often include content analysis (Heilmann, 2018). Considering the amount of data that would be dealt with, I considered at this point the use of NVivo to carry out the content analysis, but I only used it to organise all the different type and to analyse the data obtained from only one of the digital sources. This will be explained in more detail further on in section 4.9.

Finally, after analysing the transcription of the interviews, I managed to identify some **possible ADL events and practices** around problem-solution and decision-making processes in the L2 writing process of the research proposal (Table 4.1). I

mainly identified the problem-solution processes based on what Pepe found challenging and how he solved it, and the decision-making processes on why he opted or not to make changes, which were the guiding questions in the interview. Even when the analysis was incipient, some of the ADL practices inferred from the pilot study were similar to those in the actual study, such as *Leaving information out* and what would be in the actual study *Ignoring feedback*, or *Asking other people (experienced relatives and/or friends)* in the pilot study and *Seeking support elsewhere* in the actual study. The ADL practices of the students within the *Research seminar* context of the present study will be presented and explained in Chapter 5 (section 5.3).

#### 4.5 Data collection methods

The ADL practices of the student-participants as they were writing their research paper in L2, and which mainly turned around digitally-mediated interactions they engaged in during this process, were inferred from documenting all the ADL events within, which would include:

- activities in the *Research seminar*,
- interaction with their *Research seminar* facilitator and peers,
- supervisor's written and/or oral feedback, as well as any other form of interaction between them.

Other essential data collection sources to take into consideration were the students' academic and teaching experience background; the artefacts, that is, their research paper writing at different intervals within the process; as well as the student-participants', the teacher-participants', and the researcher's own perceptions, which could only be accessed through directly interacting with them, whether by formally interviewing them or communicating with them via WhatsApp. In this way, different interpretations or explanations of the phenomenon were gathered, contributing to the construction of the student-participants' stories focused on their experience of their ADL trajectories while writing their research paper in L2.

Therefore, the data was gathered from **a wide variety of sources**:

- 1) Students' academic and writing trajectories during the online BA previous to the writing of their research paper, as well as teaching-experience backgrounds. The students considered in this case were those taking the

*Research in the L2 classroom* course prerequisite to the *Research seminar*.

The data was gathered from the students' digital academic records, and informal conversations with the facilitators of the courses previous to the *Research seminar* that are related to writing and research (see Figure 4.2).

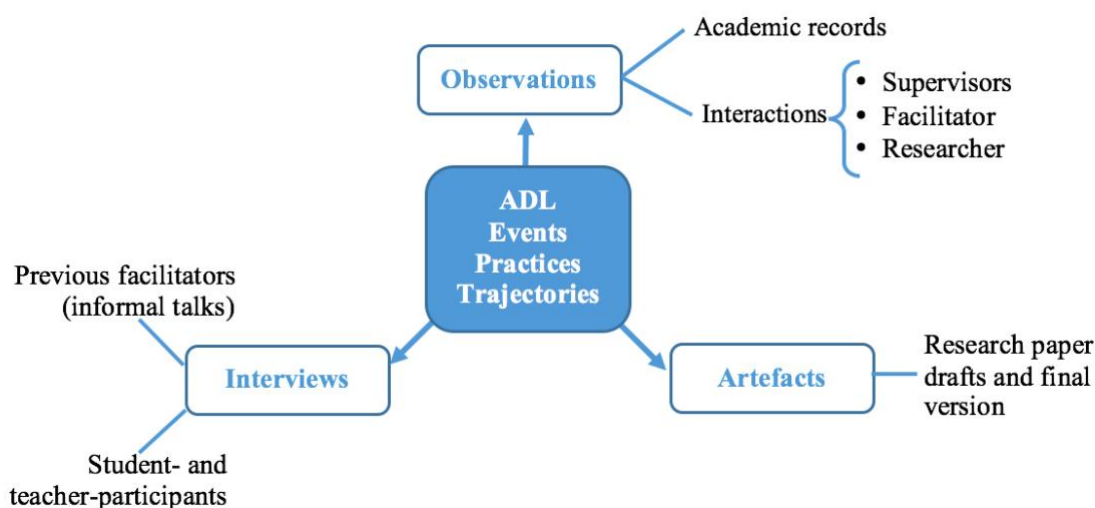
The purposive sample was based on these data, as it will be explained further ahead in section 4.7. Once the students accepted to participate in the study, I held further informal talks with the facilitators of the BA so they could tell me the general impression they had of these students.

- 2) Student-participants' activities and forum participation in the *Research seminar*. This was collected by accessing as a member the course in *Eminus*.
- 3) Student-participants' interactions with supervisors and the *Research seminar* facilitator. This was collected, apart from accessing the course, by asking the participants to share the interactions they had in *Eminus*, e-mail, WhatsApp, and any other digital means in which they take place, which in this case were telephone calls, Skype, Zoom, and Facebook videochat.
- 4) The student-participants' writing of their research papers at different intervals, in other words, all the drafts the students produced, as well as their final version. These data were analysed in order to support the construction of the student-participants' trajectories, as a way to keep track of the development of the academic text around which the practices and events emerged, and to prepare specific questions in the interviews with the participants.
- 5) Semi-structured interviews with the student- and teacher-participants, based on preliminary analysis of data gathered with respect to literacy practices and events of particular interest that emerged. The interviews were carried out via Skype video calls which were recorded using *Screencast-O-Matic*. As they were semi-structured interviews, a set of questions previously designed acted as a guide (Copland, 2015).
- 6) Personal WhatsApp interaction with the participants.

I also attempted to gather data creating a private blog and inviting the student-participants to it. The purpose of the blog was to share the participants' experiences, both the students and the researcher, while carrying out their research project and

producing the written report, including challenges and difficulties. Nonetheless, although the students did accept the invitation, they did not participate in the blog. A second attempt to creating an interaction site among us all was a WhatsApp group. They did participate a few times in this group. One of the participants expressed it would be easier for her to write via WhatsApp, and made a few comments about her ‘fascination’ for writing, whether in Spanish or English. This triggered one comment from each of the two other participants about the challenges that research writing poses (acquiring the necessary academic register and the amount of reading necessary to develop it properly). However, in the end, my interaction with them, apart from the interviews, was based on messaging with them personally rather than in the group.

The following figure summarizes the main data collection methods that were used in this virtual ethnographic case study:



**Figure 4.9 Data collection methods in the study**

The previous figure was the most concise way to depict the data collection methods. In Tables 4.2 and 4.3, I include a more detailed classification of the data collection sources according to the type of participants they are related to.

Data collected		Student-participants		
		Xareni	Jackie	Brigitte
<i>Research seminar</i> activities		✓	✓	✓
<i>Research seminar</i> forum interaction		✓	✓	x
Interaction w/supervisor	E-mail messages	✓	✓	✓
	Telephone conversations	✓	x	x
	Facebook videochat	x	x	✓
	WhatsApp chats	✓	✓	✓
	Drafts revised	✓	✓	✓
Drafts (parts & complete)		✓	✓	✓
Feedback from examiners		✓	✓	✓
Final Version		✓	✓	✓
Interaction w/facilitator	<i>Eminus</i> messages	✓	✓	✓
	<i>Eminus</i> feedback	✓	✓	✓
	WhatsApp chats	✓	✓	✓
	Drafts revised	✓	✓	✓
Interview 1		✓	✓	✓
Interview 2		✓	✓	✓
WhatsApp w/researcher		✓	✓	✓

**Table 4.2 Data collection sources from student-participants**

Interviews		Other sources (further clarification)
1	<b>Isaac</b> as Xareni’s supervisor	WhatsApp, telephone conversation
2	<b>Victoria</b> as Xareni’s facilitator	WhatsApp, meeting to revise examples of interaction with students
3	<b>Cuauhtémoc</b> as Jackie’s supervisor	WhatsApp
4	<b>Victoria</b> as Jackie’s facilitator	WhatsApp, meeting to revise examples of interaction with students
5	<b>Victoria</b> as Brigitte’s supervisor & facilitator	WhatsApp, meeting to revise examples of interaction with students

**Table 4.3 Data collection sources from teacher-participants**

## 4.6 Participants

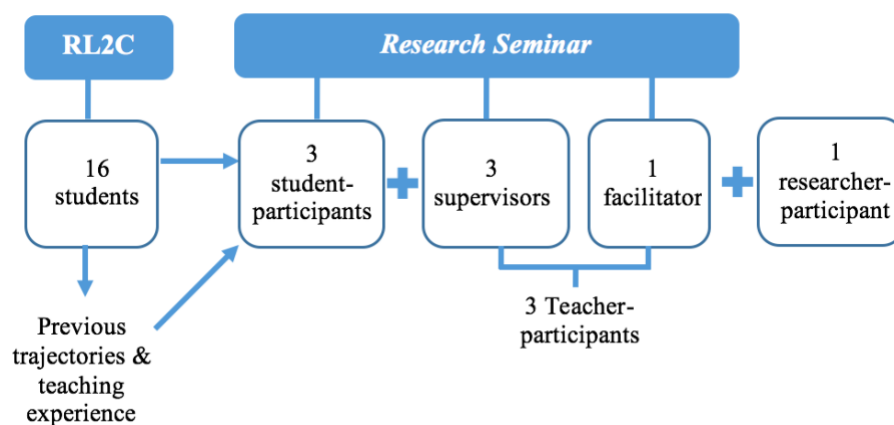
There were three types of participants in the study: the student-participants, the teacher-participants (supervisors and the *Research seminar* facilitator), and the researcher-participant. The **student-participants** were 3 students chosen purposively based on their previous academic and writing trajectories during their BA studies and their teaching experience background. The purposive sample attempted to include one successful case, one ‘average’ case, and one not so successful regarding the academic and writing trajectories, as well as at least one ELT experienced-teacher case and one with little or no experience. The data about these trajectories and backgrounds was gathered during the term previous to the *Research seminar*, while the students were taking the *Research in the L2 classroom* course (the prerequisite for *Research seminar*, see Figure 4.1). Once the cases had been identified, an e-mail was sent to them, inviting them to participate in the study. The e-mail informed them about the project: the main aim in general terms, what they would be required to do, and my role within the research process (another e-mate writing her research project ‘at a distance’). The e-mail included confidentiality issues, and the possibility of withdrawal at any moment without any repercussions. The purposive sample was taken from those who accepted the invitation; and they were asked to send by mail a signed consent form (Appendix 5) after reading their Participants Information Sheet (Appendix 1). Initially, 4 students accepted to be part of the study and sent their signed consent form; however, one of them could not continue with the *Research seminar* and I completely lost contact with her, so I excluded from the study all data I had obtained from her and her first contact (telephone conversation) with her supervisor.

The **teacher-participants** were the supervisors of each of the student-participants, as well as their *Research seminar* facilitator. They were contacted personally, and informed about the general aims of the project and what they would be expected to do, covering confidentiality and withdrawal issues as well. They consented access to their interactions with the student-participants, and an interview, by signing their corresponding consent forms after reading their own Participants Information Sheet (Appendix 6). As the focus of the case study is the students’ trajectories and practices, the data obtained from them fed the students’ stories. There was a total of three teacher-participants, as the facilitator was also the supervisor for one of the student-participants. Both versions of Participant Information Sheets for the different type of participants included in the appendices appear in English, but participants were provided with a translated version into Spanish, as it is their native language. The



consent form, also in English in the corresponding appendix (Appendix 5), was signed on its Spanish-translated version by the participants.

The **researcher** is a participant because I played no authority role in the relationship with the student-participants and presented myself as a ‘mate’ for them in that I was also writing a ‘research project’ in L2 at a distance to get a degree. The data from the researcher-participant to be analysed was my interpretation of the ADL practices and events that constitute the student-participants’ trajectories, as well as my reflexion of my own role as a researcher-participant in the project. Figure 4.3 summarizes the type of participants that were considered for the present case study, and where they ‘came from’ (*Research in the L2 classroom – RL2C*). A more detailed description of the participants will be provided in Chapter 5.



**Figure 4.10** Types of participants in the study

#### 4.7 Purposive sampling

For the purposive sampling process in order to select the participants for the study, I reviewed the academic trajectories during their online BA studies and teaching backgrounds of the possible participants for this study. I then sent an e-mail to those who seemed to be the best candidates inviting them to participate in the study. This process took place during the school term February-July 2018, when I gathered information from the 16 students taking *Research in the L2 classroom*, the prerequisite course for *Research seminar*. After an initial elimination process, I identified 6 students as the potential participants based on their academic and writing trajectories and their teaching experience. These trajectories and backgrounds will be described in detail for the actual participants in Chapter 5 (section 5.2) and within their stories in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

For the elimination process, from the original 16 students enrolled in *Research in the L2 Classroom*, 2 male and 14 female students, the first student to be excluded from the sample was one who dropped out the BA at the beginning of the school term. Then, the student who was chosen for the pilot study (section 4.4) was also left out mainly because he had already taken the *Research seminar*. Also, in order to avoid any preconceptions from the participants, I had already decided not to include participants from the pilot study as participants of the actual study. Then, two students failed *Research in the L2 classroom*, one of them the only other male student enrolled in the course apart from the one who participated in the pilot study. I did not consider the students who failed either because they would not be taking the *Research seminar* the following term. Another student was not contemplated because she is Russian, and thus her case did not conform to the intended sample (online *Mexican* BA students, that is, Spanish speakers, writing academically in L2). Finally, I excluded one student who did pass *Research in the L2 classroom* because, due to a high-risk pregnancy, she would not be able to enrol the *Research seminar* for the following term.

After this elimination process, there were ten possible participants left. From these, I selected the three students who had little or no experience teaching English as possible candidates to participate in the study. One of these students had failed several courses during her school trajectory, and all three had coincidentally some of the lowest GPAs from the sample (7.79, 7.89 and 8.56, out of 10). The other seven students had GPAs above 9.0 and were experienced English teachers, except for one who only had experience teaching Spanish. I decided to send an invitation to participate in the study to only three of them based on their high grades on previous courses where academic writing is a decisive evaluation component. Since this is a case study with an ethnographic view, and given the richness of the data that is expected to be gathered, the maximum of participants for the study that I decided on was four so as to be able to establish a deep and profound relationship with them and reach in-depth understanding of their ADL practices. In the event that all six students had accepted to participate, a final further selection would have been necessary, but this was not the case. I sent the e-mail invitation once the students had enrolled the *Research seminar* for the school term August 2018 – January 2019. Four students originally accepted to participate in the study and signed the consent forms. Nevertheless, one of them dropped out of the *Research seminar* a few weeks after the course had started. Although I attempted to contact her several times, she did not reply to any of my mails. From the facilitator I learned she had attributed her withdrawal to personal problems. She did come back the

following year and recently completed her research paper and graduated. Even then, I tried to contact her to see if she was interested in giving me an interview to document some of the reasons students may have to drop out the course, but she never replied, so I withdrew her case from the study.

#### 4.8 Data analysis

There were two main types of data analysis for the present study. One was through narrative inquiry, and the other content analysis, which is often included in narrative research. I used narrative inquiry to construct the participants' stories of how they experienced their ADL trajectories from the variety of data sources and data collected, as well as from the relationship I established with them through interviews and personal WhatsApp conversations. I used content analysis to pinpoint emerging categories that could lead me to identify the students' ADL practices and how they engaged with them. There was a third type of analysis that I conducted, which was text analysis. I analysed the students' drafts and final versions of their research papers looking for changes they had made from one draft to the other, mainly in order to adapt the interview guides so as to deepen into the reasons for the participants' decisions to make or not changes. As I did not follow a specific text-analysis framework, I do not include a section to describe it. Nonetheless, this type of analysis was crucial in documenting the students' trajectories and identifying their literacy practices, and therefore, in constructing their stories.

As follows, I describe how I used narrative inquiry, how I enacted reflexivity and my privileged positionality in the study, and then I discuss the appropriateness of including content analysis.

##### 4.8.1 Narrative inquiry

For the present study, a virtual literacy ethnography, I observed and documented the ADL events and practices in which three online students engaged while navigating the ADL trajectories around their research paper writing in L2 to obtain their ELT BA degree. This in order to better understand how these students experienced their writing journeys within their online learning context. I used narrative inquiry, or in other words, **storytelling**, as a tool for data analysis to present my findings (Barkhuizen et al., 2014), that is to say, to present my participants' stories, since “**stories** re-shape our experiences so that we can make meaning from them [and] bring coherence to these experiences [so

that] we are better able to understand them” (Barkhuizen, 2013, p. 4). Narrative is a social practice that could be used to look into the complexities of the experiences of these students, as social actors who are assuming, rejecting or contesting the forms of production and reproduction of a particular institutional order (Patiño-Santos, 2018), in this case the research paper that they are required to write to graduate from university.

In doing narrative inquiry, the researcher seeks to learn from telling a story how people perceive the world, how they experience it, and how they make sense of it (Barkhuizen, 2013). I embarked in this study precisely because I wanted to tell the story of some of our online BA students, convinced that the way they perceive and experience the world, and how they make sense of it, influenced the way they perceive, experience and make sense of their research paper L2 writing process. Since I used narrative inquiry to construct my participants’ stories of how they navigated their writing journeys, my analysis targeted the the **content** of my participants’ experiences (Barkhuizen, 2013). As a form of qualitative research, narrative inquiry may commonly draw on data analysis approaches used in other types of qualitative research (Barkhuizen et al., 2014), and thus often includes content analysis (Heilmann, 2018), which is why I will also discuss this type of analysis in the following section (4.8.2).

The **form of data** is also an important aspect to consider in narrative inquiry. According to Barkhuizen et al. (2014), there is ‘narrative’ or ‘non-narrative’ data. Narrative data is that which is already in story form, and non-narrative is not. I constructed the students’ stories from mostly non-narrative data that I collected from a wide variety of digital sources, such as the students’ digital academic records, different sections of the institutional platform (messages, activities, feedback), e-mail exchanges, WhatsApp conversations, recorded telephone conversations, and a Facebook video chat. I also obtained non-narrative data from the artefacts, that is, the students’ drafts and final versions of their research paper, also in digital form (Word files), and from the facilitator and examiners’ feedback on these files. When I interviewed the participants, however, some of the questions elicited from them certain narrative around their backgrounds and experiences, and that constitutes narrative data. As I would go back to my participants to corroborate or ask for further details, and even sometimes showed them part of their stories for them to revise them, what I did was actually to co-construct the stories with them.

In narrative inquiry studies, subjectivity and interpretation come with the territory, and thus findings inevitably include what researchers, with their subjective knowledge and cognitive capacities, have to say about data (Barkhuizen et al., 2014),

data which in the present study I, the researcher becoming ethnographer, turned into stories along with my participants. In order to do so, researchers need to acknowledge their “role as ethnographers in the production of these narratives and the resources that [they] use to interpret stories”, which is what methodological **reflexivity** obliges them to do (Patiño-Santos, 2018, p.5). And so, as I was making sense of the data I collected, trying to understand how my participants were making sense of their own experiences, I encompassed reflexive practices which questioned my own perceptions of literacy, research literacy, and research itself. Thus, reflexivity accompanied “my evolving interactions with the participants and my ever-changing understanding of the context” (Seloni, 2018, p. 120-121).

Reflexivity can be restrained by both social practices in academic writing and the researcher’s social position towards the writing context (Seloni, 2018). In this case, before I embarked in the study, I had pre-conceptions of literacy as a skill and qualitative narrative research as a means to give voice to the participants, which I was now challenging. However, far from restraining my reflexivity, I used it to embrace a new epistemological view regarding literacy and research, and it marked the beginning of my journey as an ethnographer. This meant that I was not ‘giving voice’ to my participants, but reconstructing and representing their voices, including my own (Patiño-Santos, 2019).

Thus, my **positionality** was a key issue within reflexivity so as to negotiate the ‘multiple identities’ I assumed during my study. As a facilitator of the online BA in ELT, I was an institutional member, which gained me access to the research context, a context which I am part of, giving me an insider’s perspective, but also inevitably giving me a position of power in relation to the students, and therefore an outsider’s position. As a PhD student of a distance programme, I was able to relate to my participants, my former students, as a peer undergoing a similar dissertation in L2 writing process, gaining a different insider’s perspective. This is why my role in the study was that of a researcher-participant, which means I was both looking into the students’ experiences and sharing my own with them. Therefore, I had to embrace my subjectivity from all these different perspectives so as to reconstruct and represent all our voices.

It could then be said that I had a privileged emic-insider’s perspective both as a facilitator of the online BA in ELT, and as a student writing a dissertation in L2 at a distance. The former helped me to understand how things usually work in the researched context and the latter to establish a closer relationship with my participants.

Nonetheless, my position as a facilitator could also be regarded as an etic-outsider's perspective, as I brought with me my own pre-conceived beliefs of what students should do and how they should do it, which could differ from the emic perspective of students about what they believe they are expected to do. Moreover, as a student writing a dissertation in L2 at a distance, which brought me back to an emic perspective position, I found myself several times siding with the students in their frustration and anger, at the risk of becoming too judgemental about the teacher-participants' work, who are my colleagues and friends. Therefore, as Seloni (2018) expresses to have once experienced during her fieldwork, I had to pay attention to the balance between the insider's and outsider's points of view. Recognising these challenges and enacting reflexivity, I was then able to make informed decisions and make meaning in what I experienced in the field with my co-participants (Patiño-Santos, 2019).

#### **4.8.2 Content analysis**

Content analysis examines data “in order to understand what they mean to people, what they enable or prevent, and what the information conveyed by them does” (Krippendorff, 2013, 2). This explains why it is an appropriate approach to data analysis within New Literacy Studies, where literacy is regarded as a social practice, and thus in order to study how people make sense of texts and construct knowledge from them, we need to look into what they do with them, how they do it, when, where, and why (see Chapter 2).

Content analysis in qualitative inquiry most commonly implies an inductive approach to analyse data in order to establish themes, patterns or categories, although it is also possible to follow a deductive process based on a pre-established theoretical framework to categorise data (Patton, 2002). In qualitative and interpretive research, content analysis also considers context, and thus content may be conceptualised and coded in various ways (Drisko and Maschi, 2016).

Based on the empirical research reviewed in relation to the topic of the present research in Chapter 3, content analysis is a recurrent method to analyse data in qualitative research on literacy, including case studies and ethnography; and most of these qualitative empirical studies used content analysis, whether they mention it explicitly (Arshavskaya, 2016; Brown et al., 2016; Hafner, 2014; Khadawardi, 2016; Park et al., 2014; Salter-Dvorak, 2014, 2017), or not. For example, Arshavskaya (2016) states having used a content analysis technique, where the researcher reiteratively read all the data sources and developed codes based on the most salient themes emerging

from participants' written and oral texts; while Brown et al. (2016) developed coding matrices based on the research framework they used through the content analysis of interview transcriptions. When analysing data, they may refer to **recurring themes** (Ferenz, 2005; Guikema and Menke, 2014; Khadawardi, 2016; Langum and Sullivan, 2017; Lea and Jones, 2011; Park et al., 2014; Roux, 2012; Salter-Dvorak, 2017; Seloni, 2012; Shin, 2014; Smith, 2017; Wahiza, 2012), **patterns** (Cho, 2017; Erstad, 2012; Ferenz, 2005; Navarro, 2013; Smith, 2017) or **categories** (Cassany, 2016; Figueroa et al., 2013; Goodfellow, 2005; Guikema and Menke, 2014; Hirvela and Du, 2013; Thoms et al., 2017).

Some of them mention an **inductive approach** to data analysis, for instance, by reading reiteratively in order to identify new recurrent salient themes (Langum and Sullivan, 2017; Salter-Dvorak, 2014, 2017; Wahiza, 2012), instead of having pre-established themes to be found in the data. Some others refer to the **coding of data** during their analysis, also by reading multiple times their sources (Arshavskaya, 2016; Brown et al., 2016; Cho, 2017; Hirvela and Du, 2013; Roux, 2012; Salter-Dvorak, 2017; Shin, 2014; Smith, 2017; Thoms et al., 2017). Therefore, another fairly common element in content analysis mentioned in these empirical studies was an **iterative process** in order to find the patterns or generate the themes or categories (Cho, 2017; Hirvela and Du, 2013; Langum and Sullivan, 2017; Salter-Dvorak, 2017; Smith, 2017; Wahiza, 2012). Considering the extensive use of content analysis in the field of study, the fact that it proved to be useful in the pilot study I conducted, and its common inclusion within narrative inquiry, I used content analysis with an **inductive approach** for my study, mainly with data coming from transcriptions of telephone conversations between a student and her supervisor, and those of interviews with all participants.

## 4.9 Data collection and analysis procedures

In this section I concisely describe my data collection and analysis procedures, from the moment I started working on the design of the initial semi-structured interview guides, February 2018, until the co-construction of the last story, October 2020.

### 4.9.1 Previous preparations

During the term I conducted the pilot study, that is, **February – July 2018** (section 4.4), I started designing the **interview guides** I would use with the participants along and at the end of their research writing journey. Before I could start collecting data, I had to submit my project for approval by the University Ethics Committee, which I obtained in

March 2018. This submission included my initial semi-structured interview guides (Appendix 7), **Participants Information Sheets** (Appendix 1 and Appendix 6), and **Consent Form** (Appendix 5).

During this period, I also started collecting data regarding the **academic trajectories and teaching backgrounds** of the students who were taking the *Research in the L2 Classroom* course, as I would select my participants among them, as explained in the Purposive sampling section in this chapter (4.7). The facilitator gave me access to the course as a guest facilitator. This allowed me to access the digital students' academic records and that is how I obtained their GPAs so far. Once I knew which students had passed this course and would then be taking the *Research seminar* the following period, I reduced the number of possible participants to 10, making sure to include students with little or no ELT experience previous to entering the BA and those who were experienced English teachers.

#### 4.9.2 Main data collection procedures

The main data collection process was conducted from **August 2018 to June 2019**. This is the maximum period of time that students are given to present their research papers and pass the *Research Seminar* course. In early August, once I knew which students had enrolled in the *Research Seminar*, I selected only 6 students as possible participants, making sure to include the highest and the lowest GPAs, and sent them an **invitation e-mail** to participate in my study (for more details about **student-participants**, see section 4.6). The course did not start until September, a month later than planned, and I decided to make adjustments to the number of interviews I would have with each of the participants, and thus, to my initial interview guides. During August, four out of the six students I had sent the invitation accepted to participate in the study, and during this month I had **informal talks with facilitators** of previous courses in order to know their perceptions of these four students.

Once the course started, and the supervisors were assigned, I personally **invited** the facilitator and the student-participants' supervisors to be part of the study, all of whom accepted (more details about **teacher-participants** in section 4.6). I designed a table with the calendar of activities of the *Research Seminar* (Appendix 8), and started documenting all the **ADL events** taking place in *Eminus* and any other digital channels of communication (WhatsApp, smartphone, e-mail, Facebook videochat), transcribing data when necessary (supervision sessions via telephone conversations and Facebook videochat). Regarding the **artefacts**, as the students made progress with their research



paper, they sent me their drafts, and the facilitator and supervisors sent me their feedback on these drafts.

Before the students finished their research papers, I conducted my **first interview** with them, using the interview guide I adapted for them (Appendix 9), considering the reduction in the number of interviews, and what I had observed and documented from all the ADL events that had taken place so far and the practices I had inferred from them. I then documented each of the students' subsequent and **final drafts**, the **examiners' feedback** to them, and the **final versions**. I attended the students' presentations via Skype (Xareni), Zoom (Jackie) and WhatsApp video call (Brigitte) prior to their final version submission. This practice, the research paper presentation, would require a study of its own, so I only attended and recorded the students' presentations as part of the procedures before their research paper final submission.

After the **students** had submitted their final versions, I conducted the **second interview** with them, with an interview guide (Appendix 10) considering any other ADL events and inferred practices, as well as all the drafts they had produced after my first interview with them, their final drafts, the examiners' feedback to it, and their final versions. All the students finished at different moments within the allowed time to complete their research papers. Xareni concluded her journey in January 2020, Jackie in March 2020 and Brigitte in June 2020. After the students had submitted their final versions, and once I had interviewed them for the second time, I conducted the individual **interviews** with their **supervisor and the facilitator** for each case, using their corresponding adapted interview guides (Appendix 11). So, after Xareni's second interview, I interviewed Isaac and Victoria, after Jackie's second interview, it was Cuauhtémoc and Victoria's turn, and after Brigitte's second interview, I only interviewed Victoria, as she was also her supervisor. All interviews were conducted in Spanish, the native language of the participants, so as to allow them to express themselves more freely, and they were fully transcribed.

### 4.9.3 Data analysis procedures

The **first set of data** I analysed for each participant consisted mainly in the **drafts** they had produced up to two weeks (Xareni), two months (Jackie), and three months (Brigitte) before they presented their research paper, just before I interviewed them for the first time. I also considered the **ADL events** I had documented so far in each of their

cases, some of them as a way of keeping track, and others to be actually analysed so as to infer the **ADL practices**. In this way, for **Xareni**, I analysed:

- a) her 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> draft,
- b) the feedback she received via e-mail from Isaac, her supervisor, for her 4<sup>th</sup> draft,
- c) the transcriptions of the three telephone supervision sessions she had with Isaac, and
- d) her WhatsApp conversation record with Isaac so far.

I also kept record of Xareni's *Eminus* activity, as well as her interaction here with the *Research seminar* facilitator, Victoria, and took into account that she had uploaded 12 out of 13 activities. This is the analysis and information that I considered to adapt her first interview guide.

For **Jackie**, to adapt her first interview guide, apart from considering her *Eminus* activity (13 out of 13 activities uploaded) and her interaction through this means with Victoria, I analysed:

- a) her 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> draft,
- b) the feedback she received via e-mail from Cuauhtémoc, her supervisor, for her 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> draft, and
- c) the feedback to her 1<sup>st</sup> draft from Victoria (via *Eminus*).

In **Brigitte**'s case, I adapted her first interview guide considering her activity in *Eminus* (only 1 out of 13 activities uploaded), and interaction with Victoria, which was more frequent in her case as she was also Brigitte's supervisor, and I analysed:

- a) the transcription of her Facebook videochat with Victoria,
- b) her 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> drafts, and
- c) the feedback she received from Victoria for her 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> draft.

For the **content analysis** of the **drafts and feedback** to them, I compared the first draft with the second draft and the feedback received in between if there had been any, the second draft with the third draft and the feedback in between, and so forth, depending on the number of drafts the students had completed. I colour-coded the changes they had made according to feedback (pink), when they ignored feedback (green), when they omitted information to avoid making changes according to feedback (yellow), the changes they had made on their own (dark blue), when they replied to the supervisor's comments (turquoise, only once in Jackie's case). I followed the same procedure to analyse the rest of the **drafts**, the **final drafts**, the **examiners' feedback**

and **final versions** (For examples of colour-coding in drafts, see Appendix 12). At this point, for the transcriptions of telephone supervision sessions and the Facebook videochat, I only took notes of the most relevant issues that had been discussed.

The **second set of data** was the one I analysed before the second interview with the students, and the interview with the teachers. It consisted in the rest of the **ADL events**, and inferred **ADL practices**, only for track-keeping purposes, taking place in each case between the first and second interviews, and **content analysis for drafts, feedback to drafts** (supervisors, facilitator, examiners), **final drafts** and **final versions** of the research papers. In **Xareni's** case, I used content analysis, as previously described, for:

- a) her 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> drafts,
- b) her final draft (7<sup>th</sup>),
- c) the feedback she received from Victoria for her 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> drafts via *Eminus*,
- d) the feedback she received from her two examiners for her final draft (7<sup>th</sup>) via e-mail,
- e) the feedback she received from Isaac for her final draft (7<sup>th</sup>) via e-mail, and
- f) her final version.

For **Jackie**, the second set of data in which I used content analysis was:

- a) her final draft (5<sup>th</sup>),
- b) the feedback she received from Cuauhtémoc for her 4<sup>th</sup> and final draft (5<sup>th</sup>) via e-mail,
- c) the feedback she received from Victoria for her 2<sup>nd</sup> and final draft (5<sup>th</sup>) via *Eminus*,
- d) the feedback she received from her two examiners for her final draft (5<sup>th</sup>) via e-mail, and
- e) her final version.

Finally, for **Brigitte**, the content analysis for the second set of data was used in:

- a) her 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> drafts,
- b) her final draft (7<sup>th</sup>),
- c) the feedback she received from Victoria for her 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> draft via e-mail,
- d) the feedback she received from one of her examiners for her final draft (7<sup>th</sup>) via e-mail (the other examiner did not send feedback), and
- e) her final version.

The **third and last set of data** to be analysed consisted in the **ADL events**, from beginning to end of the writing journeys, in *Eminus* and any other digital resources that were used, and the **interview transcriptions**. It was at this point that I used **content analysis and narrative inquiry** to triangulate all the data and identify the **ADL practices** in which the students engaged along their research paper writing journeys, and co-construct the **students' stories** of their **experiences in their ADL trajectories**. I first created a calendar for all the ADL events of each of the students (for an example, see Appendix 26). The calendars varied depending on the time it took them to submit the final version of their research paper, and the events each of them participated in, but they all had *Eminus*, E-mail and WhatsApp events. Xareni also had three telephone supervision sessions and one Skype event, Jackie had one Zoom event, and Brigitte one Facebook videochat event. I also developed a record for the number of the different types of events that each of the students participated in (Appendix 13).

Then, I analysed each of the ADL events for every student in order to infer the ADL practices and how they experienced them, triangulating this with the content analysis I conducted for the data from the interview transcripts. At this point, I used *NVivo 12* to organise all the data, and analyse data from the telephone supervision sessions (Appendix 14). Table 4.4 includes the type of ADL event, and the the appendices where the examples of the analysis document that I created for them can be found (Word for *Eminus*, E-mail and WhatsApp; NVivo 12 for Telephone conversations).

<b>ADL events</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<i>Eminus</i>	Appendix 15
E-mail	Appendix 16
WhatsApp	Appendix 17
Telephone supervision sessions	Appendix 18

**Table 4.4 Appendices with examples for ADL events analysis**

For the interviews, I also opted for a more traditional approach using a Word file. I reiteratively read the transcripts, and looked for relevant data to better understand the ADL practices inferred and the students' experiences navigating their research paper writing journeys, inserting comments for coding when appropriate (for some examples, see Appendix 19). Within the students' stories (Chapters 6, 7 and 8), I included

examples or extracts from all the different sources; if the information was in Spanish, I translated them into English.

#### **4.10 Concluding notes**

This chapter described the methodological approach of my study, which falls into anti-foundational ontological view, and an interpretivist epistemological position. It is a qualitative case study, explanatory, interpretive, but mainly ethnographic. Thus, the study is a virtual literacy ethnography conducted in an online BA programme in ELT, looking into the experiences of students' ADL trajectories in their journeys writing a research paper in L2 to obtain their degree. This online BA uses the institutional platform, *Eminus*, and there is hardly ever any face-to-face contact with the students, who are mainly mature Mexican English teachers with a myriad of social, occupational and family responsibilities. A pilot study helped to visualise ways to organise and analyse the considerable amount of data to be collected, as well as acquiring strategies to address participants during the interviews and envision the possible ADL practices and events that students would engage in.

A researcher-participant, a student also writing a dissertation in L2 at a distance, I collected and documented data from multiple digital sources including different types of online activity, such as *Eminus*, e-mail, WhatsApp, telephone conversations, Facebook videochat, Skype, and Zoom, as well as digital academic records, informal talks, semi-structured interviews, and artefacts (research paper drafts and final version), including all written feedback for the latter. This in order to co-construct my three student-participants' stories of their experiences in the research paper writing journey, who were purposively selected, looking into the ADL events and inferred practices they engaged in, and employing narrative inquiry and content analysis to do so. I collected the data from February 2018 to June 2019, concluding with the analysis in October 2020.



## Chapter 5 Preamble to the stories

In this chapter, I present further information related to the context, the participants, and the data analysis that is necessary for a better understanding of the subsequent analytical chapters, which tell the story of each of the participants. I first include a more detailed description of the *Research seminar*, where the students complete their research paper, so as to provide the clearest possible overview of the specific setting in which students have to engage in for this process. I also describe some particular situations to this course during the period I collected my data, as well as the academic digital literacy (ADL) practices, some of which could be referred to as *institutional* since they directly emerge from being enrolled in this online seminar. Then, I describe all the participants in more detail, including the pseudonyms I gave them, this in order to have a clear overview of all the people involved as well as their relevant background. After this description, I proceed to explain important details about the way in which I analysed and present the data, such as the different types of ADL practices that the student-participants, Xareni, Jackie and Brigitte, engaged in during the writing process of their research paper. In the last section, I describe how the analytical chapters are organised and important details about how I present the data within them.

### 5.1 The *Research seminar*

This course is meant to last one term (5 months), but there is an official 40-day extension which is commonly taken for granted for all students in order to give them enough time to complete all the work to pass it. The 40 days become 2 months, as only working weekdays are considered. During this time, students must develop their research project and write their research paper, which means it usually takes them seven months to do it. There have been a few cases in which they have been given up to a year to finish, which is within the university regulations for the course. As in any other course in the bachelor degrees at the university, those who fail the seminar on a first attempt have a second enrolment opportunity to take it, which means they have up to one more year to complete their research papers. The highest dropout rates of this online ELT BA occur during the first year, but when a student who has got this far (the *Research seminar*) fails to complete it, it is considered a major failure for the whole programme.

To pass the seminar, obtain the credits and thus be able to graduate, students also have to give a presentation of their research paper to three examiners (supervisor and two examiners), which has traditionally happened via Skype, but Zoom has recently been used as well. Students are supposed to work all along the course with their supervisor, which is assigned at the beginning of the semester depending on the topics of the students' projects and the teachers' areas of expertise. To assign supervisors, the course facilitator organises a meeting with the Coordinator of the BA programme and the corresponding *Academy* coordinator (the BA courses are integrated in *Academies* according to their main area of knowledge). In this meeting, the facilitator and the coordinators also assign the two examiners for each of the research papers; the latter determine if the research paper is ready to be presented. After the presentation, the three examiners assign a grade individually, from a scale 1 to 10, and the average of these constitutes the final grade for the *Research seminar*, which means students' grades are based on the product and not on the process. Then, students hand in the final version of their research paper considering with their supervisors all the observations the examiners have made.

The course contents are organised in units related to the sections in a research paper: the introduction, the literature review, the methodology, analysis and discussion and conclusion. In every unit, there is information on what each section consists in (See Appendix 20 for a detailed list of unit contents). In the *Activities* section, for each of the activities, apart from the instructions, there are comments related to the topic to which the activity refers and the corresponding unit contents that must be reviewed before doing the activity. Other important documents provided are the *Guidelines for the ER Final Paper* (described in Chapter 4, section 4.3.2) and the *General recommendations for ER presentations*.

During the course there are **16 activities** the students must complete before sending the final draft of their research paper to the examiners and then working on their presentation (See Appendix 8 for the Calendar of *Research seminar* activities). Although there are deadlines for all of them, only **13 activities** are required to be uploaded in *Eminus* on the stated dates for revision by the course facilitator, since the other activities will mainly depend on the progress the students have made on their data analysis and may be reviewed by the facilitator at different times, via *Eminus* messages or e-mail. The activities must be uploaded in *Eminus* whether in the *Activities* or *Evaluation* sections of the module, and are meant to guide the students in their research project development as well as their research paper writing process. The *Eminus*



platform also provides a section in each of the activities for the facilitator to give feedback and attach any files if necessary.

The first activity is a **research proposal**, and most students use the one they have developed for the pre-requisite course, *Research in the L2 classroom*. In many cases, students have already started gathering data for their research project as part of the work they have done for this pre-requisite course, therefore they only continue developing this project, now with the *Research seminar* facilitator and their supervisor's guidance. A few students do change their project and start a new one, and although this is possible, the majority prefers to finish the proposal they produced for the previous course, which is what the participants in this study did.

During the term I collected the data, the seminar did not start on time, but a month later, because there were some administrative issues to appoint a substitute facilitator, as the regular facilitator was on a leave. This would represent a challenge for both substitute facilitator and students; time pressure to complete the research paper in one-term enrolment is an issue even when the seminar starts on due time, that is why the 40-day extension is typically taken for granted for all the students. Moreover, there were originally 14 students enrolled in the *Research seminar* during this term, and although three officially had withdrawn by midterm, this was another challenge, as the usual number of students for this course had not been higher than six. Another situation that could be considered challenging is the fact that this would be the first time that the substitute facilitator would be giving this course. I am a facilitator of this BA, and of this seminar once, I helped designing the BA curriculum, designed the guides for some courses, and updated those of others, including the *Research seminar*, for which I also updated the handbook with the Research Paper Guidelines. I had four students the time I gave the seminar, two of whom were able to present their paper in 7 months, another struggled to finish in a year, and the other only finished it on the second enrolment opportunity. Hence, I am well aware of the difficulties that this final and decisive step represents for all the ones involved in it.

Thus, when I collected data for my study, the seminar started a month later, with an unusually high number of students, and a facilitator who had not given it before. As soon as the facilitator was appointed, she sent a welcome message in *Eminus* where she emphasised the importance of constant interaction with her to succeed in the course, but also the importance of working autonomously as well as working with their supervisors. She immediately updated the calendar of activities and she sent the students a message the next day indicating they should upload the first two scheduled activities. As time

was of the essence, she organised the meeting to assign supervisors as soon as possible, but still it was only after twenty days that she could inform the students who they were, and the examiners for each paper were left to be assigned in another meeting. In the meantime, the students had to work on the activities of the *Research seminar* to build up their research paper.

*Using Eminus for developing the research paper* constitutes one of the academic digital literacy (ADL) practices that students are required to engage in so as to write their research paper. As part of this ADL practice exclusive to the course, students need to engage in:

- a) uploading the required activities,
- b) receiving feedback for uploaded activities,
- c) communicating with the facilitator via Eminus messages and
- d) participating in forums, as students are required to participate in two forums (activities 1 and 10) along the course.

This institutional practice is only one type of ADL practice in which students would be expected to engage during their research paper writing process. In section 5.3, I present the different ways in which, after analysing all the data, I classified the ADL practices my student-participants engaged in. In the following section I present relevant information about the student-participants, the teacher-participants and myself, as a researcher-participant.

## 5.2 Meet the participants

There were three types of participants in the study: the three online BA **students** who were writing their research paper in L2, three **teachers** in their role of supervisor or *Research seminar* facilitator, and myself as a **researcher**-participant, writing a PhD dissertation at a distance, also in L2. There were more people involved in the students' research paper development, since there are two examiners assigned for each paper; nevertheless, I did not count them within my participants because I only considered their written feedback on the final draft of the research paper in order to document how students reacted to it.

As follows, I introduce each of the participants of my study, providing pseudonyms for all of them except myself. The age and job reference at the beginning of each of the student-participants' descriptions is situated at the moment the students

started taking the *Research seminar*. For teachers, I included a general description in the form of an academic bio data current at the time I conducted my study. For myself, as a researcher-participant, I explain why I was participant as well, and then include my biodata.

### 5.2.1 Meet the students

#### **Xareni**

Xareni is a 43-year-old English teacher and stylist of Mexican indigenous background. She did prepare herself as a hairdresser, but had not pursued bachelor degree studies. She only became an English teacher because in her small hometown in a central state of Mexico, after she returned from the United States where, as a young adult, she lived as an illegal immigrant for more than 10 years, they knew she could speak English. So, she was offered the teacher position, first, in a state primary school, then in a private one, then at secondary, preparatory and even at university level. So, she was already giving English classes, but had no degree, and thus, she was missing better job opportunities in this field. This was the main reason why she entered the online BA in ELT. An online programme was her only option given her jobs as an English teacher and in her own hairdresser's, and her family responsibilities as a wife and mother of two teenagers.

Despite her many work and family responsibilities, from the moment she entered the BA, she excelled at all her courses. She was the kind of student all the facilitators liked to work with: enthusiastic, responsible, self-confident, autonomous, and highly competent. In a scale from 1 to 10, her grades were mostly 10s and only a few 9s. I selected her as a participant as the 'successful academic case' with teaching experience, and thus, a very promising case in her research paper writing. She actually completed her BA studies and graduated in 2 years and a half, which is the shortest time students can finish this online programme.

#### **Jackie**

Jackie is a 29-year-old freelancer who revises English course books for one of the main international publishing houses in a Mexico City branch. She already had a BA degree in Translation and Interpretation (English-Spanish) when she applied for the online BA in ELT, but she had never worked as an English teacher before. She mainly decided to study the BA to expand her career options, and given her job commitments she could only do it online. She also opted for a BA in ELT taking advantage of the fact that she

had a good command of the language, as she had lived as a legal immigrant in the United States all her childhood and adolescence. Nonetheless, she struggled with academic writing along her online BA studies, which reflected on some of her grades, which ranged from 7 to 10 (out of 10). She even failed a course once and had to take it again, and in one occasion she passed a course on a second opportunity basis.

I selected Jackie as a participant because she was the example of an ‘average’ student, meaning she did not fail many courses, and although she did not always obtain the top grades, 9s and 10s were also common for her. Facilitators acknowledged her good command of spoken English, but also noticed her problems with academic writing. Yet, they thought she was always able to learn and thus that she had improved in this area a lot. She finished the BA in 3 years and a half, which is the average time that takes most students to complete it. I also selected Jackie because she did not have any formal teaching experience at all previous to the BA.

### **Brigitte**

Brigitte is a 31-year-old dance teacher who also regularly does dressmaking jobs, and is starting to organise tours with a friend to make some more money. She had previously started a BA in English but did not finish it. She realised that sooner or later a bachelor degree would come handy for better job opportunities. Her family also played a part in her decision to apply for a BA again; they were very pressing in how necessary it is ‘these days’. She did not want to start from scratch, and she could not attend a face-to-face programme, as she was key in economically supporting her mother and aunt, with whom she lived. So, she decided the most suitable option was the online BA in ELT, to which she gained admission through a revalidation process using her incomplete English BA studies.

Although she was able to revalidate one course, and did well in some others, her grades mainly ranged from 6 to 8, out of 10. She had to take several courses twice in order to pass them, and had to take 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> opportunity exams to pass others. It was this seemingly struggling academic trajectory in the BA that I considered to select her as the ‘possibly failing’ or ‘barely passing’ case in my study. Nevertheless, she did manage to finish the BA and graduate, but it took her 5 years and a half, which was longer than it would be officially allowed. The fact that she had some teaching experience, but not in English, was also an aspect to invite her to participate.

### 5.2.2 Meet the teachers

#### Victoria

Victoria was the substitute facilitator of the *Research seminar* during the time I conducted the study, and Brigitte's supervisor. She has a BA in English, a BA in French, an MA in TEFL and an MA in French Didactics, and holds a C2 English level according to the CEFRL by the Cambridge ESOL examination *Certificate of Proficiency in English* (CPE), and TOEFL. She has worked for over 4 years as a teacher in all the BA programmes of the School of Languages (French, English, and ELT) and the Foreign Languages Department at the university where the online BA in ELT is offered. She is the permanent facilitator for the *English Proficiency and Language Education in Mexico* courses of the online BA, and has been the substitute facilitator in several other courses. She is currently a member of the BA redesign committee, and was part of the committee that obtained the *COAPEHUM* national quality certification for the BA. She has also worked as an English and French teacher in several private universities, and was the Coordinator of a private English Language Institute for 6 years. She recently obtained a tenured English teacher position at the main state Teacher Training College in the area. Her research interests are EFL academic writing and the use of authentic materials in French teaching. She is a collaborator in one of the Research Groups of the School of Languages of the university. She has published two book chapters in the academic writing field.

#### Isaac

Isaac was Xareni's supervisor. He has a BA in English and an MA in TEFL, and holds a C1 English level according to the CEFRL by the Cambridge ESOL examination *Certificate in Advanced English* (CAE). He is a tenured teacher at the School of Languages of the university offering the online BA in ELT, where he has worked for over 16 years. He has taught different courses in the BA in English, the Foreign Languages Department, the MA programme in TEFL, and has been a facilitator at the online BA in ELT since it was created, where he currently gives the courses *Learning to Learn at Distance*, *Language as Communication*, *Second Language Acquisition* and *Issues in Language Teaching and Learning*. He participated in the design of the online BA and several of its courses, is a member of its redesign committee, and was part of the committee that obtained the *COAPEHUM* national quality certification for the BA. His research interests are the development of the listening and speaking skills, and

pronunciation teaching strategies, and has published several book chapters and journal articles mainly related to the development of listening skills, and inclusion in the EFL classroom.

