CULTIVATING AUTONOMY IN WRITING THROUGH 21ST CENTURY LITERACY: “THE DIGITAL NOISIS MODEL” IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to cultivate students’ autonomy in second language writing with the use of cutting edge technology tools such as blogs, wikis, Google docs and videos. Specifically, this thesis reports on an individual teacher action research that has been conducted over two academic semesters in 2 different cohorts of freshmen ESL students who study in a private higher Education college in Athens. I started the research with the aim to promote learners’ autonomy in writing by integrating new media tools in the ESL classroom to prepare them for the challenges of the digital writing era. Also, I aimed to explore students’ perceptions on the effectiveness of on-line peer-feedback and on-line reflection.

Methodology: An individual-teacher action research methodology was adopted in this project. As a teacher-researcher, I made a diagnosis of learning problems, I planned, I observed, I acted and I reflected, following a two cycles action research model. A vast variety of measurement tools have been used during this longitudinal study: data from artifacts, researcher’s journal, semi-structured interviews. This study is also supplemented by the qualitative data obtained from students’ online portfolios and videos that have been used to present students’ reflections regarding their writing autonomy.

Research findings: The qualitative data thematic analysis showed that the integration of wikis and blogs in cycle 1 encouraged collaboration