### **Cuauhtémoc**

Cuauhtémoc was Jackie's supervisor. He has a BA in English, an MA in TEFL and a PhD in Education. He holds a C1 English level according to the CEFRL by the Cambridge ESOL examination *Certificate in Advanced English* (CAE). He recently obtained the only tenured teacher position of the online BA in ELT. He has worked for this state university for over 18 years, also giving courses in the BA in English, and at the Foreign Languages Department teaching children aged 11 to 15, and adolescents aged 15 to 18 (secondary and preparatory school, respectively). He re-designed one of the courses of the online BA, *Teaching Practice*, for which he is the facilitator. He is also the facilitator for the courses *Teaching Language as Communication* and *Teaching Language as a System*. He is currently a member of its redesign committee, and was part of the committee that obtained the *COAPEHUM* national quality certification for the BA. He has also worked for private universities in similar BA degrees. His research interests are academic writing assessment, inclusion affective domain, and democratisation of the university classroom. He has published several articles related to education in an electronic magazine of Social Sciences.

### **5.2.3 Meet the researcher**

#### **Paty**

I was a researcher-participant in my study in that I related to the student-participants as 'one of their own'. I interacted with them not only through the interviews, but also through personal WhatsApp conversations, corroborating information, asking for a few more details, showing them parts of their stories, sharing how we felt, encouraging each other not only regarding what felt at points an overwhelming writing task, but also about other personal projects. This was part of my development as a researcher, it was how I became an ethnographer. Reflexivity was then very important not to merely identify my own role as a researcher, but to embrace my subjectivity in the co-construction of my participants' stories, with whom I could empathise, and my own story. I could see how different our backgrounds, situations and goals were, and still understand how Xareni, Jackie and Brigitte felt and why.

I have liked English for as long as I can remember. Although I never took extra English classes other than the ones I took at the primary, secondary and preparatory schools I attended, and was able to go abroad only until my early thirties, I remember trying to expose myself to the language as much as possible through songs, books, comics, magazines, movies, series. I also liked French, and for this I did take private lessons and courses. Deciding what to study at university was no problem for me, I had it very clear I wanted to become a language teacher. As soon as I finished my BA in English and my BA in French, I started working as an English teacher at the Foreign Languages Department of the university I graduated from, the same university that would offer the online BA in ELT seven years later. Within a year, I was also giving classes at the BA in English, then a couple of years later I obtained my master's degree, and then I became a facilitator of the online BA, in which I have already explained my deep involvement (Chapter 1, section 1.1). I also teach at the MA in TEFL programme of the university, and I am a member of a Research Group of the School of Languages named *Language Teaching and Learning Processes*.

My colleagues from the Research Group and I have conducted several research projects and published several book chapters and journal articles. I participated as one of the coordinators of one book on Higher Education institutions' perceptions of teacher training programmes, and also of a beginners' handbook on writing an EFL research report. As part of a Research Group, we try to attend to seminars and conferences to disseminate the results of our research projects and find out what our colleagues from other universities are doing. We are part of a network of Research Groups from universities around the country and do collaborative work with them when research interests converge. I continuously get involved as a supervisor and examiner of BA students' research reports and MA students' dissertations. Research and research writing has then become an important part of my professional development.

#### **5.2.4 Other people involved**

There are two other names appearing in the narratives. They are from teachers who were not participants but that I included because they were mentioned by one of the students: Karen was the pseudonym for the *Research in the L2 Classroom* facilitator, and also one of Xareni's examiners. And Rocco was one of the examiners for another student's research paper, to whom Xareni makes reference in one of her interviews. Although I did consider feedback from the students' research paper examiners, they

were not participants of the study, and so there was no need to mention their names nor provide them with pseudonyms.

### 5.3 The ADL practices of the study

To be able to infer the ADL practices in which Xareni, Jackie and Brigitte engaged, I observed and documented the artefacts, that is, the research paper drafts and final versions, and all the **ADL events** in which they participated embedded in the *Research seminar* context. First, there are those found within the **institutional platform**:

- 1) activities uploaded in the corresponding *Eminus* section according to instructions and reading materials,
- 2) forum interactions with their peers and facilitator,
- 3) *Eminus* messages exchanged with the facilitator to send information, questions, drafts and feedback, and
- 4) feedback received in the corresponding *Eminus* section.

Then there are those **ADL events** that took place using **other digital resources** different from *Eminus*:

- WhatsApp conversations
- e-mail exchanges
- telephone calls
- Skype research paper presentation
- Zoom research paper presentation
- Facebook videochat conversation

The main external digital resources were **WhatsApp, e-mail, and telephone calls**. Skype was only used once, to present Xareni's research paper, and it was the same case for Zoom, which was used to present Jackie's. The Facebook videochat was organised by Victoria to communicate with her Brigitte as her supervisor.

The **ADL practices** in which the students engaged are very complex and continuously intersecting and overlapping. As a first step to disentangle their complexity, I classified them into four 'umbrella' ADL practices according to the **main digital resources** that were used and the main purpose for which they were used:



- 1) Using Eminus to develop the research paper,
- 2) Using WhatsApp to communicate with the facilitator/supervisor,
- 3) Using telephone calls to communicate with the supervisor, and
- 4) Using e-mail to send progress and receive feedback.

Apart from all main and secondary digital resources, **ADL practices** revolving around the **development of the research paper** were related to more specific purposes within this process, and so, I decided that a second classification would be based on these. The students then were using the digital resources as a means to make decisions and solve problems resulting in the following ADL practices:

- 1) Discussing the research paper in general (e.g. topic, structure, content),
- 2) Making changes according to feedback,
- 3) Ignoring feedback received whether by the facilitator or supervisor,
- 4) Arranging presentation details,
- 5) Presenting the research paper, and
- 6) Seeking support elsewhere.

The last ADL practice mentioned, *Seeking support elsewhere*, did not only take place within a digitally-mediated environment, as students also resorted to physical places (a library), and people by meeting them face-to-face in order to make decisions or solve problems, and thus discussed their research paper with a friend or a relative, and made changes according to what they had discussed or read. Figure 5.1 portrays the complexities in students' ADL practices connecting the digital resources to the specific research paper development process, adding an extra box for the in-situ or face-to-face interactions. The Facebook videochat interaction was excluded from the figure because it was only one instance of an interaction between Brigitte and Victoria, referring to the use of a single digital source for a single research paper development purpose. This excluded videochat, recorded with Power point, took place in the early stages of Brigitte's trajectory to discuss her research paper, mostly for Victoria to catch up with her project and what she had done so far.

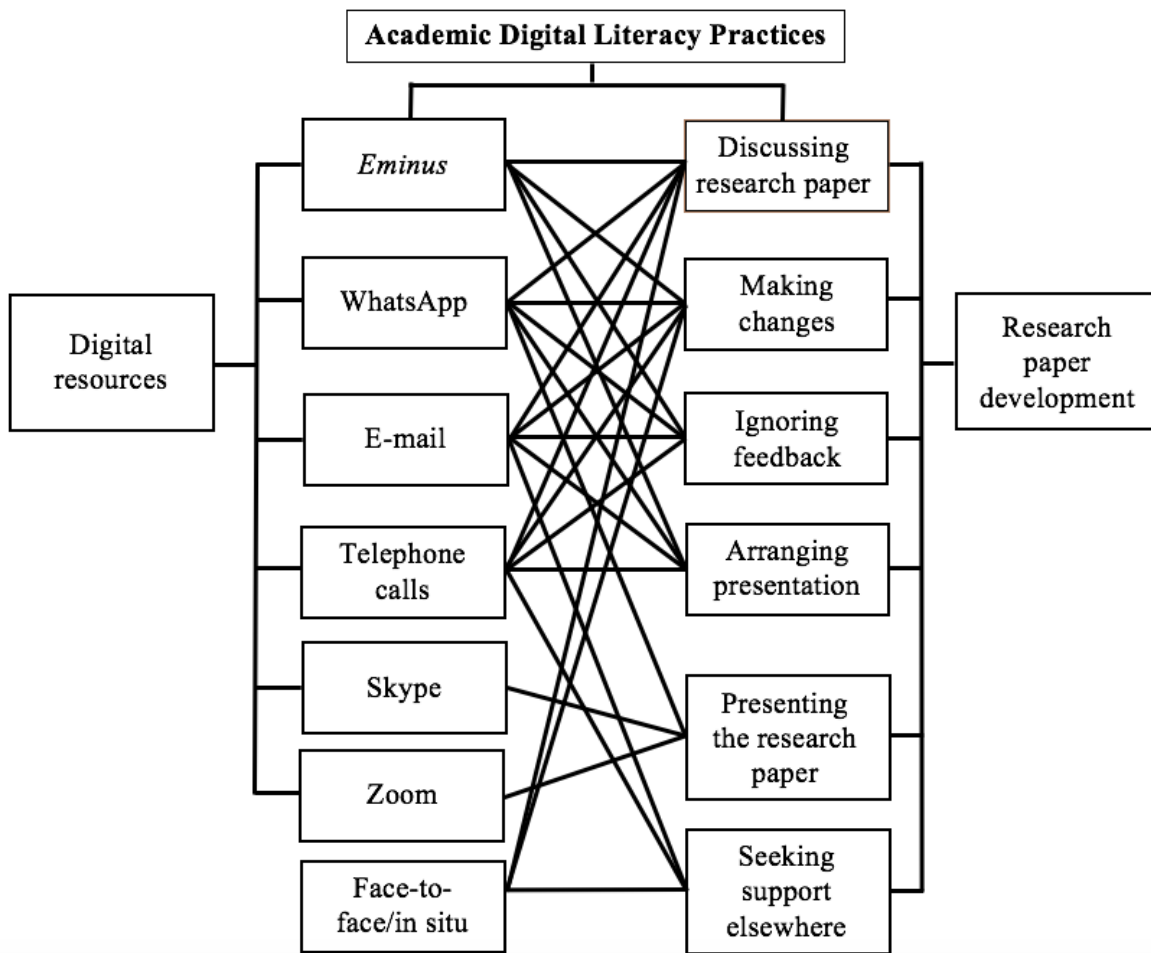


Figure 5.1 Complexities in students' ADL practices

As mentioned before, some of these ADL practices emerged while Xareni, Jackie and Brigitte were participating in the activities in the *Research seminar* with the purpose of developing their research paper. Nevertheless, as progress was being made, other practices pursuing the same goal emerged outside the *Eminus* activities framework, hence the use of other digital resources and even face-to-face interaction. The students engaged in most of these practices in different ways and at different levels. In Table 5.1, I registered their participation in the ADL practices portrayed in Figure 5.1, only in terms of who participated in what ADL practices, connecting both aspects, the Research paper development and the Use of digital resources.

		Research paper (RP) development					
		Discussing RP	Making changes	Ignoring feedback	Arranging presentation	Presenting RP	Seeking support elsewhere
Use of digital resources	<b>Eminus</b>	Xareni Jackie Brigitte	Xareni Jackie Brigitte	Xareni Jackie -	Xareni Jackie -	- - -	
	<b>WhatsApp</b>	Xareni - Brigitte	Xareni - Brigitte	Xareni - -	Xareni Jackie Brigitte	- - Brigitte	Xareni - -
	<b>E-mail</b>	Xareni Jackie Brigitte	Xareni Jackie Brigitte	Xareni Jackie Brigitte	Xareni Jackie Brigitte	- - -	Xareni - -
	<b>Telephone call</b>	Xareni - -	Xareni - -	Xareni - -	Xareni - -	- - -	Xareni - -
	<b>Skype</b>	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	Xareni - -	
	<b>Zoom</b>	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	- Jackie -	
	<b>Face-to face/in situ</b>	Xareni - -	Xareni - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	Xareni Jackie Brigitte

Table 5.1 Students' participation in ADL practices

It is in the following chapters that I constructed each of the participants' stories describing more in detail how they engaged in these ADL practices, and thus how they navigated their ADL trajectories as writing their research paper. In the following section, I explain how these chapters are organised, as well as other details about how data is presented.

#### 5.4 The analytical chapters

There are four analytical chapters, from 6 to 9, in this thesis. The first three correspond to the students' stories, Xareni, Jackie and Brigitte. The last one, Chapter 9, challenges the celebratory discourses for e-learning, this as a result of the narratives in the stories. It also connects, even if at a distance, the stories around the emerging emotions dimension experienced during the trajectories, and provides an epilogue for each of them, including one for the *Research seminar* itself.

Chapters 6 to 8 are divided into an introduction and then four main sections. First, I introduced the students' stories, that is, who they are, why they were studying

the online BA in ELT, and how their research paper writing journeys turned out. Then, the narratives tell us first about each students' research project, then the *Research seminar*, next about the changes they did or did not make, and finally their major challenges while navigating their journeys. These sections develop the following 'bits' of the stories:

- 1) **How it all started.** Here, I present the students' research projects, what they were about in general terms, the objectives and/or research questions, and how they were developed.
- 2) **Research seminar activities.** This part tells the story of how students navigated the seminar activities, which ones they uploaded, which ones they did not, how they engaged with them and to what extent the activities had a role in their decision-making and problem-solving processes around the research paper writing. In other words, this is about how they experienced the *Research seminar* and the ADL practices that emerged within.
- 3) **Changes.** This is the part of the story where I find out about how students decided to make changes or not while writing their research papers, considering their supervisor's feedback, or any other aspect that might have been involved in these decisions embedded in the emerging ADL practices.
- 4) **Major challenges.** This last 'bit' is about the students' perceptions of what the most challenging problems were for them to face along their research paper writing journey. We learn here how they felt and what they did so as to overcome these difficulties in order to complete and present their research papers.

Other important details about how these chapters were constructed are listed as follows:

- As the interviews were conducted in Spanish, all the interview extracts included, whether in-text or separated, were translated into English.
- The use of italics within the interview extracts indicates that the participant is using words as if part of an actual conversation was taking place, whether they were talking to themselves or someone else.
- The same use of italics was applied to the Telephone conversation extracts.

- Telephone conversation as well as WhatsApp conversation extracts were also translated from Spanish to English.
- English was used by the participants in all interaction within the institutional platform (*Eminus* messages, *Eminus* feedback section), as well as in all comments and observations as feedback in drafts, and most e-mail exchanges. Some e-mail exchanges, however, were in Spanish, and thus, they were also translated into English when included.
- Figures and tables were included as many times as necessary in order to present data from the observed ADL events, and artefacts including feedback provided by supervisors and examiners within the drafts, from which the ADL practices were inferred.

### **5.5 Concluding notes**

This chapter was necessary as a preamble to the students' stories in order to explain how I constructed them. First, I described in more detail the specific setting from which the stories developed, which is the *Research seminar* of the online BA in ELT. Then, I introduced the participants, since it is always important to know who the main characters are in every story. In order to better understand how I constructed these stories, it was also important to lay out the ADL literacy events and practices present in the students' journey and bring their complexities to the fore. Finally, I explained how the stories were organised and how I incorporated the data from the different sources I used to document how these students experienced their ADL trajectories. In this way, it will be easier to make sense from the following chapters: the stories themselves.



## Chapter 6 An unexpected “failure”

When Xareni, a 43-year-old woman, started her last term of the online BA in ELT, she had been teaching English as a Foreign Language for 10 years mainly in primary schools in Mexico, both private and state, but also occasionally in secondary, preparatory and university. The eleventh of twelfth children of an indigenous background family, she learned the English language while living in the USA as an immigrant for 12 years. When she moved to the USA she was only 19 years old and had no high school diploma yet; when she came back to Mexico she set up a hairdresser’s since she had studied a beauty diploma course before leaving for the USA, but opportunities for teaching English continuously emerged in her hometown. Thus, she decided to study a BA in ELT as she realised she would have better job opportunities as a teacher if she had a degree. She already had a Cambridge First Certificate Examination, and that is how she covered the language entry requirement to the online ELT BA she enrolled.

During her academic trajectory in this online ELT BA, she was an outstanding student (9.57 GPA out of 10 when she finished) with quite an enthusiastic attitude; the BA facilitators were happy to have a student like her in their courses. Therefore, the expectations about her final research paper to obtain her degree were high. Nevertheless, when she presented her research in a record time (four months), she was granted 7 out of 10 for the *Research seminar*, which is actually considered a low grade. This was definitely a major disappointment for her, and for all of those involved in the process – previous facilitators, her supervisor, and her examiners. Having been her facilitator, I was not pleasantly surprised either; as a researcher, however, I was admittedly interested in analysing what had happened. What had led Xareni’s ‘impeccable’ academic trajectory to take an unexpected turn for the worse? The unexpected unleashed barely a few days before she presented her paper,

### Interview extract 6.1

‘it was 11 at night on a Friday, and we were supposed to deliver [the final version of the paper] on Sunday. I realised then, well, to begin with, that I felt lost’.

(Interview 2)

But this was certainly not the first difficulty she encountered. Let us see what series of events led to that moment, and then, a few days later, to the unsatisfactory grade, which most certainly felt like a failure for Xareni.

### 6.1 How it all started: A singing contest project

Let us go back at the beginning of the story, that is, when Xareni started the *Research seminar*. By then, she had already implemented her action research project in the primary school where she worked, and was very happy with the results,

#### Interview extract 6.2

‘I was really satisfied with the fact that they [her students] had worked autonomously, that I didn’t have to repeatedly ask *And your homework?* – *No, I didn’t do it, And your notebook?*, no, nothing like that, they were very happy to come into the classroom’.  
(Interview 3)

Actually, the facilitator of the pre-requisite course for the seminar (*Research in the L2 classroom*), Karen, had revised and evaluated the project, as it was the main task to develop for this course, and also considered it a well-developed proposal; Xareni obtained a grade of 9.12 out of 10. Admittedly, the written report required for this course was a much simpler paper than the one required for the *Research seminar*, but in Xareni’s case it seemed to constitute a solid proposal and she chose to use it for the seminar so as to develop her research paper, as most students do.

Her action research project, conducted in a state primary school with sixth grade children between 11 and 12 years old, consisted in implementing a singing contest to promote, originally, pronunciation practice, as stated in her proposal’s title: “A singing contest to motivate primary school students to participate actively in English pronunciation practices”. Her initial objective, however, focused mainly on promoting motivation: “To find out the impact of a singing contest on the motivation of my students” (Proposal). This objective, as expected in any research project, developed through Xareni’s drafts towards her final version, but fostering motivation remained a key aspect of her project. In a further section the changes made to Xareni’s research objective will be presented and analysed, as well as the changes in Xareni’s main research question, which only appeared until her fourth draft, and in her title, which by



the end was “The Impact of a Singing Contest on Sixth Grade English Language Learners” (Final Version).

In sum, her action research consisted in using a singing contest organised in three phases, reducing the number of participants after every phase (26, 20 and 12), in order to promote her students’ motivation and performance in the language. She interviewed 5 students at the end, chosen randomly, with a semi-structured interview organised in four sections: motivation, planning, strategy, and autonomy, so as to know what the students had done regarding those aspects from their own perspective. Therefore, the other key aspect apart from motivation in Xareni’s research had to do with autonomy, more specifically with the metacognitive skills (planning, self-evaluating, help-seeking) that her students seemed to have developed by participating in the singing contest, which was the way to foster their motivation.

## 6.2 *Research seminar activities: Only for a grade?*

Thus, Xareni had her proposal; she just had to wait for the *Research seminar* to know what would be needed next. However, a first setback occurred when, during the term she took the seminar (August 2018 – January 2020), there was no facilitator assigned for the course and thus the seminar started a month later than it should have. Once **Victoria** was appointed as the **facilitator**, and before students were assigned their supervisor, Xareni had a problem with the second activity established for the seminar. The first activity was uploading the proposal, which most students had ready in advance as the Coordinator of the BA program told them to prepare it in the absence of a facilitator, and they all had developed their proposals during the previous term for *Research in the L2 classroom*. The second activity was to **upload the research work plan** (schedule), but Xareni considered this schedule should be discussed with the supervisor,

### Interview extract 6.3

‘when they finally assigned a facilitator, she told us to send the schedule, and then I said, *How am I going to send it if I don’t have a supervisor?* They hadn’t told us who our supervisor was, and she [the facilitator] tells us to send the schedule... I said *I don’t have one* [supervisor], *so I won’t do the activity*, and I didn’t do it’.

(Interview 3)

Xareni reconsidered her position only after she had been given two extensions to upload the schedule and failed to do it.

Interview extract 6.4

‘No, no, I’m wrong, because it will affect my grade, and I was used to never having a low grade, no, no, no, I will focus and do the activities and I will do them all, besides, they are not difficult, so I decided I wouldn’t be missing any other activity because I wanted to obtain a good grade’.

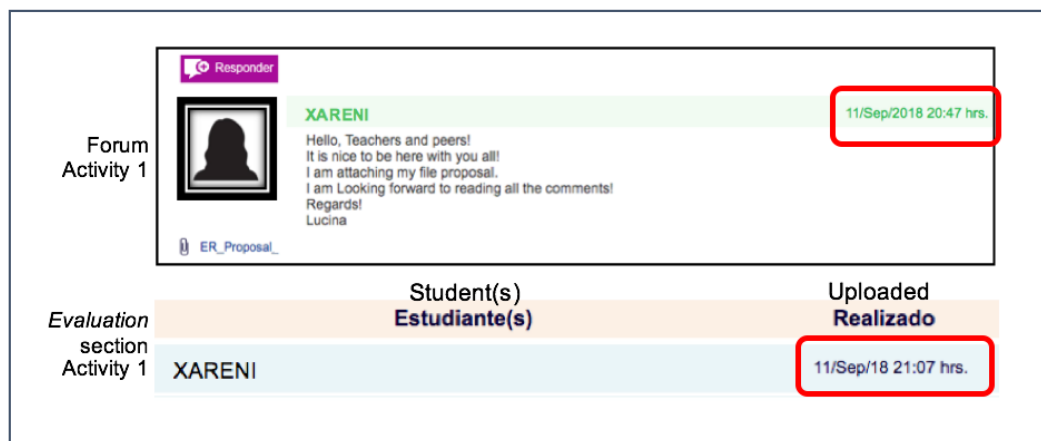
(Interview 3)

So, Xareni herself was confident she would pass the course with flying colours, as she was used to. It is fair to say that, in Xareni’s personal experience, she felt she would be able to deal with this situation easily, not only because her grades in all the previous courses of the BA were 9 or 10, but also because she had had success both in school and at work during her years in the USA. ‘I sit for the exam in 1997 and I passed, and I got the diploma, and that is a whole different level, it is like *Wow, High School*’ (Interview 3), she proudly shared, especially because her English before moving to the States was practically none, ‘and that [secondary school in Mexico] had been my first contact with English, it had made no difference, it was like whatever’ (Interview 3). After performing a series of jobs, she became a McDonald’s manager, where she was acknowledged as one of the best, ‘and then I saw that my name was there, my name among thousands, my name was there, and they informed us that we had been invited because our high quality work had made us the managers of the year in our stores’ (Interview 3).

All things considered, it can be said that Xareni is a positive person that sees challenges as learning experiences, ‘but I think that those experiences that were the most difficult were also those that have taught me the most, they gave me the opportunity to learn, it was those that you can apply to real life’ (Interview 3). Thus, a single activity that she had not uploaded was not going to be a big problem, because she would not miss any other activity. At this point, she still felt very enthusiastic and motivated; after all, she had gone through much worse and succeeded. Nonetheless, in the end, having missed a single activity would be the least of her problems, but we will come back to this later on when discussing Xareni’s major challenges. So, Xareni did

upload all the other activities that were required in *Eminus*, that is, she uploaded 12 out of 13 activities. However, this does not mean that she actually fully engaged with this ADL practice (*Using Eminus to upload activities*).

For the first activity, she did not wait for any feedback from peers or facilitator on the corresponding forum as she was supposed to before uploading her proposal in the *Evaluation* section. Although she did not receive any sort of feedback in her activity in the end, she uploaded her proposal 10 minutes later than she had shared it in the forum (Figure 6.1). For another activity, she uploaded a file using future tense to talk about her participants when she had already implemented her action research project (Activity Extract 1), suggesting she was only copying what she had done for the pre-requisite course. Moreover, she only talked about the participants in this activity when she should have also described her context.



**Figure 6.1 Uploading times for Activity 1 (Proposal) in Eminus**

Activity Extract 1. Context and Participants (Activity 6) in future tense

**CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS**

The research is planned, for 10-12-year-old students. There will be two groups of 5<sup>th</sup> grade and two groups of 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The competition will be organized in three phases; the first phase will take place inside of each group. The participants will sing in front of their classroom the same students will select the 7 participants that will represent their group on the following stage. There will be a total of 28 participants in the second phase; only 12 will be chosen to participate in the final step, the selection will be made by the Spanish teachers of each group,

Thus, she even disregarded some instructions. The first time, when she omitted a description of the context in Activity 6, and another in Activity 13, which was meant to be a Discussion section draft and where she uploaded only three paragraphs when there were 3 to 4 pages required. More importantly, she seemed not to have read some of the course material to develop some of the activities. For Activity 9, referring to methodology (Procedures), she included a section for *significance of the study* and another for *limitations*, which are nowhere indicated as part of the methodology chapter, but of other sections of the research paper (introduction and conclusion, respectively). For Activity 13, the Discussion chapter draft, she included something more similar to some of the contents in a conclusion (a summary of most salient findings) and did not relate the findings to any references in her literature review. This exact same draft actually persisted in the final version of her research paper.

It would not be fair to simply assume, however, that it was because Xareni failed to read some of the course material that she could not successfully develop some sections in her paper, presumably contributing to the low grade she received. Admittedly, she did not seem to find the content and activities in the course meaningful or helpful, which she expressed in her last interview:

Interview extract 6.5

‘those activities in that course [*Research seminar*] were very easy for me because we had already worked on them with Karen [the Research in the L2 classroom facilitator] the previous term, so it was not... it didn’t mean much’.

(Interview 3)

Interview extract 6.6

‘The *Research seminar* was nothing, it was something I had done before, so it represented nothing. Maybe it was so because [...] it was only doing it and that’s it. So probably that is the reason why, even when it is all over, I can say *Research seminar, easy*, I mean, I can still say it is easy’.

(Interview 3)

One of the reasons which made Xareni feel disappointed in the seminar has to do with the fact that she only received feedback for five activities, and she received it belatedly, at least by a month after the deadline (for a detailed tracking of these events, in Appendix 21, a calendar which includes the dates Xareni uploaded her activities, and the dates she received feedback only for five of them). This delay in feedback for the activities resulted in ‘outdated’ comments in that Xareni’s proposal had already evolved. For example, she had already realised that pronunciation was not the main aspect in her research when she received this feedback from Victoria for Activities 3 and 4 related to the literature review:

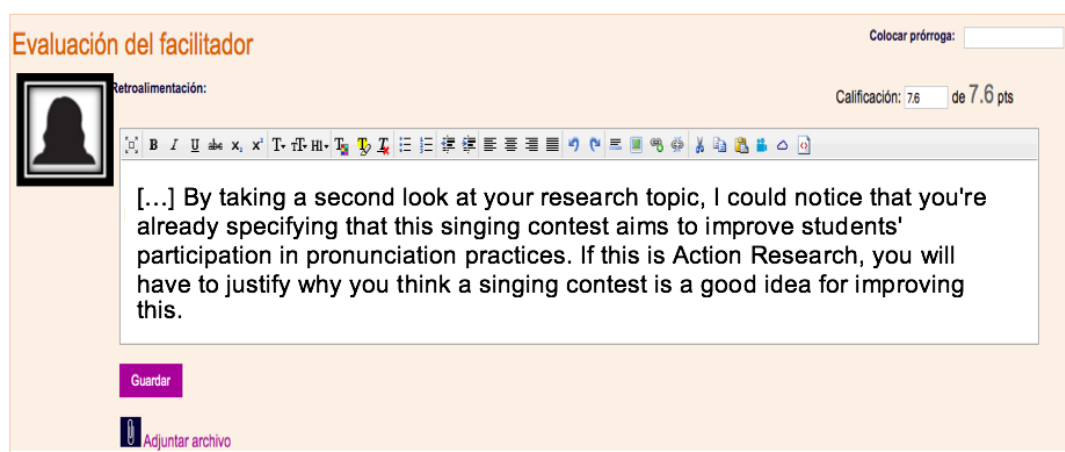


Figure 6.2 Extract from Victoria’s feedback to Activity 3

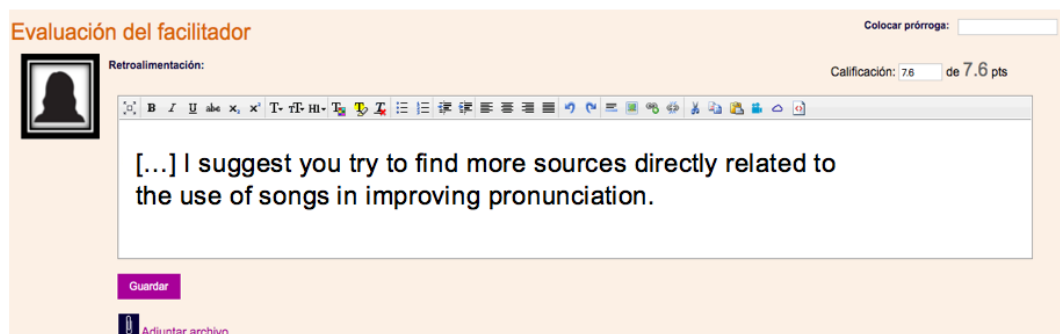


Figure 6.3 Extract from Victoria’s feedback to Activity 4

By the time she received this feedback, Xareni had already discussed with her **supervisor, Isaac**, that she had found more interesting things and considered that pronunciation should no longer be the focus of her research, to which Isaac agreed. In addition, Xareni did not receive any feedback for her forum participations. Therefore, she could not either fully engage in the ADL practice of *Using Eminus to develop the research paper*, more specifically *Using Eminus to receive feedback to uploaded*

*activities* or *Using Eminus to participate in forums*. This was then Xareni’s first setback, a key moment which inadvertently would lead her to the unexpected low grade she received. However, she only reflected upon this during her second interview, which took place after she had presented her research paper,

Interview extract 6.7

‘For me, it was a 20-day course, for me the *Research seminar* lasted 20 days, when the facilitator revised my first activity and the last one [...]. Evidently I was not happy with the results, and so I told myself *why do we need to take the Research seminar?* Honestly, I thought the course wasn’t helpful for me at all. I think that if I had received feedback for the activities I did during the course, probably I would not have been so lost’.

(Interview 2)

She felt even worse when ‘at the end, the grade they gave me was based on the exam and on something I had practically worked on my own. *What is the point of this course?* It should not even exist’ (Interview 2). Despite this negative perception of the *Research Seminar* that Xareni developed, some of the activities may have contributed positively in her research paper writing journey. Although she felt feedback for the activities related to the search for literature review sources (Activities 3 and 4) was not relevant for her any longer, she added sources that she had not included in her original proposal, most of which remained in her final version. In activity 11, related to data analysis procedure, she was already considering the change of focus from pronunciation to motivation to analyse data. Also, the activity related to findings (Activity 12) may have helped her as a first step to develop the way she presented her findings in her final version (Table 6.1). By the time she did activities 11 and 12, she had already discussed these issues with Isaac, and she included this in the activities. For example, for her outline of findings in activity 12, she considered Isaac’s comments during in her first telephone supervision session (Table 6.2).

Activity 12	First five drafts	Final version
3. FINDINGS 3.1 Affective factors 3.1.1 Attitude 3.1.2 Motivation 3.1.3 Anxiety 3.2 Cognitive factors 3.2.1 Intelligence 3.2.2 Language aptitude 3.3 Language learning strategies 3.3.1 Cognitive strategies 3.3.2 Metacognitive strategies	CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS 4.1 FINDINGS Feelings Actions Organization Attitudes Outcomes Knowledge of the process 4.2.1.- Autonomy 4.2.2.- Planning 4.2.3.- Selecting strategies	CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS 4.1 Students’ emotions regarding the contest 4.2 Students’ steps for preparing for the contest 4.3 Students’ actions prior to the contest 4.4 Students’ attitudes towards the process 4.5 Student outcomes 4.6 Knowledge of the process 4.7 Autonomy 4.8 Planning 4.9 Selecting strategies

**Table 6.1 Findings section at different stages in Xareni's research paper**

Affective factors	Cognitive factors	Learning strategies
‘We would see the factors, for example, the socio-affective factors, such as motivation [...]’	‘You told me that they improved regarding how they wanted to learn on their own’	‘And what strategies, we would need a section for strategies, because that is what you used’
‘...that that improved in, I don’t know, anxiety, they are less anxious or feel better’	‘Maybe address it, I don’t know, somehow, as the student’s cognitive processes’	‘Metacognitive factors, that is, when they were aware of how they were learning’
	‘The cognitive process, that is, how it helped them with memorization, and memory retention, for example’	‘I mean, metacognitive in that they realised how they learnt better’

**Table 6.2 Isaac’s comments shaping findings organisation for Activity 12**

Therefore, Xareni was putting all together to develop her research paper: her own reflection about her project, her supervisor’s comments, the *Research seminar* activities. This suggests that although she did not fully engage in the ADL practices related to the *Use of Eminus for developing the research paper*, her journey involved the intertwining of her engagement in different types of ADL practices at different levels, and that doing the *Research seminar* activities contributed more than she may have realised to it. She certainly expected more from the seminar and the facilitator (Interview extract 6.8):

Interview extract 6.8

‘[...] She [Victoria] was the one behind [sending her comments], not me, if she had read my first draft, and had read it well, thoroughly, from that moment she would have told me *this is wrong*, from that moment, we would have produced a better paper, right? But as I was telling you, the first draft, I got nothing, only a message saying *I’ll read it later*’.  
(Interview 2)

Whether the activities, the content material or the *Research seminar* itself were meaningful for Xareni or not, she was doing the activities because she assumed it would affect her grade, and in the end, they were part of her research paper writing trajectory. During this journey, she was making decisions about what changes she considered necessary and which ones she would not make. The next section discusses these decisions involved in the major changes Xareni made along her writing trajectory and those she decided not to make.

### 6.3 Changes: Lost in Voices

Changes are expected to be made all along the writing process of any paper, especially if it is a complex text such as a research paper (Ferenz, 2005; Kelly-Lauscher, Muna, and van der Merwe, 2017; Pineteh, 2014; Roux, 2012; Seloni, 2012) like the one these students have to write. The type of changes Xareni made along her own writing journey covered format, language, content and editing, and the most common type was related to content (Appendix 22). It is not uncommon for content in this type of texts to undergo many changes, including in title, objective and research questions, and Xareni was not the exception. Some of her most salient changes were precisely related to her research paper title, objective and questions, and thus I will discuss these first.

**Xareni’s title** changed four times (Table 6.3). It is only in her proposal that she included pronunciation in it, since she realised even before discussing with her supervisor that she could not limit her project to this aspect, ‘the topics must be narrowed, that is, you have to focus on something and well, yes, pronunciation. But when I carried out my project, I realised that it goes beyond pronunciation, and I also realise that if I only focused on pronunciation, I would cover too little’ (Interview 2). As a matter of fact, she did not even mention pronunciation in the objective of her proposal

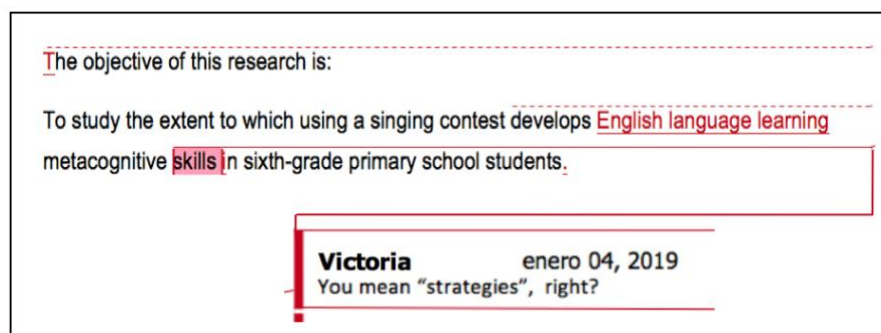


(Table 6.4). Thus, she decided on her own to change the title to include ‘metacognitive skills’ in it, only after having discussed this concept with Isaac, ‘I still did not have a name for that, and then he [Isaac] told me *Look Xareni, read about metacognitive skills and then you’ll tell me*’ (Telephone supervision session 1).

Proposal	A singing contest to motivate primary school students to participate actively in English pronunciation practices
Drafts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5	THE METACOGNITIVE SKILLS THAT 6TH GRADE STUDENTS DEVELOP WITH A SINGING CONTEST IN LANGUAGE TEACHING
Drafts 6, 7	THE IMPACT OF A SINGING CONTEST ON SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS OF ENGLISH LEARNERS [Sic]
Drafts 8, 9	THE IMPACT OF A SINGING CONTEST ON SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS’ [Sic] ENGLISH LEARNERS
Final draft, Final version	THE IMPACT OF A SINGING CONTEST ON SIXTH GRADE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

**Table 6.3 Xareni’s development of her Research Paper title**

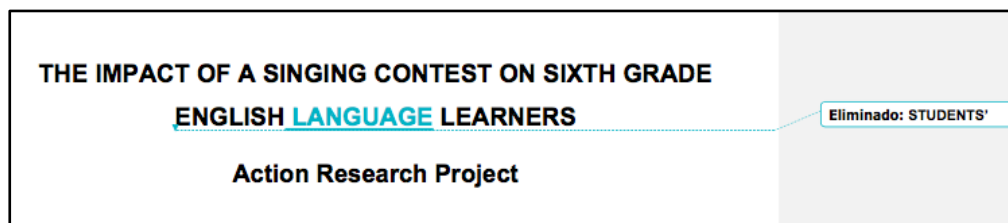
Nevertheless, Victoria questions the use of the word ‘skills’ in the research objective when revising Xareni’s fifth draft (Figure 6.4), and Xareni opts for a more general title and removes the idea of developing metacognitive skills, but makes a mistake when rewording it (Table 6.3). Victoria realises there is a mistake before the presentation and tells her via WhatsApp to change it (Figure 6.5), but Xareni forgets to erase one word, and it is one of the examiners who finally makes the last correction to the title (Figure 6.6).



**Figure 6.4 Victoria’s comment on Xareni’s research objective, 5th draft**

07/01/19 21:23 – Victoria: Xareni  
 07/01/19 21:24 – Victoria: There is a mistake in your title. I’m going to modify it in the format so that it appears correctly in your official document  
 07/01/19 21:24 – Victoria: It would be The impact of a singing contest on sixth grade English language learners  
 07/01/19 21:46 – Xareni: Ok thank you teacher

**Figure 6.5 Xareni-Victoria WhatsApp conversation extract 1**



**Figure 6.6 Examiner’s correction in Xareni’s title**

Hence, the decision of making a ‘simple change’ in the title actually entangles a quite complex series of events, and not even Xareni seems to distinctly remember how it happened. At some point, she shared in her second interview, ‘probably I had already received an email, that I had to pay attention in the title because I wouldn’t be able to make changes later, I don’t know where I received that mail’, when it had been via WhatsApp, ‘a mail’, she continues, ‘that stated that for the presentation, the CD, by then I should have already decided what my title was going to be in my research paper’. Then, she recalls, ‘I had taken into account some comments from the facilitator, she had told me that I was, that I had narrowed it too much and, she had already made a comment somewhere that it had not been, that I couldn’t focus immediately on metacognitive skills’ (Interview 2). And actually, it was more complex than that, as the changes in the title, the objective and the questions are all related, and thus, more events intervene in the decisions to change each of them.

**Xareni’s research objective** underwent six changes (Table 6.4). She narrowed it from the impact of the singing contest on learners’ motivation in general, to developing their metacognitive skills, then their strategies, then widened it to its impact on the learners themselves, and finally left it on the learners’ motivation and performance.

Proposal	To find out the impact of a singing contest on the motivation of my students
Drafts 1,2,3	[...] to inform how a singing contest could improve the student’s language learning process and motivate them to participate actively in their language activities.
Draft 4	To demonstrate that using a singing contest in language teaching develops metacognitive skills on the sixth-grade primary school students
Draft 5	To study the extent to which using a singing contest in language teaching develops metacognitive skills on the sixth-grade primary school students
Draft 6	To study the impact of a singing contest of the extent to which using a singing contest develops English language learning metacognitive strategies in sixth-grade primary school students.
Drafts 7, 8, 9	To study the impact of a singing contest on sixth grade language learners
Final draft	To study the impact of a singing contest on sixth grade language learners’ motivation and performance.
Final version	To study the impact of a singing contest on sixth grade language learners’ motivation and performance

**Table 6.4 Xareni’s development of her research objective**

She remembers discussing with Isaac her own insights about her project, ‘I told him *Look, pronunciation is important, but they [her students], well, what I liked was the fact that they wanted to do it* (Interview 2). She actually spent some time explaining the background, implementation and results of her project to Isaac in their first telephone supervision session, and Isaac came up with a couple of suggestions:

Telephone conversation extract 1

‘we first need to see what was the main issue, it would be then *a singing context to promote learning or promote motivation and autonomous learning*, I don’t know, something like that [...] Then, we could only say *to promote motivation in autonomous learning*, something like that’  
(Telephone supervision session 1)

Xareni did not include this exact idea in any of her research objective versions, nor her research questions (Table 6.5) because she found the idea of metacognitive skills, also suggested by Isaac, more attractive for both objective and questions.

However, she did consider autonomous learning for her project both in her findings (Table 6.1), and her literature review (Figure 6.7), and included the idea in her abstract. Nonetheless, the latter did not seem a good idea for Victoria (Figure 6.8).

2.7 METACOGNITIVE SKILLS .....	9
2.7.1 Autonomy .....	9
2.7.2 Planning.....	10
2.7.3 Selecting strategies .....	10
2.7.4 Monitoring strategy.....	10
2.7.5 Orchestrating various strategies .....	10
2.7.6 Evaluating strategy use and Learning.....	10

**Figure 6.7 Xareni’s Literature Review sub-section including autonomy**

structured interviews were used to collect data. After having analyzed the data, it was discovered that a singing contest motivated sixth-grade primary school students and help them to develop metacognitive abilities that allowed them to take control of their cognitive abilities (autonomy).

**Victoria**  
 Only autonomy? Then we cannot say that they developed metacognitive skills, they just improved or developed autonomy.

**Figure 6.8 Victoria’s comment on Xareni’s abstract**

So, how could Xareni ‘please’ everyone? Who should she ‘please’? Did she need to ‘please’ anyone else but her? She may not have fully engaged in *Using Eminus to develop her research paper*, but she did engage in *Discussing her research paper*, especially during her telephone conversations with Isaac, and then *Making changes according to feedback*, both from Isaac and Victoria. She ended up getting rid of ‘metacognitive skills’ in title (Table 6.3), objective (Table 6.4), and questions (Table 6.5) trying to ‘please’ Victoria (Figure 6.9), only to be told by one of the examiners that she needed to include them (Figure 6.10), which she did not do in the end (Table 6.5).

Proposal	If sixth and fifth-grade students are involved in a singing contest, will this motivate them to participate actively in pronunciation practices and improve their speaking skills?
Drafts 1 to 6	What metacognitive skills do the 6th-grade students develop when using a singing contest in language teaching?
Draft 7 to 9	What impact did a singing contest have on the sixth-grade students language learners?
Final draft	What impact does a singing contest have on the sixth-grade language learners?
Final version	What impact did a singing contest have on the sixth-grade language learners?

**Table 6.5 Xareni’s development of her main research question**

The central question of this research is:

What metacognitive skills do 6<sup>th</sup>-grade students develop when using a singing contest in language teaching?

**Comentado [ ]:** I don't see consistency between this and other parts of your paper. Sometimes you say the aim is to know the extent to which the contest motivated students, other times you say the aim is to know the effect or the impact of the singing contest on students language learning.

**Figure 6.9 Victoria’s comment on Xareni’s research question**

**1.4 Research questions**

The central question of this research is:

**Comentado [ ]:** You have to modify your questions, based on what you told me by pone to fit them in with the metacognitive strategies.

**Figure 6.10 Examiner 1’s comment on Xareni’s research question**

This takes us to another ADL practice. Yes, Xareni did make many changes based on the feedback received, but she also decided **NOT to make changes** despite she was suggested to do so, thus *Ignoring feedback*. Some of her decisions to ignore feedback may have lied on her own beliefs and convictions, but she also ignored feedback because the other too many voices involved in the revision of her research paper sometimes contradicted each other. An example of *Ignoring feedback because of her own convictions* was related to including a reference in Xareni’s paper. Victoria was not sure this reference was relevant:

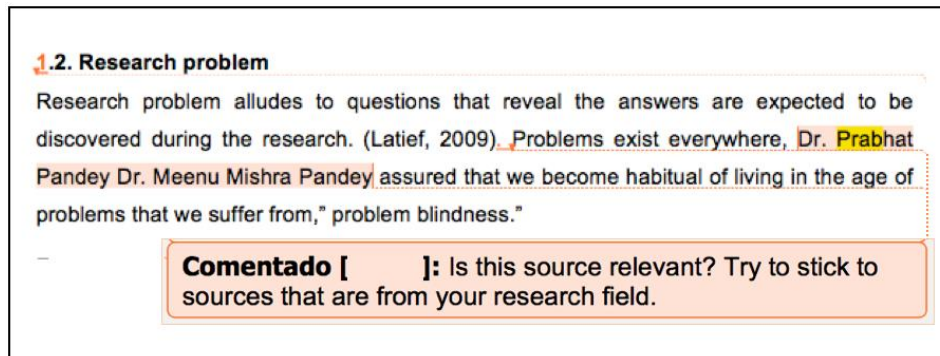


Figure 6.11 Victoria’s comment on one of Xareni’s references

But Xareni decided to maintain this reference because it was meaningful for her; she saw it as an expression of the importance of doing research to solve problems:

Interview extract 6.9

‘I did consider it relevant because Dr. Prabhat says that these days we have many problems, right? We live in the age of problems, but many of us decide not to pay attention and we remain blind, why? [...] Because seeing problems means having to do research and solve them, and so we decide to be blind. When we do research it is because we want to solve a problem, and although Dr. Prabhat had nothing to do with our field, for me, what he said was something that is happening these days, so I said, *maybe the facilitator [Victoria] does not find it relevant, but I do.* [...] If I do not see the problems, I become blind’. (Interview 2)

As Xareni’s project was action research, she identified a problem and implemented a course of action to try to solve it; she saw the relevance and defended her position. *Ignoring feedback* in this case may not have represented a major pitfall in her research paper development, as it is the only comment related to the type of source from the facilitator. Ignoring other type of feedback, however, may have had a negative impact. In the interview with Isaac about Xareni’s research paper, he mentioned that she did not make the expected changes regarding her data analysis and results:

## Interview extract 6.10

‘I told her, *You know? You need to go more in depth, you need to try to see what you found, and how you found it so you can see how you will relate it to the theory, etcetera*, but I tried to tell her... I did not tell her any further idea, however, I said so because of a matter of form, if expectations were not met it was maybe because she did not go beyond in terms of reflexion’.

(Interview with Isaac)

Victoria seems to agree that Xareni should have deepened in how she discussed her results:

## Interview extract 6.11

‘the way she presented her results, there was no solid foundation, and that was precisely what the examiners observed, because she claimed that she had found some results but one could not see how she had found that result and where the evidence of such result was.’

(Interview with Victoria)

For Xareni, however, it seemed not to have been completely clear what was expected. She even reviewed other research papers by students of the same BA and she noticed that there was no discussion section in any of the 10 she had access to, and she thought ‘why discussion if they [the other students] do not provide any?’ (Interview 2). It was precisely for the *Research seminar* activity related to the discussion chapter (Activity 13) that Xareni did not submit what was expected, and where the section remained practically the same until her final version. Therefore, ignoring this type of feedback and not fully engaging with the activities required for the seminar seems to be a combination that may have contributed to Xareni’s unexpected low grade. Nevertheless, it is important to consider that Xareni did not receive any feedback for Activity 13, and what Isaac and Victoria observed for Xareni whether in their written feedback, telephone conversations or WhatsApp interactions may not have been clear enough or too late for Xareni to make the expected changes. This will be discussed in more detail in the following section (6.4), dedicated to major challenges.

Another reason for *Ignoring feedback* in Xareni’s case was **not knowing whose observations she should comply to**, ‘I did observe contradictions, although I agreed

with her [one of the examiners], I thought *If you three cannot come to an agreement, I will stick to what I already have*’ (Interview 2). And some of the differences in feedback were actually contradictory, which may have been confusing for Xareni. For example, for including the number of pages with in-text referencing, Victoria tells Xareni that it should be at the end of the quotation (Figure 6.12), while one of the examiners tells her that it should go after the year, implying then that it is always before the quotation, and continues indicating along the paper that she should follow the ‘Cite format’ he explained (Figure 6.13).

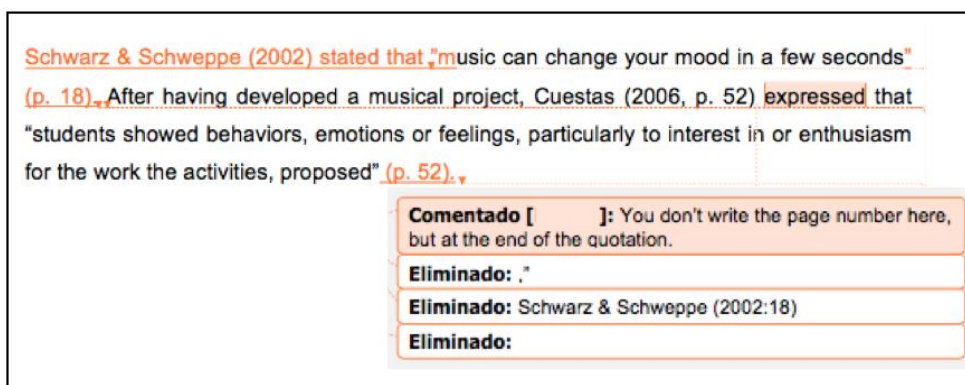


Figure 6.12 Victoria’s comment on Xareni’s in-text referencing

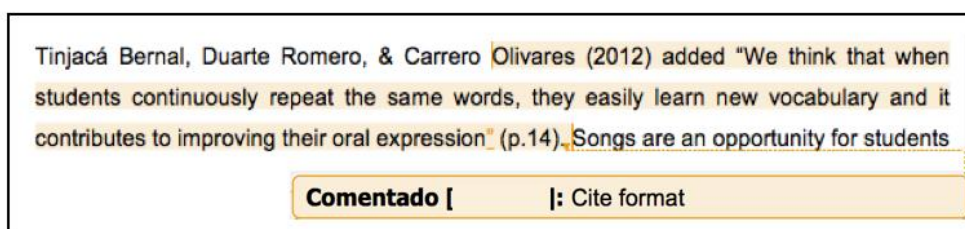
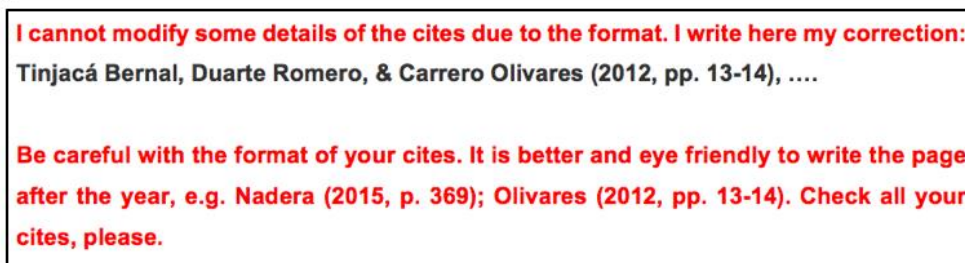
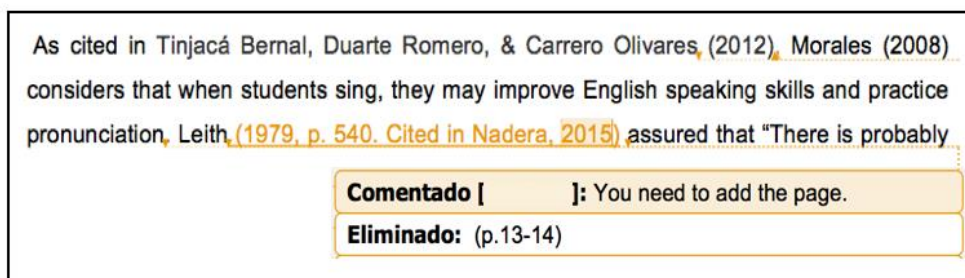


Figure 6.13 Examiner 1’s comments on Xareni’s in-text referencing



Xareni had attempted to use the Word APA function, because it is the referencing style required, that is why this first examiner tells her that he cannot correct the in-text referencing. In her final version, however, although not consistently, she kept using this function as she had done from the beginning; yet, no one observed this lack of consistency. The second examiner also observes some in-text referencing problems in Xareni’s paper (Figure 6.14), but at this point, even I was confused about the observations received.

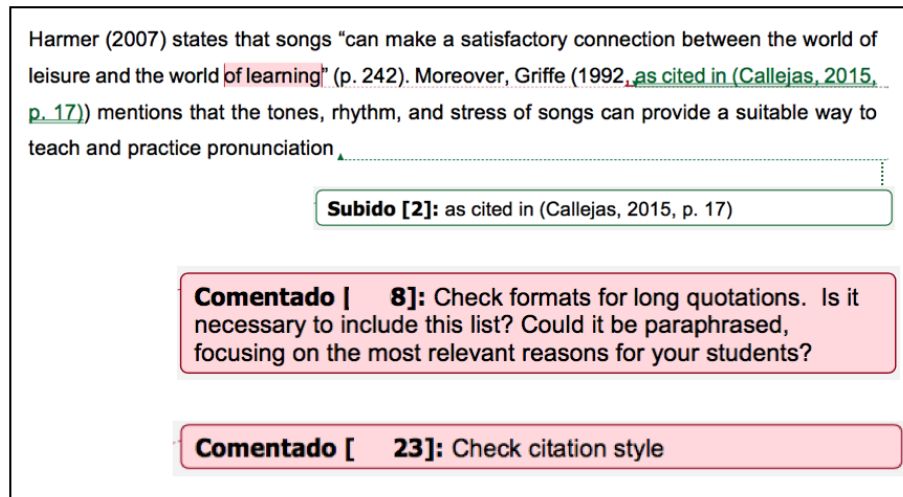


Figure 6.14 Examples of Examiner 2’s observations on in-text referencing

This does not mean that the teachers that revised Xareni’s paper were not providing clear feedback. From my own experience revising students’ research papers, and then while writing my own PhD thesis, I am aware that formatting the referencing style can be a difficult task; as a matter of fact, incorrect referencing is acknowledged as one of the main problems when it comes to referencing skills (Gravett and Kinchin, 2020a; Kahu et al., 2015; Lindahl and Grace, 2018; Rahmat, 2019), particularly challenging for non-English-speaking novice writers (Jomaa and Bidin, 2017), and yet it is a neglected area of practice as it is considered a simple skill to learn (Gravett and Kinchin, 2020b). If we add the many voices involved in Xareni’s case, some of them contradictory, it becomes quite complicated to make changes following everybody’s observations, especially when all of these were made practically at the end of Xareni’s research paper writing trajectory. Isaac and Victoria’s feedback concentrated from mid-December to the first days of January, and Xareni received the examiners’ observations only after her presentation.

This leads to a **final reason for Ignoring feedback**, Xareni was disappointed of her result. She started her research paper trajectory very enthusiastically because she

had already implemented her project, which she had loved, she felt she was ready to write the paper from the beginning of the seminar, she sent several drafts but did not receive immediate feedback, she started receiving crucial feedback when her presentation was about to take place and even after that, so maybe Xareni was **too frustrated to make so many changes** once she had presented her research paper, ‘why doing those changes?, maybe my mood was not... I mean, I did realise their comments were very good, but I said *At this point, these [changes] are pointless for me*’ (Interview 2). We already have an idea of the main challenges that Xareni faced to end up feeling this way. The following section deals with these in more detail.

#### 6.4 Major challenges: When the world seemed to fall down

In Xareni’s eyes, **communication at a distance** was definitely her major challenge. She realised that her result and what she lived during those days before her presentation had been a consequence of this type of problems along the process and not only at the end:

##### Interview extract 6.12

‘I think that now that it’s all in the past, I see things with different eyes, I am more calm, now I can tell you that the most difficult, what we find difficult about doing this, is distance; the fact that you can’t have your supervisor near and tell him *See, here it is physically, check it, am I ok?* My supervisor would say *You’re doing alright, perfect* just in messages, and I would say *Well, I’m doing alright, right?* Probably, if I had been one of the face-to-face programme students, maybe if the teacher [Victoria] did not give feedback, I may then have looked for her, right?’  
(Interview 2)

For Xareni, the main means of communication with Isaac were WhatsApp, E-mail and telephone conversations for supervision sessions, and she clearly felt that she was doing alright based on his comments. During the telephone supervision sessions and WhatsApp conversations, as we can see in the following examples, Isaac did express that Xareni was doing alright. This does not mean, however, that he did not provide feedback to guide and improve Xareni’s work. For every time Isaac says Xareni is doing alright, there is also feedback on what she does need to work on or help to decide what to do, as I clarify after each example.

## Telephone conversation extracts 2

(A)

[At the very beginning of the conversation]

**‘Ok, I have been reading your paper, I think, as it is action research, right? Well, what I was thinking is that it is very good.’**

(B)

[about Xareni’s explanation of what she included in her literature review]

[intrinsic and extrinsic motivation] **‘It is very good.’**[definition and selection of songs] **‘Sure. That is very good.’**[advantages of using songs] **‘Very good.’**

(C)

[about Xareni’s explanation of the interviews she had already conducted, her interview guide, and the fact that she could conduct them again if necessary]

**‘I’m checking the interview and the questions, the first ones are very good, all of them are very good, only the last ones, from half of the interview on, are too focused on pronunciation’**

(D)

[Almost at the end, to wrap up the conversation, after Xareni had expressed feeling confident about her work]

**‘So, we’re going to start, I think we are starting with good basis’**

(Telephone supervision session 1)

In this first supervision session on the telephone (18/10/2018), Isaac and Xareni mainly discussed her proposal in terms of the project background and development, the literature review and a data collection instrument. Isaac tells Xareni, among other things, that it is necessary to define her main objective (A), that there will very likely be more topics to add for the literature review and suggests some that seem to be relevant such as socio-affective factors (B), and that it would be better to change some questions and interview her students again (C). At the end, he also mentions that there are many aspects then to work on for the next supervision (D).

Telephone conversation extracts 3

(A)

[About Xareni’s specific request to discuss her interview questions and the observations made by the facilitator, which she had already considered]

**‘You know your students and adjusted your questions to them, Xareni, do you think they will understand them? I think the they’re quite down-to earth, right?’**

(B)

[About the *Research seminar* facilitator’s comments regarding the need to interview the contest jury members, and Xareni’s interest in rather focusing on the students’ process, not the product]

**‘You are right. If you want to make more emphasis on the process, you stick to what the student says and how they developed all of those topics, the ones you included, ok?’**

(C)

[about Xareni wanting to present sooner than expected]

**‘If we speed it up, yes, if we speed it up, we will finish’**

(Telephone supervision session 2)

In the second supervision session (28/11/2018), they mainly discussed data collection issues and Xareni’s desire of presenting her research paper before it is usually expected from students to do so. Isaac helps Xareni to realise her questions need to be more open-ended (A), to decide that she does not need to interview teachers or authorities as suggested by Victoria, but focus on the students (B), and that he thinks that it is possible to finish sooner but that they will be working against the clock (C).

## Telephone conversation extracts 4

<p>(A) [After they both quickly went through the contents of Xareni’s introduction, literature review and methodology] <b>‘In general, you included all that is needed, that is what I can see’</b></p> <p>(B) [After discussing some improvements to Xareni’s conclusion, such as adding pedagogical implications, limitations of the study and further research] <b>‘Well, you’re doing alright, the truth is that, in general, what I can see, it [the research paper] is very good, very thorough, with appendices, everything, all that is needed; the truth, your paper, you have taken into account many aspects from other papers, so I think that we will finish next week, ok?’</b></p> <p>(C) [Final comments responding to Xareni’s anxiety] <i>Isaac: Ok, it’s alright, so, we’ll keep in touch, you’re doing so well, Xareni, congratulations</i> <i>Xareni: Thank you teacher, I’m so worried</i> <i>Isaac: All of this work you’re doing is paying off, really, you only need to work on some little things, but it’s almost ready</i> <i>Xareni: I’m glad to hear that because I can’t sleep because of that.</i> <i>Isaac: Don’t you worry, you’re doing very well, and most of it has been on your own</i></p> <p>(Telephone supervision session 3)</p>
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At the beginning of the last telephone supervision session (06/12/2018), Isaac opens the last draft Xareni had sent him, and goes through it very quickly, checking mostly that all the sections expected are present, and that every section has been developed to some extent. He does make some suggestions, like adding a previous research section in the literature review (A), getting rid of the hypothesis, and adding pedagogical implications and limitations of the study to the conclusion (B), among others, but tells her that if any ‘big’ changes are necessary, he will let her know (C). There are also similar comments by Isaac via WhatsApp (Figure 6.15). But what in the end felt for Xareni misleading go-ahead comments could be seen as encouraging words from Isaac’s perspective. After all, it is not like he had not provided her with any useful

feedback; he seems to have followed a pattern in the telephone supervision sessions where he made sure to provide encouraging feedback but at the same time observations that Xareni needed to see to. Xareni actually tried to make all the changes Isaac suggested in the supervision sessions, and accepted all the changes he made in the final draft for handing in her final version.

19/11/18 10:50 a. m. - Xareni: I've been working  
19/11/18 10:50 a. m. - Xareni: On everything you've told me  
19/11/18 10:51 a. m. - Xareni: And I'm very interested in the metacognitive because that is where autonomy planning and and search for help fit  
19/11/18 10:51 a. m. - Xareni: What do you think  
19/11/18 11:00 a. m. - Isaac: **Very well!**

30/11/18 6:15 p. m. - Xareni: What do you think about the interview  
30/11/18 6:29 p. m. - Isaac: Sorry, I haven't been able to  
30/11/18 6:31 p. m. - Isaac: I'm listening to it  
30/11/18 6:34 p. m. - Isaac: **I think it went very well**, check if you can use that information

1/12/18 11:34 p. m. - Xareni: I started analysing like that. Is it ok?  
2/12/18 12:33 a. m. - Isaac: **It's ok**  
2/12/18 12:34 a. m. - Isaac: I have some observations but you can continue analysing

7/1/19 10:46 a. m. - Xareni: Am I doing well?  
7/1/19 10:47 a. m. - Xareni: Or should I go back?  
7/1/19 10:53 a. m. - Isaac: **You're doing well!**  
7/1/19 10:53 a. m. - Isaac: **Keep up the good work**

**Figure 6.15 Xareni-Isaac WhatsApp conversation extracts 1**

Regardless the good intentions that Isaac may have had with his encouraging words, and all the changes that Xareni made trying to see to Isaac's “minimal” observations, the fact is that the result was disappointing. The truth is that neither Isaac nor Victoria told Xareni that they felt her paper was not ready to be presented. Isaac ‘respected her decision to finish as soon as possible because she needed to finish as soon as possible for a job opportunity’ (Interview with Isaac), and Victoria ‘didn't feel with the right to tell her *you are not ready*’ because she was not the supervisor (Interview with Victoria). Victoria also knew that Xareni wanted to finish as soon as possible, but was not sure why exactly:

## Interview extract 6.13

‘I don’t now, even now, I don’t understand very well why, it was something personal, I mean, she actually needed to demonstrate that she could do it in that time or if it was actually a requirement for a job, or it was simply because another student with whom she had always worked, I think, she was also making progress and maybe they wanted to do it all together, right?’

(Interview with Victoria)

Therefore, both Isaac and Victoria considered the research paper was not ready, and never told her so. They did provide feedback that Xareni diligently tried to meet, but they were never clear that they thought her research paper still needed a lot more to be presented. Xareni realised about this on her own the weekend before her presentation, when she was told her objectives and questions were not congruent with the results:

04/01/19 12:53 - Victoria: [Sound message (4 min 42 sec) partially transcribed:] Hi Xareni, look, last night I was checking the congruence between the objectives and the research questions, and well, the results, and I think that actually the main objective of your research is not about the impact of the contest you carried out in the metacognitive strategies, that was what you found in your results [...] but your idea to implement this contest was not only focused on the metacognitive strategies [...] we have to modify that in the title, the research objectives and the research questions [...]

04/01/19 13:03 - Xareni: Okay teacher thank you!

04/01/19 13:03 - Victoria: Welcome, we’ll keep in touch

**Figure 6.16 Xareni-Victoria WhatsApp conversation extract 2**

4/1/19 1:04 p. m. - Xareni: Hi teacher. I’m sending you this comment from teacher Victoria so that you give me your opinion

4/1/19 1:16 p. m. - Xareni: Pliz

4/1/19 4:18 p. m. - Isaac: I already listened to it

4/1/19 5:12 p. m. - Isaac: Yes, I agree with the teacher

4/1/19 5:42 p. m. - Xareni: Ok, I’ll correct it tonight and send it to you

**Figure 6.17 Xareni-Isaac WhatsApp conversation extract 2**

Interview extract 6.14

‘So, I think the difficult part was that there was no communication, I was there thinking *Yes, yes, it is alright, I’m doing alright*, and the teacher [Isaac] said *Yes, you’re doing well, very well, Xareni*, and when I would talk to him *Teacher, what do you think?* - *Yes, yes, very well, Xareni, you’re doing very well*. And then, I also felt lost because when teacher Victoria told me, *change the objective, change the questions, change almost everything*. I asked him [Isaac], hoping that he would say *No, you’re doing alright, don’t change it*, but he said *Yes, she is right*, and I said *She’s right?? And now you tell me?*’

(Interview 2)

Xareni also fails to communicate her disagreement and frustration with this event. By the time she receives the examiners’ observations, who agreed to receive the paper only a few days before the presentation because they did not want to affect Xareni’s job opportunity, she simply goes along with everybody because she was ‘fed up to be trying to figure out who was right [...] I will just please them and that’s it’ (Interview 3). She was indeed very frustrated that Victoria and Isaac had not told her before, ‘because of the pressure, you say nothing, because you are this side, you can’t say it, to whom can you say it? But you often hear *I mean, why didn’t the teacher tell you this before? Weren’t you supposed to be sending...? Why didn’t she tell you before? Why until now?*’ (Interview 2). Trust, understood as believing in the truthfulness, reliability or faith in another person’s ability, has been found a key component in successful thesis supervisory teams (Robertson, 2017). At this point, Xareni just went along with hers not because she was convinced about the observations she received, on the contrary, she had lost all trust in those supervising and reading her research paper.

If we consider when and how often she sent progress (proposal, drafts, progress on specific sections) and when she received most feedback (Appendix 23), she had good reason to feel that way. Yes, Isaac and Victoria tried to send Xareni as much feedback as possible, but this mainly concentrated in December and January; she had already implemented her project and had her proposal ready since September. Then, after sending several drafts and receiving whether no written feedback on them or some ‘no-alarming’ feedback, she is finally told to change ‘everything’ only a few days before her presentation (Figures 6.16 and 6.17). For her, changing the title, objectives



and questions affected all the paper, and it was impossible for her to make all the other necessary changes in such a little time, but she changed them because, in her words, ‘if you say it is like that, even if I knew it wasn’t, that I was going to contradict myself in that report, I ended up doing what she [Victoria] told me’ (Interview 2). It was in that moment when all this lack of effective communication felt for Xareni as if the world was falling down.

**Another major challenge** that Xareni faced, mentioned in the previous section, was dealing with the **so many voices, sometimes contradicting each other**, involved in revising her research paper (Interview extract 6.15 as follows, and Figures 6.9, 6.10, 6.12, 6.13, and 6.14 in section 6.3 for specific examples). She also felt that she had been treated differently compared to another student who was also going to present her research paper, ‘she [the student] received teacher Victoria’s corrections both as facilitator and examiner about a week and a half before her presentation [...] Karen’s corrections [one of the examiners], she also received them long before, and teacher Rocco’s [the student’s supervisor] corrections were also received in due time’ (Interview 2). This could feel nothing but unfair to Xareni.

Interview extract 6.15

‘teacher Isaac said everything was perfect, everything was alright, and teacher Victoria said *No, everything needs to be changed*, and teacher Cuauhtémoc [Examiner 1] told me *You should have left it as it was before*’ and teacher Karen [Examiner 2], maybe when I wrote the proposal for her, she also had a different idea, right?  
(Interview 3)

Xareni then felt that she had been left alone, that she had not been given the same opportunities for corrections, and that there was no one she could tell about this. She still managed to pull herself together, and present her research paper. Once Xareni had more time to reflect on what had happened, once she realised lack of effective communication had admittedly taken place on both sides, and more importantly, once she realised it is impossible to please everyone, she felt more at peace (Interview extract 6.16). The low grade may have felt like a failure in that moment, not only for her, but for all the people involved, and even myself; yet, she finished in the record time of 4

months... and now she has a permanent position as a teacher in a state secondary school, to which she could apply almost as soon as she got her degree diploma.

Interview extract 6.16

‘Now that there’s some time in between, I think it is not that teacher Cuauhtémoc was right, or teacher Isaac [...] it is that there are simply different ways of thinking, and we all as examiners are going to have different ways of thinking [...] After all this mess, I know I can’t please everyone, definitely not everything I write is perfect [...] and so, I think that in the future, among those who read my research paper, there will be many Isaacs, many Cuauhtémocs, many Karens and many Victorias’  
(Interview 3)

## Chapter 7      The ideal trajectory?

During her final term in the BA, Jackie, of 29 years old, worked for an international publishing house in Mexico City, where she lived; she was in charge of the commercialization and editing of books in English. She also worked for another company that promoted studies abroad, where she made sure that schools abroad, whether to study languages or undergraduate and graduate programmes, were actually what they said they were, especially for university agreements. She learned English from an early age as her family moved to the United States when she was nine years old. She studied in an all English learning environment the rest of her elementary school, all high school and a first year in university. She came back to Mexico when she was 19 years old, and she decided to study a BA in translation and interpretation in Mexico City, where her classmates frequently asked her to help them practice English conversation.

These informal English lessons were one of the reasons why she became interested in studying a BA in ELT. Another was the fact that her mother had also studied a BA of this type. She did not need to take an English language certification either during her undergraduate studies in translation and interpretation or her time working for the publishing house and the promotion company. It was until she applied for the online ELT BA that she took the university certification, EXAVER 3 (B2 level) for the language requirement. She had no English teaching experience before entering the online BA, which usually helps students to keep up with the course work. However, all in all, she was considered a good student: for some courses she did greatly, such as *Learning to Learn at a Distance*, *General Aspects of Language Teaching and Learning*, or *Testing and Assessment*, for some others not so much, such as *Finding Out about the Language Classroom*, *Research in the L2 Classroom* or *Practicum*, and her GPA at graduation was 8.69 out of 10, which could be considered a bit above average.

One of the reasons she wanted to finish her research paper within the average 7 months was because she was planning to move to Germany, where her boyfriend lived, after graduating. She thought that having a BA degree in ELT could give her some job opportunities in teaching, if she had no luck in translation or interpretation. So, she was a capable student with strong motivation to complete her research paper, and this combination proved to turn out quite well. She did not only finish within the expected time, but actually received the top grade, 10 out of 10. Her supervisor, **Cuauhtémoc**,

and **Victoria**, the facilitator, felt at ease with their roles in Jackie's research paper development:

Interview extract 7.1

'it was a paper in which revision was very free-flowing, totally free-flowing, and there was no need to be after her. In fact, we did not get in touch that often, there were very few times because she sent something every now and then, and what she sent was quite good, so observations were minimal'.

(Interview with Cuauhtémoc)

Interview extract 7.2

'at the beginning, I did pay attention to her paper, and told her some things, but then, I think, once the supervisors were appointed and she started to get in touch with her supervisor, that really helped a lot because her supervisor was responsive'.

(Interview with Victoria)

So, this could be considered quite a successful research paper writing trajectory, a trajectory where the student sends steady progress, the supervisor revises it and does not need to observe too much as it is mostly well-done, the student makes the necessary changes and the supervisor corroborates so, and the facilitator can rely on the supervisors doing their job, whatever that may mean. In this case, this led to a top grade as the result, and a process without complications, at least from the teacher-participants' perspective. Let us see now what it was like not only for them, but for Jackie herself.

### **7.1 How it all started: Songs in the classroom**

Jackie developed the idea for her research proposal when she, as a requirement for another BA course, worked as a voluntary English teacher in a private primary school, helping 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers. She noticed that teachers there did not use any audio or audio-visual materials, and songs had played a very important role in her English language learning process, 'Oh, I'm starting to get it! I now understand that the song says this!' (Interview 2). She then decided to use songs in her lessons, and as she

realised children enjoyed the classes and later kept asking about the songs, she developed her proposal for *Research in the L2 classroom*, which then used as the initial proposal for the *Research seminar*: ‘3rd grade primary school Students’ Behavior when song [sic] are used in their English Classes’.

Her initial objective was “to discover and examine students’ behaviour in English classes when songs are used” (Proposal), and although she reworded it for her final version, she maintained her focus on students’ behaviour in the language classroom when using songs as a teaching tool. Thus, from the first draft to her final version, her research question did not change very much either, it still included students’ behaviour and songs as a teaching tool as its main elements. Basically, Jackie’s action project consisted in systematizing what she had already done with her third-graders class. During a month, keeping a diary, she observed the group of nine children, five girls and four boys, between 8 and 9 years old, during English lessons where she planned activities around songs. She then individually interviewed the regular English teachers, who stayed during her lessons, and conducted a focus group with the children, to find out their perceptions about the teaching tool used.

Jackie had been given a 7.11 out of 10 for her proposal in *Research in the L2 classroom*. This means that it was considered a proposal a bit below the average, at least for the facilitator of that previous course. In the *Research seminar*, for her supervisor, Cuauhtémoc, her proposal ‘was clear, well-defined’, he wasn’t sure about ‘maybe the questions, at the beginning, a little bit [...] but nothing serious’ (Interview with Cuauhtémoc). Actually, he had very high expectations for Jackie, ‘she is an excellent student, right? I knew that she would do something very well organised, and she didn’t let me down’ (Interview with Cuauhtémoc). For Victoria, initially, this was not exactly the case, ‘when she uploaded her proposal, I had the impression that she hadn’t narrowed her topic, what she wanted to do [...] The way she had formulated was too general’ (Interview with Victoria). Victoria’s expectations were not as high as Cuauhtémoc’s at that moment, ‘Jackie had been my student in a previous course and I noticed she had some problems in writing’ (Interview with Victoria).

Hence, the teachers that would be involved in Jackie’s research paper development had different opinions of her and her proposal. So, how did things go from then on that they turned out quite well?

## 7.2 Research seminar activities: What for?

Jackie uploaded 12 out of 13 activities required in *Eminus* for the *Research seminar*. Admittedly, there is no time established for the facilitator to send feedback (nor for the supervisor), but for her proposal, Activity 1, she received feedback almost a month later. Victoria did mention some areas of improvement, but it had nothing to do with the topic being too general (Figure 7.1). Jackie had sent a file with a second draft of the proposal to Cuauhtémoc just a couple of days before receiving this feedback from Victoria. When Cuauhtémoc sent his feedback a week later, he did have a few questions about the objective (Figure 7.2), but he was more concerned with methodology, and language and punctuation issues (Figure 7.3). This is probably why Jackie’s research objective remained practically the same from the beginning, adding only ‘as a teaching learning tool’ at the end in the second draft of her proposal (Figure 7.2), and for her final version a few more words so that in the end it read “to examine students’ behavior in English classes where songs are used as a teaching learning tool by observing their behavior inside of the classroom”.

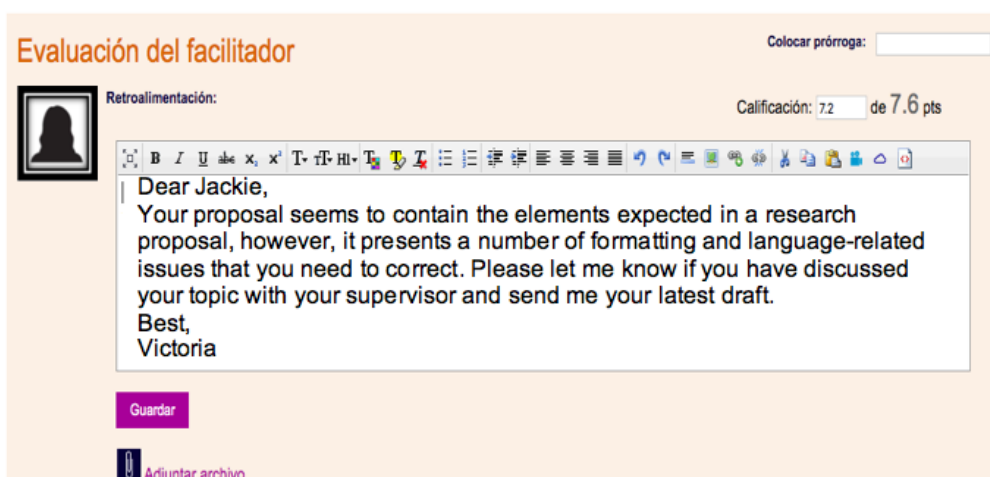


Figure 7.1 Victoria’s Eminus feedback on Jackie’s proposal

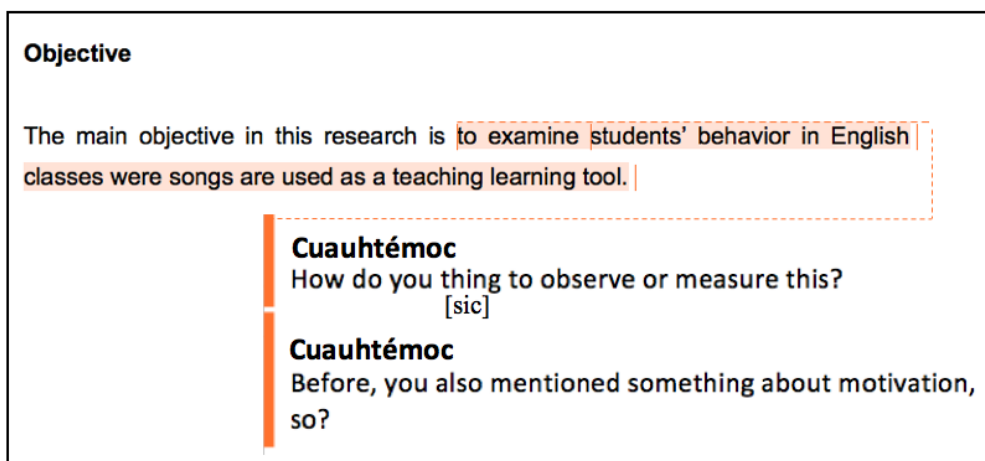


Figure 7.2 Cuauhtémoc’s observation on Jackie’s proposal

**You should settle down the nature of your paper. I mean, if it is case study, action research, monography of experience, for example.**

**Be careful, please, with your writing skills. Pay particular attention to spelling, punctuation and structure.**

**Figure 7.3 Cuauhtémoc's observation at the end of Jackie's proposal**

Just as Xareni, Jackie did not wait for comments from her e-classmates in the forum to improve and upload her proposal; in fact, she practically posted her proposal in the corresponding forum (14<sup>th</sup> September, 14:56) and uploaded it in the *Evaluation* section (14<sup>th</sup> September, 14:57) at the same time. Considering only 7 (out of 14) students posted their proposals in the forum, and only two of them made comments to their peers, the value of this activity may not be clear for the students, and thus they do not engage with it.

For the second activity, the research work plan, Jackie only uploaded the table already provided as a guide. A month later, Victoria sent her feedback only stating that the activity was incomplete. Jackie 'didn't understand well what the facilitator really wanted' (Interview 1), and although, according to Jackie, Victoria later explained to her what students were supposed to do (Interview 1), she did not develop any research work plan, and was not really required to do it. Not doing so did not seem to affect at all her progress either. So, what are the students doing the activities for?

For Jackie's Activity 3, literature review cards, she included 11 quotes from 7 different sources. Victoria, also a month later, sent feedback suggesting adding more sources directly related to students' behaviour towards songs (Figure 7.4). Among Jackie's quotes, there were already three related to it (Figure 7.5); for her Final Version she did add some other sources to this respect (Appendix 24). Does this mean that Jackie did take into account Victoria's feedback? Does this imply that she actually engaged with this *Research seminar* activity?

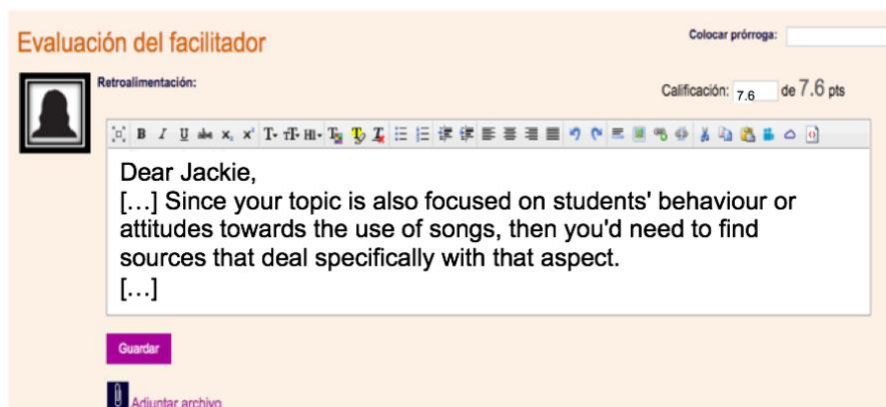


Figure 7.4 Victoria’s feedback extract to Jackie’s Activity 3

2. Phillips, S. (1993). <i>Young learners</i> . (p. 184). New	
Main idea	Related quotes
When learning a new language children can get frustrated.	Songs, but more especially instrumental music, give us the external cover to feel more secure.
4. Saslow, J. & Arscher, A. (2006). <i>The purposeful use of music in the classroom</i> . Available at: <a href="http://longmanhomeusa.com/content/Useful">http://longmanhomeusa.com/content/Useful</a>	
Main idea	Related quotes
How children have fun with music	Songs in English classrooms, not only can help children feel relaxed, but they can also create an appropriate atmosphere for them.
5. Saslow, J. & Arscher, A. (2006). <i>The purposeful use of music in the classroom</i> . Available at: <a href="http://longmanhomeusa.com/content/Useful">http://longmanhomeusa.com/content/Useful</a>	
Main idea	Related quotes
Songs help students to get relaxed	Songs can help children feel relaxed, but they can also create an appropriate atmosphere for them to enjoy the class

Figure 7.5 Jackie’s quotes in Activity 3 related to songs

Apparently, this was not the case. For Jackie, the *Research seminar* activities were ‘more like something for only meeting the course requirements for the final grade, but as support in writing the research paper, not really [...] the course **was not useful at all** for my research paper’ (Interview 1). This is how Jackie feels despite the fact that there is material in the course indicating the parts of the research paper (Appendix 20), there is a handbook with guidelines for it (Figure 7.6), and the *Research activities*



themselves intend to guide the students throughout the sections in the research paper (Appendix 8).

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Figure 7.6 Research paper Handbook contents

In her feedback for Activity 4, Victoria insisted that Jackie should add more sources connecting the use of songs and the students' behaviour (Figure 7.7). However, Jackie only added more references in relation to this suggestion until her final drafts, probably because Cuauhtémoc told her to support some of her statements related to songs (Figure 7.8), or because Victoria herself told her directly to do so as feedback in one of her drafts (Figure 7.9).

The screenshot shows a feedback interface with the following elements:

- Header:** "Evaluación del facilitador" and "Colocar prórroga: [input field]"
- Profile:** "Retroalimentación:" with a placeholder profile picture.
- Score:** "Calificación: 7.6 de 7.6 pts"
- Text Editor:** A rich text editor containing the message: "Dear Jackie, [...] I noticed that the source4s [sic] you make reference to are relevant for your study. Still, I think you need to include information related to behaviour or attitude in children, especially towards songs, since this element is included in your title. If behaviour is no longer in your project, please let me know."
- Buttons:** "Guardar" (Save) and "Adjuntar archivo" (Attach file).

Figure 7.7 Victoria's feedback extract to Jackie's Activity 4

receive is meaningful and interesting to them (Krashen, 1982). For this reason, it is important to provide children with occasions for real language use in which they can enjoy and thus let their subconscious work on language learning process as when we use songs in the classroom.

**1.5 Teaching and learning English with songs**

There are several reasons why songs can be effective for teaching and learning a foreign language. Some reasons are the following: the fact that songs can help children relax, the atmosphere they create in the classroom, the facility for children to remember the songs, the lack of inhibition children possess to imitate the sounds and movements that the teacher can promote during a song, among others.

**Cauhtémoc**  
According to whom?

**Cauhtémoc**  
Only? Using songs is enough to have a meaningful and interesting learning process?

Figure 7.8 Cauhtémoc’s observations about songs in one of Jackie’s draft

important to provide children with occasions for real language use in which they can enjoy and thus let their subconscious work on language learning process as when we use songs in the classroom.

**Victoria**  
Before going into the use of songs in ELT, you should define what a song is, their pedagogical uses in general, what their role has been in the classrooms, etc.

**1.5 Teaching and learning English with songs**

There are several reasons why songs can be effective for teaching and learning a foreign language. Some reasons are the following: the fact that songs can help children relax, the

Figure 7.9 Victoria’s observations about songs in one of Jackie’s draft

Thus, Jackie was not really engaging with the ADL practice of *Using Eminus to develop the research paper*. Although she did upload almost all the activities, it is clear from her opinion of the course that for her there was no connection between them and the research paper she had to write. She only participated in one of the two forums; the activity she missed (Activity 10 related to data analysis) was precisely linked to the second forum and involved peer interaction, neither in which she engaged. Additionally, she only received feedback for 6 activities, and received it only a month or more later (Appendix 25). Probably, this delay in feedback is one of the reasons for Jackie’s negative perception of the course, ‘the truth is that I stopped receiving feedback from

her [Victoria] [...] no one taught us how to do a research paper, what it should include, it was like *there you go the activities so you can put it together*, but help in general, no’.

Nonetheless, the feedback Jackie received for Activities 5 and 6, related to methodology, might have had an impact in her research paper development. For Activity 5, she did not understand the instructions (Interview 1) and uploaded something more similar to a general proposal rather than focusing on her methodology approach, which she did not include at all. For activity 6, she did not describe her research context as required. In both cases, Victoria sent feedback that may have had an impact in Jackie’s first draft, which she sent to her supervisor on a date subsequent to the days she had received this feedback in *Eminus*.

In her feedback for Jackie’s Activity 5, sent on 13 November, Victoria briefly explained what she should include in the methodology chapter (Figure 7.10). When Jackie sent her first draft to Cuauhtémoc, she had already considered all the elements Victoria suggested, and more (Figure 7.11). Admittedly, Jackie could have figured out these elements on her own, especially since she included two more apart from the ones Victoria mentioned in her feedback. It is clearer for Activity 6 that Jackie may have actually taken into consideration Victoria’s feedback regarding what she should have included in the context section (Figure 7.12), as she describes exactly what Victoria suggests (Figure 7.13).

You didn’t mention any methodological aspect. You have to start by describing your research approach, the type of study, the research methods, the context and the participants.

**Figure 7.10 Victoria’s comments on Jackie’s Activity 5**

- 2.1 Qualitative Research
- 2.2 Action Research
- 2.3 Data collection
- 2.4 Data analysis
- 2.5 Context
- 2.6 Participants
- 2.7 Research procedures

**Figure 7.11 Jackie’s sections in her methodology chapter, 1<sup>st</sup> draft**

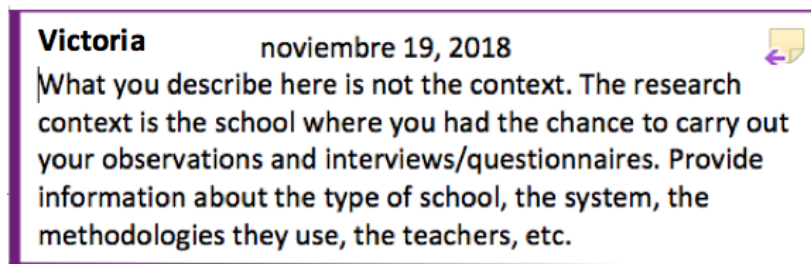


Figure 7.12 Victoria's comments on Jackie's Activity 6 about context

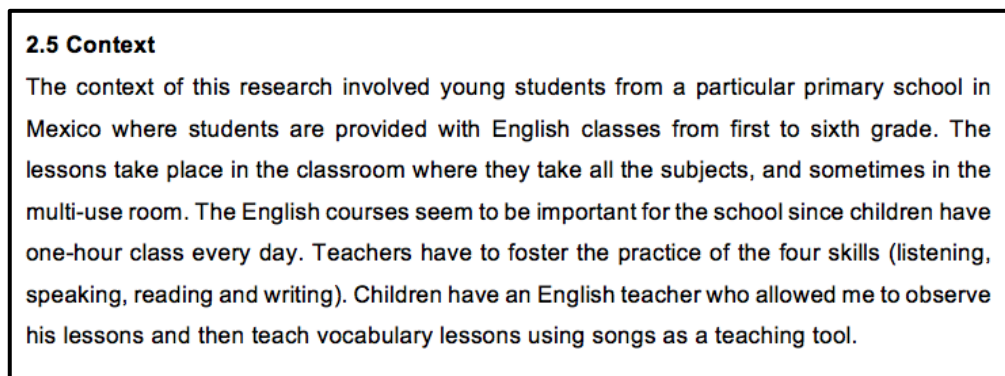


Figure 7.13 Jackie's context section, 1<sup>st</sup> draft

Therefore, it is possible that even when students do not see the connection between the *Research seminar* activities and the development of their research paper, and even when they do not fully engage with them, doing the activities may have an impact in the process. Both Jackie and Xareni, however, did not see the point of the course, and wondered what the activities were for. This may suggest that there is room for improvement when it comes to how the students experience their research paper trajectories.

### 7.3 Changes: Let's ignore that

When I started analysing Jackie's drafts and the feedback she had received from Cuauhtémoc and Victoria, my impression was that she had tried to see to all their comments and observations. This was also Cuauhtémoc impression, 'I always ask them [students he supervises] to send corrections in a different colour so that the next revision flows more freely, and she did so. Yes, **she always integrated the comments**. Even when her paper went to the examiners, she also took into account what they commented' (Interview with Cuauhtémoc). This was Victoria's impression as well, 'she

responded to observations very well, maybe it took her some time, but when she sent it [her paper corrected], she even sent it when her supervisor had already checked it, and she had already incorporated what I had observed. That was very satisfying [...] the comments I made, **she made all the changes**' (Interview with Victoria).

Let us remember that according to Cuauhtémoc himself, his observations were minimal, and they were mainly related to 'punctuation and a few grammar mistakes' (Interview with Cuauhtémoc). Actually, Jackie recalls something similar about Cuauhtémoc's comments, 'the truth is that the mistakes I've had are more like I'm missing a comma, I mean, it is not about content' (Interview 1). The fewer observations of this sort, the easier to see to them, right? However, once I started analysing Jackie's changes in more detail, by comparing the feedback received in every draft to Jackie's Final Version, I realised that it was more than periods, commas and a few language problems. Jackie did engage in *Making changes according to feedback* when she received this and any other type of feedback; otherwise, neither Cuauhtémoc nor Victoria, or myself, would have had the impression that she had seen to practically all of them, but in fact *Ignoring feedback* was also a very common ADL practice in which Jackie engaged.

Interestingly, one type of observation that Jackie ignored was related to punctuation. In his feedback for Jackie's second draft, Cuauhtémoc insisted that she should pay attention to it (Figure 7.14), and in the fourth draft he was very emphatic about it (Figure 7.15). One of the examiners also made several corrections related to punctuation all along Jackie's research paper which she did not consider in her Final Version (Figure 7.16). Considering that both Cuauhtémoc and Jackie considered punctuation a 'minimal' observation that was corrected, it is intriguing that punctuation problems persisted and yet did not affect the excellent result Jackie obtained.

**Cuauhtémoc** enero 15, 2019  
You should improve your punctuation in English, please.

Figure 7.14 Cuauhtémoc's observation on punctuation, 2<sup>nd</sup> draft

**Cuauhtémoc** enero 22, 2019  
**Be careful with punctuation, please. I have observed punctuation a lot in your previous drafts. Take it into account, please.**

Figure 7.15 Cuauhtémoc's observation on punctuation, 4<sup>th</sup> draft


<b>2.2 Cognitive development: Piaget Theory</b>	Reader marzo 08, 2019 Eliminado: ,
Cognitivism is an essential and valuable thec cognitive theory has been an important contribi	
<b>2.2 Cognitive development: Piaget Theory</b>	<b>Final version</b>
Cognitivism, is an essential and valuable thec cognitive theory has been an important contribi	
There are several factors that are very i children. One of them is the knowledge of chil children's characteristics, and finally it is vital to	Reader marzo 08, 2019 Eliminado: ,
<b>2.2 Cognitive development: Piaget Theory</b>	<b>Final version</b>
There are several factors, that are ver children. One of them is the knowledge of cl children's characteristics, and finally it is vital	
roup and another English teacher	Reader marzo 08, 2019 Eliminado: :
bserved, as well as nine children in the investigation: five girls and	
the group and another English	<b>Final version</b>
vas observed, as well as: Nne nts in the investigation: five girls	

**Figure 7.16 Punctuation problems examples persisting in Jackie's Final Version**

There were also several content observations that Jackie decided to ignore, some made by Cuauhtémoc but mostly by Victoria. Admittedly, some of Cuauhtémoc's observations may not have been crucial to change; differently to his opinion, dealing with new and unknown concepts may very well be reason enough for some to feel frustrated (Figure 7.17), and there were already several in-text references regarding qualitative approach in Jackie's corresponding section, so adding more characteristics and references supporting them may have seemed unnecessary for her (Figure 7.18). In any case, being ignored in these and other similar cases must have been of no great concern for Cuauhtémoc, as he does not even remember his observations being ignored at all.


When children learn a new language, they might feel frustrated, since they must deal with new and unknown concepts for them. Songs, but more especially instrumental music, give us the external cover we need to feel more secure while, at the same time, provide the internal support to carry on with the task (Griffiee 1992).	
<b>Cuauhtémoc</b>	noviembre 29, 2018
But why frustrated? The management of new and unknown concepts is not enough to be frustrated. Include more information to say what you really want to express here.	

**Figure 7.17 Ignored Cuauhtémoc's observation, example 1**


**Cuauhtémoc** diciembre 11, 2018   
 You need here to go deeper in terms of the main characteristics of the qualitative approach and mention, at least, an in-text cite to back up this component.

**Figure 7.18 Ignored Cuauhtémoc's observation, example 2**

The same happens with Victoria, who was very satisfied with Jackie's corrections, but in this case the observations she made that Jackie did not see to were of a more significant nature. For example, one of them referred to the apparent lack of connection between the theoretical concepts in Jackie's literature review (Figure 7.19), another to insufficiently developed categories in Jackie's findings, and a third one to the title of her research paper itself (Figure 7.20). Victoria's recollection of these events was different from what really happened, 'she [Jackie] stated that she was going to study the students' behaviour when songs were used, but she did not define behaviour and did not mention it in the results, but she changed this at the end, I don't remember if she got rid of *behaviour* or if she did include information about it' (Interview with Victoria). As a matter of fact, Jackie did not add any more sections in her literature review, or any information related to the concept of behaviour in her results; she did not develop more her categories, there was actually not a single reference included in her findings chapter, and her title remained the same from her first draft to her Final Version: 'Students' behaviour when songs are used in the English classroom'.

**Victoria** enero 13, 2019   
 There should be a point (maybe here) in which you have to link children learning theories and children's first language acquisition and second language learning. You seem to be skipping that bridge and you're going directly to particular issues in children's second language learning.

**Figure 7.19 Ignored Victoria's observation, example 1**

**Victoria** enero 13, 2019 

In general, I think that your findings need to be enriched. Include more information about the focus group and your field notes. The categories are not well developed. Also, your title says children's behavior but I think you never used that word in the findings. Behavior and attitude are broad concepts and there are many other aspects you could include there.

You already mentioned some like attention, participation, positive attitude, but you can also mention engagement, task completion, emotions, among others.

Maybe you could modify the title as The use of songs in teaching English to children, as you also talk about other issues like vocabulary and materials.

**Figure 7.20 Ignored Victoria's observation, example 2**

One of the **reasons** Jackie may have had for *Ignoring feedback* in Victoria's case is the way Cuauhtémoc referred to the need of making those changes, which leave it to Jackie to decide whether to make them or not (Figure 7.21). Jackie did understand that it was up to her, and thus decided to do what Cuauhtémoc said (Interview extract 7.3). However, what may have influenced more Jackie's decision not to include everything Victoria observed was the fact that Victoria sent her feedback almost two months later (See November and January dates in Appendix 25), and thus, Jackie had already made several changes Victoria was not aware of, 'Victoria's comments, to tell the truth [...] those comments took too long to be received and we had already made many changes' (Interview 2).

Hello,

Here you are my feedback. Continue working hard on your corrections. Read carefully Reyna's comments and try to incorporate those corrections you consider pertinent to improve your paper.

Take care,

Cuauhtémoc

**Figure 7.21 Cuauhtémoc to Jackie email about Victoria's comments**

Interview extract 7.3

'Victoria's observations, there were things I said *Ok, I'll see if I can include them*. The truth is that Cuauhtémoc told me *Take them into account but they are not that necessary, right? If you consider that you need to change something, change it*. So, that was what I did'.

(Interview 2)



Jackie also ignored almost all the observations by the examiners. One of them had quite a lot, over 40, all practically related to language mistakes and punctuation. Jackie only made corrections for 6 of this examiner's observations. Although it would not have been difficult to make the corrections, Jackie said the reason she had not made them was that she thought all the examiners' comments had to be incorporated before the presentation and 'they [this examiner's comments] are going to change all the structure of my research paper, so I said *I prefer not to change those, otherwise it will be much more work and not in a lifetime will I finish on time for my presentation*' (Interview 2). For Jackie, thus, her reasons to ignore this examiner's feedback were of a practical nature. The other examiner only sent three observations in all the paper, and yet Jackie ignored one, related to adding something about Scaffolding (Vygotsky) and the theory of meaningful learning (Ausubel), because 'it was not going to enrich or affect, I mean, whether it was there or not, and I didn't have much time, so I took what I thought *Yes, this will enrich my research paper, but this other is unnecessary*' (Interview 2). Jackie was truly concerned about not having time to make the examiner's corrections before the presentation, she even sent an email to both Cuauhtémoc and Jackie asking for any news (Figure 7.22, translated from Spanish).

Hi,  
 I hope you are fine.  
 I'm writing because I haven't received any news from you.  
 I haven't received any information from my examiners, if my research paper is ready to be presented.  
 I'm a little worried about the little time left.  
 I look forward to hearing from you.  
 Regards,

**Figure 7.22 Jackie's email expressing concern about time pressure**

This was the only event in which Jackie expressed any concerns to Cuauhtémoc or Victoria, but she felt stressed and frustrated more times than this one. This will be discussed in the following section, as it is part of Jackie's major challenges.

#### 7.4 Major challenges: On her own, tracking changes

From Cuauhtémoc and Victoria's perspective, Jackie's case was that of an ideal trajectory for a research paper writing process. For Jackie, however, it was a different story. In the end, she admits 'it wasn't as painful as everyone told [her]' (Interview 2), but it was the first time she was writing an academic text of this nature, and it was not that easy either, 'I really didn't know how to start, what elements [of a research paper], what I had to do' (Interview 1). It is clear that from the very beginning Jackie did not find the *Research seminar* helpful at all, 'I think that the most difficult was to figure out the elements of a research paper, and that in the course we take [the *Research seminar*], they don't give it to you [...] they don't tell you what it is that a research paper should include in general' (Interview 1). According to her, she had to resort to other sources, such as reading other 'theses', and going to the library of her previous university to look for literature on English language teaching and learning and her topic (using songs). She mentioned to have consulted internet sources in order to write what would become the first draft of her research paper, which took her around two months to write. She even reviewed her mother's research paper, as she had graduated from a similar BA program at the same university, but in a face-to-face modality.

We can then see that, from the beginning, Jackie experienced this trajectory as a **lonely process**, where there was no guiding element, either human or in the form of online content, offered by the institution, that would help her find out how to get started and put her very first draft together. This loneliness would increase along the process as she only communicated with the *Research seminar* facilitator via *Eminus*, with occasional e-mails or WhatsApp texts, and with her supervisor only via e-mail, with occasional WhatsApp texts (See Appendix 26). The WhatsApp conversations were mainly to inform about feedback that had been sent by e-mail or administrative information that had been sent in *Eminus* (See Appendix 27 for examples). The e-mails other than the files with progress or feedback really did not discuss any other issue (See Figures 7.21, 7.22 and 7.23 for examples).

Jackie could have arranged, however, a Skype meeting with her supervisor so as to establish a more personal contact, but she admitted this was not her supervisor's fault, 'I didn't have a [Skype] call [...] or messages [...] but I think it was not a lack of monitoring from him [Cuauhtémoc], it was because I didn't ask for it' (Interview 2). After all, Cuauhtémoc did tell her in his e-mails that she could get in touch with him if she had any questions about the feedback he sent (Figure 7.23). Jackie attributes part of this **communication at a distance** problem to her usual way of doing things on her

own, ‘My mistake maybe is that I work alone, I’m used to doing it like this at my job in general, I don’t ask, for me is like *Ok, I get it, so I change it*’. Nevertheless, Jackie clearly felt she should receive more guidance, and this failure in communicating it to her teachers may suggest that there was a **lack of trust** to consult whether the facilitator, who was not delivering support as she expected, or her supervisor, whose observations were minimal. Trust in those who are supposed to know the field, and who are supposed to be there to help you, is vital for communication within this type of academic literacy practices (Robertson, 2017).

[17 October, 2018]  
 Hello Jackie,  
 Here you are my comments about your paper. Read my feedback carefully, try to understand it and to think in advance on possible solutions for my requirements. Before you make any improvement, **get in contact with me to clarify some possible questions you have.** |  
 Take care,  
 Cuauhtémoc

[14 December, 2018]  
 Hello Jackie,  
 Here you are my comments. **If you have any question, get in contact.** Please, make all your corrections in blue.  
 Take care,  
 Cuauhtémoc

[22 January, 2019]  
 Hello,  
 Here you are my feedback. Please, take into account my comments and do not repeat mistakes I have already observed before. **Any question, ask me.**  
 Take care,  
 Cuauhtémoc

**Figure 7.23** Cuauhtémoc’s emails expressing Jackie can get in touch

Jackie complained, as has been previously mentioned, about the course and that the feedback from Victoria was too belated; she would have expected that the facilitator of such a course (the *Research seminar*) would be responsible for guiding the students in the research paper development. Therefore, Jackie thought the course and the facilitator were not doing what they were meant to, but failed to communicate so, to both her supervisor and the facilitator. This is an issue that needs to be addressed in the

BA programme, because, just as Janke et al. (2020) propose for academics who wish to publish, students writing a dissertation and teachers involved in the process should not only be socially aware, but also socially skilled. The people involved in the writing process of this research paper in this BA can be compared to the multi-institutional team with each member having their own goals for participating that Janke et al. refer to. As such, each member should be prepared to navigate the research paper writing trajectory, where there will be differences in backgrounds, experiences and preferences, and thus they should be ready to negotiate forms and meanings of the expected genre to be produced.

This failure in communication led to another major challenge for Jackie. Even when she was used to doing things on her own, she felt lost at writing the first complete draft of her research paper on her own. She was so stressed that even her mother noticed it, and they both attributed this to the fact that Jackie's case was not "normal" in that there were no face-to-face sessions with a supervisor (Interview extract 7.4). Therefore, apart from the possible lack of trust, another possible reason not to get in touch with her supervisor or facilitator via Skype, for example, is that Jackie considered it would not have been the same as having the possibility of the actual physical presence of someone she could go to for the necessary guidance (Interview extract 7.4 and Interview extract 7.5). What Jackie needed was 'a face or something like a voice that tells you how to do it [the research paper]' (Interview 1); she apparently longed for face-to-face contact during this process. Thus, the lack of face-to-face contact in the teacher-student relationship within online learning environments makes it necessary for this relationship to evolve and consider a wider range of actors involved in the learning process and the emerging new roles for the teachers and students themselves (Haythornthwaite et al., 2016).

Interview extract 7.4

'she [Jackie's mother] told me *I can see you are very stressed, because you don't have like something normal, somewhere you can sit with someone and have a session [...], in my case I did have someone I could sit with and I had 100% support, and they told me how to write the paper because I didn't know, and it is not like they wrote the research paper for her, but they told her what to include and what to do, where to research, how it should be organised, I did all of that on my own, I think this course [the Research seminar] needs that'.*

(Interview 1)

## Interview extract 7.5

‘the course was not useful at all [...], my mum had the same course, but not online, face-to-face, and she tells me it’s completely different, I told her *no one has helped me*, I mean, I have done everything to the best of my knowledge; for my mom there was an actual supervision, **sitting** with her supervisor, *Look, step number one, the research paper should include this, step number 2*, I think that this was what online work is missing’.

(Interview 1)

What Jackie may have needed was an actual voice at least behind the screen, rather than uploaded contents, explaining her how to go about the writing of a research paper. The fact that Jackie did not make any attempt to get in touch with Cuauhtémoc or Victoria to ask for this guidance suggests that students, even those who seem to be used to sorting things out on their own, can feel lost, alone and frustrated if they do not receive the expected support. All of this is particularly important to consider in online higher education contexts, as no matter how independent the students may be, commitment to communicate efficiently at a distance has to come from both sides, and online facilitators should keep in mind that students expect support and sometimes do not know how to or will not ask for it.

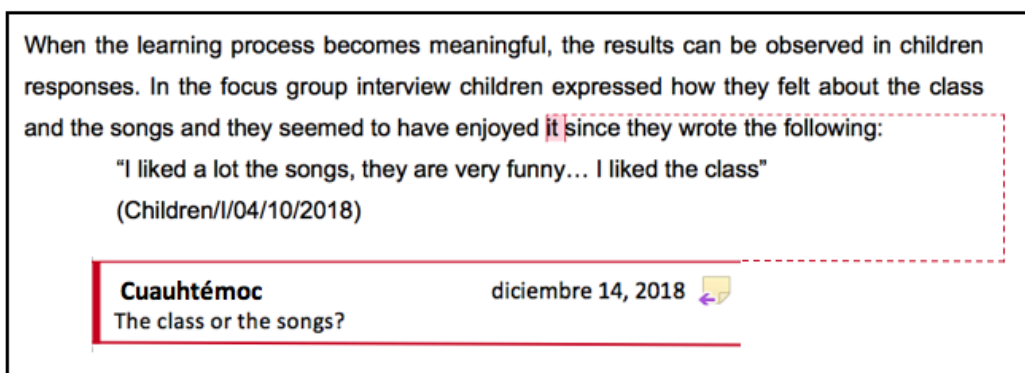
Another issue within communication in this online learning community emerges in relation to **communication between the teachers** involved in the student’s research paper writing process. It was clear from the belated feedback Victoria sent for Jackie’s first draft that there was no communication between Victoria and Cuauhtémoc in relation to Jackie’s actual progress. This entailed a major challenge for Jackie. On the one hand, asynchronous communication did not help, ‘that was the most challenging about communication, that the dates, it was like we were doing it at a different, we were out of synchronisation’ (Interview 2). On the other hand, the actual problem was that Victoria’s feedback did not correspond to Jackie’s latest version, ‘what I think was super frustrating was that I already had some observations [Cuauhtémoc’s] and I had already changed my structure, my everything, and then this other teacher [Victoria] changes, uhm, makes other comments, it was then that I did get lost’ (Interview 2).

If Victoria and Cuauhtémoc had maintained a closer communication regarding Jackie’s progress, this may have not been an issue, as Victoria would have been aware

of all the changes that Jackie had already made to her research paper, and thus her feedback would not have been on a different draft to the latest version. This could be the result of not having clearly defined roles for the facilitator of the *Research seminar* and the supervisors, but this will be further discussed in the discussion chapter. It is clear, though, that this made it harder for Jackie to keep track of changes and to decide if changes were worth doing or not, ‘Who should I listen to? What do I do? What do I not do? [...] that was part of the confusion, that Victoria changed some things that Cuauhtémoc was okay with, I mean, he did not have any comments about something, but Victoria did’ (Interview 2).

I found this discrepancy mainly in Jackie’s findings chapter. On the first draft, Cuauhtémoc made very few and minor observations in this chapter, mostly related language and punctuation. Victoria, however, commented that in general the section had to be improved by including data from the different data collection methods and developing the categories in more detail (Figure 7.20 on previous section, 7.3). When Jackie received these comments, she had already made changes according to Cuauhtémoc’s observations on her first draft, she had sent him a second draft and had already received his feedback for it, so she was already working on her third draft. Although Jackie did make a lot of changes according to Victoria’s observations, she ignored or omitted most of them for the findings chapter. Let us see some examples of this.

The following is one of Cuauhtémoc’s observations in one of Jackie’s categories in her findings chapter:



**Figure 7.24 Cuauhtémoc’s observation on Jackie’s findings chapter, 1<sup>st</sup> draft**

Jackie did take this observation into account and made the changes in this paragraph for her second draft, where Cuauhtémoc made no further observations:

When the learning process becomes meaningful, the results can be observed in children responses. In the focus group interview, children expressed how they felt about the class and the songs and they seemed to have enjoyed both the songs and overall of the class since they wrote the following:

"I liked a lot the songs, they are very funny... I liked the class."

**Figure 7.25 Jackie's correction on findings chapter, 2<sup>nd</sup> draft**

Then, when Jackie was already working on her third draft, she received Victoria's feedback, where she made an observation on this same paragraph, but from Jackie's first draft, questioning Jackie's interpretation of her findings and requesting for further clarification:

When the learning process becomes meaningful, the results can be observed in children responses. In the focus group interview children expressed how they felt about the class and the songs and they seemed to have enjoyed it since they wrote the following:

"I liked a lot the songs, they are very funny... I liked the class"

(Children/1/04/10/2018)

**Victoria** enero 13, 2019

And what is the relationship between this and meaningfulness? Was the use of songs meaningful for them? why? Also, did the songs include topics of interest for the children, or did they include vocabulary about their daily activities or other topics to which learners could relate?

**Figure 7.26 Victoria's comment on Jackie's findings chapter, 1<sup>st</sup> draft**

In the end, Jackie ignored Victoria's comments for her final version, and kept only the changes she had made according to Cuauhtémoc's minor observation:

When the learning process becomes meaningful, the results can be observed in children responses. In the focus group interview, children expressed how they felt about the class and the songs. The students seemed to have enjoyed both the songs and overall of the class since they wrote the following:

"I liked a lot the songs, they are very funny... I liked the class".

(Children/1/04/10/2018)

**Figure 7.27 Jackie's paragraph on findings chapter, Final Version**

Jackie's decisions as to what to do when Cuauhtémoc thought there was no problem but Victoria did make comments were not all the time about *Ignoring feedback*; they were also related to *Omitting 'problematic' information* (Figures 7.28 and 7.29). As I mentioned before, Jackie did engage in *Making changes according to feedback*, and when she ignored feedback, it was sometimes related to practical reasons due to time pressure. Some other times, because Cuauhtémoc did advise only to change what she "considered necessary", and some others because Victoria's feedback had taken too long to be received. In her findings chapter, Jackie did not 'completely' ignore all Victoria's comments (Figures 7.26 and 7.27); she argues that she sometimes decided to eliminate the sentences that Victoria had questioned because she 'read it again, and the truth is that the information was not contributing to [her] research paper but damaging it, and it was because of that that, sometimes, in certain cases, [she] omitted it' (Interview 1). She did not explain what she meant by 'damaging', but the fact that she ignored or omitted some of Victoria's most 'problematic' comments (See Figures 7.19, 7.20, 7.26, 7.28 and 7.29) suggests that this 'damaging information' implied making further major changes that she would not do, whether because she thought it was too late to do so or because her supervisor, Cuauhtémoc, had not indicated any necessary changes in those cases and let Jackie decide about it, as it has been previously mentioned.

**Draft**  
as they could produce language in English. This kept them interested and willing to do more. ~~The satisfaction in their faces showed this.~~ Besides the fact that children seemed to enjoy playing with songs, it was important that activities helped them to understand and use English in a meaningful way

**Reyna López Blé** enero 13, 2019  
Did you record this in your field notes or did they say that in the focus group? You need to support this with evidence. Include the section of your field notes or the extract of the interview where this is shown.

**Final version**  
language in English. This kept them interested and willing to do more. Besides the fact that children seemed to enjoy playing with songs, it was important that activities helped them to understand and use English in a meaningful way.

Figure 7.28 Jackie omitting 'problematic' information, Example 1



**Draft**

In this category some of the advantages of using songs in the English class are shown. The information described in this category has emerged from the different instruments used during this research project. First, one of the advantages is that using songs in class seemed to increase children motivation, as explained above, and they also create a relaxed atmosphere.

**Reyna López Blé** enero 13, 2019

How can you support this? Did the teachers tell you that? Sis you write it on your field notes? Can you describe it? Or did the children say so in the focus group?

**Final version**

In this category, some of the advantages of using songs in the English class are shown. The information described in this category has emerged from the different instruments used during this research project.

**Figure 7.29 Jackie omitting ‘problematic’ information, Example 2**

Jackie admitted, however, that trying to put together all the observations from Cuauhtémoc and Victoria was hard; ‘**unifying**, for me, was very difficult, I missed many things, but I think that it was because I was swamped with going from one file to the other’ (Interview 1). Hence, eliminating sometimes the sentences where Victoria had made observations in the findings chapter was probably partly due to this overload of work that tracking all the necessary changes meant for her. In all fairness, and ironically, I also found it very hard to track all the changes she had made because she did not only keep the Track Changes Word tool on from one draft to the other, but also the marks for all the changes Cuauhtémoc, Victoria and she had made on all previous drafts (See Figure 7.30 for an example). She ‘cleaned’ her file for her fourth draft, as requested by Victoria, and it was then that Cuauhtémoc realised that Jackie had not made some changes he had already observed and emphasised she should pay attention to them (See Figure 7.15, in section 7.3, for an example).

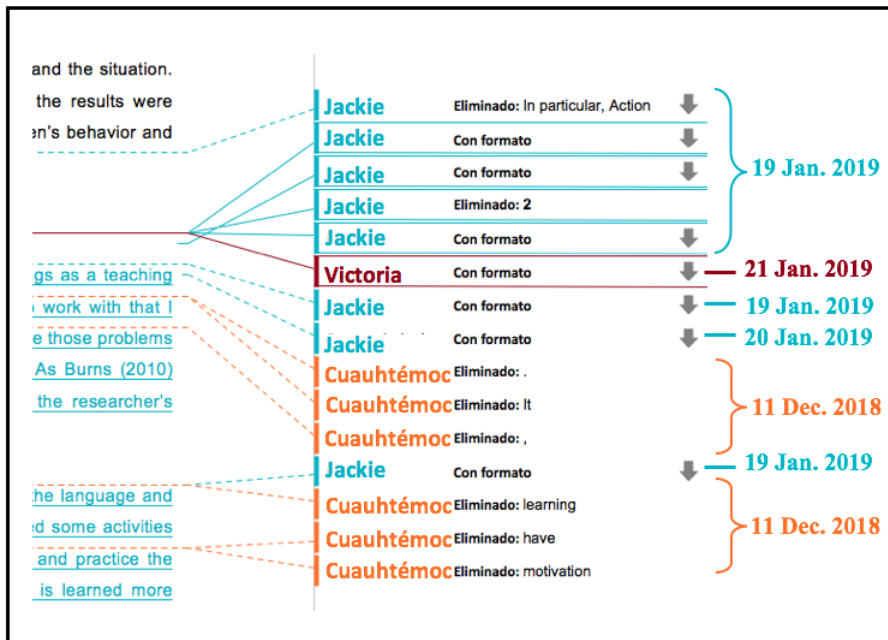


Figure 7.30 Track Changes Word tool on Jackie's fourth draft

Even though neither Cuauhtémoc and Victoria nor Jackie mentioned it as such, one last major challenge in Jackie's case was **referencing**. Cuauhtémoc barely commented on this on Jackie's drafts, referring exclusively to using the correct format of the required style in two very specific cases (Figure 7.31), observations which Jackie ignored. Victoria only made a format correction in the reference list adding the hanging indent as required in APA style (Figure 7.32), and sent a couple of references to Jackie suggesting she should include them in her literature review (Figure 7.33), both of which actually appeared in Jackie's reference list after Victoria sent them. As a matter of fact, in general, Jackie's in-text referencing and the list of references seemed to follow the required APA style. Admittedly, there were some italics missing in journal's names, a few punctuation issues, and some information missing in some of the references in her list at the end, but they were easy to go unnoticed.

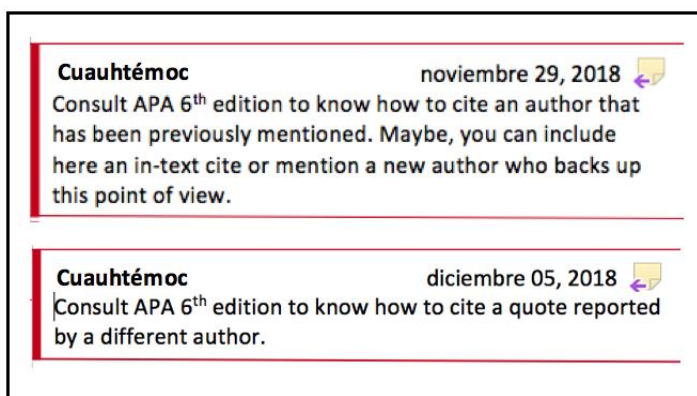
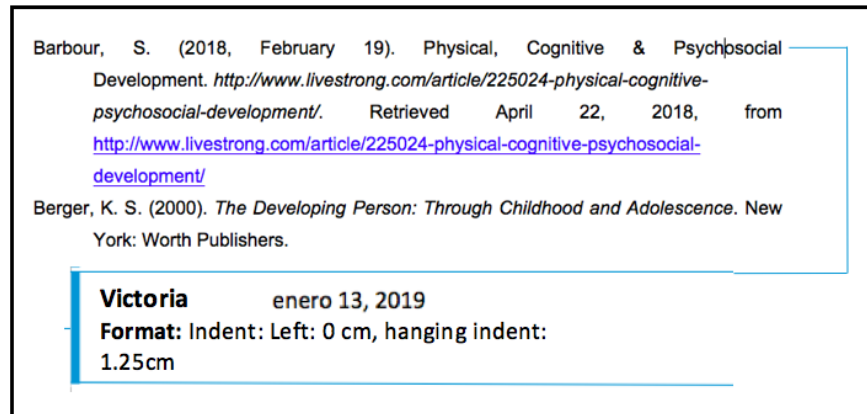
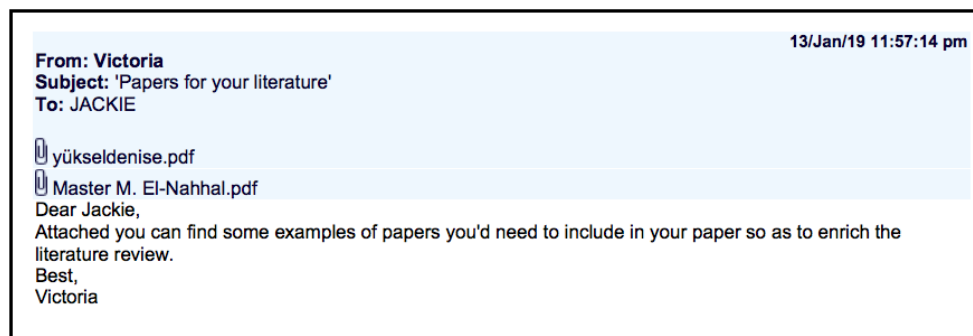


Figure 7.31 Cuauhtémoc's observations about referencing



**Figure 7.32 Victoria's format correction to reference list**



**Figure 7.33 Victoria's references suggestion for the literature review**

The actual problem was that there were 14 references in her list of 36 that did not appear in her text, including those suggested by Victoria, and there were 8 references in her text that did not appear in her reference list, as well as some cases of surnames spelled differently (6) and references with different years (5) (See Appendix 28). No one seemed to check either if the references were academic, reliable sources or updated. This could imply that the focus on referencing skills in the BA may be mainly in terms of format style so as to adhering to an acceptable referencing tradition, (See Figures 6.12, 6.13, 6.14, 7.31 and 7.32), apart from the use of references that are relevant to the research topic in question (See Figures 6.2, 6.3, 6.11, 7.4, 7.7 and 7.18). In my experience as a *Research seminar* facilitator, supervisor and examiner in this B.A programme, avoiding plagiarism is also an important aspect for insisting on including references appropriately. According to Aghadiouno (2017), referencing is in fact important to demonstrate the writers' credibility of their work, and both adhering to a reference system and avoiding plagiarism are some of the most common concerns when it comes to referencing skills. Should this be the only focus for referencing?

Recapitulating Jackie's research paper writing trajectory, for Cuauhtémoc and Victoria it was the "ideal" one because, according to them, Jackie was very independent, knew what to do and did it well, and made all the changes to their observations, which resulted in the highest grade in the *Research seminar*. On the other hand, for Jackie, on the contrary, things were not so straightforward. She felt lonely, stressed and frustrated all along, and did not reach out for help, which probably led her to ignore more observations than Cuauhtémoc, Victoria and herself realised, thus indicating a lack of trust. Nonetheless, despite the negative side of this experience, Jackie was proud of having been able to succeed in writing a 'dissertation' by herself:

Interview extract 7.6

'to see all the puzzle together, to see all the process, the truth is that it was something I did enjoy, I mean, it was as an achievement of my own, it was like *Look, you were able to write a 'dissertation'*, and it wasn't as painful as everyone told me it would be'.

(Interview 2)

## Chapter 8      A pleasant surprise... in a way

Brigitte was 31 years old when she enrolled in the *Research seminar* course in 2018. She still lived in the same city she had lived since she was born, which is the capital city of the state where the university context of the present study resides. She has always dreamt of travelling abroad, and was always aware that English would be an asset for this purpose. She had never given English classes before she entered the online BA in ELT, and had already dropped out from a similar face-to-face BA programme four years before at the same university. 'I have never been good at studying', she admitted (Interview 1). Nevertheless, even if it took longer than she expected, she finished the online BA and she obtained a grade of 8 out of 10 as a result in the *Research seminar*, which is considered if not an 'excellent' grade, a quite 'good' one. 'Straight A', that is, excellent students are those whose grades range from 9 to 10, and below average students are usually those within a 6-7 range, or lower. A grade of 8 is then considered average, but still regarded as quite acceptable. However, due to the below average academic trajectory she maintained along the BA, expectations about her performance for the *Research seminar* were not very high. Thus, obtaining an 8 for her research paper was not 'bad' at all. But, how did this story begin?

It was in 2013, at the age of 26, when she had recently become a dance teacher in a state secondary school that she decided to study the online ELT BA. Not having completed the face-to-face BA in English Language degree she had previously enrolled or pursued any other BA studies, she realised she needed a degree diploma for better job opportunities, although she was still not sure she wanted to become an English teacher. She did like the language, but it had not been always that way. The mandatory English courses in Mexican state high schools (6 years) were barely a learning experience for her, as it is known to be for most students. She was not interested in English until her last year in senior high school. She liked music in this language very much, and wanted to know what the lyrics said. She decided then to take formal English courses at the Language Department programme for children and adolescents of the same university she would later study the BA programmes. It was during these courses that she enjoyed English lessons for the first time.

Once she finished high school in 2005, as she was already taking those English courses at the university, she decided to study the face-to-face BA in English, but her conviction was not very strong then either, 'for all bachelor degrees one needs to take at

least two or three English courses, so if I was going to take it anyway, I thought I'd better study the BA [in English]. I simply said *Well, let's do that*, because I couldn't make up my mind for anything else' (Interview 1). She completed 7 out of 10 semesters of this BA, but for personal problems she dropped out in 2010. According to her, insecurity and low self-esteem issues she had at the time had always made it hard for her to make friends, but she had made really good ones at this face-to-face BA. They became practically her only reason to go to university, and when they started falling behind or dropping out, she felt alone and rejected, 'I got to a point where I said *Why do I keep coming? I'm only wasting my time and I don't like it here anymore*, it was me and my sadness, my issues, and I stopped going, I didn't want to go; it wasn't the language, it was what was happening to me' (Interview 1).

For the following four years her life took a very different direction. She left home, started to work in a video store, and decided to study again, this time in a job training school. She studied the folk dance programme for two years and a half, and then started the dressmaking programme, which she studied for two years. Although she only completed the latter, she continued taking lessons of other dance styles in different institutions. In 2013, she quit her job at the video store, started working as a dressmaker, and had got a job as a dance teacher in a 'telesecondary' school<sup>1</sup> when she realised that

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<sup>1</sup> 'Telesecondary' schools in Mexico are junior high schools (3 years) that emerged in the late 60s as state schools supporting education at this level with TV and videos for all classes in remote rural communities. According to Jiménez et al. (2010), they emerged first as a measure to decrease illiteracy rates in Mexico. In the mid 60s, only 38% of children finished primary school (6<sup>th</sup> grade). The problem in rural areas was even more critical, as only 2% of children in those areas were able to complete this level of education, and thus, even fewer had the opportunity to complete junior high school or any other further level. One of the reasons for this low number was the lack of schools and teachers in these areas both for the last three years of primary school and the following levels of education: junior high school (3 years, 3 grades), and senior high school (3 years, 6 semesters). The creation of 'Telesecondary' schools attempted to solve part of this problem.

As Jiménez et. al (2010) explained, classes in 'Telesecondaries' were initially 20-minutes long, using 15 to 18 to watching the TV transmission or video, and then a "monitor teacher" would supervise students performed the activities they were meant to carry out. Later, they decided to extend the sessions to 50 minutes, dedicating 18 minutes maximum for the TV programming, and the rest for revision and discussion. The "monitor teachers" were in charge of all the subjects of one grade, which lowered costs in terms of teaching staff. Thus, instead of several teachers giving the different classes in the curricula (history, mathematics, English, Spanish, and so forth), as it normally happens at this level of education in Mexico, one teacher was in charge of all the subjects for Grade 1, another teacher of those in Grade 2, and another of the ones in Grade 3. These days, this one teacher per grade scheme still officially prevails, but the TV and video are no longer the only teaching support resources. Apart from a more varied television programming and support videos, they now use new printed materials and have incorporated additional technological resources such as DVD and education software, giving teachers more flexibility to organise their classes in the interest of promoting reflexion, discussion and interaction among students, this in order to generate more meaningful learning situations in the 50-minute sessions.

'Telesecondary' schools can now be found not only in remote rural communities, but also in rural areas close to cities, in order to offer more state school options for children finishing primary school whose parents cannot afford private institutions. Other than the one teacher per grade scheme, and the fact that there are still TV transmissions developed especially for this type of education, in terms of classroom

she would ultimately need a degree diploma if she wanted to have access to better opportunities in life.

As Brigitte had almost finished the face-to-face BA in English, and had the English language certification EXAVER III (B2), she was admitted in February 2014 to the online ELT BA through a revalidation process. She thought she could finish within the 2 years and a half in which the online programme can be completed, and thus would have a degree diploma sooner than she would get it if she studied a different bachelor programme. Nevertheless, she admitted she was never a ‘good’ student:

Interview extract 8.1

‘I’ve never been good at studying. If I were diligent, I would be good, but I find it very difficult to commit [...] I was never on the honour roll, I have never been very keen on school stuff, it’s been always hard for me [...] When reading, at school, it’s been 5 minutes and for me it feels like half an hour, it feels like a burden’  
(Interview 1)

She especially had issues with reading in general, both in Spanish and English, and the BA was all reading, researching and writing for her, and ‘I don’t even read for things I like’ (Interview 1). This partially explains why it took her longer than she expected to make progress. Although she did well in her first year courses, she failed several all along the BA and had to sit for second or third chance exams, or even take the courses again in order to pass them. Her passing grades usually ranged between 6 and 8 out of 10. Her GPA in the end was 7.94 out of 10, which is considered a bit lower than average. All in all, this is why her trajectory at the BA could be considered below average in general.

The August 2018 – January 2019 term was the last chance for her to take the *Research seminar* and then be able to complete the BA. It took her a year to finish and present her research paper, and although expectations were not very high at the

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management they work very similarly to ‘normal’ high schools, where the number of students per classroom varies a lot, as well as the assessment methods, which ultimately depend on the teachers. It is well-known, however, that English usually poses a great challenge for ‘Telesecondary’ school teachers. It is not uncommon that they pay themselves an English teacher, or receive voluntary pre-service teachers to give those classes. This is how Brigitte was able to do her teaching practices and social service for the online BA, as teachers of the ‘telesecondary’ where she worked as a dance teacher knew that she was studying the BA in ELT and started to ask for her help with their English classes. From this experience, Brigitte would develop her project for her research paper.

beginning, she got an 8 for it, a higher grade than Xareni's, who had been practically a straight A student, as we saw in Chapter 6. It was then a pleasant surprise that, even when it took her longer than expected, Brigitte was able to deliver a quite acceptable research paper. Her supervisor and *Research seminar* facilitator, **Victoria**, commented:

Interview extract 8.2

'I even thought that I would struggle checking language and organisation of ideas, that I would have to modify all of it, but I first tried with comments like *you missed something here and this other there*, and she did see to my observations, and she did it well [...] [Her strength was] that she was constant, it went slow, but she was constant, and responsive.'

(Interview with Victoria)

So, not only her result was a pleasant surprise, but also her writing skills to a certain extent as well as her commitment to make changes all along the process. However, not everything went smoothly. Getting started was problematic, and there were ups and downs along the process, but let us start from the beginning.

### 8.1 How it all started: Why English at all?

Brigitte did not feel that she had actually chosen a topic for her research project, but it was rather something that she had done 'for the paper of another course [Research in the L2 classroom]', something 'that just happened to pop out in that moment' (Interview 1), and that she kept for the *Research seminar* paper, as most students do. She nonetheless claimed that she did become interested in it from the beginning. She noticed how indifferent the students she had in the 'Telesecondary' school were towards English, 'I remember that maybe there were times I didn't do my [English] homework because I had forgotten about it, but I did whatever was necessary to pretend I had done it, copying it or something, but they wouldn't even bother, they would simply say *I didn't do it*, I mean, it was total apathy' (Interview 1). They would commonly ask her 'Why English? What for? Why not something else?' Brigitte first thought that maybe she was the reason why they had this attitude, 'maybe they don't like me' (Interview 1), but she also taught them the dance class, and their attitude there was completely different.

She thus related this attitude to the social context of the community where the 'Telesecondary' school was located, 'The truth is that very few [students] go on with



senior high-school, and even fewer go to university, some even drop junior high school because they get pregnant or run away with the boyfriend' (Interview 1). She suspected that students did not care for learning English at all because they would never use it, as they would very likely stay in their town and become housewives or bricklayers, as most of their parents. It was shocking for her that although this rural community was only 15 to 20 minutes away from the capital city of the state where they resided, the students seemed to have no other aspirations different from their parents; this context was the only one they knew and they seemed not to be interested or motivated to do anything different.

She then formulated the following **questions** in her **proposal**:

- Does the students' family context directly affect their attitude towards learning English?
- In what ways do the students socio-economical backgrounds impact on their interest for learning the English language?
- To what extent does living in a small community affect the motivation of students to learn a new language?

These questions did change to some extent along the process because of **Victoria**'s feedback (Figures 8.1 and 8.2), who was not only the *Research seminar* facilitator for Brigitte, but also her supervisor.

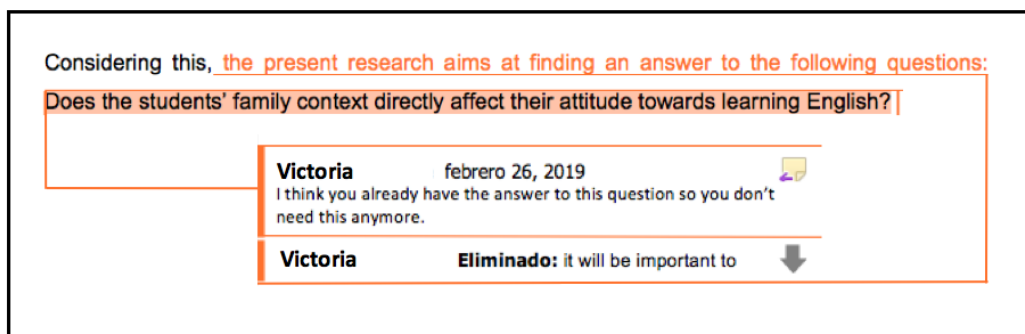


Figure 8.1 Victoria's changes to Brigitte's research questions (1)

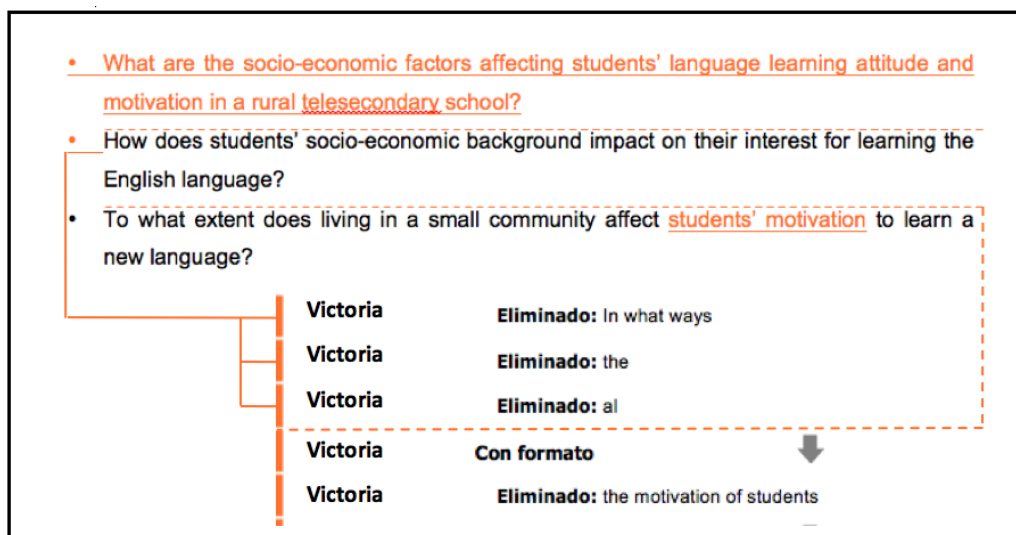


Figure 8.2 Victoria's changes to Brigitte's research questions (2)

By the **third draft**, Brigitte had formulated the **objective** as 'to find out the impact that the socioeconomic background has on English language learning' and she had **accepted** Victoria's changes in the **questions**:

- What are the socio-economic factors affecting the students' language learning attitude and motivation in a rural telesecondary school?
- How does the students' socio-economic background impact on their interest for learning the English language?
- To what extent does living in a small community affect the students' motivation of students to learn a new language?

For her **fourth draft**, Brigitte formulated her research objectives on her own as:

- to find out the impact that the socioeconomic background has on English language learning.
- To find out the socioeconomic factors affecting students' academic performance.
- To find out how socioeconomic factors impact on the students' motivation when learning a second language.

Both her research questions and objectives remained the same until her **final version**, where the objectives slightly changed considering one of her examiner's observations (Figure 8.3).

**1.1 Research objective**

This research aims to find out the impact that the socioeconomic background has on English language learning. To contribute to the attainment to this general objective, it is necessary to consider the following specific objectives:

- To **find out** the socioeconomic factors affecting students' academic performance.
- To **discover** how socioeconomic factors impact on the students motivation **to learn** a second language.

<p><b>Reader 1</b> Shed light on</p>	<p><b>Reader 1</b> Eliminado: find out</p>	<p><b>Reader 1</b> Eliminado: when learning</p>
--	--	---

**Figure 8.3 Examiner's observations to Brigitte's research questions**

Thus, for the **final version**, Brigitte's **research objectives** were:

- to find out the impact that the socioeconomic background has on English language learning.
- To inquire into the socioeconomic factors affecting students' academic performance in English.
- To discover how socioeconomic factors impact on the students' attitude and motivation to learn English.

As regards her **research questions**, they were changed until the very end for the final version, but there were no observations either from Victoria nor the examiners about them in any of Brigitte's drafts. According to Brigitte, it was during her conversations via WhatsApp with Victoria that they discussed these changes just before handing in the final version, '...there were three questions and two objectives, if I remember rightly, and they were not very well connected, so the teacher [Victoria] suggested [the changes] and so I changed them, but the suggestions were not on the paper, but during our WhatsApp conversations' (Interview 3). So, in the end, the questions were:

- What is the impact of telesecondary students' socioeconomic background on their English language learning?
- What are the socioeconomic factors affecting students' English language learning?
- How does students' socioeconomic background affect their attitude and motivation students to learn English?

As both Victoria and Brigitte lost their WhatsApp conversations before they could send them to me, there is no direct data from this process. However, during the interview with Victoria, she also remembered changing them at the end:

Interview extract 8.3

‘We first revised that they [research questions] were congruent with the objectives, and also if we were actually answering the questions [...] and we agreed that we should make some changes because [...] it could be confusing, as [Brigitte wasn’t] actually answering those [previous] questions. And there was a *To what extent*, but I think this is kind of quantitative, and so we changed it to *How*. By then, with the data, we could answer that question.’

(Interview with Victoria)

Therefore, all in all, Brigitte looked into her students’ socioeconomic background so as to find out how this could be affecting their attitude towards learning English. Her participants were 18 students (originally 20, but two of them dropped school before the study was completed), between 13 and 16 years old, enrolled in the second grade of this *telesecondary* school. She used a questionnaire to gather the socioeconomic background data, and interviewed 4 students to gain a more detailed perspective. From the beginning, Brigitte’s research project was very interesting for Victoria, ‘I saw a lot of potential [on Brigitte’s research paper], personally her topic called my attention. I talked to her at the beginning [of the course] to know if she had already developed the project, she explained the situation, and I thought it was very promising’ (Interview with Victoria). So, Brigitte’s research paper trajectory ‘got off to a good start’ from her supervisor’s perspective, and Brigitte claimed to be genuinely intrigued by the relation between the students’ context and their motivation to learn the language. What happened next, however, would be the first major ‘down’ in her trajectory.

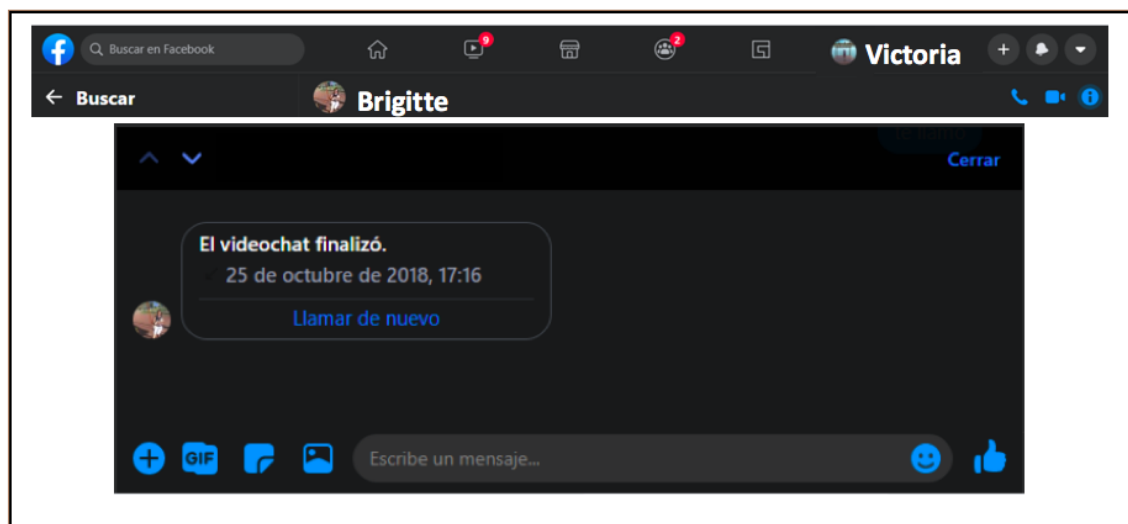
## 8.2 *Research seminar activities: Not really essential*

The only activity that Brigitte uploaded in *Eminus* for the *Research seminar* was the first one, her research proposal. She uploaded it in the Evaluation section on the deadline date (16 September) at the very last moment (Figure 8.4), and received

feedback for it almost a month later (10 October) (See Appendix 29). However, Victoria tried to arrange a meeting with her from the moment supervisors had been assigned (30 September) via *Eminus* messages and WhatsApp (Appendix 30), and they finally met via Facebook videochat on 25 October 2018 (Figure 8.5).

Evaluación: Activity 1 Proposal	Student(s)	Uploaded
	<b>Estudiante(s)</b>	<b>Realizado</b>
BRIGITTE		16/Sep/18 23:46 hrs.

**Figure 8.4 Brigitte's Activity 1 uploaded**



**Figure 8.5 Record of Brigitte-Victoria Facebook videochat**

It was then complicated for both to arrange the first and only meeting they had, and then, Brigitte suddenly lost all access to *Eminus*. The system had cancelled her registration because she was already in her tenth term, and only nine were allowed for the students to complete the online ELT BA. Even when there is a stipulated maximum number of terms for the bachelor programmes at the university, which officially depends on the total number of credits that students have to earn to complete the programme, never before had they cancelled any student's registration in any programme for this reason.

This term somehow they had decided it was about time to 'enforce the law', but they did so after the students had already enrolled and paid their registration fees for the ongoing term. Fortunately for Brigitte, they had to reintegrate all the students whose

registration had been cancelled under these circumstances, and thus she regained access to *Eminus* in December, and her right to complete her BA had been restored, but it was her very last chance. In the meantime, she had stopped all work, ‘Why doing something if in the end they are going to tell you *thank you for participating?*’ (Interview 1).

Brigitte resumed her work in December, when she sent her first draft (See Appendix 29), but it was until January that she felt she had started to make any progress, ‘then, it was already December holidays, and well, nothing [no progress]. The term was practically over [...] Yes, in January [I started making progress again]’ (Interview 1).

As Brigitte only uploaded one activity for the course, her *Eminus* interaction with Victoria was practically only that of a supervisor-student rather than facilitator-student. Apart from communicating in order to arrange their meeting, Brigitte and Victoria used *Eminus messages* to send progress and feedback (See Appendix 29). Their last interaction in *Eminus* was in February 2019, and then they continued sending progress and feedback via e-mail until June (See Appendix 31), as Brigitte presented her research paper on 25 June.

In Brigitte’s case, the *Research seminar* facilitator is also the student’s supervisor, thus the only way to differentiate these teacher’s roles is to consider within the **facilitator’s role** those practices around the **course activities**. These clearly include the use of *Eminus* to upload activities in the corresponding section and the feedback received for those activities by the facilitator. They also include the **general *Eminus* messages** the facilitator sent to all students enrolled. The general messages Brigitte received were: a) welcome message, b) message informing students activities 1 and 2 were ready, c) message informing students who their supervisor was, d) message arranging a meeting (counselling session), which Victoria suggested for all the students enrolled in the course (Figure 8.6), not only for those she would be a supervisor, and e) message sending information about the 40-day extension. There were two more general messages Victoria sent to all students enrolled, but she sent them in November, and Brigitte did not receive these because it was during this time that her registration had been cancelled.

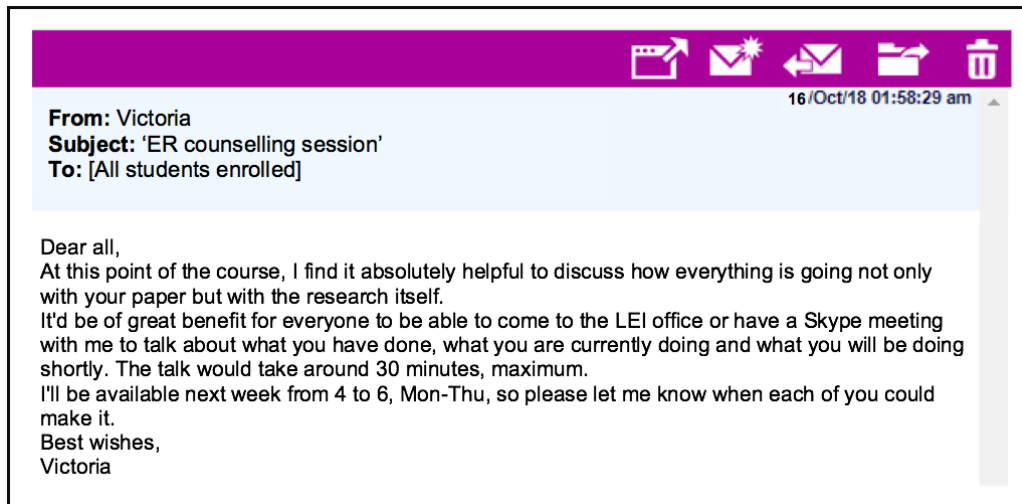


Figure 8.6 General *Eminus* message about counselling session

Victoria actually contacted Brigitte to arrange a meeting before she sent this general message suggesting the counselling session for everybody. This means that these messages trying to arrange a meeting during October (See Appendix 29) are actually part of Victoria's **supervisor's role**. Victoria also maintained contact via *Eminus* with all students to receive their drafts and send them feedback in her role as the *Research seminar* facilitator, but in Brigitte's case, this type of *Eminus* interaction sending progress and feedback is actually part of Victoria's supervisor's role.

The only feedback then that Victoria sent Brigitte as a **facilitator** was the one for Activity 1 (Figure 8.7). She just made some general comments to Brigitte's proposal, as she basically did for all students. Considering all *Eminus* interaction between Brigitte and Victoria, Brigitte may have partially engaged in the ADL practice of *Using Eminus for developing the research paper*, but she practically did not engage in the practices within related to the institutional expectations, that is *Using Eminus to upload activities*, *Using Eminus to receive feedback to uploaded activities*, and *Using Eminus to participate in forums*. Nonetheless, not only did she manage to pass the course, but, as previously mentioned, she also obtained a higher grade than Xareni.

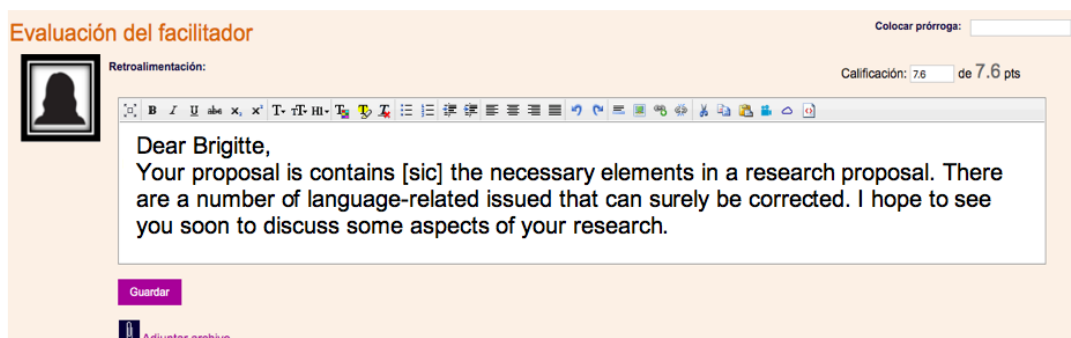


Figure 8.7 Victoria's feedback to Brigitte's Activity 1

What is the point then for all the activities? What is the point for the whole *Research seminar*? Xareni and Jackie clearly did not see any (See Chapters 6 and 7, sections 6.2 and 7.2), Brigitte simply did not engage with it, and yet they all passed the course. For the institution, however, the role of this course in the students' research paper development is seen as crucial. It is actually within the framework of this course that they present their paper to the examiners. It is the *Research seminar* facilitator who has to arrange the virtual encounter among all the participants: student, supervisor and examiners. Whether via Skype as in Xareni's case, Zoom as in Jackie's case, and WhatsApp call as it had to be in Brigitte's case, the presentation of the research paper is the moment when the students explain what they did, and then find out if they pass the course and the grade they obtain for all their work. The importance of its role in the result then seems clear, but what about the process? Brigitte seemed to continue making steady progress with her research paper without any consequence in her result even when she did not complete practically any *Research seminar* activity in the platform. This then actually may render these activities **not really essential** for the completion of the seminar. It seems that for her all that was needed was to maintain in contact with the facilitator, who happened to be her supervisor, and to respond to feedback effectively. Let us see how this story developed.

### 8.3 Changes: You say it, I do it

Brigitte may not have engaged in doing the *Research seminar* activities, but the way she made progress with her research paper was clearer for me than Xareni's or Jackie's. Both Xareni's and Jackie's **first drafts** were 'complete' from the beginning. They still needed to add information, analyse more in detail and reorganise sections, and they certainly made many changes. However, after their research proposal, for the first draft that they produced, they had developed every section of the paper to a certain extent (Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Findings and Conclusions). They had also already included most of their references and appendices. Xareni's first draft had 9969 words and was 43 pages long, and Jackie's had 9792 words and was 38 pages long.

In contrast, **Brigitte's first draft** was only 7 pages long and had 1196 words. For her first draft, Brigitte used the information that she had included in her research proposal and placed it in the corresponding main sections of the research paper. She



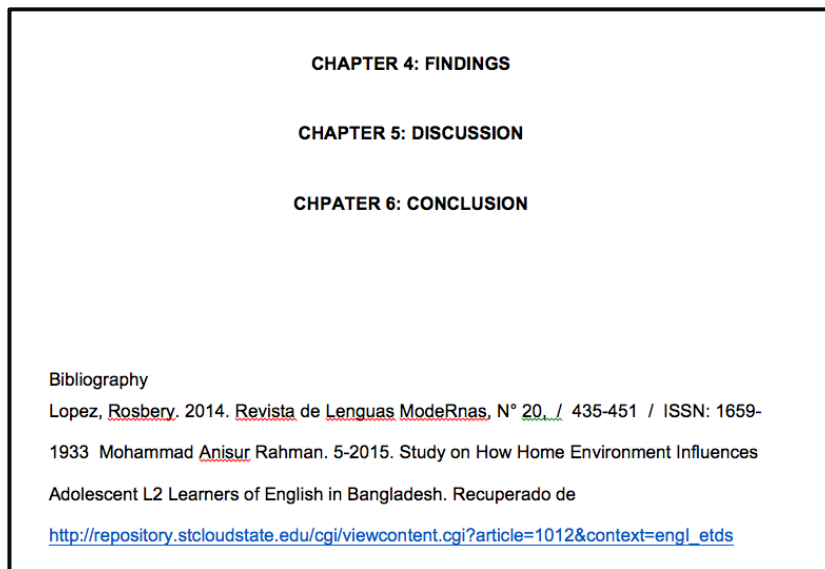
produced a table of contents with these main sections (Figure 8.8) considering the ones presented in the course handbook (Figure 8.9). There was no information for the abstract, but she had left a page with the corresponding title. There was no information either for the findings, discussion and conclusion chapters, no appendices, and only two incomplete references at the end (Figure 8.10). Apart from the information in her proposal, she added a paragraph in the introduction, and a couple of paragraphs in the literature review.

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	
ABSTRACT .....	1
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	2
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	3
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	3
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	4
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS .....	6
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION .....	6
CHPATER 6: CONCLUSION .....	6

**Figure 8.8 Brigitte’s table of contents, 1<sup>st</sup> draft**

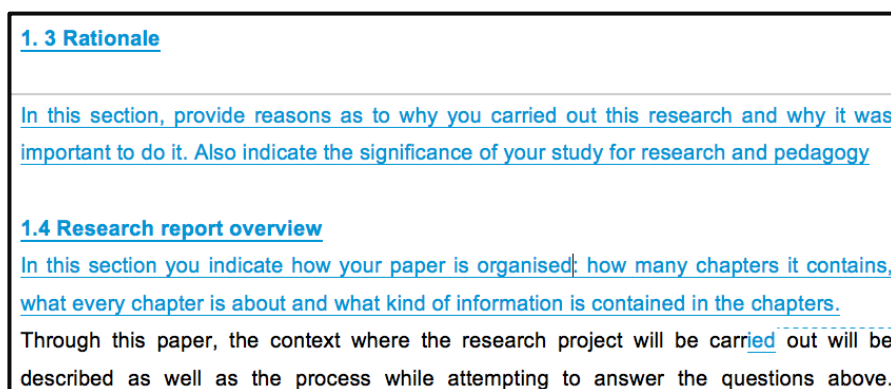
- 2. Sections and Chapters of the Paper**  
 A research paper should include the following sections and chapters:
- Title page (see example in Appendix A)
  - Abstract (150-250 words)
  - Acknowledgements (optional)
  - Contents
  - List of Tables and Figures (optional)
  - Chapter 1: Introduction (2 - 5 pages)
  - Chapter 2: Literature Review (7 - 10 pages)
  - Chapter 3: Methodology (7 - 10 pages)
  - Chapter 4: Results and Findings (6 - 8 pages)
  - Chapter 5: Discussion (3 - 5 pages)
  - Chapter 6: Conclusions (2 - 5 pages)
  - References (in APA format)
  - Appendices

**Figure 8.9 Sections of the research paper according to the course handbook**

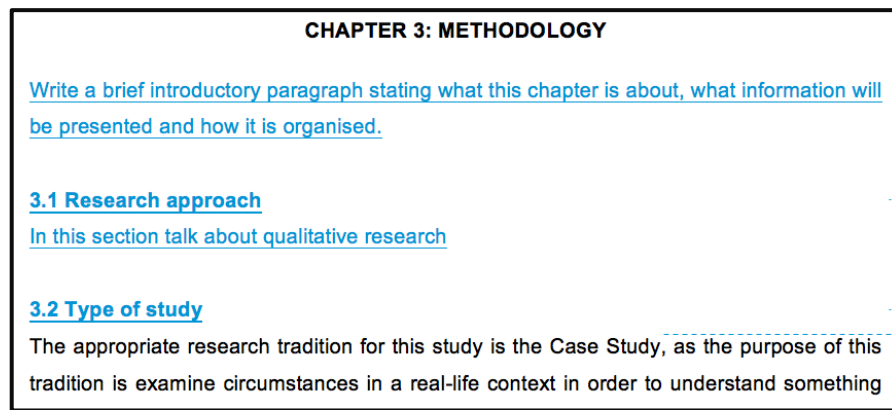


**Figure 8.10 Brigitte's research paper last sections, 1<sup>st</sup> draft**

For this first draft, Victoria made a few language and referencing style corrections, the latter in the Literature Review chapter, but she mainly focused on indicating missing sub-sections in the introduction and methodology and the information that should be included in them (for examples, see Figures 8.11 and 8.12). For her **second draft**, Brigitte included all the sub-headings indicated by Victoria and completed almost all of them with the corresponding information. Additionally, she developed a far more elaborated Literature Review chapter, adding 29 references which she included in her list at the end. Thus, from 293 words in her first draft, Brigitte's literature review increased to 1829 words by her second draft. She also included her abstract and her appendices.

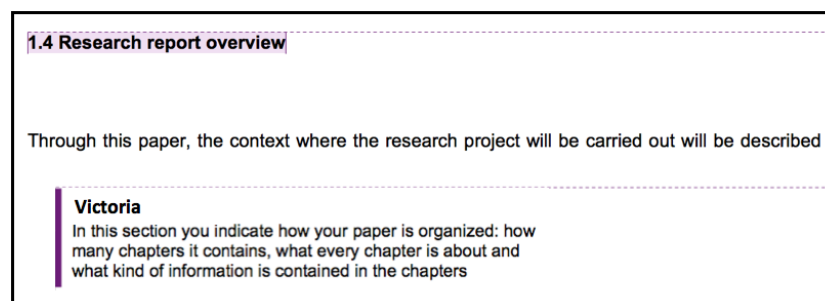


**Figure 8.11 Victoria's comments on Brigitte's 1<sup>st</sup> draft, example 1**

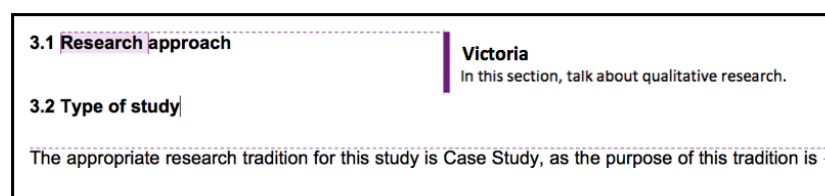


**Figure 8.12 Victoria's comments on Brigitte's 1<sup>st</sup> draft, example 2**

For her feedback on Brigitte's second draft, Victoria paid more attention to language, making corrections directly on Brigitte's writing style with the Track Changes Word tool, corrections that Brigitte simply accepted for the following draft (See Appendix 32 for an example), as she acknowledged it as part of her process, 'Well, first it was accepting the corrections she [Victoria] had made' (Interview 1). For those sub-sections that Brigitte still had not completed in her second draft, and that Victoria had already indicated, Victoria just left the same comment she had made (For examples, see Figures 8.13 and 8.14, compared to Figures 8.11 and 8.12 respectively). For the Literature Review chapter, Victoria added four sub-headings to divide it into sections according to the different main issues Brigitte had included (Figure 8.15), this without altering the organisation of Brigitte's text. She also continued indicating where Brigitte should add more information (Figure 8.16).



**Figure 8.13 Victoria's comment on Brigitte's 2<sup>nd</sup> draft, example 1**



**Figure 8.14 Victoria's comment on Brigitte's 2<sup>nd</sup> draft, example 2**

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	8
2.1 The effect of socioeconomic factors on language learning.....	8
2.2 Socioeconomic factors and language learners' access to learning resources.....	10
2.3 The influence of parental encouragement on language learning.....	11
2.4 Intercultural background and language learning motivation.....	12
[...]	
<b>2.1 The effect of socioeconomic factors on language learning</b>	
Sociocultural theory sustains that language, as a social construction, is modelled by all issues, embedded in learners' beings, such as their identities, ethnicities, socioeconomic positions, and	
[...]	
<b>2.2 Socioeconomic factors and language learners' access to learning resources</b>	
For Vellymalay (2012), social and economic factors provide educational resources for students and have the greatest impact on their learning outcomes. Social factors also motivate and help	
[...]	
<b>2.3 The influence of parental encouragement on language learning</b>	
Some studies have shown the importance of the family in students' amount of effort. Hewitt (2006) conducted an empirical study with 42 kids in Andalusia on the influence of parental	
[...]	
<b>2.4 Intercultural background and language learning motivation</b>	
Matsumoto (2012) mentioned that, when it comes to motivation and its role in second and foreign language learning, it can be affected from different cultural backgrounds. His study	

Figure 8.15 Victoria's suggestions for Literature Review sub-headings

**CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Victoria

Before you start, write a brief introductory paragraph where you indicate what this chapter is about, what topics are addressed and how it is organised.

Figure 8.16 Victoria's comment on Brigitte's 2<sup>nd</sup> draft, example 3

For her **third draft**, apart from accepting changes, Brigitte completed the sub-sections that she was still missing (Figures 8.13 and 8.17 for an example), added the new information Victoria had indicated as necessary in her second draft (Figures 8.16 and 8.18 for an example), and added more information she considered necessary in the Literature Review and Methodology chapters, every time underlining what was new, 'everything I added, I underlined so that she [Victoria] did not have to read what she had already read and corrected, so I only underlined what was new' (Interview 2) (Figures 8.17 to 8.19 for examples). Basically, Brigitte diligently followed Victoria's suggestions. She also completed her Findings chapter and included some notes and a paragraph for the Discussion chapter, which she no longer underlined, as 'there was

nothing there before, so I did not underline it' (E-mail from Brigitte to Victoria, dated May 7, 2019).

**1.4 Research report overview**

This paper is organized into six chapters; 1) Introduction, 2) Literature Review, 3) Methodology, 4) Finding, 5) Discussion and, 6) conclusion. In the Literature Review chapter we will find some overviews of previous investigations related to this research. These chapter will subsequently be

**Figure 8.17 Brigitte completing missing subsection, 3<sup>rd</sup> draft**

**CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

In the next chapter we will examine some outlines of previous investigations related to socioeconomic background and its impact in English Language Learning. The following are results obtained from researchers committed to investigate several factors and its influence when learning English as a second language, primarily in areas with a low socioeconomic status. These previous findings will aid to support the advance research in further chapters.

Through these chapter four topic will be presented; 1)The effect of socioeconomic factors on

**Figure 8.18 Brigitte adding new information as indicated, 3<sup>rd</sup> draft**

There are numerous factors beyond the teacher's, and the school's control that contributes to the classroom situation. (Hofman, 2016). Gradman and Hanania (1991) investigated the influence of several language learning factors in ESL proficiency, including socio-cultural background variables. They concluded that the variables which proved to contribute most to

**Figure 8.19 Brigitte adding new information, 3<sup>rd</sup> draft**

For this third draft, Victoria made very few corrections mostly related to spacing; she focused on sending recommendations for the discussion section, as she mentioned in the email she sent some feedback (Figure 8.20). She also made some recommendations for what should be included in the conclusion section (Figure 8.21). Brigitte and Victoria continued working this way for **the fourth and fifth drafts**, focusing on the missing chapters, Discussion and Conclusion. By the **sixth draft**, Victoria was just checking it for submission to the examiners (Figure 8.22).

**From:** Victoria  
**Sent:** May 7, 2019 at 1:02 PM  
**For:** Brigitte  
**Subject:** Re: third draft

Dear Brigitte:  
Your paper is quite well advanced. I'm sending you some recommendations for chapter 5 Discussion.  
Look forward to hearing from you.  
Greetings,  
Victoria

**Figure 8.20 Victoria's email to Brigitte, 3<sup>rd</sup> draft feedback**

**Victoria**  
It is a summary of what you did and found out; it is not a section for further analysis and new findings. You should start your conclusion by restating the purpose(s) of your study, and, very generally, what you did, and then to what extent you accomplished your aims by a summary of your findings.

**Figure 8.21 Victoria's recommendation about conclusion section**

**Re:** sixth draft

**From:** Victoria  
**To:** Brigitte  
**Date:** Wednesday, June 12, 2019, 12:19 PM CDT

Thank you very much, Brigitte. I'll check it and I'll send it [to the readers].  
Greetings,  
Victoria

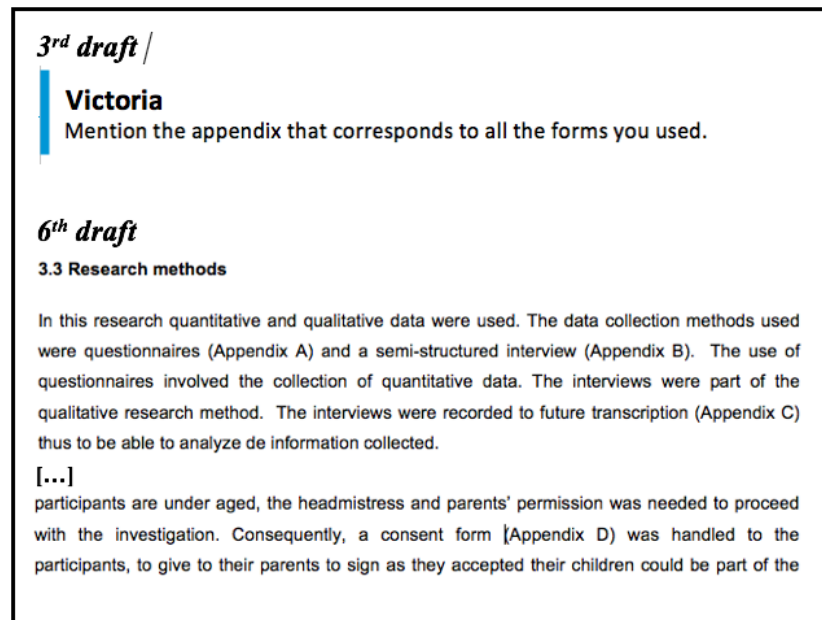
**Figure 8.22 Victoria's email confirming research paper is ready**

It is then clear that Brigitte fully engaged in *Making changes according to feedback*. She never really ignored Victoria's feedback, it was only sometimes that did not immediately make the changes. An example of this is when, from the first to the second draft, she did not complete the missing information in some of the subsections indicated by Victoria (Figures 8.11 to 8.14), but she did it for the third draft (Figure 8.17). She also seemed to have ignored Victoria's corrections on her second draft about the references list format (Figure 8.23), but by her fifth draft, she had already made the changes, 'I first put together all the references I was using [...] then, once I already had the ones I was really going to leave, I organised them alphabetically [...] and until the end I gave them the format as required by APA' (Interview 2). The same happened with

Victoria's observation on Brigitte's third draft about indicating the Appendices within the text, which Brigitte 'ignored' until her sixth draft (Figure 8.24), 'as the research paper was not finished yet, I had to check where I would mention it [the corresponding appendix] for the first time, and that is why I had ignored it because [...] maybe I was going to keep writing and I would end up mentioning it before [Victoria had indicated it], and it shouldn't then be there, but before' (Interview 2). It is not then that her changes in these cases were 'belated', Brigitte was only waiting for the most appropriate moment to make them.



**Figure 8.23 Victoria's corrections on references list format, 2<sup>nd</sup> draft**



**Figure 8.24 Brigitte making 'belated' changes**

Brigitte decided to ignore only one of Victoria's observations by omitting some information from her text in the Conclusion chapter (Figure 8.25). Although the observation appeared in the conclusion, it implied making changes if necessary in the findings section, and Brigitte was not sure how to do so, 'It is always the same with me

when I don't know, it's a problem of lack of self-confidence [...], and so it was like *Mmm, I'll just omit it because I'm not sure*' (Interview 2).

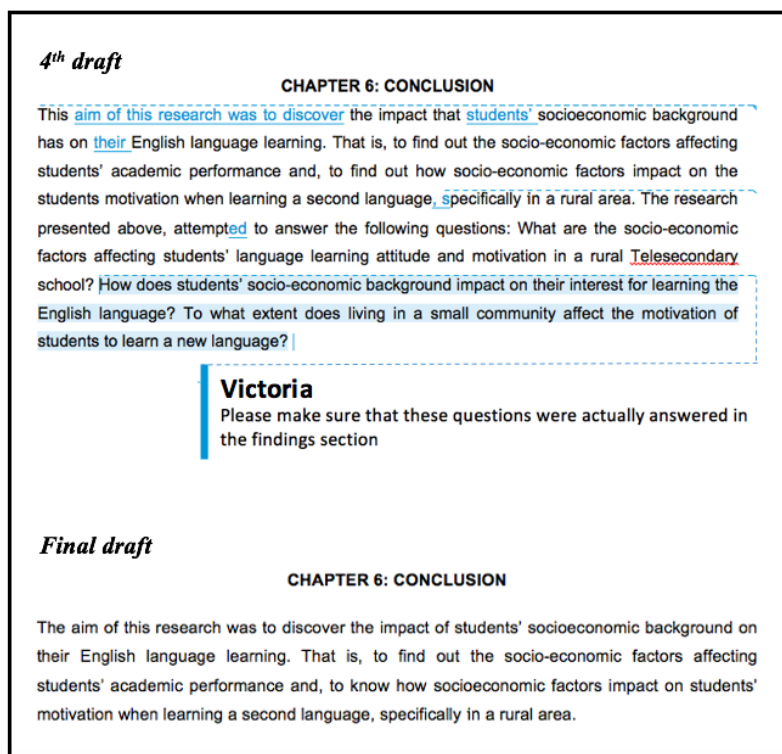


Figure 8.25 Brigitte omitting information

The changes according to one of Brigitte's examiners was a different story. She did work with Victoria on them and did consider most of them, but they represented one of her major challenges, and she ignored more than a couple of these observations. This will be addressed in the following section.


#### 8.4 Major challenges: What an attitude

When teachers provide feedback for students' writing, they expect students will follow it in the future (Mitchell et al., 2019), as this may indicate for them improvement in the process. Brigitte's effective response to Victoria's feedback on her drafts actually gained her an acceptable result in the end, but this does not mean that the process went on as smoothly at all times.

Let us remember that at the beginning it was complicated for Brigitte and Victoria to arrange a first meeting (section 8.2, and Appendix 30). For Brigitte, it was Victoria who had problems to meet, 'the teacher had told me we should meet, and we arranged to meet about three times, and all the times she had some sort of difficulty and



she told me she couldn't make it' (Interview 1). For Victoria, it was Brigitte the one with difficulties, as she expressed so in the mail she sent me along with all her *Eminus* messages with Brigitte:

Dear Paty,  
 This includes all the messages B. and I have exchanged. You'll notice it hasn't been very productive, since she can't come to the office and she seems to be beating around the bush with regards to skype . I hope this improves soon  
  
 Victoria

**Figure 8.26** Victoria's mail about difficulty arranging meeting with Brigitte

Neither of them seem to have expressed frustration in the interview or e-mail because of this, and we know that they managed to communicate and make steady progress in the end. Nonetheless, this was a first challenge to overcome. They both perceived it was 'the other', not themselves, who was having problems to meet, and this could have been led to not committing to each other.

Fortunately, this was not the case, but then, as we also previously saw (section 8.2), another emerging challenge was 'saving' Brigitte's BA when her registration was cancelled. In that moment, it seemed it had all come to a full stop, 'she [Brigitte] was not going to be able to take the *Research seminar* because the system had decided she was out' (Interview with Victoria). Not surprisingly, Brigitte decided to stop all work during that time, 'everything came to a halt, and there was no work at all there' (Interview 1). Luckily, they were also able to leave this behind once the system registered Brigitte once again for her very last chance to finish her BA.

Once they resumed work, and after Brigitte sent her first draft, she had some personal problems at home. Her mom and she lived with an aunt who became seriously ill. This made her feel distressed and thus pause work, as she explained Victoria in an e-mail:

Brigitte to Victoria E-mail extract

'she [Brigitte's aunt] has a progressive disease and has been slowly losing movement in general, but all of a sudden she has become totally dependent of my mom and [myself]. She also reacted badly to some medicine and we thought the worst, and truth be told we are all down in the dumps at home and honestly last week I forgot about this [her research paper] completely.'  
 (Email, 16 February, 2019)

Although she seemed overwhelmed, Brigitte sent her first draft and some questions along with this e-mail. Victoria replied understandingly and supportively to Brigitte's situation, 'Dear Brigitte, I'm very sorry to learn about your situation and I hope everything is going better at home. Don't hesitate to contact me in case you need it' (Victoria to Brigitte email, 17 February, 2019), and sent her feedback on the first draft and answered her questions. This means that despite this personal problem and making progress a bit more slowly than expected, Brigitte and Victoria continued working steadily. Another challenge overcome.

However, in spite of this apparent resilience, one of the major challenges along this trajectory was Brigitte's attitude. Brigitte acknowledged that it was common for her to overreact when dealing with pressure, 'I feel like I *want no longer anything, I am not going to do it, I am not going to send it, nothing can be done now, it was all wasted time*, I do react this way very often' (Interview 3). Victoria found it difficult to deal with this kind of attitude. She expected major problems with the writing and corrections, which did not happen to be the case (See Interview extract 8.2), but Brigitte's attitude towards some 'minor' complications related to writing the paper was unexpected for her:

Interview extract 8.4

'I got to the point to feel kind of frustrated because I considered I was giving this student everything and she still felt she couldn't do it [...] for very simple things, at least simple for me, she said she couldn't, she didn't know how to do it, that she didn't have a computer, that she didn't have Office; there were many obstacles that, if she had wanted, I believe she would have found a way, but it was almost as if she wanted me to solve them [...] I might have expected some complications of this nature, but I didn't expect they would be such an issue, I mean, it was not really about the writing, but a matter of attitude.'

(Interview with Victoria)

The major 'break down' if this type occurred almost at the end, when Brigitte received one of her examiner's observations – actually, these were the only comments from examiners she received, as the second examiner only agreed that she was ready to present and sent no feedback. Brigitte did not receive the examiner's comments very

well, ‘I got so frustrated because it was only a few days before I had to send corrections and seeing **everything in red**, I felt like *Do I have to do it again!?* [...] I was so frustrated and angry, and wanted to give up’ (Interview 3). Victoria was quite worried about this situation, as it seemed possible for her that Brigitte would drop everything in that moment:

Interview extract 8.5

‘After the [examiner’s] observations that she didn’t take very well, and having to work on that even if she didn’t want to, I think she felt it was the very last thing she needed, like *I finished the paper and now they are saying this is wrong!* I think it was the last straw for her, and at some point I came to believe that she wouldn’t even want to present [her paper].’

(Interview with Victoria)

Victoria worked on calming Brigitte down, ‘she [Victoria] told me, *No [you don’t have to do it all over again], relax, you just first accept the spelling, grammar and the like corrections, and then focus on the comments, which actually are not that many*’ (Interview 3). As a matter of fact, the examiner’s observations were mostly related to language and punctuation (63 corrections) and there were a few related to in-text referencing style (6 corrections). In terms of content, the examiner had made a total of 22 comments. Victoria felt compelled to convince Brigitte to go on, ‘at this point you [Brigitte] can’t say you want do nothing else because we have both worked so hard and this is not the time, you’re almost there’ (Interview with Victoria). So, it did work, Brigitte accepted the corrections, ‘and **there was no longer so much red**’ (Interview 3). Nonetheless, she was still not very happy with several comments, which might have been one of the reasons to **Ignoring feedback** in some cases, since emotional reactions actually play an important role in how students respond to feedback (Pitt and Norton, 2017).

The first comment she ignored was the one related to one of the key words her research paper, ‘telesecondary’. The examiner questioned the existence of this term in English and suggested an option (Figures 8.27 and 8.28), which Brigitte found practically insulting, ‘it was like *doesn’t he know what a ‘telesecondary’ is? Where is he from? Because he is Mexican, and I would understand if he was a foreigner [...]*, but

he's not, so how does he dare questioning what 'telesecondary' is? Come on! I really disliked his comment' (Interview 3).

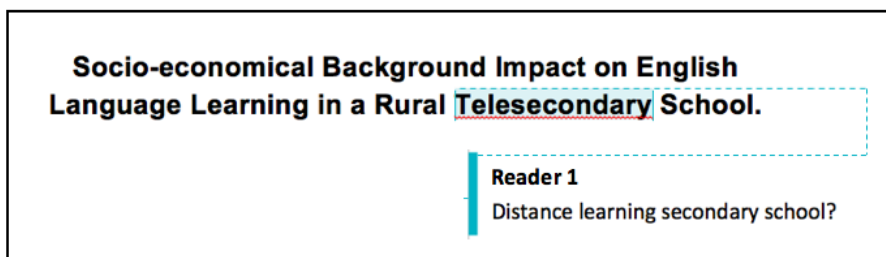


Figure 8.27 Examiner's comment about 'telesecondary' in Brigitte's title

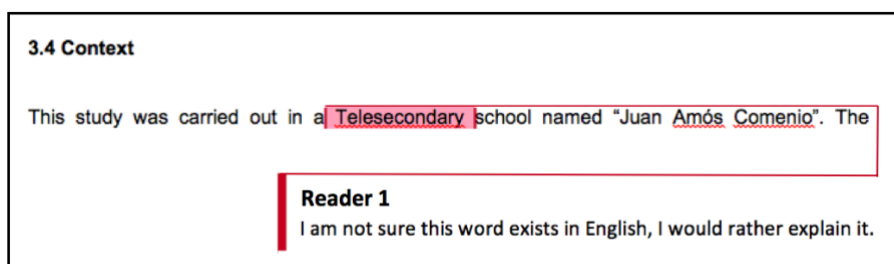


Figure 8.28 Examiner's comment about 'telesecondary' in Brigitte's paper

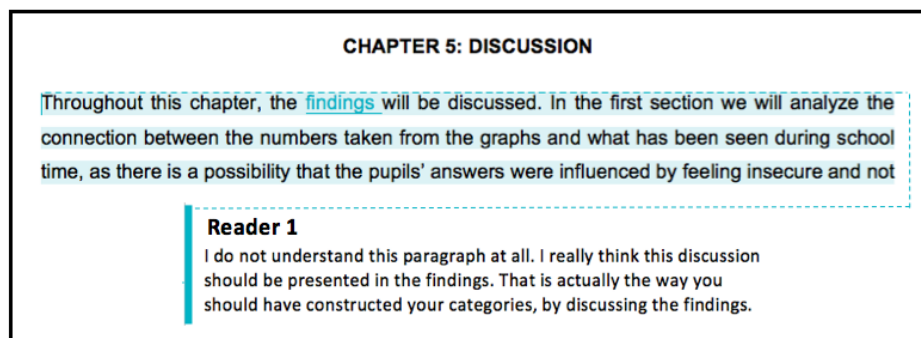
In the end, although Brigitte definitely did not change the word, she did add a few lines explaining what 'telesecondary' refers to in Mexico, so she did not completely ignore the examiner's comments to this respect. Victoria, however, wrote to him saying they would not make this and some other changes he had suggested, this as part of her on way to show Brigitte she would totally support her in this final stage:

Interview extract 8.6

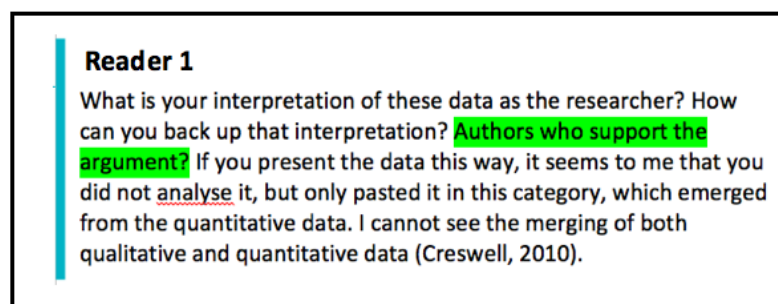
*'Look, I understand, we're obviously not going to change the word [telesecondary], maybe the examiner could have been more informed [about it], but don't worry, I told her [Brigitte], I will explain to him that you are not going to change it and why not. In fact, I sent him an email thanking him for his comments, but informing him there were some things we would not change, and one of them was this [telesecondary], and I sent him two references, and told him they were reliable references in which they used this term, and that what we could do is have her [Brigitte] include a definition, and that's what it was done'*

(Interview with Victoria)

There were other observations that Brigitte and Victoria decided to ignore. From those, the ones that would have implied more significant changes were related to the sections of Findings and Discussion (Figures 8.29 and 8.30). The examiner questioned the need to have two different sections for them, but it was established as so in the *Research seminar* handbook (Figure 8.9). He also questioned the way to present and interpret data, and indicated it was necessary to incorporate references supporting the findings. Although Brigitte did add a couple of lines for each of her 5 categories including some further analysis of the data and results she presented, she did not add any author either in the findings or the discussion sections, and kept both sections as in the handbook. They ended up ignoring the observation about adding authors, but they did not address this directly in their interviews, they both only said they got confused with the changes in these sections, ‘first I eliminated information, then I put it again, and then I added some more [...] I was a bit mixed up’ (Interview 3 with Brigitte), and ‘maybe some further discussion of the findings was necessary, but I thought that, well, we got confused’ (Interview with Victoria).



**Figure 8.29 Examiner's comment about findings and discussion**



**Figure 8.30 Examiner's comment about references to support discussion**

Admittedly, I failed to insist in both interviews about why not adding references in these sections, as I did not know how not to appear judgemental about ignoring this observation. I cannot then speculate whether it was because of time pressure, not wanting to do more complicated changes, or any other reason, but as it turned out after analysing all three cases, this would have been an interesting issue to be discussed. As we saw in Chapter 6, one of the reasons Xareni was given a grade of 7 out of 10 was because she did not 'go more in depth' and 'there was no solid foundation' in her findings. Then, in Chapter 7, we saw Jackie ignoring feedback about insufficiently developed categories and still obtaining 10 out of 10. Finally, Brigitte was also made this very same observation, which she did not take into consideration either, and was given an 8. What is then the actual weight of the inclusion of references in the findings and discussion chapters to support them? The problem may lie on the lack of clear guidelines for supervisors and examiners to grade the research paper, and on the fact that it is only the supervisor who reviews that examiners' observations have been taken into consideration. Nevertheless, further research would be needed in order to answer this question more accurately.

There was a final attitude issue with Brigitte. She admitted she had problems with technology, 'technology is simply not my thing' (Interview 1). Victoria had noticed this, so for her presentation, which had to be online, 'I offered her to come to [the university] to connect, somewhere here, and I would help her connect [to skype] because she felt she would not know how to connect; but she never accepted my offer, and she had problems to connect' (Interview with Victoria). Apart from the fact that Brigitte could not connect to skype, the Wi-Fi signal at the university facilities, where examiners and facilitator were gathered for her presentation, had always been unreliable. Therefore, none of the them could video call Brigitte via WhatsApp because they did not have data to connect to internet in their mobile phones. I had previously asked for consent to be present at Brigitte's exam, and as I did have data in my mobile phone, Brigitte's presentation could take place this way. I video called her and as she explained her research paper Victoria projected her Power Point presentation for the examiners.

Victoria was a bit upset about this situation, 'I sometimes simply couldn't understand what the problem was, I really didn't know if she didn't want to come [to university for her presentation] or what her deal was' (Interview with Victoria). In the end, she did feel happy that Brigitte could finish her research paper and graduate, 'I did understand that she had gone through very particular situations that didn't let her focus

on her research paper, and thus as her supervisor I supported her as much as I could so she could make it, and she did make it!' (Interview with Victoria). Brigitte acknowledged and appreciated Victoria's support, 'actually, she [Victoria] really really helped me a lot, a lot, a lot!' (Interview 3). With Brigitte's case we then can clearly see that adequate timely feedback is not the only type of support that some students need, and that this other kind of emotional support can make the difference. Nonetheless, to what extent should supervisors be responsible for dealing with their supervisee's emotions? But this is certainly another story.

Brigitte as well as Xareni and Jackie were mature students with compelling reasons to finish this online ELT BA degree. They all had had different learning experiences as well as life and professional experiences that made their research paper writing trajectories worth researching. After graduating, Brigitte continued teaching dancing and English and working as a dressmaker, and started learning Hindi more formally. She talked about her dreams of traveling abroad, and she not only felt that she finally had something less to worry about, but that she actually had more opportunities for whatever she decided to do next, and she was aware that Victoria had a lot to do with this.

#### Interview extract 8.7

'As it [interaction with Victoria] is all online, everything is with the computer, e-mails [...] and WhatsApp mostly, text messages and audio messages [...] This is the only time that I have written a paper like this, and I think that she [Victoria] helped me a great deal, she was accessible, and above all patient, because there were moments when I was so frustrated that I wanted to quit, *It is so hard, how am I supposed to do that?*, and she was always telling me *No, just do this and do that* [...] She definitely helped me a lot.'

(Interview 2)





## Chapter 9      Different stories connecting at a distance

The purpose of this final analytical chapter is, firstly, to challenge the celebratory discourses around e-learning, and secondly, to connect Xareni, Jackie and Brigitte's stories, as well as my own. In order to do so, I discuss in the first section how research has focussed on e-learning affordances and how to improve them, and how, through ethnographically investigating and giving an account of the way my participants experienced their academic digital literacy trajectories, I came to the realisation that the challenges of online learning are too great to only be timidly addressed. One of these challenges turned out to be related to the emotions that emerged along the research paper writing process of my participants, which is why in the following three sections I briefly discuss how they permeated at the beginning, along, and at the end of both my participants' and my own trajectory. Finally, I also include a section which is a sort of epilogue to their stories and to the context that surrounds them, that is, the *Research seminar* of the online BA in ELT.

### 9.1      Challenging e-learning celebratory discourses

**Online or e-learning**, the context in which Xareni, Jackie and Brigitte's academic digital literacy (ADL) trajectories were embedded, has been widely acknowledged as a highly valuable learning environment within higher education. Learning online is commonly portrayed as a more efficient and effective exchange of learning experiences (Al-Samarraie et al., 2018), making students more intrinsically motivated (Rodrigues et al., 2019), which is not only more flexible and personalised, but also reduces the cost of learning (Cidral et al., 2018; Glenn, 2018). Improving access to education is also one of the main reasons why this type of learning has become so popular, as time and space constraints typical in traditional face-to-face contexts are significantly reduced (Panigrahi et al., 2018; Glenn, 2018). Several studies in this area have focussed on comparing online or blended-learning to face-to-face teaching so as to know which offers better results in terms of outcomes and satisfaction (Nortvig et al., 2018), and although success in learning is more complex than the environment where it takes place, it seems that the increasing popularity of the acknowledged positive sides of online learning has encouraged research in this area to most frequently address issues related to improving it by mainly emphasising its advantages and to a much lesser degree exposing its pitfalls in depth.

In this sense, there have been studies that aim, for example, to evaluate engagement and explore attitudes in online learning contexts for developing better e-tutorials (McGuinness and Fulton, 2019), to identify factors that determine satisfaction to ensure continuation of e-learning (Al-Samarraie et al., 2018; Choi and Park, 2018; Cidral et al., 2018), to study factors that affect e-learning acceptance so as to provide better services (Al-rahmi et al., 2018; Salloum et al., 2019), to foster engagement for better outcomes (Martin and Bollinger, 2018; Panigrahi et al., 2018), or to explore digital competencies so as to determine readiness for fully online collaborative learning (Blayone et al., 2018). All in all, research on this area addresses learning innovation involved and demands that need to be fulfilled so as to successfully adopt e-learning (Rodrigues et al., 2019), which is presented as the way of the future.

Admittedly, this study originally emerged from my personal experience as an online facilitator of a BA programme in an attempt to better understand how students experience certain activities, their ADL practices and how they engage in them, and thus improve the way they experience their ADL trajectories when they are about to finish their studies. And although this remains an essential part of my research, a more critical side of embarking in this type of learning has also emerged as a significant aspect to be considered. I do not mean to say, however, that online learning is not a viable option for many; I actually agree that “online learning is here to stay” (Glenn, 2018, p. 381). Nonetheless, there is as much to be learned from the challenging than there is from the positive. Online research has so far mainly focussed on trying to identify successful practices, and has only timidly covered those that suggest that despite the great advantages and affordances that it offers, online learning may not be the answer for everyone - hence the high drop out rates-, sometimes not even for those “adults with hectic schedules who cannot participate in conventional face-to-face learning due to work, social and/or family responsibilities” (Choi and Park, 2018, p. 130). Xareni, Jackie and Brigitte are precisely this type of learners, and although they did succeed in the end, we could see that, regardless of the expectations, they went to great lengths in ways no one imagined during the writing process of their research paper to obtain their degree.

This final and crucial challenge that students face should not be envisioned as literacy as ‘a separate and unvarying thing’ (Hamilton, 2010, p. 8). It is not only about the text they produce and the series of steps they may be told to follow to do it; it is about how they actually engage in the practices around this process in order to reach an ultimate goal, where the complexities, including talk and interaction embedded in the

dynamics of these ‘textual’ trajectories, need to be considered, thus moving away from privileging the text alone (Tusting, 2017). This is why I drew on a digital ethnographic approach so as to give an account of how three social actors, Xareni, Jackie and Brigitte, navigate such practices. Hence, the theoretical stance I take for academic literacies is the one that envisages **literacy as a social practice** (Barton and Hamilton, 2000), where context plays an essential role as well as the interactions with others, in order to make choices. The ‘textual’ trajectories in this case are the academic digital literacy trajectories of three individuals who decided to navigate a process into which they brought in their own personal goals, and their own linguistic, social, cultural, and economical backgrounds. A process where there were power relations established with other people, as well as different types of interactions with texts and around texts. A process which involved different activities developed mainly in an online context but which inevitably implied interaction within physical settings as well. And most importantly, a process in which they were making sense of it all in order to construct knowledge while writing their research paper.

Therefore, I am referring here to two different types of **trajectories**. One could be called an ‘institutional’ trajectory, the one that the students have to navigate in the institutional platform within the framework of a *Research seminar* in order to complete their research paper and thus obtain their degree, which goes beyond simply doing the activities they are asked to upload. It also involves how they engage with them, with the context they are embedded, and the social interaction in which they take part in order to make meaning of it all, including that with their supervisors, the *Research seminar* facilitator and other people they resorted to. The other type of trajectory is the one I constructed by narrating my participants’ stories, that is, my account of what I was able to observe in the literacy events and what they told me about the literacy practices that emerged in which they participated.

For that reason, an **ethnographic approach** to these issues has the most to offer (Kaufhold and Tusting, 2020), more specifically, a virtual ethnographic approach. The digital component was a natural response to the online learning environment. Moreover, I had a privileged position in the study. Not only did I have the experience as a facilitator in the online BA, writing teacher, and undergraduate and graduate students’ supervisor, but, even though our backgrounds, purposes and circumstances surrounding our choices are different, I was also sharing my participants’ condition of being a mature student writing a dissertation remotely and in a foreign language, experiencing the constraints that this type of educational context entails, including the pressure it

implies to manage time so as to comply with what is expected from us not only in this task, but in our every day lives as well.

In this way, each case allowed me to approach the online student dissertation writing process as the social practice it entails. Even when our specific circumstances may have been different, by closely following their trajectories in order to identify their ADL practices and analyse how they engaged with them, the main aims of my thesis, I could empathise with some of the issues that they experienced and how they felt about it. Yes, there is a beginning, a middle and an end in all our stories, but the connection I felt with them did not occur because we experienced similar things along our dissertation writing trajectories online. On the contrary, it sometimes occurred because some of their experiences were completely different from each other and from mine, and yet I could see myself in those situations. Admittedly, I also identified myself with some of their circumstances, which made me empathise with them even more strongly. This is partly how I was able to better understand how they navigated and experienced the process by engaging in the ADL practices that were identified, including those that shaped their process and helped them make decisions and solve problems.

The other element that significantly contributed to reaching my research aims was using **narrative inquiry**, for I constructed the participants' stories in order to make meaning and convey understanding of all the data I gathered (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). In the previous chapters (6, 7 and 8), I told Xareni, Jackie and Brigitte's stories of their ADL trajectories while writing their research paper to obtain their online BA degree. In order to do so, I put together what I documented from all my fieldwork, including the literacy events I observed and my own interaction with them to elicit their narratives around those literacy events: their *Research seminar* activities and all institutional platform (Eminus) interaction, such as messages, activities feedback and forums; the e-mails they exchanged with their *Research seminar* facilitator and their supervisors, as well as their WhatsApp conversations and any other interaction they had with their supervisors, such as telephone conversations or Facebook videochat; their research paper drafts, their final versions, and all the feedback they received from facilitator, supervisors and examiners; and finally the interviews with them, with the facilitator and their supervisors eliciting their own account of their experiences. Thus, these stories are biographical case studies in that, as a researcher, I am telling the participants' stories, but it also involves an autobiographical component, since I also tell my own story (Barkhuizen et al., 2014) as a researcher-participant. This blurriness, as Barkhuizen (2014a, p. 451) points out, is expected as the distinction lies on the complexities of

defining “who is doing the research, who the participants are and how narrative data and reports are constructed.”

Thus, I constructed my participants’ trajectories by looking into diverse data, and I also contrasted information with them at different moments of the process, corroborating with them via WhatsApp or e-mail mainly biographical information, but also during the interviews, by verifying I had actually grasped how they experienced or how they had understood certain events. I also engaged with them by sharing how I felt or how I was experiencing my own trajectory, but mainly by making it clear for them that I was not judging in any way whatsoever their own experiences, but, on the contrary, I could empathise with them. As I mentioned in the methodology, I did it this way because my focus was understanding how each of them experienced this specific academic writing process, how they navigated these trajectories, considering I mainly chose them because of their different academic backgrounds (low-, average-, and high-achieving students during the BA) and their previous teaching experience or lack of it. The purpose to select my participants this way was to ensure examples of different trajectories, which actually, as we could see, turned out to provide not only interestingly different but also unexpected outcomes.

However, we can also notice that **emotions** emerged as a salient issue in every story. After all, all writers struggle with emotions, and students writing a dissertation are no exception (Cameron et al., 2009). And it is within emotions where there is room for further analysis in the trajectories of my participants. Literacy trajectories involve a process of a dynamic nature, as they are embedded in changing and emerging contexts, but in order to further analyse them I selected “fixed points” (Tusting, 2017), which, for clarity purposes, I organised chronologically, yet making reference to different points all along was inevitable. In this way, I deepened in the emotionally laden side of the stories, now also including my own experience as a researcher-participant, and how I was able to empathise with my participants despite the different trajectories we all had, going from the initial struggling, to the ups and downs along the way, to surviving the last stretch.

## 9.2 Initial struggling

According to previous studies (e.g. Eberle and Rummel, 2020), it is commonplace that negative emotions show through the initial state of writing a dissertation, almost disappearing at the end. Thus, this implies that students would normally experience an

initial struggle before they can settle in. This might be due to a lack of self-confidence on what is being done, for example, generating high levels of uncertainty, anxiety and fear of not being able to complete the challenging task. And then, at the end, especially after accomplishing the goal of obtaining their degree, students would very likely experience feelings of satisfaction. This, however, is not always the case, as Xareni's story shows us.

Xareni's initial enthusiasm and confidence in my first interview with her was overwhelming; I remember thinking to myself she was so lucky not to have struggled as I did. Our academic trajectories were similar in that we were very responsible students who would usually obtain the top grades, and thus a lot was expected from us. Xareni was dealing with this high expectations pressure much better than I did, she did not even seem to perceive this as pressing at all. At this stage, she felt self-confident and very satisfied with what she perceived as the successful completion of most sections of this challenging writing task, which is a typical reason for positive emotions to emerge (Murray and Moore, 2014). Her enthusiasm was even contagious. This contributed to my fully empathising with her indignation and frustration when things turned out completely different for her at the end.

Jackie and Brigitte did struggle at the beginning, but they struggled differently from each other, and from myself. Jackie did not know how to write a 'thesis' and felt no one provided her with the necessary support to this respect. Although there is plenty of information in the course, and its activities are designed to provide this guidance, she seemed to have experienced a lack of teacher presence. Both a self-perceived lack of writing confidence (Bilikozen, 2015; Murray and Moore, 2014; Yu, 2020) and insufficient writing support (Yu, 2020) are actually some of the main negative emotional sources during the writing process. As an online teacher, I might not have been able to understand Jackie's feelings; after all, she did have access to all the information and activities and both her supervisor and facilitator offered help in case Jackie considered it necessary. Having experienced a distance programme as a student, I realised how important it is to be able to trust your supervisor and actually sense their support in this type of process, as I would probably not have been able to cope with this initial struggle myself had not been for my supervisor's support; the role of the supervisor is indeed crucial (Roux, 2012). I could then see that Jackie did have a point.

In Brigitte's case, she acknowledged that getting started had always been an issue for her, 'what I find very hard is getting started [...] It's like, I turn on the computer, and I am there one hour, one hour and a half, and I turn it off and I did

nothing because I came up with nothing' (Interview 1 with Brigitte). Fortunately for her, things turned out better than expected at the end, but Brigitte's attitude proved to be challenging, especially for Victoria. Still, I could understand Brigitte's struggle to get started as I experience it myself quite painfully. Before the PhD, getting started had not been a step with which I would particularly have difficulties. This time, however, I did struggle at the beginning not only expressing what I actually wanted to pursue, but also organising myself.

I had wrongly assumed that with my experience as a university teacher, undergraduate and graduate students' supervisor, member of a Research group with a few publications, and an online *Research seminar* facilitator, I would not have much difficulty to know what to do and how to do it at this initial stage. Fortunately, just as it happened for Brigitte with Victoria, my supervisor was very supportive and understanding with me; she would not hesitate to firmly and clearly tell me when I was not capturing an idea, but always managed to motivate me and make me feel more confident about what I was doing. So, even when Brigitte's attitude was an issue, my initial struggle was so great that I continued empathising with her until she finally finished. Admittedly, from Brigitte's case, we could see that the attitudinal component played an essential role, which as been found to be a common factor in generating negative emotions (Gu et al., 2020; Han and Hyland, 2019; Janke et al., 2020; Olave-Encina et al., 2020; Yu, 2020).

### 9.3 Ups and downs along the way

Not surprisingly, emotions continued fluctuating all along the way in all trajectories, which proves that Eberle and Rummel's pattern (2020) 'negative at the beginning positive at the end' is much more complicated than it may seem, as they acknowledge it themselves. Their study especially addresses the importance to prevent procrastination, since it is perceived as a factor affecting emotions negatively thus impeding a successful writing process. This did not seem to be a problem either for Xareni or Jackie, as they proved to be working and progressing steadily all along. It was a problem, however, for Brigitte, 'It is very frustrating, really, time goes by and by and suddenly I realise that there's no time left! [...] It is always the same with me, every semester, with all kinds of assignments' (Interview 1 with Brigitte). As Eberle and Rummel (2020) suggest, a high procrastinator is prone to get more easily frustrated, especially when conflicts arise, which is also what happened to Brigitte. Let us recall that she admittedly had very

difficult external challenges to cope with along her trajectory, issues that added up to and justified her procrastination to a certain extent, such as the system taking her out of the institutional platform and her aunt's serious health problems. In my experience, as a Mexican student and teacher, institutions are just beginning to pay attention to emotional and mental health issues among students, especially when it comes to completely external situations to the school environment. Fortunately, in Brigitte's case, Victoria was always as understanding and supportive as possible, as well as the Faculty authorities as far as her administrative problem was concerned. So, against all odds, Brigitte managed to finish, which proves that support of different types is vital in this process.

I must admit that procrastination is also a problem of my own, which is why I could empathise with Brigitte despite her noticeable attitude issues. Although Eberle and Rummel (2020) admit that further studies are needed to reach reliable conclusions regarding the role of procrastination and its impact of academic writing, it is generally accepted that people who procrastinate tend to struggle with it. Given Brigitte's trajectory and my own, I would say that in a way our experiences point in this direction. Unlike the students in Langum and Sullivan (2017), Wahiza et al. (2012) and Bilikozen's (2015) studies, neither Brigitte nor I had difficulties in academic writing in terms of problems with the language. Content was not an issue either. In Brigitte's case, we could clearly see that it was more an attitudinal problem, and in my case it was more a concentration and time management struggle. Therefore, the complexity of this specific aspect has very likely many different approaches that may have an effect on the emotional side and thus on the writing process.

Jackie also experienced loneliness, frustration and anxiety along the process. In her case, there was a variety of other commonly acknowledged factors for negative emotions taking place, such as insufficient writing support and confusion impeding writing (Yu, 2020), difference in feedback expectations (Bastola and Hu, 2020; Salter-Dvorak, 2017), and communication issues (Gürel, 2017; Olave-Encina et al., 2020; Yu, 2020). Although she did receive some feedback and there were resources for her within the *Research seminar*, Jackie felt that she was on her own, and we can understand why, as her supervisor's comments about her work were minimal, as he reported it himself, and the facilitator's comments were belated. This was not only perceived as insufficient support for her, but it also meant a major challenge translating into confusion about what changes she should make, as she was receiving different type of feedback from two different people at different moments for different drafts. This also implies that she



was expecting more and different type of feedback to be provided. Ultimately, communication with her supervisor and facilitator was inefficient, as she never asked for more support and they assumed she did not need it because she was not asking for it and for them she seemed to be doing alright.

One practice that all the participants engaged in to overcome some of their difficulties and negative emotions along the process was looking for other people's support. Although Xareni did not really seem to experience strong negative emotions at the beginning and during the process, she did have difficulties in knowing how to 'build' her report, and she resorted to her nephew, who had a master's degree in International Business, and who would spend several hours with her at different moments of Xareni's progress, listening to her and peeking at research paper for a general gist, as his English level was not very high. Xareni also received very positive feedback from him, and although his area was a completely different one, this support reassured her self-confidence in that she felt that she was going on the right direction. Jackie turned to her mother, who sympathised with her frustration and disappointment regarding the expected support from teachers involved in her research paper, and lent an ear whenever she needed so. And Brigitte turned to a friend she worked with organising tours. She simply confided in him once about the difficulties she was having finding reliable academic sources on the topic for her research paper, and he explained to her how to find downloadable articles in pdf format in the Internet. Therefore, it is important to bring to the fore that external support sometimes from unexpected human sources, may have a very important role in the students' writing process, as they can repurpose extracurricular activities or strategies on behalf of their research paper writing (Kaufhold, 2017).

#### **9.4 Surviving the last stretch**

It might be very common to experience feelings of satisfaction at the very end of this writing process, once a dissertation has been submitted and approved; it is, however, fair to say that it is not uncommon to experience negative emotions in the final stages. This is what happened to Xareni, as she started experiencing high levels of anxiety, frustration, and even anger a few days before presenting her research paper, feelings that only increased after receiving what was for her quite an unsatisfactory result, and even endured some time after having submitted her final version. It was not until she was supposed to be about to finish that she realised writing support had not been

efficient or sufficient, giving her the wrong impression of her research paper writing, that she would certainly have expected more support as the one other student friend of hers had been receiving, and that communication had failed spectacularly, as mentioned before all factors pointed by different authors as a trigger for negative emotions (e.g. Bastola and Hu, 2020; Gürel, 2017; Olave-Encina et al., 2020; Salter-Dvorak, 2017; Yu, 2020). In the end, even when she had the chance to share her experience with me, Xareni suffered the complexity of unfolding negative emotions when it might have made a difference (Olave-Encina et al., 2020), as she felt that she did not have anyone to talk to so as to understand what had happened and be given the opportunity to change the now predictably unsatisfactory outcome, which made her feel very frustrated and angry, “it is that moment [when everything seems to be going wrong] that you say, *no, I’ll say nothing, because if I do, I’ll say something that might not be appropriate* [...] because I knew that was going to happen [an unsatisfactory outcome for her], maybe I predisposed myself to it, I don’t know, but I didn’t see a way I could find myself, I was lost, I mean, there was no way” (Interview 2 with Xareni).

Brigitte experienced a burst of frustration in this last stretch when she received her examiner’s observations. It is true that students may find highly emotional and even frustrating to have their writing critiqued (Cotterall, 2013). The relation students develop with supervisors is different from the one they have with their examiners. If supervisory interaction is successful, students may receive feedback from them harmoniously, that is, with a positive attitude and making the necessary changes. After all, supervisors are there to support, and if support is sufficient and efficient as expected, students will likely respond well to it. But within examiners’ role is that to evaluate, and thus tensions are not uncommon to emerge. This could explain Brigitte’s negative reaction to a certain extent, but Brigitte’s personality had also a saying in this, ‘I was so frustrated and angry [after receiving her examiner’s observations], I was like *I want nothing more, enough*, this happens to me a lot. It was like *Agh, that’s it, I won’t do it* [the corrections], *I won’t submit it* [the research paper], *there’s no point, it was a waste of time, that’s it*. I have this type of reactions frequently, though, and then, after throwing my tantrum, I calm down’ (Interview 3 with Brigitte).

On the other side, we could see how exhausting it was for Victoria, from beginning to end, to deal with Brigitte’s attitude both as the facilitator and her supervisor all along the process. Admittedly, supervisory interaction and feedback has actually been found to be particularly emotionally laden within the writing process (Bastola and Hu, 2020; Olave-Encina et al., 2020; Yu, 2020), thus supervisors should

always consider to what extent they can afford getting involved to this respect. After all, the complexity of students' emotions is worth appreciating, and the focus should be on how all type of emotions, not only negative, may deploy around corrective feedback (Han and Hyland, 2019), as students' emotions triggered by feedback will determine in many cases if they will make changes according to it (Olave-Encina et al., 2020).

All in all, there are always both highlights and setbacks regarding emotions along the writing process, and positive emotions do not always translate into learning achievements, and negative emotions can motivate improvement (Han and Hyland, 2019). Xareni's emotions, for example, were very positive at the beginning and basically all along the process. Remember she had this very positive and enthusiastic attitude, was very motivated about her research project and her results, and felt very self-confident that she was on the right path regarding her research paper writing. Then, at the end, 'the world seemed to fall down' as all the contradictory voices emerged all of a sudden and her result was by far much lower than she expected.

On the contrary, for Jackie, all the process was mostly experienced negatively, as she felt frustrated and lonely from the beginning and all along, and very disappointed regarding the support she expected. In the end, she felt very proud of herself for having completing her research paper practically all on her own, and despite her initial frustration, loneliness and disappointment, the process was not as 'painful' as she thought it would be. Brigitte started off on the wrong foot to the point of thinking she would not even be given the opportunity to finish. Then, things just seemed to get worse as she felt frustrated, insecure and overwhelmed along the process, some of which was due to personal problems. And when she thought she had seen the light at the end of the tunnel, she felt very annoyed and even angry about her examiner's comments. Fortunately, she did finish with a more satisfying result than she expected and felt very relieved when it was all over.

## 9.5 Epilogue

It has been two years since **Xareni** presented her research paper, and she is now working in three different schools: the state secondary school where she earned her position as a permanent teacher after obtaining her BA degree, and two preparatory schools where she had previously worked, everything online due to COVID-19 pandemic. This was the main reason she had studied the BA for, to be able to access a permanent position as an English teacher. Apart from teaching English, she is giving a

Spanish class in her secondary school, as the school's authorities trust her abilities as a language teacher. She spends her days in front of the computer, but feels in her element, 'it is madness [but] I am really happy' (personal WhatsApp conversation). We communicate from time to time via WhatsApp, to share worries as well as achievements, and I have an open invitation to visit her in her home town, which I do hope can happen one day. Xareni may have had a bad experience in her research paper writing trajectory in terms of her result, but resilient as she has proven to be, she has made the most of it:

'Getting a degree was one of the biggest achievements in my life, at the beginning, I didn't know how to start or what to do [...] but when the time passed, I got familiar with all my facilitators and I found all my courses easy. Soon I found myself taking the *Research seminar*. I began very enthusiastically [...] Unfortunately, my experience writing the results of my research was not what I thought it would be [...] This unpleasant experience made me not wanting to do research again, and I am not really sure if I really learned to do it well. [...However,] in the future I want to get a Master's degree, I just do not feel ready now [...]. I know my research project was great, and the negative experience was not because I was working at a distance, on the contrary, this helped me to become autonomous and has made me able to face the changes that this confinement time [due to COVID-19] requires from teachers [...] I believe soon enough, when I overcome this first experience with research, I will start all over again and make of my next research study a better experience.'

(Personal WhatsApp conversation with Xareni)

One year and ten months after her research paper presentation, **Jackie** is living in Germany. She is working for a company sited in Canada helping students who want to study abroad, and studies German in the afternoons. Everything is also online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and this has confirmed for her that a simple video call with her supervisor, which she never requested, but was never offered either, would have been very helpful to improve communication. In Jackie's case, she may have had a bad experience along the process of her research paper trajectory, but her result reassured her as an independent learner and she now also appreciates the process itself:

‘To tell the truth, now that some time has gone by, I still remember the research paper process as a unique experience [...] As everything was at a distance with the teachers [supervisor and facilitator], at times I felt a little bit lonely and frustrated. There were always questions that emerged at the moment I was working that I did not have the opportunity to clarify [...] Both the BA in general and my research paper writing process helped me to sort things out on my own, manage my work delivery times and most of all to research more in depth. Now I am well aware of what delivery times and working from home imply. I learned to research and sort things out on my own, and that asking for help is definitely alright, but if you take some time to do it, you can find the correct answer [...], the BA and the research paper were definitely a lifelong learning experience. During the process I experienced different emotions, but it was partly because it was all new for me and I did not have a teacher in front of me to ask for help [...]. One of my greatest concerns was feeling disheartened and never being able to graduate, or not having enough time to do it before I moved to Germany. When obtaining my degree [before moving to Germany], I felt so peaceful [...] There were moments of frustration, yes, but in general it was a good experience that I would certainly like to repeat.’

(Personal e-mail with Jackie)

For **Brigitte**, it has been one year and a half since her research paper presentation. It has not been easy for her to continue with other activities different from teaching English during the COVID-19 pandemic; she has not had requests as a dress-maker, which was a common source of extra money for her, nor has been able to organise tours, a project she had with a friend that was just starting to take off. Thus, she does not have enough money for dancing lessons or Hindi classes, but has managed to keep in touch with another Hindi student to continue practicing the language. Her father’s long time health problems have worsened lately to the point of needed hospitalisation, and after he was dismissed from hospital she and her mother have been taking care of him, which is what has made it harder for her to look for other jobs unrelated to teaching that may require ‘going out’, for her parents’ health sake. Yet, she has plans to travel to India and is saving up for it. Because she already had her degree,

she was offered a job in a private secondary/preparatory school where she worked for a year, and now is working for a private university. She is not very fond of online teaching as she feels it limits her in the type of activities she likes using in her classes. However, although her colleague teachers at the university seem to have a lot of experience and training, she feels satisfied with the work she has been doing with her students and has had no major issues facing the online teaching challenge. She looks back at her writing research process and although there were parts she did not enjoy at all, she sees it as an experience she could learn from to become a better teacher:

‘During the research process, the interviews and getting to know my students was the part I enjoyed the most, as I realised they felt confident expressing their thoughts to me. Besides, I understood the reasons behind their attitude towards the English class. However, the process of looking for authors and papers related to my investigation was not satisfactory at all. At the end, presenting my research paper was not as horrifying as I imagined all those years I was trying to avoid it. Even when probably I could do it so much better, it was satisfying to finally prove myself I could do it. Yet, I would not love going through that process again. Currently, I have had the opportunity to work with students living in a completely different socioeconomic context and cannot help analysing and comparing those aspects [emerging from her research project], which makes me try to be more understanding and patient as an English teacher, always bearing in mind that not everyone learns the same way or have the same reasons or motivation for acquiring a second language. For this reason, I try to motivate them, even using myself as an example and also looking for better ways for them to learn the language.’

(Personal e-mail with Brigitte)

With regard to the *Research seminar*, the setting for this online BA students’ research paper writing trajectories, there have been some changes since Xareni, Jackie and Brigitte’s cohort took it. As mentioned before, the literature supports that teacher presence is a key element in online activities, and according to Xareni, Jackie, and Brigitte’s experiences, it actually is. Students’ future anxieties inevitably impact their present written work (Altınmakas and Bayyurt, 2019), such as the need to finish within

a certain period of time whether due to job opportunity reasons like Xareni, or moving away from the country like Jackie. So, teacher presence along the process is of paramount importance both for guiding and connecting with students' needs. The need for more teacher presence at this online BA in ELT has been discussed in recent meetings of the academic staff as part of the BA redesign project. And thus, for the *Research seminar*, the facilitator has included, at the beginning of every unit (for further reference, See Appendix 20, list of *Research seminar* contents), a short video broadly presenting what each of the sections expected in the research paper consist of, so as to make it clearer for the students what they need to be working towards.

During these BA redesign meetings, and given the experience of my participants, including Pepe (the pilot study participant), I advocated for the importance to maintain the course *Research in the L2 classroom* not only as a strongly suggested pre-requirement for the *Research seminar*, but even a compulsory one. Further changes to the contents in these two course are still to be discussed, since students' writing practices are inevitably influenced by their previous writing experiences (Altınmakas and Bayyurt, 2019). This is supported by all my participants' perceptions, as they acknowledged the importance of developing a research proposal, which is done during *Research in the L2 classroom*, before enrolling the *Research seminar*. Xareni, Jackie and Brigitte used this proposal for their research paper, and they all referred to this course and the proposal as an important basis for it. In my interview with Pepe in the pilot study, he acknowledged that it would have been much easier for him to write his research paper had he taken *Research in the L2 classroom* before the *Research seminar*.

Tensions emerging along writing and supervision practices is inevitable, and what restrains actual change from happening is the culture of silence that prevails around it (Cotterall, 2013). Thus, as we could see in Xareni, Jackie and Brigitte's stories, emotions are there, permeating the process, and have an impact on it and thus on the outcomes. It is important then to acknowledge the importance not to silence them, especially in the challenging task that writing a dissertation, in a foreign language, at a distance, implies. Moreover, the challenging is essential to the meaning-making process; therefore, in the online learning field as in any other, it is necessary to focus on it as much as it is to celebrate its benefits and affordances.





## Chapter 10 Conclusion

This chapter firstly summarises what the present study aimed at, how it was conducted, its main findings regarding the research aim and research questions, and its main theoretical and empirical contributions. I then include a section discussing its limitations or rather shortcomings and eventualities, and another suggesting further research scenarios. Finally, there is a section dedicated to pedagogical implications, where I present practical applications of the study, especially concerning the *Research seminar* of the online BA in ELT, but that can be considered for any online learning context where academic digital literacy practices take place.

### 10.1 What it was all about

I embarked in this study with a new perspective of literacy thus transforming my epistemological views about it. As an English language learner and teacher, I had conducted myself understanding reading and writing as a set of specific skills to be learned. Embracing the notion of literacy as a social practice (Barton and Hamilton, 2000) allowed me to look at literacy through a new lens, which I expect will have an impact in my teaching practice, but most of all, has helped me develop as a researcher. It was my personal background that led to me becoming interested in improving my online BA students' experiences when writing their research paper. It was the stance I took as a virtual ethnographer, using narrative inquiry (Barkhuizen et al., 2014, Patiño-Santos, 2018) to construct their stories, that led me to achieve my research aim and answer my research questions.

The **research aim** of my study was to look into a group of three **online undergraduate** students' **experiences** as navigating their **academic digital literacy trajectories** while writing their **research paper** in **L2** to obtain their BA degree. This in order to validate this type of students' choices in their meaning making process when making decisions and solving problems, which shapes their research paper writing, and not simply dismiss them as something 'incorrect' or 'deficient'. My research questions were then the following:

- 1) What ADL practices do the students of an online BA in ELT engage in while writing their research paper?
- 2) How do the students engage in these practices during this process?

- 2a. How do students make sense of the practices in which they participate?
- 2b. What practices do students engage in to make decisions and solve problems in their writing process?

### 10.1.1 Answering the questions

The **first question**, which aimed at **identifying the ADL practices** these students' engaged in as experiencing this research paper writing process, was answered in Chapter 5. The complexities of these practices are portrayed in Figure 5.1, and who engaged in what was reported on Table 5.1. There were seven practices related to the use of digital resources (*Eminus*, WhatsApp, E-mail, Telephone call, Skype, Zoom and Facebook videochat), and six related to the research paper development process itself (Discussing the research paper, Making changes, Ignoring feedback, Arranging the presentation, Presenting the research paper, and Seeking support elsewhere). The most salient emerging practice outside the digitally-mediated environment that could be inferred was Seeking support elsewhere. This referred to in situ or face-to-face interactions, such as Jackie going to the library of her former college for consulting references, and all of them, Xareni, Jackie and Brigitte, resorting to someone else, a nephew, her mother, a friend, respectively, for support. Both in Figure and Table 5.1 we can see that the most common practices were those using *Eminus*, WhatsApp, E-mail and Telephone call whether to Discuss the research paper, Make changes, Ignore feedback or Arrange the presentation. What is noteworthy to highlight here, however, is the complexities in the way the students engaged in the different types of ADL practices, since, as they navigated their journeys towards the completion of their research paper, their engagement in these practices intertwined and combined in different ways.

This is more closely related to the answer for the **second question**, which aimed at **understanding how students engaged in these ADL practices**. This was answered along Chapters 6, 7, and 8, in the students' stories of their experiences navigating their ADL trajectories. However, from Figure and Table 5.1 in Chapter 5, it becomes clear that the participants engaged in several practices and at different levels. Xareni, for example, was the one that seemed to have engaged the most and in more practices from the information displayed in the aforementioned figure and table. As a matter of fact, the total number of ADL events I documented for her seems to have been the highest if compared to Jackie and Brigitte's, even when some WhatsApp events between Brigitte

and Victoria were lost before they could send their interaction to me (Appendix 13). Nonetheless, despite her active engagement, Xareni's grade was the lowest.

As we could learn from her story chapter, the practice that Xareni did not fully engage in was using *Eminus* to develop her research paper, meaning that she did not find useful the material and activities in the *Research seminar* that attempt to support this process and thus did not integrate them to her writing process. Nevertheless, this hardly explained her unsatisfactory results; in Jackie and Brigitte's story chapters we could see that they did not fully engage in this ADL practice either, and they both obtained better grades than she did. Therefore, in none of their cases did the way the *Research seminar* was presented and delivered contribute to the development of their research paper as it would be expected. Both Jackie and Brigitte also engaged in making changes according to feedback, which suggests that success in writing this type of academic text is indeed, as Bastola and Hu (2020) claim, in great measure related to engaging in successful supervisory work. However, while Brigitte felt supported at all times, Jackie felt abandoned to a certain extent, and yet it was Jackie the one who obtained the highest grade. Despite having felt left alone, she was able to engage in making progress on her own, whether making changes or ignoring feedback, and this translated into a successful outcome.

As part of seeking the answer for the second question on how these students engaged in the emerging ADL practices during their research paper writing process, I posed the **sub-question 2a**, stated in terms of meaning-making, that is to say, **how students made meaning of those ADL practices**. The main findings through the participants' stories to this respect suggest that, apart from the fact that they did not make much sense from the *Research seminar* material and activities, they struggled to try to contemplate all the other voices that had a say in their research paper, that is, supervisor, facilitator and examiners so as to make the changes considered necessary. There were different types of observations, and some of them were contradictory, and that is when Xareni and Jackie felt lost. This was one of the reasons for them to ignore some of the observations. In Brigitte's case, she was the one that made more changes at the end after the examiner's observations, but in her case, it was only one examiner sending observations, and her supervisor was Victoria, who was also the facilitator. This means the number of voices involved in Brigitte's research paper were fewer than in Xareni and Jackie's.

This also suggests that trust in those 'research-experienced' people involved in the students' research paper also played an important role in their meaning-making

processes. Xareni was completely disappointed when Victoria's observations meant changing 'everything' she had done, when Isaac, her supervisor had always told her she was doing alright. Then she came back to him expecting his reassurance, and he just said 'Victoria is right'. When Jackie realised that Victoria's observations were very different from those of her supervisor's, Cuauhtémoc, she went to him for clarification, only to be told that if she considered they were not necessary, she might not make any changes regarding those. Therefore, both Xareni and Jackie were left on their own to try to make meaning of contradictory voices, and thus they decided to ignore what they considered too hard to be accomplished in the little time left they had to make changes. On the contrary, Brigitte always had Victoria's support, they were constructing the research paper together, making decisions together. Thus, Brigitte was able to make meaning of feedback more easily so as to accomplish more changes.

Considering how they were making meaning of their own practices, and now with regard to **sub-question 2b**, which referred to the **practices** the students engaged in **to make decisions and solve problems**, we can see that, not surprisingly, supervision support played a key role. Nevertheless, whether supervision support was the one expected or not, they all sought for support elsewhere when facing problems so as to be able to make decisions. Both Xareni and Jackie had recourse to people they thought could help them to figure out how to organise their research paper given their experience: Xareni's nephew had already written a master's degree dissertation, and Jackie's mother had graduated from a BA in English by writing a research report. Jackie also visited her former college library, where she knew she could find reliable resources on the field of her study. Brigitte learned by chance, by word of mouth, how to download academic journal articles that were not easily accessed online. This could be in a way regarded as a type of repurposing of extracurricular activities into dissertation writing (Kaufhold, 2017). A casual chat with a friend solved Brigitte's problem of not finding reliable sources for her research topic. His friend once needed to access certain documents, maybe for study, maybe for job purposes, and as 'he's good with computers and technology, not like me' (Interview 2 with Brigitte), he learned to download documents that were not commonly of free access, and they realised this strategy could be used to help in her research paper writing.

While constructing my participants' stories on how they experienced their ADL trajectories while writing their research paper, and from my own journey with my PhD thesis, **emotions** emerged as a very significant dimension in this context. The role of this dimension in learning processes has recently been widely acknowledged, and it has

also been addressed within academic writing development processes. Nonetheless, in this study the complexities of emotions at a distance should be brought to the fore. On the one hand, Xareni's enthusiastic and confident attitude along the process resulted in disappointment, frustration and anger in the end as no one dared to discourage her. On the other hand, Jackie and Brigitte's disappointment, frustration and fears transformed into self-satisfaction and peace of mind, but Jackie's adverse feelings were not even noticed, while Brigitte received a great deal of emotional support. In the end, the high-achieving student ended up with a low grade that felt like a failure for her, the average-achieving student attained the top grade and was perceived as 'the ideal trajectory' by the teacher-participants, and the low-achieving student obtained a quite successful outcome, which was a pleasant surprise.

### 10.1.2 Main contributions

The field of study of my research was that of academic digital literacy practices in Higher Education, assuming the notion of literacy as a social practice. This means I approached writing as something my participants did, which was shaped by their **contexts**, especially their online learning environment, by their **life histories**, considering who they are and how they ended up studying the online BA in ELT, and **resources** they drew on and **experiences** they had along the process (Tusting and Barton, 2016). Research on this and other related areas, such as academic literacy in L2, digital literacy, academic online writing, and literacy trajectories, has mainly focussed on online learning affordances to support face-to-face contexts. Therefore, the present study contributes to bridge the gap when it comes to literacies development in fully online learning settings in Higher Education programmes, which is particularly significant since 'the nature of a site shapes the experiences people have of learning literacies there' (Tusting, 2012, p. 121).

The first main contribution of my study is that of **challenging the celebratory discourses around online learning** (as those in, for instance, Al-Samarraie et al., 2018; Cidral et al., 2018; Glenn, 2018; Nortvig et al., 2018; Panigrahi et al., 2018; Rodrigues et al., 2019). I still agree that online learning has opened a myriad of possibilities and affordances, but the present study brings to the fore that its challenges are as important to look into as its advantages, especially when dropout rates remain an issue far from being overcome. Online learning environments have been presented as an answer for those mature students with a life full of job and family responsibilities unable to attend face-to-face classrooms (Choi and Park, 2018), should they want to or have to continue

their professional development, they can now do it ‘easily’ because of e-learning ubiquity. Nonetheless, even in the event that accessibility and connectivity can be ensured, the desirable levels of satisfaction to continue and finish an online higher education programme do not seem to have been achieved yet. Little wonder a great deal of attention has been paid precisely to maximising the benefits of online learning to improve the students’ experiences so as to increase satisfaction and graduation rates.

The present study, also originally conceived from a concern in improving certain students’ experiences in an online learning community, demonstrates that investigating the challenges in those experiences, qualitatively, has at the very least as much to offer as quantitative online learning satisfaction studies, for example, or studies aiming at improving the use of digital resources or exploring learning innovation in this education context. There are difficult circumstances that can lead a previously successful case to feel like a failure, make an expected failing case thrive, and an ongoing apparently thriving case suffer unnecessarily. The three stories narrated in this thesis concluded in a passing grade for their research paper, and although not all of them were ‘happy’ about the grade they received, they all succeeded in obtaining their BA degree, despite the great challenges they faced. Therefore, success can be achieved albeit any challenges that may come, so there is no point in mainly focusing on advantages and positive qualities when challenges can also offer meaningful learning experiences. This contribution is even more significant these difficult days in which the pandemic due to COVID-19 has obliged all institutions to work from home, and people are realising that online learning may have as many pitfalls as it has perks.

A second contribution of the present study is having shed light on the **complexities of ADL practices** that these **online BA students engaged in** as they navigated their journey in writing their research paper in L2. Practices related to academic literacy are influenced by the variety of education and language background of students and teachers, and thus they are increasingly varied (Kaufhold, 2017). Conducting this study allowed me to disentangle some of the reasons for unexpected events in the journeys and outcomes in the students’ trajectories. In constructing my participants’ stories by documenting their engagement in these ADL practices, **trust and communication** were found to be at stake if taken for granted. Lack of trust contributes to dysfunctional supervisory interaction (Robertson, 2017), and communication between student and supervisor is essential in successful academic writing practices (Gürel, 2017).

Thus, it is necessary not only to acknowledge the importance of the role that trust and communication play in students' research writing, but also to make sure they are taking place and not assuming, for example, that students who seem to be 'doing alright', like Jackie, are not experiencing any serious difficulties. Moreover, findings of the present study indicate that communication among all the people involved in the students' research papers, such as supervisors, examiners and the facilitator of the *Research seminar*, is also of paramount importance. Otherwise, students will very likely feel 'lost in voices', and will find decision-making processes harder than necessary.

Feeling lost was not the only emotion emerging in the study. Frustration, disappointment, loneliness, anxiety and anger were also emotions that had an impact on students' trajectories, especially because of the pervasive culture of silence around them (Cotterall, 2013). A third contribution of this study is then that **emotions** emerging as a more significant dimension in the pedagogical field, especially within online learning environments, where students can experience stronger feelings of isolation, and if combined with lack of trust and communication problems, they can turn the students' research writing journey unnecessarily painful. Therefore, this emotional dimension needs to be central in online programmes in general, but even more in courses that aim to assist on dissertation writing, as emotional support can help to reduce 'painful' feelings and enhance students' production (Gu et al., 2020).

If undergraduate students can experience this journey so negatively, one may wonder why we should vehemently insist in imposing such practice of research writing at this level, when probably all they want is to 'finish it once and for all and move on to the next thing'. At least one year after graduating from the online BA in ELT, neither Xareni, Jackie or Brigitte have engaged in doing research again, let alone writing about it. Brigitte admitted that she 'would not love going through that process again' (Personal e-mail with Brigitte), and Xareni even mentioned the 'unpleasant experience made [her] not wanting to do research again' (Personal WhatsApp with Xareni).

Nevertheless, they all claim to have learned valuable lessons in having gone through this process online. Xareni does not dismiss doing and writing about research in a master's degree in the future, and acknowledges that writing her research paper at a distance has helped her become more autonomous and able to face, as a teacher, the complications that the confinement due to COVID-19 have represented. Similarly, Jackie believes that the experience has contributed to her now better skills at time management, working from home, and sorting things on her own, so necessary in this pandemic, and thus describes the research paper writing as a lifelong learning

experience. And Brigitte says she is now trying to be more understanding and patient with her students, this because writing her research paper helped her realise that there might be many factors behind the different ways people may be learning English.

Therefore, a fourth contribution of the study is the realisation that even when it might become an even more lonely and challenging experience when doing it online, **writing a dissertation (or research paper)** remains a **highly significant** practice at **undergraduate level**.

Finding arguments for **validating students' choices** when writing online a research paper in L2, even when not fully complying with the expected conventions, was one of the aims of this study. This study, as a fifth contribution, has proved that the challenges that students face in this context, combined with all the particular circumstances that surround them, play a role in the writing process and become an essential part of the choices and decisions they make in research paper writing, and they should not be penalised for it. This could be seen clearly in Jackie's story. She received the top grade for her research paper even when not including any references to support her findings. Victoria, the *Research seminar* facilitator, did tell her this was necessary, but Cuauhtémoc did not make any comment to this respect, nor the examiners. One may think that she should not have received the top grade for not meeting these expectations.

Nevertheless, there are some considerations to be made in terms of institutional purposes and national context. Firstly, the main purpose of writing a research report at this online BA programme is that of providing the students with a first exercise to conduct research and write formally and academically about it. This, and the fact that teachers, whether as facilitators, supervisors or examiners, acknowledge that writing such a report in L2 can be a daunting task, they do not expect students to be able to discuss research findings as an expert would do. Secondly, because of our own experience in Mexico and the resulting limitations at our university, we are all aware of the difficulties that students may face when trying to find access to reliable sources in the field such as academic journal articles. This is part of the reality in our students' educational and national contexts, and we thus understand certain features in our students' writing. We now need to take a step further and acknowledge other complexities inherent to our students' ADL practices, not only when writing their research reports.

A last contribution of my study is in terms of research **methodology and methods**. As Tusting and Barton (2016, p. 20) assert, literacy practices are "best studied by spending time with people, observing what they do with reading and writing, and



interviewing them to understand their perspectives and experiences”, and “ethnographies of academic writing practices elicit methodological challenges” (Kaufhold and Tusting, 2020, p. 358). Considering the online learning environment in which my study was embedded, I might not have had direct access to certain activities around reading and writing that my participants carried out when developing their research papers in L2. Nevertheless, the amount and variety of digital data I was able to observe and document was quite significant, and I not only interviewed them to understand their perspectives and experiences, I also interacted with them as another online student who was struggling to write a quite daunting academic text in a foreign language. In this way, following a narrative inquiry approach, I was able to co-construct the participants’ stories and give an account of how they experienced their journeys, how they navigated their ADL trajectories.

## **10.2 Shortcomings and eventualities in the study**

The first shortcomings in this study are related to time constraints and the loss of some valuable data. As mentioned in Chapter 5 (Section 5.1), for the term I would collect my data, the *Research seminar*, the framework of my setting, started a month later than it should have. This inevitably put time pressure on the facilitator and the students, which I had to take into consideration. I could not be seen as another reason for pressure, and so I decided to reduce the number of interviews for each participant in order to be less invasive and not to overwhelm them. Therefore, instead of conducting a total of 17 interviews, 9 with students and 8 with teachers, I conducted 11 interviews, 6 with the students and 5 with teachers. More interviews would have probably allowed me to capture more complexities of the process or more depth in such complexities, and thus construct a more detailed account of the students’ stories. Similarly, the lost WhatsApp conversation between Brigitte and Victoria may have contributed to richer data. Had any of them been able to send their conversation before they lost it, I could have given a more detailed account of the impact of this practice in Brigitte’s journey. Nevertheless, the stories I presented did capture the overall complexity embedded in the students’ experiences and ADL practices, and Brigitte’s story was not any less enlightening than the others. Therefore, despite this time constraint and ‘lost’ data, I was able to surmount this difficulty by virtue of the amount of data obtained from all the other sources and the documentation and analysis I conducted to construct the stories.

In the same line, a larger number of participants might have enriched the findings around the students' stories. As a matter of fact, my intention in the beginning was to accompany four, not three, students in their ADL trajectories, and four students had initially accepted to be part of the study. I even started documenting the fourth participant's data (one telephone conversation with her supervisor, and her first activity uploaded in *Eminus* along with the facilitator's feedback), but she withdrew from the *Research seminar* for personal reasons, and so the number of my participants was reduced due to circumstances out of my control. Because of my research aim, I knew I was not after a large number of participants, but having lost one case of the very few I attempted to follow was an eventuality that I had to deal with. In the end, my research required of an in-depth longitudinal focus on my participants, necessary for a detailed analysis of their individual experiences as well as full, descriptive reports of my outcomes, and this could only be achieved with few participants (Barkhuizen, 2014b). Therefore, even when more stories would have contributed to obtain 'a larger picture', this eventuality of reducing the number of my participants from four to three, or not going for more participants in the first place, did not imply a major drawback, as the picture I was able to portray was meaningful enough.

The major limitation in my study was the lack of representation of a case where a student actually failed the *Research seminar*. This would have allowed me to provide 'the whole picture' in terms of all the different possible outcomes: pass with flying colours (Jackie), pass with merit (Brigitte), pass (Xareni), and fail. Predicting a failing case at this point of the students' academic trajectories, specifically in the *Research seminar*, seems to be 'tricky'. As we could see, stories may have unexpected outcomes in the end. Still, it would be interesting to address the experiences in an 'unsuccessful' outcome. Another important limitation was the fact that all the participants in my study were women. There was only one male student passing the *Research in the L2 classroom* course from where I selected my participants, and he had already untypically taken the *Research seminar*, and was thus part of the pilot study. Admittedly, the ADL trajectory of a male student would have been an interesting journey to document and give an account of, thus further research on the implications of gender in these experiences would add a valuable insight to the stories.

Finally, being a novice ethnographic researcher using narrative inquiry may have limited different ways in which I could interpret the data that I gathered, which was very rich and complex. However, in the field of linguistic ethnography different and further interpretations are always a possibility. Ethnographers may provide insights

about the social action or practices under study in light of their active involvement in them, which gives room to interpretive challenges dealing with reality representation and individual interests (Tusting and Maybin, 2007). Therefore, novice linguistic ethnographers, as I identify myself, can contribute to shed some some light on the complex social literacy practices they are investigating.

### 10.3 Further research scenarios

On account of the major limitations of this study, further work needs to address, firstly, the stories behind the experiences of online undergraduate students that, after having ‘survived’ a whole degree programme, did not make it in the end because they failed to complete their research paper in L2. It has been established that looking into challenges is important, whether they lead to success or failure. This study managed to give an account of the experiences of three cases of female students who succeeded in this journey, one against all odds, another barely meeting anyone’s expectations, but it could not provide an account of a student who disembarked before she could set foot on land. One can never be sure, however, of having spotted a case that will undoubtedly fail. Despite the possible oversimplification of a phenomenon that a retrospective interview study could fall into (Murto et al., 2020), this method would be a practical way to research the experiences of those students who abandoned the ship just before reaching mainland, since retrospective interviews can render significant findings if dealt appropriately (Jomaa and Bidin, 2017).

Secondly, the lack of representation of a male student in this study was noticeable. The value of linguistic ethnography in contributing to social science debates, including those regarding gender, has long been acknowledged (Rampton, 2007). It was not the purpose of this study to analyse gender issues, nor contribute to this debate, but even when this was not the case, it would have been more representative of the context population to include the story of a male student. It is true that, as mentioned before, there were only female students in the *Research seminar* course when the study took place, but overall, the online BA in ELT programme does not remarkably consist in mainly female students. Therefore, research on the ADL trajectories of male students would be of value in portraying more thoroughly the experiences of online undergraduate learners writing a dissertation in L2.

Finally, although there is room for looking into other perspectives, such as those of native speaking students, facilitators, supervisors or examiners, or extending the scope of the ADL trajectories so as to cover the students' journeys from the moment they enter the BA until they finish it, it is the emotions dimension that emerges as one that deserves more attention, especially when it comes to online learning and academic writing in L2. The role of emotions is vital in online student engagement, and institutional support should aim at better understanding students' emotion in order to improve course design (Kahu et al., 2015). Likewise, L2 academic writing triggers strong emotional issues that need to be regulated and so more explicit support should be provided to students (Han and Hyland, 2019). Research writing trajectories also pose a challenge emotionally speaking, and as recognizing or suppressing emotions can make the difference in enhancing or derailing research, by acknowledging this emotional dimension institutions can offer better support in these trajectories (Cotterall, 2013). Therefore, the pedagogical implications of the emotional dimension in online learning environments, especially when it comes to research writing, need to be addressed, and it is the responsibility of institutions to do it. From the present study, some pedagogical implications came to light, and so I include them in the following section.

### 10.4 Pedagogical implications

The purpose of this study was not to evaluate the online BA in ELT programme or its *Research seminar*. From its findings, however, there are several areas of opportunity that need to be addressed and to which this research can contribute in the light of the role that emotions played in the students' experiences of their ADL trajectories in their research paper writing journeys.

The first of these suggestions has to do with **teacher presence**. As part of the BA staff, I have witnessed our students' satisfaction regarding our programme, of which all the facilitators are very proud. Nonetheless, students could greatly benefit from more meaningful interaction with their facilitators, especially when they are writing an academic text that could very well be the reason for many not to have completed undergraduate studies. There are some steps that have already been taken by the substitute facilitator of the *Research seminar*, as she added a video for each unit where she explains what the different sections of a research paper are about. This is a first approach for more meaningful teacher presence, but there are more steps to be taken along the process while students are trying to produce their research papers. Students

need to feel reassured that there is an open line of communication, admittedly not only with the facilitator of the seminar, but also with their supervisor. Communication among facilitator, supervisors and examiners is also of paramount importance, as they need to be playing the same tune for students, otherwise they are just making the process for them more painful than it already is.

Communication is not the only area of improvement in this process. **Clearly defined roles** of all the teachers involved in the students' research paper are necessary so as to support more effective communication practices among all the parties: facilitator-student/student-facilitator, supervisor-student/student-supervisor, facilitator-supervisors/supervisors-facilitator, and supervisor-facilitator-examiners in all directions. Knowing who is responsible for what will enhance trust within the students-teachers' relationship, which is of paramount importance in the complex collaborative team that this process becomes as it involves more the traditional dyadic supervisor-student relationship (Robertson, 2017). Furthermore, if roles are clearly defined, it is easier to establish more egalitarian attention to students. Xareni, Jackie and Brigitte might be all mature students with jobs studying an online BA, but they have had different life experience, family situations, and language learning and teaching experiences. They wanted a BA degree for different specific reasons, and have had different academic trajectories not only during their undergraduate studies but their whole lives. No matter how prepared or not they might have felt in academic writing, the difficulty in complying to the expected discussion conventions pervaded in all three cases.

Challenges are always present when writing in an L2 in a new context (Salter-Dvorak, 2014), which is precisely what the participants of this study were doing (writing a 'dissertation' in L2 in a fully online learning environment), and it is important to acknowledge that the nature of the challenges that students at undergraduate level face is complex (Bilikozen, 2015). Therefore, given the heterogeneity of student backgrounds in different domains of life who enrol in this online BA, the *Research seminar* should address these differences in needs and provide opportunities for them in the form of **consistent supportive practices** so that they fully develop their potential instead of constantly striving for understanding what is expected from them (Salter-Dvorak, 2014). If all the people involved in this process are aware of each other's expectations and practices, Higher Education institutions will be in a better position to offer the appropriate conditions for students to become successful L2 writers (Gürel, 2017).

Moreover, approaching literacy practices based on meaning-making processes related to diverse domains, contexts, purposes, people, and allowing students to draw on their extracurricular literacy experience, can help us provide better guidance in research writing practices (Kaufhold, 2017). During the study, I was personally in the process of adopting and adapting the literacy as a social practice notion, and of becoming an ethnographer. This process will certainly continue to unfold, shaping my professional development both as a teacher and researcher, and I expect to be able to introduce, little by little, this gained experiences with my colleagues in the hope that it can actually make a difference.

Appendices

## **Appendices**

**1 to 32**





## Appendix 1 Student Participant Information Sheet

**Study Title:** Academic digital literacy trajectories: the case of online undergraduate TEFL students' L2 writing

**Researcher:** Patricia Núñez Mercado  
**ERGO number:** 40275

*Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.*

### **What is the research about?**

This study is part of my PhD research project. I am part of the academic staff of the online BA in TEFL of the University of Veracruz, and as such, I am interested in improving the program and the students' experience in it. I intend to investigate the academic digital literacy trajectories of this online BA students during the L2 writing of their Final Research Paper to obtain their degree. In other words, I want to explore what students do and why they do it in regard to decisions they make and problems they solve while writing their Final Research Paper, and how this shapes their writing process.

### **Why have I been asked to participate?**

I am asking you to participate because you are in the process of writing the Final Research paper of this online BA, and thus, it is precisely your experience that will be studied.

### **What will happen to me if I take part?**

If you agree to participate, you would need to:

1. give me access to all your Final Research Paper (FRP) drafts as you send them to your Research Paper Seminar (RPS) facilitator and supervisor along the RPS course until its final version.
2. give me access to all interaction with the RPS facilitator and supervisor, by forwarding the supervisors' feedback to and comments on his/her drafts, and related e-mails, messages via the institutional platform and, if that is the case, sharing recorded Skype conversations using the Free Video Call Recorder for Skype, for which I will provide the necessary use instructions (<https://www.dvdvideosoftware.com/es/products/dvd/Free-Video-Call-Recorder-for-Skype.htm> is).
3. give me short interviews when I have identified events that may indicate significant decision-making and problem-solving processes during the FRP writing. In this interview, you will be asked information related to your experience as an English language learner and as a student during the BA, as well as events that have been found significant during your FRP writing.
4. give me a final interview when you have submitted your final version. In this interview, you will be asked about your overall experience writing your FRP and your practices around it.

### **Are there any benefits in my taking part?**

The benefits are mainly for the program and future students, as the study aims at better understanding the students' experiences and practices regarding this writing process. This may help to improve the program, making this requirement (the writing of the FRP) a better experience for the students, facilitators and supervisors.

### **Are there any risks involved?**

The only risks involved in the research are related to confidentiality and anonymity, and how intrusive the participants may feel it is to provide to their work and interactions. To avoid this, all personal information will be changed, and the participants will be able to see any report which includes it to confirm that it has been changed to their entire satisfaction. If there is certain information that participants

prefer not to share, they can state so, briefly explaining why, and its omission from the study will be considered.

**Will my participation be confidential?**

The data obtained from your participation will be used only for the purposes of this study and your personal information will be anonymised. Therefore, all names and other personal information that may reveal the participants' identity will be changed. No one will have access to this information except for me and, only if necessary, my supervisor, and it will be kept in my laptop, which has a password. All backup made will also be given a password for access.

**What should I do if I want to take part?**

If you agree to participate, please complete the consent form and send it via e-mail to me (pnunez@uv.mx).

**What happens if I change my mind?**

If you change your mind, you can withdraw at any time and this will not have any repercussions in any way whatsoever for you. In this case, the data obtained from your participation up to that point will be completely withdrawn from the study should you require so.

**What will happen to the results of the research?**

The results will be used in the PhD thesis as well as any publication derived from the study. You will have access to the information that concerns your participation before the thesis or any contribution for publication submission to confirm that your identity has not been exposed in any way. You will also have access to the thesis once the University of Southampton releases it, and I will inform you about any publication that has been made, with the corresponding link if available. The data will be stored for a minimum of 10 years according to the University of Southampton policy. The anonymised data may be available for future research projects, but only when I am involved and only if the participant has agreed to it, in the understanding that anonymity will be respected at all times.

**Where can I get more information?**

You can contact me for any additional information you may require at pnunez@uv.mx, or you may contact the coordinator of the BA if you have any questions about the general consent to carry out the study in this program (leifiuv@gmail.com). You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Adriana Patiño Santos, from the University of Southampton, at A.Patino@soton.ac.uk.

**What happens if something goes wrong?**

If you have any complaint, you can contact the Head of our Faculty, Carmen Báez Velázquez (krbaez@yahoo.com), or our Registrar, Dora Luz Aguilar García (dlag@live.com.mx). These emails are the ones these authorities have provided for issues regarding the School of Languages.

**Thank you.**

I truly appreciate that you have taken the time to read this information sheet and considered taking part in the research.

[05/02/2018] [2]

[40275]

## Appendix 2      Calendar of *RL2C* Activities

Unit	Week	Dates	Topic	Activities	Type of activity	Material needed for the activity
1 The ELT Research Community	1	6-12 Feb	Why do research and where do we begin?	1.1 Why teachers do research	Forum	Question
				1.2 Motivations for classroom research	Brief reflection, 150-200 words	1 article, questions
				1.3 Stages of research	Pair discussion Forum	1 article, questions, (Skype, WhatsApp, etc.)
	2	13-19 Feb	Exploring current issues in TESOL Research	1.4 Information literacy skills	Forum	1 article, questions Optional: SCONUL (2011)
				1.5 TESOL topics of interest	Forum	1 article selected by the student
	3	20-26 Feb	The process of writing a literature review	1.6 Drafting a literature review	Pair discussion (any digital means) Individual brief reflection, 150-200 words (T's feedback)	Chapter (Skype, WhatsApp, etc.)
				1.7 Literature review outline	200 words reviewing selected literature = LR 1st draft (peer-reviewed in 1.9)	3 articles selected by ss APA guide
				1.8 Constructing a text	Forum	Article extract Theme-Rheme analysis of article extract
	4	27 Feb-5 March		1.9 Drafting as a social process	1st LR draft peer-revision	2 LR drafts, feedback sheet
2 Approaches to Research in ELT	5	6-12 March	Quantitative or Qualitative: an out-of-date debate?	2.1 Identifying research paradigms	Forum	1 chapter, 1 article selected by the ss (same as in 1.5)
				2.2 Identifying with a research paradigm	Brief description, 200-250 words (T's feedback)	1 chapter
	6	13-19 March	Common Research Traditions in ELT	2.3 Research traditions wiki	Informative Wiki in collaboration with peers	1 book extract, 1 book chapter, 1 video, Access to PBWorks wiki
				2.4 Practicalities of research traditions	Forum	Questions
	PORTFOLIO UNIT 1 (14 March)				Word file including Activities 1.2, 1.6 and 1.7 (T's feedback)	

	7	20 March – 2 April	What makes good research?	2.5 Evaluating research for quality	Brief report, 150-200 words	2 articles (1 chosen by the ss)
				2.6 Becoming a good researcher	Forum	1 article and questions
3 Data Collection Techniques	8	3-9 April	Establishing research objectives	3.1 Identifying research purposes, objectives and questions	Forum	2 chapters and 1 article chosen by the ss (same as in 1.5)
				3.2 Stating your research objectives	Forum	Questions
	PORTFOLIO UNIT 2 (9 April)			Word file including Activities 2.2 and 2.5 (T's feedback)		
	9	10-16 April	Participant selection and ethics	3.3 Ethical issues in research	Forum	Video, BERA ethical guidelines, questions
				3.4 Selecting participants	300-word description	1 article, questions
				3.5 Skype discussion	Tutorial Facilitator-Student about research plans	None
	10	17-30 April		3.6 Data collection methods used in TESOL	Forum	1 article chosen by ss and questions (same as in 1.5)
	11		Small-scale research data collection methods	3.7 Interviews in Educational Research	Interview guide (pairs or trios), Interview recorded (individually), 300-400 word report	1 chapter, British University webpage, 1 video
				3.8 Quantitative data collection in small-scale research	Observation schedule or Questionnaire (pairs or trios)	Obs: chapter & guide (book) Quest: 1 chapter
				3.9 Data collection methods for your research	250-word brief explanation	None
4 Data Analysis	12	1-7 May	Transcription of data	4.1 Issues with transcribing	Forum	Questions
				4.2 The transcription process	5-minute transcription, 150-word brief explanation (complications and decisions)	Interview recording Programme for transcribing (e.g. Express Scribe)
	PORTFOLIO UNIT 3 (7 May)			Word file including Activities 3.2, 3.4, 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9 (T's feedback)		
	13	8-21 May	Analysing data	4.3 Analysing your data	2 interview transcriptions (in pairs), 300-500 word individual report	Interview recordings, programme for transcribing
14						

## Appendix 2

5 Presenting Research	15	22-28 May	Ways of presenting research	5.1 Ways of presenting research	Revising material on posters, spoken presentations, and papers	British University Webpage (3 guides, 1 including tutorials), 2 YouTube videos
-	PORTFOLIO UNIT 4			Word file including Activities 4.2 and 4.3 (T's feedback)		
-	-	8 June	Final task	(presentation of research proposal)	800-1000 word Written Research Proposal	YouTube video Recommended outline Task criterion



## **Appendix 3 1<sup>st</sup> interview script for the Pilot Study**

### **Student's experience as an English language teacher:**

1. Are you an English teacher? / What kind of teaching experience have you had? / For how long?

### **Student's experience as an English language learner and as a student of the BA**

2. How long have you been learning English?
3. Where have you learnt it?
4. Why did you decide to study this BA?
5. What skills have been easier for you?
6. What is the most difficult thing for you about writing in English?
7. What are you doing to overcome those problems?

### **Significant events during writing tasks and processes**

#### **RL2C focused – some also relevant to ER**

8. How do you feel about doing research? (why/motivations)
9. Who did you discuss the article related to the stages of research (Act 1.3)?
10. What app did you use?
11. How do you search for information online?
12. How did you choose your 1.5 article?
13. Why did you not participate in forum 1.8?
14. Was there any activity that represented a challenge for you?
15. In what ways was it a challenge?
16. How did you overcome such challenge?
17. Were there any activities that were particularly helpful? In what ways?





## **Appendix 4     2<sup>nd</sup> interview script for the Pilot Study**

### **Overall experience in writing the Research Proposal**

1. What was for you the most challenging during this process?
2. How did you deal with it?
3. What other problems did you face?
4. How did you solve them?
5. Why didn't you include your participants' selection process as suggested by the facilitator?
6. Why didn't you include more data collection methods as suggested by the facilitator?
7. What do you think you should do to improve your proposal?
8. What has been the most helpful for you in this process?
9. Was there anything you had resisted to change despite being advised to do so? IF so, why?



## Appendix 5 Consent Form

**Study title:** Academic digital literacy trajectories: the case of online undergraduate TEFL students' L2 writing

**Researcher name:** Patricia Núñez Mercado  
**ERGO number:**

*Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):*

I have read and understood the information sheet (05/02/2018/2) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	
I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.	
I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time for any reason without my rights being affected.	
I understand my responses will be anonymised in reports of the research.	
I understand that the information collected about me may be used in future ethically approved research studies, remaining anonymous.	

Name of participant (print name) .....

Signature of participant .....

Date .....

Name of researcher (print name) Patricia Núñez Mercado .....

Signature of researcher  .....

Date .....



## Appendix 6 Teacher Participant Information Sheet

**Study Title:** Academic digital literacy trajectories: the case of online undergraduate TEFL students' L2 writing

**Researcher:** Patricia Núñez Mercado  
**ERGO number:** 40275

*Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.*

### **What is the research about?**

This study is part of my PhD research project. As part of the academic staff of the online BA in TEFL of the University of Veracruz, I am interested in improving the program and the students' experience in it. I intend to investigate the academic digital literacy trajectories of this online BA students during the L2 writing of their Final Research Paper to obtain their degree. In other words, I want to explore what students do and why they do it in regard to decisions they make and problems they solve while writing their Final Research Paper (FRP), and how this shapes their writing process.

### **Why have I been asked to participate?**

I am asking you to participate because you are involved in the process of writing the Final Research paper of this online BA, whether as the facilitator of the Research Paper Seminar course or the supervisor of students writing their FRP who have accepted to participate in the study.

### **What will happen to me if I take part?**

If you agree to participate, you would need to:

1. allow access to all your interaction with the student(s) you supervise, including feedback to and comments on the student(s)' drafts, and related e-mails, messages via the institutional platform and, if that is the case, Skype conversations.
2. give me short interviews when I have identified events that may indicate significant students' decision-making and problem-solving processes during the FRP writing. In this interview, you will be asked information related to changes that student(s) has/have made in the FRP drafts.
3. give me a final interview when the student(s) you supervise has submitted his/her final version. In this interview, you will be asked about your insights about the student(s)' FRP writing process.

### **Are there any benefits in my taking part?**

The benefits are mainly for the program and future students, as the study aims at better understanding the students' experiences and practices regarding this writing process. This may help to improve the program, making this requirement (the writing of the FRP) a better experience for the students, facilitators and supervisors.

### **Are there any risks involved?**

The only risks involved in the research are related to confidentiality and anonymity, and how intrusive the participants may feel it is to provide to their work and interactions. To avoid this, all personal information will be changed, and the participants will be able to see any report which includes it to confirm that it has been changed to their entire satisfaction. If there is certain information that participants prefer not to share, they can state so, briefly explaining why, and its omission from the study will be considered.

### **Will my participation be confidential?**

The data for this study refers mainly to students, not teachers. However, any data obtained from your participation will be used only for the purposes of this study and your personal information will be anonymised. Therefore, all names and other personal information that may reveal the participants' identity will be changed. No one will have access to this information except for me and, only if necessary, my supervisor, and it will be kept in my laptop, which has a password. All backup made will also be given a password for access.

**What should I do if I want to take part?**

If you agree to participate, please complete the consent form and send it via e-mail to me (pnunez@uv.mx).

**What happens if I change my mind?**

If you change your mind, you can withdraw at any time and this will not have any repercussions in any way whatsoever for you or the student(s) you supervise, as they will not be able to continue in the study either. In this case, the data obtained from your participation up to that point will be completely withdrawn from the study should you require so.

**What will happen to the results of the research?**

The results will be used in the PhD thesis as well as any publication derived from the study. You will have access to the information that concerns your participation before the thesis or any contribution for publication submission to confirm that your identity has not been exposed in any way. You will also have access to the thesis once the University of Southampton releases it, and I will inform you about any publication that has been made, with the corresponding link if available. The data will be stored for a minimum of 10 years according to the University of Southampton policy. The anonymised data may be available for future research projects, but only when I am involved and only if the participant has agreed to it, in the understanding that anonymity will be respected at all times.

**Where can I get more information?**

You can contact me for any additional information you may require at pnunez@uv.mx, or you may contact the coordinator of the BA if you have any questions about the general consent to carry out the study in this program (leifiuv@gmail.com). You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Adriana Patiño Santos, from the University of Southampton, at A.Patino@soton.ac.uk.

**What happens if something goes wrong?**

If you have any complaint, you can contact the Head of our Faculty, Carmen Báez Velázquez (krbaez@yahoo.com), or our Registrar, Dora Luz Aguilar García (dlag@live.com.mx). These emails are the ones they have provided for issues regarding the School of Languages.

**Thank you.**

I truly appreciate that you have taken the time to read this information sheet and considered taking part in the research.

[05/02/2018] [2]

[40275]

## Appendix 7 Initial Interview Guides

Participants	
Students	Teachers
<i>Initial interview</i> Questions related to:	
<p>The students experience as an English language learner and as a student of the BA. Eg.:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How long have you been learning English?</li> <li>2. Where have you learnt it?</li> <li>3. Why did you decide to study this BA?</li> <li>4. What skills have been easier for you?</li> <li>5. What is the most difficult thing for you about writing in English?</li> <li>6. What are you doing to overcome those problems?</li> </ol> <p>Events that have been found significant during writing tasks in the Research Paper Seminar addressing the Final Research Project draft. Eg.:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How did you decide your topic?</li> <li>2. What did you do to complete the table of references on your topic that you were required?</li> <li>3. Why did you include this reference?</li> </ol>	<p>Their expectations of the students' writing process. Eg.:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. Do you think the student will manage with the Final Research Project in due time, why?</li> <li>12. What do you consider to be his/her main strengths?</li> <li>13. What do you think will be his/her main challenges?</li> <li>14. How much support do you expect him/her to need?</li> </ol> <p>Events that have been found significant during writing tasks in the Research Paper Seminar addressing the Final Research Project draft. Eg.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Did you help the student decide on his/her topic? How or why not?</li> <li>2. Did you help him/her to look for references related to his/her topic? How or why not?</li> <li>3. How did you discuss with him/her the type of the study s/he would need to do?</li> </ol>
<i>Subsequent short interviews (2 to 3)</i> Questions related to:	
<p>Events that have been found significant during the writing of Final Research Project drafts. Eg.:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16. What has been for you the most challenging thing to do so far when writing your FRP drafts?</li> <li>17. Why did you decide to omit <i>this</i> information?</li> <li>18. How did you find the information that you were missing regarding <i>this concept/aspect</i>?</li> </ol>	<p>Changes that students have made in their Final Research Project drafts. Eg.:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What have been the most challenging aspects for the student to deal with so far?</li> <li>2. Why did you recommend him/her to add <i>this</i> information?</li> <li>3. Did s/he integrate the information as you had expected? How is that?</li> </ol>

Participants	
Students	Teachers
<i>Final interview</i> Questions related to:	
<p>Overall experience in writing their Final Research Paper and their practices around it. Eg.:</p> <p>10. What was for you the most challenging during this process?</p> <p>11. How did you deal with it?</p> <p>12. Why did you change your mind regarding <i>this</i> section of your FRP?</p>	<p>Insights about the students' Final Research Paper writing process. Eg.:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What were the most challenging issues for the student to deal with?</li> <li>2. Did s/he have difficulties you did not expect him/her to? (Which ones? Why do you think that happen?)</li> <li>3. Did s/he always accept your suggestions? Why or why not?</li> </ol>



## Appendix 8 Calendar of *Research Seminar* Activities

August 2018 – January 2019 term

Due date	Activity	Type of activity	Material Needed for the activity
16 <sup>th</sup> September	<b>Activity 1 –</b> Research Proposal	<b>Forum Proposal</b> (2 pages)	Proposal from RL2 course (or a new one)
	<b>Activity 2 –</b> Schedule	<b>Table</b>	Suggested table
23 <sup>rd</sup> September	<b>Activity 3 –</b> Literature Review	<b>File cards</b>	10 sources chosen by the e-learner File card format
	<b>Activity 4 –</b> Literature Review-plan	<b>Table</b>	Unit 2 – The Literature Review File cards Suggested table
30 <sup>th</sup> September	<b>Activity 5 –</b> Methodology	<b>Introduction to methodology</b> (200-300 words, approach description)	Example
	<b>Activity 6 –</b> Methodology: Context & Participants (ethical considerations)	<b>Description</b> (2 brief sections)	Unit 3 – Methodology (3.2, 3.3)
7 <sup>th</sup> October	<b>Activity 7 –</b> Methodology: Research Instruments (validity & reliability)	<b>Description</b> (400 – 600 words)	Unit 3 – Methodology (3.2, 3.4)
14 <sup>th</sup> October	<b>Activity 8 –</b> Literature Review Chapter	<b>Draft</b> (no specified length, reference for final draft: 7-10 pages)	Literature Review Plan Table (Activity 4)
21 <sup>st</sup> October	<b>Activity 9 –</b> Methodology chapter	<b>Draft</b>	Activities 5, 6, 7 and 9. Guidelines for the ER Final paper.
28 <sup>th</sup> October	<b>Activity 10 –</b> Data Analysis	<b>Peer partner activity</b> <b>Forum</b> <b>Report of discussion</b>	Unit 4 – Data Analysis (4.1, 4.2) Piece of data collected so far (3 pages max.)
5 <sup>th</sup> November	<b>Activity 11 –</b> Data Analysis: Description of procedure	<b>Description</b> (1 page max.)	Data collected Activity 7
11 <sup>th</sup> November	<b>Activity 12 –</b> Data Analysis: Findings	<b>Rough draft/outline</b> (no specified length, reference for final draft: 6-8 pages)	Data collected Chenail's (1995) model Activities 10 and 11

Due date	Activity	Type of activity	Material Needed for the activity
18 <sup>th</sup> November	<b>Activity 13</b> - Discussion	<b>Rough draft</b> (3-5 pages)	Activity 12 (Findings) Activity 8 (Literature Review)
25 <sup>th</sup> November	<b>Activity 14</b> - Conclusion – Summary of findings, Limitations of study & Recommendations for practice and/or further research	<b>As it may vary depending on each student, it is not included as part of the activities to be uploaded in <i>Eminus</i> during the course. Rather, each e-learner sends the facilitator their work when they have it ready.</b>	
2 <sup>nd</sup> December	<b>Activity 15</b> – Introduction		
9 <sup>th</sup> December	<b>Activity 16</b> - Abstract & Formatting of paper		
13 <sup>th</sup> December	Sending the paper to examiners (previous approval of advisor). Working on presentation		

## Appendix 9 Interview 1 Adapted guide for students

### Interview guide 1, introduction (the same for every student)

*Experience as an English language learner and as a student of the BA.*

1. How long have you been learning English?
2. Where have you learnt it?
3. Why did you decide to study this BA?
4. What skills have been easier for you?
5. What is the most difficult thing for you about writing in English?
6. What are you doing to overcome those problems?

### Xareni's interview guide 1 (continued after introduction)

*Events that have been found significant during writing tasks in the Research Seminar addressing the Final Research Project draft.*

7. How did you decide your topic?
8. You didn't upload your schedule on Eminus? Why was that? What happened?
9. What did you do to complete the table of references on your topic that you were required?
10. Why did you include those references?
11. Was it difficult to complete the second table with the references, the ideas and their relation to your own research? How did you do that?

*Events that have been found significant during the writing of Research paper drafts.*

12. Ask about the first draft, what was most difficult about it? How did she solve it at that
13. moment? Why did she take those decisions?
14. What has been for you the most challenging thing to do so far when writing your drafts?
15. Why did you decide to omit *this* information?
16. How did you find the information that you were missing regarding *this concept/aspect?*

### Jackie's interview guide 1 (continued after introduction)

*Events that have been found significant during writing tasks in the Research Seminar addressing the Final Research Project draft.*

7. How did you decide your topic? (Make sure it was actually the same she chose for RL2C)
8. What was the most difficult part (apart from choosing the topic, if that is the case) to get started?
9. What did you do to overcome these difficulties? What or who was helpful and how?
10. Why was your schedule incomplete?
11. What did you do to complete the tables of references on your topic that you were required for ER activity 3?
12. Why did you include those references?
13. Was it difficult to complete the second table with the references, the ideas and their relation to your own research? How did you do that?
14. Activity 5 was about writing a brief introduction to your methodology, but your facilitator mentions you uploaded a research proposal instead, without any methodological aspect included. What happened there?
15. After Activity 6, there is no follow up in Eminus of the activities. What did you do then to keep in touch with the facilitator? When and why would you get in touch with her?

*Events that have been found significant during the writing of Research paper drafts.*

16. How did you put your first draft together?
17. What was the most difficult about writing your first draft (before handing it in)?  
How did you solve it at that moment and why?
18. How did it turn out? Was there anything you didn't expect to be told by your supervisor about your first draft?
19. Can you tell me how you made the changes in that first draft for a the second one?  
What did you take into account?
20. Why did you decide to go for Action Research in the end?
21. Why did you decide to omit certain information in your second draft? (Check yellow highlighting in drafts 2 & 3)
22. Why did you decide to keep certain information the same way? (Check green highlighting in drafts 2 & 3)
23. What has been for you the most challenging thing to do so far when writing your drafts?
24. What have you been doing to sort out those problems?

**Brigitte's interview guide 1 (continued after introduction)**

*Events that have been found significant during writing tasks in the Research Seminar addressing the Final Research Project draft.*

7. How did you decide your topic? (Was it the same she chose for RL2C?)
8. What was the most difficult part (apart from choosing the topic, if that is the case) to get started?
9. What did you do to overcome these difficulties? What or who was helpful and how?
10. What has your interaction been like with your supervisor?

*Events that have been found significant during the writing of Research paper drafts.*

11. How did you put your first draft together?
12. What was the most difficult about writing your first draft (before handing it in)?  
How did you solve it at that moment and why?
13. How did it turn out? Was there anything you didn't expect to be told by your supervisor about your first draft? Did you expect to receive more corrections?
14. Can you tell me how you made the changes in that first draft for the second one?  
What did you take into account?
15. What have the most difficult aspects in the writing of your drafts been?

## Appendix 10 Interview 2 Adapted guide for students

### Xareni's interview guide 2

*Overall experience in writing Research Paper and practices around it.*

- What was for you the most challenging during this process? (**Ask her about her nephew's preparation, why she says he is a well-prepared person**)
- How did you deal with it?
- *Isaac* and *Victoria* sent you corrections and observations to your drafts twice each. When was that? Can you tell me about this process?
- You practically saw to every comment they did. Did you make the changes suggested considering anything else apart from their observations? Can you tell me how you made the changes when they suggested any? (Check pink in the analysis if necessary to provide examples)
- There were also times you didn't make the changes suggested by *Victoria* and *Isaac*. Why did you decide to do so? (Provide examples, check green in the analysis)
- You also made changes on your own at the end of the process. Why did you decide to do so? How you did it? (For example, the title and several writing instances such as rewriting a paragraph or adding a sentence)
- At the end, you practically didn't make any changes in your final version from what any of your readers observed. Why was that?
- **If problems with referencing haven't been mentioned so far, as her why.**
- **Ask her about the job she is aiming at, and why she wanted to take the exam so soon**
- **Ask her to describe more the process of reading and writing for the research paper**

### Jackie's interview guide 2

*Overall experience in writing Research Paper and practices around it.*

- What was for you the most challenging during the whole process?
- How did you deal with it?
- Your supervisor seems to have observed some corrections more than once, and you did change them in the end. Is there any particular reason you didn't do it before? (Eg. When he wrote AGAIN?)
- In the final draft you sent to your supervisor he observed you had changed something that was better expressed in previous drafts. Why did you make that change? (p. 17, 3.4.3)
- For the final version before your presentation, you practically made every single change your supervisor had suggested. Can you tell me in as much detail as possible how you worked with him, how you checked his feedback, how you decided it was time to send him a new draft?
- Your facilitator also sent you feedback several times, and you also seem to have practically changed all the suggestions she made. Can you please also tell me in as much detail as possible when you started sending her drafts, how you worked with her, how you decided it was necessary to send her a new draft, etc.?
- How did you manage with feedback from both your supervisor and the facilitator?
- Now, about the readers' feedback. I noticed you practically didn't make any changes observed by one of the supervisors (*Isaac*) for your final version. Why was that? How did you decide on the few changes you actually made (Check green highlighting all along the paper and pink highlighting on pages 14, 17, 18, and 24 in *Isaac's* file)
- The other reader made fewer observations, and you practically made all the changes suggested but one (green highlighting on p. 10, 2.3, about Scaffolding). Why was that?

- Why isn't there any abstract and yet it is included in the table of contents?
- How did you know how to list your references at the end? Why didn't you put in italics the names of magazines? Why is there a comma after the word references (which wasn't there in previous drafts and that nobody observed in the final version)?
- Finally, could you tell me more in detail how you decided what to add, what to eliminate, apart from what your supervisor and facilitator told you? How did you work with your references? How did you find them? In general, how did you build up your research paper?

## Brigitte's interview guide 2

*Overall experience in writing Research Paper and practices around it.*

1. What was for you the most challenging during this process?
2. How did you deal with it?
3. Can you tell me about how you worked with *Victoria*?
4. You tried to see to every comment she did. Did you make the changes suggested considering anything else apart from her observations? Can you tell me how you made the changes when she suggested any? (Check pink in the analysis if necessary to provide examples)
5. There were also times you didn't make the changes she suggested (green and yellow). Why did you decide to do so? (Some of these were along the process but finally made, and some others were never included)
 

Examples

  - a. List of references format (*Victoria* even stopped indicating them, why? How was this changed for the last draft before sending it to the readers? Why are there still many issues here in the final version?)
  - b. Talking about qualitative research
  - c. The corresponding appendix within the methodology text (data collection procedure)
  - d. Matching questions with objectives
  - e. Reasons why the study was carried out and its importance in the rationale
  - f. Specifications about discussion (yellow 3C)
  - g. Making sure the research questions were answered in the findings section (conclusion 4D)
  - h. Supervisor's remarks within the text about things to add
  - i. Impact of your findings on your own teaching (in limitations)
6. You also made changes on your own along the process. Why did you decide to do so? How did you do it?

Examples from second draft

- a. Abstract
- b. Table of contents
- c. Introduction, first paragraph, last sentence
- d. Rationale
- e. Literature review sources integrated (leaving one piece of information out)
- f. Some changes in Methodology
- g. Adding appendices

Examples from third draft

- h. Underlined text all along the sections apart from those that were required by the supervisor
- i. Change of order in paragraphs

Examples from fourth draft

- j. Conclusion remarks
- Examples from fifth draft

k. Some rewriting specially in findings

7. What about *Rocco*'s observations? How did you feel when you received them?
8. There were actually very few changes that he suggested that you didn't make for your final version? Why was that? Would you like to see the examples? (e.g. keeping 'research' methods instead of 'data collection' methods, or 'telesecondary' instead of 'distance learning...', he says number of participants must be mentioned in the abstract, and it was, but in the final version it is not).
9. I also noticed that you made even more changes not mentioned by *Rocco* for your final version. Can you tell me about it?
10. How did you feel about not receiving any observations from your second reader?
11. (If it hasn't been mentioned) You also changed the title. Why was that?





## Appendix 11 Adapted Interview guide for teachers

### Supervisors' interview guide

*Expectations of the students' writing process.*

1. What expectations did you have of (*Xareni/Jackie/Brigitte*)'s paper and why did you have such? Were these expectations met? Why, why not, how?
2. How much support did she need? Was it enough?
3. Did you help her define her topic? How or why not?
4. Were there any issues related to the type of the study she conducted? Any recommendations or observations?
5. Did you help her to look for references related to her topic? How or why not?
6. Did she integrate your recommendations as you had expected? How is that?
7. Did she always accept your suggestions? Why or why not?
8. What do you consider to have been her main strengths?
9. What do you think were the most challenging issues for her to deal with?
10. Did she have difficulties you did not expect her to? (Which ones? Why do you think that happen?)
11. Did she make all the changes suggested by the examiners for her final version? (Why do you think she did not do so? – because she actually did not change practically any?)
12. Could you, briefly if you want, describe how you perceived the whole process developed? What happened, when, how and why? (Try to elicit if s/he perceived any other relevant aspect of (*Xareni, Jackie, Brigitte*)'s process apart from his/her own supervision)
13. Make sure that issues related to the writing itself be mentioned, including those related to referencing.

**\* In Isaac's case, also:**

14. Make sure that Xareni's apparent rush in the process is brought up. Why not recommend her to wait?

### Victoria's interview guide as a facilitator in Xareni's and Jackie's cases

\*Same as supervisors' interview guide except for question 11:

11. Do you know if someone verified or did you verify if she made all the changes suggested by the examiners for her final version? (Why do you think she did not do so? – because she actually did not change practically any)

### Victoria's interview guide as both facilitator and supervisor for Brigitte

\*Same as supervisors' interview guide except for question 11:

11. Did you verify if she made the changes suggested by the examiners for her final version?

\* Additional questions:

- You were both the *Research seminar* facilitator and her supervisor, do you think it makes a difference in these cases? In what ways? Any particular issue in *Brigitte's* case?
- What do you think happens with referencing? It is a common issue where there's always a lot room for improving when it comes to the students' research papers?




## Appendix 12 Example of colour-coding in drafts/final version

### Example 1: Abstract in Brigitte's final version

#### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to inquire into students' socio-economic background and its impact on their English language acquisition, specifically to know how it affects the learners' motivation and attitude towards learning English as a foreign language. This research is based on 18 students attending the Telesecondary school "Juan Amós Comenio", located in Rancho Viejo, Tlalnelhuayocan. Though not all of them live in Rancho Viejo, **many of them** live in other rural areas relatively near. The participants **were adolescents** enrolled in second grade of secondary education, with ages between 13 and 16 years old. **Because of their age**, it was necessary to obtain their parents' consent as well as the Headmistress of the school's. **The study was carried out in real-life circumstances and in a natural setting, aiming to understand the realities from the participants' perspectives; however, quantitative information was also needed to gain richer insight. That is why, the research approach adopted was Mixed Methods Research, and the tradition used for this research was Case Study.** The instruments used were questionnaires (quantitative data) and semi-structured interviews (qualitative), to gain a more detailed perspective of the participants' socioeconomic context **and the impact of this on students' learning.** In order to **represent** the data collected, graphics were used. The findings suggest that there is a close connection between learners' socioeconomic context and their English language learning attitudes, motivation **and practices.**

### Example 2: Students' reply in Jackie's 3<sup>rd</sup> draft

**Cuauhtémoc (supervisor)** noviembre 29, 2018   
**IMPORTANT!!**  
 YOU SAY THAT YOUR PAPER IS AN ACTION RESEARCH. HOWEVER, YOUR OBJECTIVE GIVES TO UNDERSTAND A DIFFERENT THING. ACCORDING TO THIS, AS WELL AS TO YOUR RESEARCH QUESTIONS, IT IS A CASE STUDY. IN ORDER TO BE AN ACTION RESEARCH, FIRSTLY YOU NEED TO IDENTIFY A PROBLEM AND THEN TO FIND OUT SOME POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO SOLVE SUCH PROBLEM BY, FOR EXAMPLE, DESIGNING MATERIALS FOR STUDENTS TO IMPROVE THEIR LEVEL IN TERMS OF VOCABULARY.

**Jackie** diciembre 29, 2018  
 My intention was to do it as a case study but when I presented it to *Karen* she told me to change it to an action research.



### Appendix 13      Record of participants' ADL events

**Xareni's number of events via different means of communication by month**

	September 2018	October 2018	November 2018	December 2018	January 2018	ADL events totals
<b>Eminus interaction</b>	9	7	8	3	2	29
<b>Email exchanges</b>	0	1	3	8	9	21
<b>WhatsApp conversations</b>	0	2	8	19	34	63
<b>Telephone conversations</b>	0	1	1	1	0	3
<b>Skype sessions</b>	0	0	1	0	1	2
<b>Total ADL events a month</b>	9	11	21	31	46	118

**Jackie's number of events via different means of communication by month**

	Sep 2018	Oct 2018	Nov 2018	Dec 2018	Jan 2019	Feb 2019	Mar 2019	ADL events totals
<b>Eminus interaction</b>	9	7	9	1	8	4	3	41
<b>Email exchanges</b>	0	5	1	1	5	4	5	21
<b>WhatsApp conversations</b>	0	1	0	2	0	1	4	8
<b>Zoom session</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Total ADL events a month</b>	9	13	10	4	13	9	13	71

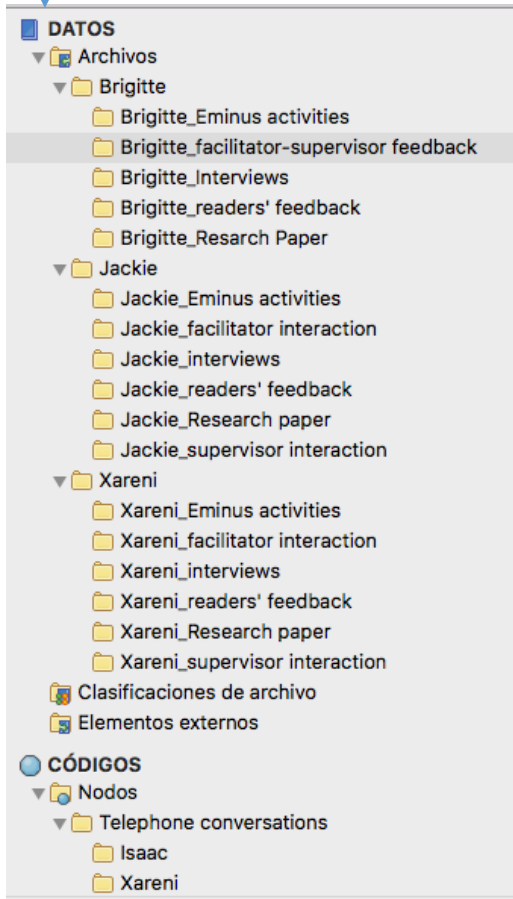
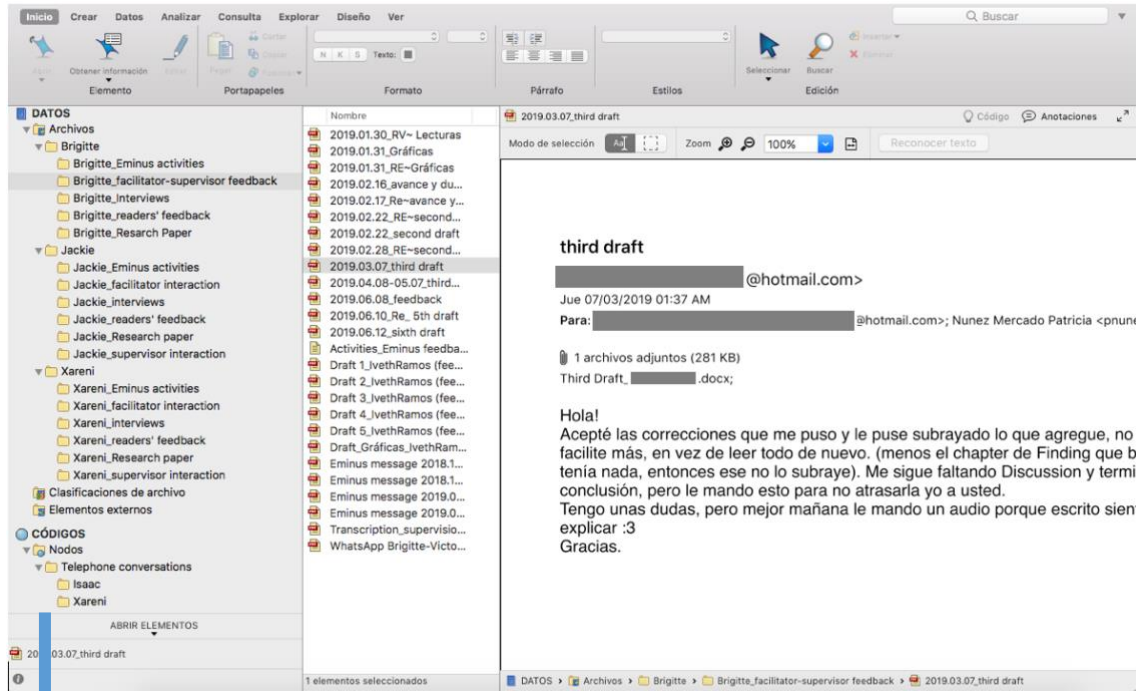
**Brigitte's number of events via different means of communication by month**

	Sep 2018	Oct 2018	Nov 2018	Dec 2018	Jan 2019	Feb 2019	Mar 2019	Apr 2019	May 2019	Jun 2019	ADL events totals
<b>Eminus interaction</b>	4	8	0	1	12	1	0	0	0	0	26
<b>Email exchanges</b>	0	0	0	0	3	6	1	1	1	5	26
<b>WhatsApp conversations</b>	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2*
<b>Facebook videochat</b>	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Total ADL events a month</b>	4	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	1*

\*A great deal of WhatsApp interaction of their conversations was lost by both Brigitte and Victoria before they were able to send it to me.



## Appendix 14 Using NVivo







## Appendix 15 Example of analysis for *Eminus* events

### Uploading activities

<b>September</b>	<b>11</b>	Proposal (Act 1)	Before deadline	She was supposed to consider feedback from peers and facilitator on the corresponding forum before uploading her proposal, but there was none. Still, she did not wait for any feedback to upload the proposal, which was then exactly the same as the one she had shared in the forum.
	<b>23</b>	File cards (Act 3)	On deadline	She filled in 11 file cards in the format provided (one more to the minimum established). In each file card, students had to include the full reference, paraphrase the main idea, include the quotes that supported it, reflect on the relationship of the idea to her topic and add any comments they may have. Xareni's 11 references were different from the ones included in the literature review in her proposal.
	<b>23</b>	Lit review chart (Act 4)	On deadline	Students had to filled in a chart where they stated main ideas, then different authors that supported them (year, name) and then reflect on how the ideas related to their topic. Xareni filled in her chart with ideas supported by different authors, in some cases including quotes or paraphrasing the author. Some of the authors had been included in both her proposal and her file cards, but she also added more authors that shared the ideas she wanted to support. Some of her reflection already includes reference to the results in her implementation, as she had already carried out her project.
	<b>30</b>	Methodology (Act 5)	On deadline	Xareni stated her research approach (action research, qualitative), her objectives (although not very clearly), but no research questions. She justified her choice of methodology to some extent.
	<b>30</b>	Context and participants (Act 6)	On deadline	She described her participants, but not her context. Strangely, it is all expressed in future tense even when she had already implemented the project. This suggests that she was only copying what she had done for the previous course.
<b>October</b>	<b>7</b>	Instruments (Act 7)	On deadline	She included a description of the instruments she chose, why she chose them and how she developed and/or used them. She also included an interview guide.
	<b>14</b>	Lit review draft (Act 8)	On deadline	She uploaded a very rough draft of literature review, with a heading in Spanish (Marco Teórico), including the main sections of motivations, songs, and advantages of using songs in the classroom. She included some references from her proposal and her literature review file cards, and almost all references from her literature review chart. She also added a few more references. The references, however, were all cited differently (using different referencing styles) and no reference list was included at the end.

	21	Procedure (Act 9)	On deadline	She put together the information for methodology in all the previous activities and this one, as requested. She added two sections not specified, and that do not usually belong to the methodology section (limitations and significance of the study).
	28	Data Analysis (Act 10)	On deadline	She included the report required discussing her insights about the peer activity she carried out with one of her e-mates in relation to the data analysis process. Although she used her forum participation almost exactly the same in this report, she did add more information regarding her own data and results.
November	5	Data analysis procedure (Act 11)	On deadline	She described her data analysis procedure for the interviews she had already conducted. She realizes her that her focus is more on motivation rather than pronunciation.
	11	Findings draft (Act 12)	On deadline	She included a very rough draft of her findings chapter, referring only to the first phase of her implementations, considering the interviews she had conducted then. She divided the findings for this stages in three sections: affective factors, cognitive factors and language and learning strategies, including only some quotes from her transcriptions for each subheading within the main sections.
	18	Discussion draft (Act 13)	On deadline	She included something more similar to a conclusion rather than a discussion. She did not relate the findings to the literature and wrote only one page (three paragraphs) instead of 3-4 pages, both of which were stipulated in the activity instructions.

\* Xareni **DID NOT** upload Activity 2

### Participating in forums

September	11	Proposal shared	On deadline	The forum was open until 15 September to receive feedback from peers and facilitator, as students are required to take into account this feedback to enrich their proposal to be uploaded for Activity 1. Nevertheless, Xareni did not receive feedback either from peers or facilitator. For this forum, only seven out of thirteen students who were enrolled shared their proposals, and only three students provided feedback to some of their peers. The facilitator did not provide feedback to the students in the forum, but she did post a message thanking to those who participated.
October	28	Analysis process discussion	On deadline	She shared her insights of the peer activity (Activity 10) she carried out along with one of her e-mates on the data analysis process of interview transcripts. Only two other students participated in the forum with their insights (one of them the e-mate she did the peer-activity with), and there was no feedback either from the peers (although it was not required for the students to do so) or the facilitator.

**Receiving feedback to uploaded activities**

<b>October</b>	<b>10</b>	Feedback for proposal (Act 1)	A month later Eminus text	Facilitator points out a possible mismatch between the stated research question and research objective
	<b>16</b>	Feedback for file cards (Act 3)	A month later Eminus text	Facilitator points out that if Xareni's research objective is to improve students' participation in pronunciation practices, she needs to justify why a singing contest can help to do so
	<b>17</b>	Feedback for Lit review chart (Act 4)	A month later Eminus text	Facilitator suggests Xareni should try to find more sources directly related to the use of songs in improving pronunciation
<b>November</b>	<b>13</b>	Feedback for methodology (Act 5)	A month and a half later Word file	Facilitator makes three language corrections, indicates that the heading should include 'Chapter 3', and makes an observation regarding how to cite references in text.
	<b>19</b>	Feedback for context and participants (Act 6)	Almost 2 months later Word file	Facilitator makes one language correction and observes that Xareni did not describe the research context (only the participants). In the Eminus feedback text, the facilitator instructs to make the necessary adjustments.

**Communicating with facilitator via *Eminus* messages**

<b>September</b>	<b>10</b>	General presentation message from the facilitator		The facilitator sent all the students a welcome message, emphasising the importance of constant interaction for success. She also emphasised the importance of working autonomously as well as working with their supervisors. She sent the message as soon as she could, since there were administrative problems and the course started almost a month later than scheduled, and thus she explained that the calendar of activities still needed updating.
	<b>11</b>	General message from the facilitator announcing activities 2 and 3		As soon as she updated the calendar of activities, the facilitator sent all the students a message to let them know this had already been done and that they should check activities 1 and 2 right away.
	<b>24</b>	Xareni to facilitator about extension for activity 2		Xareni explained why she did not upload the activity; she thought they were expected to discuss the research schedule with their supervisors (although this was not explicitly stated in the activity instructions), and they had not been assigned one. She wanted to know if she could upload it once she had her supervisor assigned. The facilitator replied explaining Xareni that due to the late start of the course, they could not wait for the supervisors to be assigned. She granted her an extension to upload the activity, but Xareni failed to upload the activity again.
	<b>30</b>	Facilitator to Xareni informing about assigned supervisor		The facilitator informed Xareni who her supervisor would be, and the emails she could write to him, asking her to contact him as soon as possible. She actually sent him her proposal 5 days later, once she had organised it better.

<b>November</b>	<b>19</b>	Xareni to facilitator requesting Skype session	Xareni requested a session in Skype for counselling, and the facilitator replied by scheduling a date for her. The session did take place, but the facilitator did not mention it in the interview, and Xareni expressed it had not been what she had expected.
	<b>20</b>	Xareni to facilitator sending progress	Xareni sent a draft and interview guide.
	<b>20</b>	Facilitator to Xareni sending feedback	Facilitator sent feedback on interview guide, also making general recommendations regarding length and flexibility, as well as the need for a close relation with the objectives. She also told Xareni to write a consent form for the parents.
<b>December</b>	<b>9</b>	Xareni to facilitator sending progress	Xareni sent the facilitator her fourth draft.
	<b>19</b>	Facilitator to Xareni sending feedback	The facilitator sent feedback on Xareni's fourth draft. She wrote in her message that she has not finished revising and that she has focused on format and organisation rather than on content. She instructs Xareni to start working on corrections.
	<b>30</b>	Xareni to facilitator sending progress	Xareni sent the facilitator her fifth draft.
<b>January</b>	<b>4</b>	Facilitator to Xareni sending feedback	The facilitator sent Xareni the first part of feedback on fifth draft, for the first three chapters. She mentions she still needs to revise content on the last chapters and instructs her to send her supervisor the corrected version.
	<b>5</b>	Facilitator to Xareni sending feedback	The facilitator sent Xareni the second part of feedback on fifth draft. She informs her that she made format changes, so she should consider using the file she is just sending to work on. She instructs her to send the corrected version to her supervisor and then to the readers by 7 January at the latest, which she did.

## Appendix 16      Example of analysis for E-mail events

### Using email for sending progress and feedback

<b>October</b>	<b>5</b>	Proposal	Xareni to supervisor	English	She lets him know she's glad. She sends the proposal shared in the platform, but also a more organised one. FEEDBACK RECEIVED BY MAIL: Yes, but the supervisor only asks about a pre-test and post-test for data collection.
<b>November</b>	<b>15</b>	Problem statement and interview	Xareni to supervisor	Spanish	She specifically wants to know if she needs to add anything else [to the interview] She also sends an Eminus activity (12, data analysis findings) and wants to know if she is doing alright. She asks for a supervision by telephone (which she gets 13 days later). FEEDBACK RECEIVED BY MAIL: None
	<b>26</b>	First draft/New interview	Xareni to supervisor	English	She informs him that she has made changes to the interview according to facilitator's observations. She wants feedback about it so that she can start with the interviews. FEEDBACK RECEIVED BY MAIL: None
	<b>28</b>	New interview	Xareni to supervisor	Spanish	She wants to know the supervisor's opinion about the questions. FEEDBACK RECEIVED BY MAIL: None
<b>December</b>	<b>1</b>	Progress on analysis	Xareni to supervisor	Spanish	She wants to know if she is doing the analysis correctly. FEEDBACK RECEIVED BY MAIL: Yes
	<b>4</b>	Observations on analysis progress	Supervisor to Xareni	-	No text
	<b>6</b>	RP guidelines	Xareni to supervisor	-	No text
	<b>9</b>	Third draft	Xareni to supervisor	English	Just letting him know she's sending third draft. FEEDBACK RECEIVED BY MAIL: None
	<b>10</b>	Fourth draft	Xareni to supervisor	English	She lets him know she just added 'the content' FEEDBACK RECEIVED BY MAIL: Yes
	<b>15</b>	Feedback on fourth draft	Supervisor to Xareni	-	No text
	<b>21</b>	Fifth draft	Xareni to supervisor	English	She lets him know she 'made the corrections already', informs she couldn't update her content as her last interview is still missing, and she sends the facilitator's observations on her previous draft 'just in case' he has anything to say about them. FEEDBACK RECEIVED BY MAIL: Yes.
<b>28</b>	Feedback on fifth draft	Supervisor to Xareni	-	No text	

<b>January</b>	<b>6</b>	Sixth draft	Xareni to supervisor	-	No text FEEDBACK RECEIVED BY MAIL: None
	<b>6</b>	Seventh draft	Xareni to supervisor	-	No text FEEDBACK RECEIVED BY MAIL: None
	<b>7</b>	Presentation	Xareni to supervisor	Spanish	She wants to know if she has to make any changes. FEEDBACK RECEIVED BY MAIL: None
	<b>7</b>	Final draft	Supervisor to readers	-	No access to actual mail sent. He tells Xareni she sent them on a WhatsApp conversation after correcting it, but sends no corrections to Xareni.
	<b>14</b>	Final draft observations	Readers to Xareni	-	No access to actual mails sent. Xareni sends the files to her supervisor after she receives them.
	<b>14</b>	Readers observations	Xareni to supervisor	Spanish	Just letting him know she's sending readers' observations.
	<b>15</b>	Corrections to one of the readers' observations	Xareni to supervisor	Spanish	Just letting him know she's sending progress on one readers' observations. FEEDBACK RECEIVED BY MAIL: None
	<b>16</b>	Final version	Xareni to supervisor	Spanish	She lets him know she made all corrections relative to quotes and spelling. She wants to know if she has to change the questions and eliminate everything related to the four skills. FEEDBACK RECEIVED BY MAIL: Yes
	<b>16</b>	Final version corrected	Supervisor to Xareni	Spanish	He lets her know he is sending two files. One with the minimal corrections he made and another one accepting all the changes to be burnt in a CD.

## Appendix 17 Example of analysis for WhatsApp events

### Using WhatsApp for communicating with supervisor/facilitator

<b>October</b>	<b>17</b>	Xareni	Supervisor	English	Arranging telephone supervision session Informing about progress sent (via email)
	<b>18</b>	Supervisor	Xareni	English Spanish	Arranging telephone supervision session Xareni informing about blog invitation sent
	<b>25</b>	Xareni	Supervisor	Spanish	Arranging telephone supervision session
<b>November</b>	<b>9</b>	Supervisor	Xareni	Spanish	Arranging telephone supervision session Apologizing (Xareni to supervisor, for not making contact because of workload)
	<b>19</b>	Xareni	Supervisor	Spanish	Informing about progress sent (via email) Consulting supervisor
	<b>26</b>	Xareni	Supervisor	Spanish	Informing about progress sent (via email) Arranging telephone supervision session Expressing anxiety
	<b>27</b>	Xareni	Supervisor	Spanish	Reminding about telephone supervision session
	<b>28</b>	Xareni	Supervisor	English	Arranging telephone supervision session
	<b>28</b>	Xareni	Supervisor	Spanish	Consulting supervisor Sending multimedia (interview guide; parental consent) Apologizing (Supervisor to Xareni, for not replying)
	<b>30</b>	Xareni	Facilitator	Spanish	Informing about progress sent (via Eminus message)
	<b>30</b>	Xareni	Supervisor	Spanish	Sending multimedia (interview track) Consulting supervisor
	<b>30</b>	Xareni	Supervisor	Spanish	Consulting supervisor Sending multimedia (voice message) Apologizing (Supervisor to Xareni, for not revising yet)

\*December and January, the months with more WhatsApp activity, were omitted.

### Consulting supervisor via WhatsApp

<b>November</b>	<b>19</b>	Spanish	Questions about metacognitive aspects	Feedback provided
			Asking for feedback on interview guide	No feedback
	<b>28</b>	Spanish	Asking for feedback on interview guide	Feedback provided
			Asking for feedback on parental consent	Feedback provided
	<b>30</b>	Spanish	Asking for feedback on interview (sound file)	No feedback
	<b>30</b>	Spanish	Asking for feedback on interview (sound file)	Feedback provided

<b>December</b>	<b>1</b>	Spanish	Asking for feedback on interview guide	Feedback provided
		Spanish	Question about parental consent	Feedback provided
		Spanish	Asking for feedback on research paper	No feedback
		Spanish	Asking for feedback on analysis	Feedback provided
	<b>5</b>	Spanish	Question about number of words	Feedback provided
	<b>6</b>	Spanish	Question about context	No feedback
	<b>19</b>	Spanish	Question about correction	No feedback
<b>30</b>	Spanish	Asking for feedback on conclusion (5:20 am!!)	No feedback	
* January WhatsApp activity was omitted				

### Supervisor's feedback via WhatsApp (a few instances)

<b>Feedback provided</b>	<b>No feedback</b>
19/11/18 10:50 a. m. - Xareni: He estado trabajando <sup>[1]</sup> 19/11/18 10:50 a. m. - Xareni: En todo lo que me dijo <sup>[1]</sup> 19/11/18 10:51 a. m. - Xareni: Y me interesa mucho lo metacognitivo porque ahí entraría la autonomía la planeación y la búsqueda de ayuda 19/11/18 10:51 a. m. - Xareni: Cómo ve 19/11/18 11:00 a. m. - Isaac: <b>Muy bien!</b>	19/11/18 11:07 a. m. - Xareni: Solo espero que me diga si la entrevista está bien 19/11/18 11:07 a. m. - Xareni: Para aplicarla 19/11/18 11:07 a. m. - Xareni: También me gustaría saber cuántas entrevistas serían las ideales 19/11/18 12:40 p. m. - Isaac: <b>Voy a checar</b> 19/11/18 12:40 p. m. - Xareni: Ok
28/11/18 12:09 p. m. - Xareni: Le envié las preguntas 28/11/18 12:09 p. m. - Xareni: Dígame si hay alguna que necesite corrección 28/11/18 12:09 p. m. - Xareni: También las envié a su correo 28/11/18 12:34 p. m. - Isaac: Ok 28/11/18 3:18 p. m. - Isaac: <b>En la numero tres, en la back-up question, yo le añadiría, cuál fue ese orden?</b> 28/11/18 3:20 p. m. - Isaac: <b>En la cuatro, en la main question, podríamos añadir y cómo lograste alcanzar esa meta?</b> 28/11/18 5:07 p. m. - Xareni: Ok	30/11/18 12:06 p. m. - Xareni: Esta es mi entrevista maestro 30/11/18 12:39 p. m. - Xareni: Como la escucha 30/11/18 12:42 p. m. - Isaac: <b>Voy</b>
28/11/18 8:44 p. m. - Xareni: Mi formato de consentimiento de padres está bien ? 28/11/18 8:53 p. m. - Xareni: <b>Si, yo creo</b> 8/11/18 9:11 p. m. - Xareni: 🍊	1/12/18 7:48 p. m. - Xareni: Cómo ve mi reporte hasta ahorita? 1/12/18 7:48 p. m. - Xareni: Voy bien? 1/12/18 7:49 p. m. - Isaac: <b>Apenas voy a checarlo pero te digo ahorita</b>

### Consulting facilitator via WhatsApp

<b>January</b>	<b>8</b>	Spanish	Questions about findings in presentation and research paper	Feedback provided
	<b>15</b>	Spanish	Questions about referencing	Feedback provided
	<b>16</b>	Spanish	Final details for research report	Feedback provided



**Facilitator's feedback via WhatsApp (A few instances)**

<b>Required</b>	<b>Unrequired</b>
<p>08/01/19 11:56 - Xareni: Maestra tengo una duda</p> <p>08/01/19 11:57 - Xareni: En los findings se cambió a estos headings</p> <p>08/01/19 11:57 - Xareni: IMG-20190108-WA0004.jpg (archivo adjunto)</p> <p>08/01/19 11:58 - Xareni: Pero en mi reporte yo maneje este esquema para mis categorías</p> <p>08/01/19 11:58 - Xareni: IMG-20190108-WA0003.jpg (archivo adjunto)</p> <p>08/01/19 12:03 - Victoria: El esquema lo puedes dejar</p> <p>08/01/19 12:07 - Victoria: PTT-20190108-WA0005.opus (archivo adjunto)</p> <p>08/01/19 12:12 - Xareni: Gracias maestra.</p> <p>08/01/19 12:14 - Victoria: De nada!</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>08/01/19 12:18 - Victoria: Déjame revisar tu última versión y te digo qué se puede hacer con el esquema. No lo borres</p> <p>08/01/19 12:20 - Xareni: Si maestra</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>08/01/19 13:09 - Xareni: En los findings puedo hacerlo así</p> <p>08/01/19 13:09 - Xareni: IMG-20190108-WA0007.jpg (archivo adjunto)</p> <p>08/01/19 13:10 - Victoria: Sí pero no sólo pongas las palabras de los estudiantes, también tu interpretación</p> <p>08/01/19 13:10 - Xareni: Si está bien</p> <p>08/01/19 13:53 - Victoria: Xareni, creo que puedes dejar el esquema, después de las primeras categorías</p> <p>08/01/19 13:56 - Xareni: Esta bien maestra</p>	<p>04/01/19 12:53 - Victoria: PTT-20190104-WA0005.opus (archivo adjunto)</p> <p>04/01/19 13:03 - Xareni: Okay maestra gracias!</p> <p>04/01/19 13:03 - Victoria: De nada, seguimos en contacto</p>



## Appendix 18 Example of analysis for telephone supervision sessions

The screenshot displays a software application for data analysis. The interface is divided into several sections:

- Menu Bar:** Includes 'Inicio', 'Crear', 'Datos', 'Analizar', 'Consulta', 'Explorar', 'Diseño', and 'Ver'.
- Toolbar:** Contains icons for 'Formato', 'Párrafo', 'Estilos', 'Seleccionar', 'Buscar', and 'Edición'.
- Left Sidebar (DATOS):** A hierarchical tree structure showing folders like 'Archivos', 'Brigitte', 'Jackie', 'Xareni', 'CÓDIGOS', and 'CASOS'. The 'Self-satisfaction' folder is selected.
- Central Table:** A table with columns 'Nombre', 'R', and 'Creado el'. It lists various categories such as 'Anxiety', 'Project development', 'Project implementation', 'Project in general', 'Concerns', 'Facilitator's comments', 'Self-confidence', 'Confidence', 'Self-satisfaction', 'Theoretical framework', and 'Project background'.
- Right Sidebar (Self-satisfaction):** Shows a 'Resumen' and 'Referencia' section. It includes a link to a transcription file and a summary: '2 referencias codificadas, cobertura 4.38%'. Below this, there are two references with their respective text excerpts.

**Referencia 1: cobertura**

Sí, por ejemplo, bueno, la verdad para mí el proyecto fue como cuando tú planeas... dices para facilitarme esta parte de mi trabajo, y después te encuentras con muchas sorpresas, o sea, verdaderamente, o sea, para mí fue como algo muy grande, algo esperaba, porque por ejemplo, la segunda semana cuando mis alumnos me empezaron a decir, '¡Maestra, ya me sé mi canción!', y los empecé a grabar algunos en el salón... algunos me mandaban sus audios, yo los escuchaba y decía, pues ellos ni siquiera escuchan que no hablen inglés, si, o sea, no ni siquiera se escucha de que en el salón esto, no, algo totalmente diferente, y también, este, me dio mucho gusto, o sea, y para mí también de gran sorpresa que dijeran, yo desde la casa escuchando sus WhatsApp, sea sus audios en WhatsApp, o en Messenger, y escuchándolos, pero aparte esa, yo sentí en ese momento como que de repente si estaba de visita con alguna hermana alguien, '¡Maestra, mire cómo...!', en sábado, en domingo, '¡Maestra, mire! ¿Cómo lo compartí, así, era tan grande, pues, la, como se puede decir, el orgullo de tener alumnos en ese momento, que lo compartía con mis amigos, 'Miren, ¿cómo ven alumnos cantando?' - ¿Y a poco ellos son tus alumnos del DIF? - Sí son del DIF, como que 'Wow'

**Referencia 2: cobertura**

Entonces este pues sí, o sea, para mí sí fue muchas sorpresas,



## Appendix 19      Examples of interview transcripts analysis

### Extracts from Interview 2 with Xareni

<p>X: Ah... pues... como que las cosas cambiaron mucho, ¿no? Cuando nos entrevistamos la vez pasada te había dicho que no había sentido nada, todavía no sentía qué era lo difícil de estar trabajando en esto, ¿no? En el reporte. Pero, después de que todo me pasó y que todo lo que viví en esos días, en dos, tres días antes de la presentación, entonces, ahora sí, puedo afirmar que lo difícil de este proceso fue la distancia</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office CHALLENGE: DISTANCE</p>
<p>P: Ajá...</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office CHALLENGE: COMMUNICATION</p>
<p>X: Ehh, falta de comunicación...</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office CHALLENGE: COMMUNICATION</p>
<p>P: Ok...</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office CHALLENGE: COMMUNICATION</p>
<p>X: Eso fue lo difícil para mí. Este, no lo había sentido porque, como te había dicho desde el principio, pues yo hacía mis reportes y aunque no me daban retroalimentación, pues me decían 'Estás bien, ¡vas bien!' o sea, y yo '¡Wow!', entonces no he sentido nada, o sea, me sentía muy libre, muy así. Pero lo difícil para mí empezó, este, porque no me decían que estaba mal, estaba bien. Y, del otro lado, la maestra de materia, pues una sola vez me dio retroalimentación antes de. Y pues lo que ella me revisó fueron, este, formato y cosas así. Jamás me dijo nada de objetivo ni nada. Lo difícil para mí empezó un viernes antes de entregar. Se supone que entregaba yo el domingo por la noche, y lo difícil para mí empezó el viernes a las 11 de la noche. O sea, cuando tú ya estás casi celebrando que terminaste y dices 'Ya, voy bien'. Este, a las 11 de la noche, ehh, ella me manda un mensaje por WhatsApp y me dice 'Lucina, estoy revisando y fíjate que no, el objetivo no', este, 'las preguntas no', y me dice 'te voy a mandar un audio,' e incluso me mandó un audio por WhatsApp, me dice 'no, Lucina, tu objetivo está muy específico, hay que abrirlo más', y ya me empieza a decir de los cambios</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office CHALLENGE: COMMUNICATION</p> <p>Usuario de Microsoft Office FRUSTRATION</p>
<p>P: Mhmm, mhmm</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office OVERCOMING CHALLENGES</p>
<p>X: Entonces yo llegando, abrí la computadora y dije 'voy a ver si es cierto que ahí están las tesis de los demás', busqué y no lo pude hacer. Entonces, este, le pedí a Vianney que si ella las podía bajar y me los podría enviar. Entonces eso fue lo que hice, leí como 10 tesis de alumnos egresados de la UV que estuvieron en Enseñanza del Inglés; pero también buscaba en escritos de la UNAM... casi todo era por la web.</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office WHY NOT MAKING CHANGES</p>
<p>P: Mhmm, mhmm. Ok</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office WHY NOT MAKING CHANGES</p>
<p>X: Sí, eso es</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office WHY NOT MAKING CHANGES</p>
<p>P: Ok, perfecto. Bueno, a lo mejor, este, se me hace muy interesante eso y no me acuerdo muy bien de haber ahondado en eso en la última entrevista, y voy a tomar nota, pero, ok.</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office WHY NOT MAKING CHANGES</p>
<p>X: De acuerdo a las tesis que también iba yo leyendo de alumnos egresados de la UV, con esta misma carrera, pues también de esas agarraba yo y decía 'pues voy bien, porque él está haciendo así, va, lleva este formato', digo, alguno, bueno, hoté que entre todas esas 10 reportes que yo leí, en ninguno había una parte que dijera 'discusión', ninguno, todos se iban después de la metodología, al análisis y todo y luego todos se iban a la conclusión, pero en ninguno tenía, ninguno de los 10 que yo leí tenía...</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office WHY NOT MAKING CHANGES</p>
<p>P: Mhmm, mmmh</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office WHY NOT MAKING CHANGES</p>
<p>X: ...ehh, discusión</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office WHY NOT MAKING CHANGES</p>
<p>P: Mhmm</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office WHY NOT MAKING CHANGES</p>
<p>X: Y, este, incluso comentaba con mi sobrino, bueno, vi diferencias, 'bueno, ¿por qué aquí no pusieron esto?, ¿por qué aquí, esto?', y mi sobrino me explicaba 'acuérdate, que todo ese va reformando', y como le comentaba que ya, este, teníamos la certificación y todo, 'pues sí, entre mejores sean, tienen que ser más estrictos y se tienen que apegar más, y por eso es que tú tienes que seguir el formato que te acaban de mandar', porque decía '¿pero por qué discusión si ellos no tienen ninguna?'</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office WHY NOT MAKING CHANGES</p>
<p>P: Mmmh, mhmm</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office MAJOR CHANGES MADE</p>
<p>X: Todavía no le tenía un nombre a eso, y entonces me dijo 'mira, Lucina, ponte a leer de habilidades metacognitivas y me dices y hablamos'. En la siguiente que hablamos, ya le mostré todo lo que tenía y me dijo 'vas bien', pero hasta ahí no había... sí, yo le empecé a mandar al maestro desde que a mí me dijeron que él iba a ser mi supervisor, yo empecé a mandarle la propuesta</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office MAJOR CHANGES MADE</p>
<p>P: Mhmm</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office MAJOR CHANGES MADE</p>
<p>X: Desde ahí, mi primer correo para él fue 'Maestro Allen, ya sé que eres mi supervisor, aquí le va mi propuesta, pero de esa propuesta pues no recibí, y las actividades que le iba mandado a la maestra Reyna se las iba mandando a él, pero no me decía 'estás bien', 'estás mal', no</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office MAJOR CHANGES MADE</p>
<p>P: Mhmm</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office MAJOR CHANGES MADE</p>
<p>X: Este, entonces, su primera corrección, este, después te la... te voy a pasar fecha del correo... pero su primera corrección fue como, probablemente, los últimos días de noviembre, la corrección del maestro Allen, y eso porque yo ya le mandaba 'ahí va otro draft', o sea, yo ya le había mandado primero, segundo, tercero, y él me manda en el cuarto, me parece. Voy a...</p>	<p>Usuario de Microsoft Office PERSONAL CHANGES</p>



## **Appendix 20**      **List of *Research seminar* contents**

General Information

Course Calendar

Guidelines for the ER Final Paper

### **Unit 1 – The Introduction**

1.1 The purpose of the introduction

1.2 The research issue

1.3 Objectives

1.4 Rationale

1.5 Writing the introduction

### **Unit 2 – The Literature Review**

2.1 Finding relevant sources

2.2 Organising your literature review

### **Unit 3 – The Methodology**

3.1 Methodological Paradigms

3.2 Context, Participants and Samples

3.2.1 The context

3.2.2 Research participants

3.2.3 Sampling in qualitative research

3.3 Ethical considerations

3.3.1 Introductions

3.3.2 Ethics in Applied Linguistics in ELT

3.3.3 Ethics in educational research

3.4 Ensuring Validity and Reliability

3.5 Writing the methodology chapter

### **Unit 4 – Analysis and results**

4.1 Qualitative Data Analysis Procedures

4.1.1 Analysis for Reliable Research

4.1.2 The Analysis Process

- 4.1.2.1 Analytic induction
- 4.1.2.2 Constant Comparative method
- 4.1.2.3 Content Analysis
- 4.2.3.4 Processes in Qualitative Analysis
- 4.2 Categorising and Coding Techniques
  - 4.2.1 Looking for patterns
  - 4.2.2 The Process of Coding
  - 4.2.3 Coding Guidelines
  - 4.2.4 What is a category?
  - 4.2.5 Overcoming prejudices in research
  - 4.2.6 Writing up the analysis process
- 4.3 Linking Data and Theory
- 4.4 Presenting your Results

## **Unit 5 – Discussion and Conclusion**

- 5.1 The Discussion Section: how and why?
- 5.2 From results and discussion to conclusions
- 5.3 Limitations
- 5.4 Recommendations
- 5.5 Writing your conclusion

## **ACTIVITIES**

General Recommendations for ER Presentations



### Appendix 21 Xareni's *Eminus* events by month

EM	Eminus message, communication between facilitator and students
EA	Eminus activity uploaded by the student
EAF	Feedback to Eminus activities uploaded by the student
EF	Feedback via Eminus message (communicating with facilitator)

Participant	September 2018				
	10	11	23	24	30
Facilitator	Welcome general message	General message (Act 1 & 2)	-	Communication initiated by Xareni (extension for Act 2)	Message informing about assigned supervisor
Xareni	-	Proposal (Act 1) uploaded & Forum participation	File cards (Act 3) & Lit review chart (Act 4) uploaded		Methodology (Act 5) & Context and participants (Act 6) uploaded

Participant	October 2018			
	7	10	14	16
Facilitator	-	Feedback for proposal (Act 1)	-	Feedback for file cards (Act 3)
				General message about counselling session
Xareni	Instruments (Act 7) uploaded	-	Lit review draft (Act 8) uploaded	-

Participant	October 2018		
	17	21	28
Facilitator	Feedback for Lit review chart (Act 4)	-	-
Xareni	-	Procedure (Act 9) uploaded	Data Analysis (Act 10) uploaded and Forum post

Participant	November 2018				
	4	5	11	13	18
Facilitator	General message: extension Act 11	-	-	Feedback for methodology (Act 5)	-
Xareni	-	Data analysis procedure (Act 11) uploaded	Findings draft (Act 12) uploaded	-	Discussion draft (Act 13) uploaded

Participant	November 2018		
	19	20	21
Facilitator	Feedback for Context and participants (Act 6)	Message sending feedback on interview	General message: first draft required
Xareni	Message requesting Skype session	Message sending draft and interview	

Participant	December 2018		
	9	19	30
Facilitator	-	Feedback on fourth draft sent	-
Xareni	Fourth draft sent to facilitator	-	Fifth draft sent to facilitator via

Participant	January 2019	
	4	5
Facilitator	1 <sup>st</sup> part of feedback on fifth draft sent	2 <sup>nd</sup> part of feedback on fifth draft sent
Xareni	-	-

**Appendix 22 Types of changes in Xareni's research paper writing process**

<p><b>FORMAT</b></p> <p>Spacing</p> <p>Font style and size</p> <p>Word referencing functions for citations and table of contents</p> <p>In-text referencing</p>	<p><b>LANGUAGE</b></p> <p>Eliminating unnecessary words</p> <p>Adding missing words</p>
<p><b>CONTENT</b></p> <p>Reorganising content</p> <p>Title change</p> <p>Reordering sections</p> <p>Modifying headings names</p> <p>Modifying appendices names</p> <p>Modifying number scheme</p> <p>Adding headings</p> <p>Eliminating headings</p> <p>Adding content</p> <p>Whole subsections</p> <p>Specific information within subsections</p> <p>Eliminating content</p> <p>Whole subsections</p> <p>Specific information within subsections</p>	<p><b>EDITING</b></p> <p>Re-wording</p> <p>Elimination</p> <p>Hedging</p> <p>Formality</p> <p>Punctuation</p> <p>Paragraphing</p>



## Appendix 23 Xareni's progress and feedback calendar

	Progress sent (proposal, drafts, progress on specific sections)
	Victoria's feedback
	Isaac's feedback
	Examiners' feedback

September 2018	October 2018	November 2018	December 2018	January 2019
Eminus	Email	Telephone	Email	WhatsApp
	Eminus	Email	WhatsApp	Eminus
		WhatsApp	Email	WhatsApp
		Eminus	WhatsApp	Eminus
		Email	Email	Email
		Telephone	Telephone	Email
		WhatsApp	Email	Email
			Eminus	WhatsApp
			Email	WhatsApp
			Email	WhatsApp
			Eminus	Presentation
			WhatsApp	Email
			Email	WhatsApp
			Email	Email
			Eminus	Eminus
			WhatsApp	Email
				Email



## Appendix 24      References in Jackie's final version related to songs

Griffie, Dale T. (1992). *Songs in action*. Great Britain. Dotesiosctd, Trowbridge, Wiltshire.

Lo, R. S. M., & Li, H. C. F. (1998). Songs Enhance Learner Involvement: Materials Development. In *Forum* (Vol. 36, No. 3, p.3). doi: 10.1088/1748-6041/10/3/035010.

Murphey, T. (1992). *Music & song*. New York. Oxford University Press.

Rantansari, H. (2007). Songs to Improve the Students Achievement in pronunciation English words. Final project. English educational program. Bachelor's. Degree . Semarang state University

Sarıçoban, A. (2012). Metacognitive strategies and learner autonomy in EFL reading. *Modern Journal of Language Teaching Methods*, 2(2), 45.

Saslow, J. & Arscher, A. (2006). *The purposeful use of songs in Language Instruction*. Pearson. Longman. Available at: [http://longmanhomeusa.com/content/Use\\_of\\_Songs\\_in\\_%20Language\\_Instruction.pdf](http://longmanhomeusa.com/content/Use_of_Songs_in_%20Language_Instruction.pdf)

Schoepp, K. (2001). Reasons for Using Songs in the ESL/EFL classroom. *TESOL Journal*, V11(2). Retrieved from <http://iteslj.org/Articles/SchoeppSongs.html>

Schön et al. (2007). *Songs as an aid for language acquisition*. France. Elsevier Press.

Sharpe, K. 2001. *Modern Foreign Languages in the Primary School: The What, Why and How of Early MFL teaching*. London, UK, Routledge: Kogan Page.

Stansell, J. W. (2005). *The use of Music for Learning Languages: A Review of the Literature*. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Yüksel, D. (2016). *Using Songs in Teaching English to Very Young Learners*. Retrieved from <file:///C:/Users/ufrauca/Downloads/yükseldenise.pdf>.

### Extracts from Jackie's research paper:

In addition, Saricoban (2000) explained that the use of songs in class keeps the students' attention, it provides a positive attitude and at the same time learns the language through the song.

According to Sharpe (2001), songs provide language use in a fun and enjoyable environment. It can contribute to fluency and real language structures and a variety to authentic language.





## Appendix 25 Jackie's *Eminus* events by month

EM	Eminus message, communication between facilitator and students
EA	Eminus activity uploaded by the student
EAF	Feedback to Eminus activities uploaded by the student
EF	Feedback via Eminus message (communicating with facilitator)

Participant	September 2018			
	10	11	14	18
Facilitator	Welcome general message	General message (Act 1 & 2)	-	-
Jackie	-	-	Proposal (Act 1) & Schedule (Act 2) uploaded & Forum participation	File cards (Act 3) uploaded

Participant	September 2018		
	20	26	30
Facilitator	-	-	Message informing about assigned supervisor
Jackie	Lit review chart (Act 4) uploaded	Methodology (Act 5) & Context and participants (Act 6) uploaded	-

Participant	October 2018				
	4	10	11	16	17
Facilitator	-	Feedback for proposal (Act 1) & schedule (Act 2)	-	Feedback for file cards (Act 3) General message about counselling session	Feedback for Lit review chart (Act 4)
Jackie	Instruments (Act 7) uploaded	-	Lit review draft (Act 8) uploaded	Procedure (Act 9) uploaded	-

Participant	November 2018			
	4	10	13	18
Facilitator	General message: extension for Activity 11 Communication initiated by Jackie (problems with Eminus)	-	Feedback for methodology (Act 5)	-
Jackie	Data analysis procedure (Act 11) uploaded	Findings draft (Act 12) uploaded	-	Discussion draft (Act 13) uploaded

Participant	November 2018		
	19	21	23
Facilitator	Feedback for Context and participants (Act 6)	General message: first draft required	-
Jackie	-	-	1 <sup>st</sup> draft sent to facilitator

Participant	December 2018 21
Facilitator	-
Jackie	Message asking for Extension

Participant	January 2019			
	11	13	14	20
Facilitator	General message: information about Extension	Feedback to 1st draft	Communication initiated by Jackie about drafts and feedback	
		2 PDF files (useful references)		
Jackie				3 <sup>rd</sup> draft sent to facilitator

Participant	January 2019		
	21	24	25
Facilitator	Message asking for draft without 'marks'	Message confirming draft was received	
Jackie	Same draft without 'marks' sent		4 <sup>th</sup> draft sent to facilitator

Participant	February 2019		
	1	5	11
Facilitator	Message asking if paper is ready for examiners	Communication initiated by Jackie informing paper is ready for examiners	General message: presentation dates approaching
Jackie			Message informing final draft is ready

Participant	March 2019		
	6	7	14
Facilitator		Message confirming exact date for presentation	General message: Degree diploma procedures
Jackie	Message asking exact date for presentation		

## Appendix 26 Jackie's ADL events by month

**Events:**

Eminus messages	Email exchanges	WhatsApp conversations	Zoom session
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Participant	September 2018			
	10	11	14	18
Facilitator	Welcome general message	General message (Act 1 & 2)	-	-
Jackie	-	-	Proposal (Act 1) & Schedule (Act 2) uploaded & Forum participation	File cards (Act 3) uploaded

Participant	September 2018		
	20	26	30
Facilitator			Message informing about assigned supervisor
Jackie	Lit review chart (Act 4) uploaded	Methodology (Act 5) & Context and participants (Act 6) uploaded	

Participant	October 2018			
	4	8	10	11
Facilitator			Feedback for proposal (Act 1) & schedule (Act 2)	
Jackie	Instruments (Act 7) uploaded	Proposal, Literature Review and project sent to supervisor		Lit review draft (Act 8) uploaded
	First contact with supervisor, reply			
Supervisor	Reply to Jackie			

Participant	October 2018		
	12	16	17
Facilitator		Feedback for file cards (Act 3) & General message about counselling session	Feedback for Lit review chart (Act 4)
Jackie		Procedure (Act 9) uploaded	Conversation initiated by supervisor informing feedback was sent via e-mail
Supervisor	Work received		

Participant	November 2018			
	4	10	13	18
Facilitator	General message: extension for Activity 11	-	Feedback for methodology (Act 5)	-
Jackie	Communication initiated by Jackie & Data analysis procedure (Act 11) uploaded	Findings draft (Act 12) uploaded	-	Discussion draft (Act 13) uploaded

Participant	November 2018		
	19	21	23
Facilitator	Feedback for Context and participants (Act 6)	General message: first draft required	
Jackie			1 <sup>st</sup> draft sent to facilitator 1 <sup>st</sup> draft sent to supervisor

Participant	December 2018			
	14	16	19	21
Jackie		Conversation initiated by supervisor informing feedback was sent via e-mail	Conversation initiated by Jackie asking about extension	Message asking for Extension
Supervisor	Feedback to 1 <sup>st</sup> draft			

Participant	January 2019			
	8	11	13	14
Facilitator		General message: information about Extension	Feedback to 1st draft + 2 PDF files (useful references)	Communication initiated by Jackie about drafts and feedback
Jackie	2 <sup>nd</sup> draft sent to supervisor			

Participant	January 2019		
	15	20	21
Facilitator			Message asking for draft without 'marks'
Jackie		3 <sup>rd</sup> draft sent to facilitator 3 <sup>rd</sup> draft sent to supervisor	Same draft without 'marks' to facilitator 4 <sup>th</sup> draft sent to supervisor
Supervisor	Feedback to 2 <sup>nd</sup> draft		

Participant	January 2019		
	22	24	25
Facilitator		Message confirming draft was received	
Jackie			4 <sup>th</sup> draft sent to facilitator
Supervisor	Feedback to 3 <sup>rd</sup> draft		

Participant	February 2019			
	1	5	6	11
Facilitator	Message asking if paper is ready for examiners	Communication initiated by Jackie informing paper is ready for examiners		General message: presentation dates approaching
Jackie				Message informing final draft is ready
				Final draft to supervisor & facilitator
Supervisor			Feedback to 4 <sup>th</sup> draft	

Participant	February 2019		
	12	20	22
Facilitator	Final draft to examiners		
Jackie		Message to facilitator & supervisor asking if there are any news	Conversation initiated by supervisor informing about facilitator's message in Eminus
Supervisor			

Participant	March 2019		
	6	7	8
Facilitator		Message confirming exact date for presentation	
		Examiner 1's observations to Jackie	
Jackie	Message asking exact date for presentation		Presentation to facilitator
EXAMINERS	Examiner 1's observations to facilitator		Examiner 2's observation to Jackie

Participant	March 2019		
	9	10	11
Facilitator	Feedback on presentation		
Jackie		New presentation & final version to facilitator	Conversation initiated by supervisor asking about changes in Final Version
Supervisor			

Participant	March 2019		
	12	14	30
Facilitator		General message: Degree diploma procedures	Conversation initiated by facilitator about Degree diploma procedures
Jackie	Message getting in touch for presentation	Conversation initiated by facilitator about information in Eminus	
	PRESENTATION		

## Appendix 27 Jackie's WhatsApp interaction examples

### **Interaction between Jackie and Cuauhtémoc about feedback on proposal**

[10/17/18, 12:18:34 PM] Cuauhtémoc: Hello. I have just sent you my feedback.

[10/17/18, 12:35:56 PM] Jackie: Thank you!

[10/17/18, 12:35:56 PM] Cuauhtémoc: 😊👍

### **Interaction between Jackie and Cuauhtémoc about feedback on 1<sup>st</sup> draft**

[12/16/18, 9:17:46 PM] Cuauhtémoc: Hello. I sent you on Friday my feedback.

[12/16/18, 9:18:29 PM] Jackie: Hi, thanks you! Im planning to make corrections over next week

[12/16/18, 10:20:23 PM] Cuauhtémoc: Ok. Take care!!

### **Extract of interaction between Jackie and Victoria about Degree diploma procedures**

[3/14/19, 10:08:19 AM] Victoria: Hi Jackie, I'll be sending you messages in eminus

[3/14/19, 10:08:40 AM] Jackie: Hi thank you! Actually I'll be there tomorrow

[3/14/19, 10:08:45 AM] Jackie: I'll bring my photos

[3/14/19, 10:08:51 AM] Jackie: And in case there are any procedures to be done

[3/14/19, 10:08:56 AM] Victoria: Wow! Really?

[3/14/19, 10:09:22 AM] Victoria: Why are you coming? You should have told me you were coming, to do all the procedures

[3/14/19, 10:09:44 AM] Jackie: I'm going to visit my parents

[3/14/19, 10:09:54 AM] Victoria: Well, what you can do is to pay for your certificate and request for it at the secretary's office

[3/14/19, 10:10:01 AM] Victoria: Ahah ok perfect

[3/14/19, 10:11:42 AM] Jackie: Yes pwrfect

[3/14/19, 10:11:46 AM] Jackie: And I'll leave the photos

### **Extract of interaction between Jackie and Victoria about Degree diploma procedures**

[3/30/19, 4:55:31 PM] Victoria: Hi Jackie, I sent you a message in eminus. Did you see it?

[3/30/19, 4:55:55 PM] Jackie: Hi! How are you? No I'll do it in a moment

[3/30/19, 4:55:58 PM] Jackie: Thank you very much

[3/30/19, 4:56:16 PM] Victoria: In one of the documents it is said that you must bring some 3 X 2.5 cm photos, but those are not necessary. Just the ones for the Diploma and the certificate

[3/30/19, 4:56:29 PM] Jackie: I already did all of that

[3/30/19, 4:56:32 PM] Jackie: I already handed in the cds

[3/30/19, 4:56:35 PM] Jackie: I already paid and left the photos

[3/30/19, 4:56:41 PM] Victoria: Also for the Diploma?

[3/30/19, 4:56:44 PM] Jackie: Yeap

[3/30/19, 4:56:48 PM] Victoria: Ah ok perfect





## Appendix 28      Problems with Jackie's references

List of references	In-text reference
Barbour (2018)	2014
Burns (1999)	1990, 1999, 2010
Clark (2003)	NOT IN TEXT
Crosse (2007)	Coss
Crystal (2003)	NOT IN TEXT
Davis (2000)	NOT IN TEXT
Elliot (1998)	NOT IN TEXT
El-Nahhal (2011)	NOT IN TEXT
Griffie (1992)	Griffe/Griffem
Keenan (2009)	NOT IN TEXT
Lindfords (1991)	Lindfors
Miller (2007)	NOT IN TEXT
Murphy (1992)	1992, 1998
Porter (2009)	NOT IN TEXT
Rantansari (2007)	Ratnasari
Rubin & Rubin (1995)	NOT IN TEXT
Sarıçoban (2012)	Saricoban
Schön (2007)	NOT IN TEXT
Saslow & Arscher (2006)	Ascher
Spada & Lightbown (1999)	NOT IN TEXT
Spada (2011)	NOT IN TEXT
Spada & Lightbown (2008)	NOT IN TEXT
Stansell (2005)	2008
Yüksel (2016)	NOT IN TEXT
Cameron (2001)	Piaget (1963) apparently in Vygotsky (1962) apparently in
NOT IN THE LIST	Barker (2009)
NOT IN THE LIST	Campbell (2000)
NOT IN THE LIST	Flick (1998)
NOT IN THE LIST	Kalmer (1982)
NOT IN THE LIST	Krashen (1982)
NOT IN THE LIST	Levinowitz (1998)
NOT IN THE LIST	Papalia, Olds & Ferman (2007)
NOT IN THE LIST	Santos (1995)

Total number of references in Jackie's list: 36



## Appendix 29      Brigitte's *Eminus* events by month

EM	Eminus message for communication
EA	Eminus activity uploaded by the student
EAF	Feedback to Eminus activities uploaded by the student
EMP	Eminus message for sending progress
EF	Feedback on progress via Eminus message

Participant	September 2018			
	10	11	16	30
Facilitator/ Supervisor	Welcome general message	General message (Act 1 & 2)	-	Informing about assigned supervisor and arranging supervision session
Brigitte	-	-	Proposal (Act 1) uploaded	-

Participant	October 2018		
	3	8	10
Facilitator/ Supervisor	-	Arranging supervision session	Arranging supervision session Feedback for proposal (Act 1)
Brigitte	Arranging supervision session	-	Arranging supervision session

Participant	October 2018		
	13	16	26
Facilitator/ Supervisor	-	General message about counselling session	-
Brigitte	Informing problems with computer	-	Interview & questionnaire sent

Participant	December 2018
Facilitator/ Supervisor	-
Brigitte	1 <sup>st</sup> draft sent


Participant	January 2019			
	10	11	14	16
Facilitator/ Supervisor	-	General message: information about Extension	Feedback to questionnaire	-
		Reply: any other progress?		
Brigitte	Interview & questionnaire sent	-	-	Interview

Participant	January 2019				
	17	18	19	21	24
Facilitator/ Supervisor	Feedback to interview	Feedback to interview to demographic & socioeconomic data	Feedback to questionnaire	Map received	Guidelines for Research paper
Brigitte		Demographic & socioeconomic data sent		Map of the context community sent	

Participant	February 2019 13
Facilitator/ Supervisor	Feedback to 1 <sup>st</sup> draft
Brigitte	-

## Appendix 30 Brigitte-Victoria's meeting arrangements

### *Eminus* messages




30/Sep/18 10:41:17 pm ▲

**From:** Victoria  
**Subject:** 'Supervisor'  
**To:** Brigitte

Dear Brigitte,

I'm glad to inform you that I will be your research supervisor. Please let me know when we can meet in order to discuss your paper. I won't be available this week but the following week will be ok.  
You can send me a whatsapp message at 9212038603 or send me a message here.


Best wishes,  
Victoria



03/Oct/18 12:28:56 am ▲

**From:** Brigitte  
**Subject:** 'Re: 'Supervisor''  
**To:** Victoria

Hello!! I'm available Monday and thursday morning and, friday before 11:00 and then in the afternoon. I have one question: the meeting is online or face to face?  
Thank you and regards :)



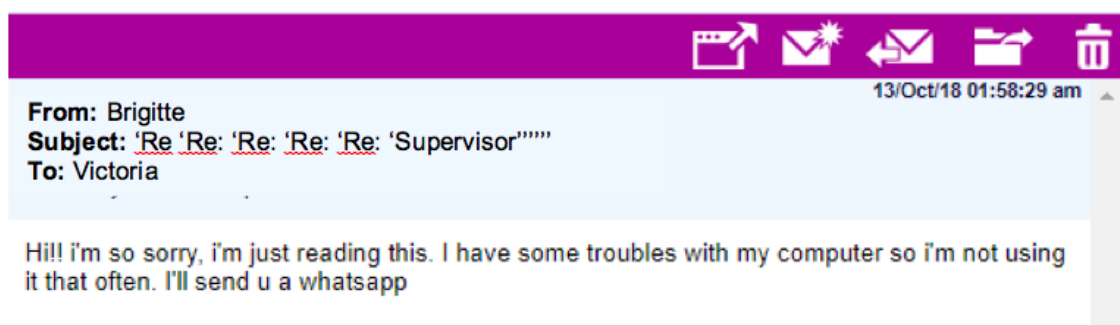
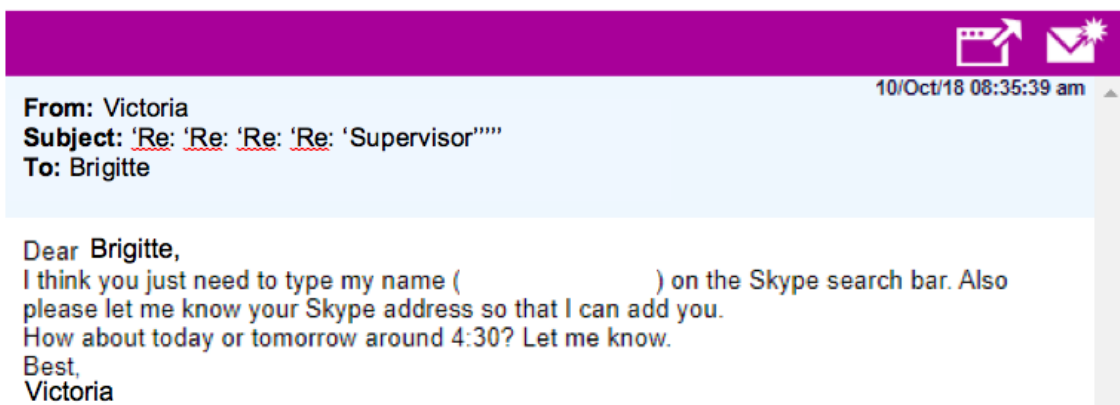
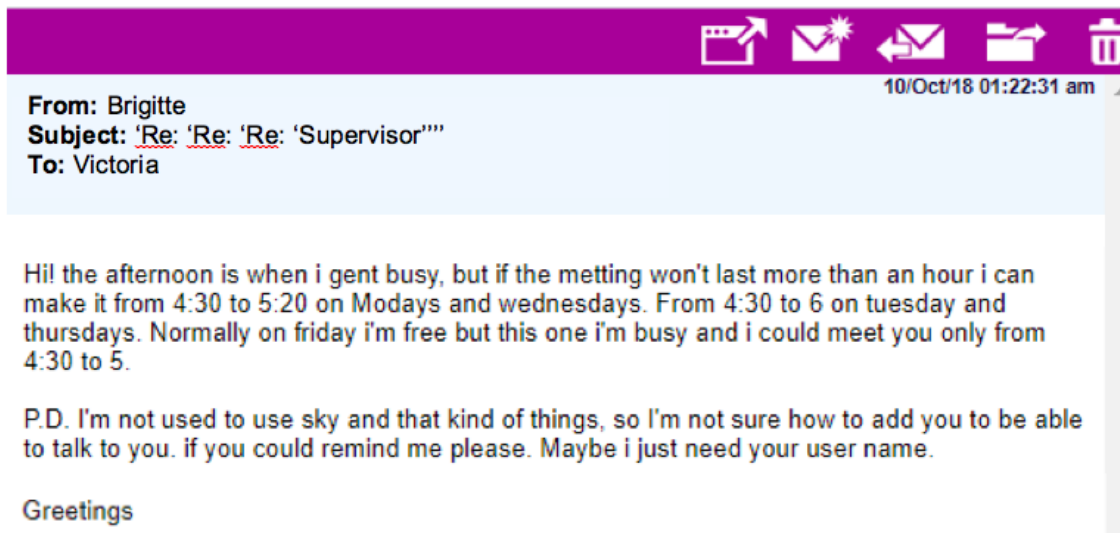
08/Oct/18 04:38:04 pm ▲

**From:** Victoria  
**Subject:** 'Re: 'Re: 'Supervisor''  
**To:** Brigitte

Hi Brigitte,

I really can't make it in the morning; I'm available only in the afternoon at the office from 4 to 6 pm. The meeting can be online if you wish and I think it's better if we do it at the same time i'm at the office. Please let me know how and when you can.

Hugs,  
Victoria



## WhatsApp conversation

- 17/10/18 10:13 a.m. - Brigitte: Good morning teacher, I'm Brigitte, I'm with you in the Research seminar. Sorry for not sending [the message], but I have too much work.
- 17/10/18 10:21 a.m. - Victoria: Hi Brigitte
- 17/10/18 10:22 a.m. - Brigitte: Hi
- 17/10/18 10:28 a.m. - Victoria: How are you?
- 17/10/18 10:28 a.m. - Victoria: When could we meet? Either in person or via Skype
- 17/10/18 10:30 a.m. - Brigitte: Fine thank you.

## Appendix 30

17/10/18 10:31 a.m. - Brigitte: Well on Thursday (tomorrow) I'm "free" until 6:30  
17/10/18 10:33 a.m. - Victoria: Oops, tomorrow I have another student  
17/10/18 10:33 a.m. - Victoria: But Friday maybe  
17/10/18 10:33 a.m. - Victoria: What do you think?  
17/10/18 10:34 a.m. - Brigitte: Friday what time?  
17/10/18 10:34 a.m. - Brigitte: The thing is I have a class  
17/10/18 10:36 a.m. - Victoria: It could be in the afternoon, after 4:30  
17/10/18 10:38 a.m. - Victoria: Look, if it is too complicated, we could try writing more often or a normal phone call. But I'd like to meet at least once  
17/10/18 10:38 a.m. - Brigitte: Can I confirm in the afternoon, I'll see my teacher later and I can ask her what time we will have the rehearsal on Friday  
17/10/18 10:39 a.m. - Victoria: Yes, it's alright  
17/10/18 10:40 a.m. - Brigitte: Ok thanks  
17/10/18 9:54 p.m. - Brigitte: Good evening, sorry about the time. I have my class from 4 to 6. I don't know if you can make it after that  
17/10/18 9:54 p.m. - Victoria: Ok





**Appendix 31 Brigitte's Email exchanges by month**

Participant	January 2019	
	30	31
Brigitte	Sources sent (are they reliable?)	Graphs sent
Supervisor/ Facilitator		Feedback to graphs

Participant	February 2019			
	16	17	22	28
Brigitte	2 <sup>nd</sup> draft (outline) and more sources sent, questions		3 <sup>rd</sup> draft and questions	
			3 <sup>rd</sup> draft file	
Supervisor/ Facilitator		Feedback to 2 <sup>nd</sup> draft (outline) and other comments	3 <sup>rd</sup> draft file missing	Feedback to 3 <sup>rd</sup> draft

Participant	March 2019
	3
Brigitte	4 <sup>th</sup> draft
Supervisor/ Facilitator	

Participant	April 2019
	8
Brigitte	4 <sup>th</sup> draft again
Supervisor/ Facilitator	

Participant	May 2019
	7
Brigitte	
Supervisor/ Facilitator	Recommendations for Discussion

Participant	June 2019		
	8	9	10
Brigitte		5 <sup>th</sup> draft	
Supervisor/ Facilitator	Feedback to 4 <sup>th</sup> draft		Feedback to 5 <sup>th</sup> draft

Participant	June 2019	
	11	12
Brigitte	6 <sup>th</sup> draft	
Supervisor/ Facilitator		6 <sup>th</sup> draft received (for examiners)



## Appendix 32      Style corrections on Brigitte's drafts

### Example of Victoria's corrections on Brigitte's writing style:

ABSTRACT	
The purpose of this study is to find out to what extent <u>students'</u> socio-economical background	Victoria Eliminado: the
impacts on the English language acquisition and how it affects the learners' motivation and	Victoria Eliminado: to
attitude towards learning English as a second language. These research is based on students	Victoria Eliminado: coursing
attending the <u>Telesecondary</u> "Juan Amós Comenio" located in Rancho Viejo, <u>Tlalnelhuayocan</u> .	Victoria Eliminado: the
Though not all of them live in Rancho Viejo, many of them live in other rural areas relatively	Victoria Eliminado: that
near. The participants were eighteen adolescents <u>enrolled in</u> second grade, with ages between	Victoria Eliminado: permission
13 and 16 years old, so it was necessary <u>to obtain</u> the parents' <u>consent</u> as well as the	Victoria Eliminado: were examined
Headmistress of the school's. As <u>the study was carried out in</u> real-life circumstances <u>and in a</u>	Victoria Eliminado: the
<u>natural setting</u> , the research <u>approach was</u> Qualitative Research, <u>and the</u> tradition used for this	Victoria Eliminado: Approach
study was Case Study. The instruments used were questionnaires (quantitative data) and	Victoria Eliminado: the
interviews (qualitative), to gain a more detailed perspective of the participants' socio-economical	Victoria Eliminado: the
context. In order to analyze the data collected, graphics were used. The findings suggest there	Victoria Eliminado: acquisition
is a close connection between <u>learners'</u> socioeconomic context and their English language	
<u>learning attitudes, motivation and practices</u> .	

### Example of Brigitte accepting Victoria's style writing corrections for the following draft:

*Corrections accepted indicated in pink*

ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study is to find out to what extent <b>students'</b> socio-economical background
impacts on the English language acquisition and how it affects the learners' motivation and
attitude towards learning English as a second language. These research is based on students
<b>attending the</b> <u>Telesecondary</u> "Juan Amós Comenio" located in Rancho Viejo, <u>Tlalnelhuayocan</u> .
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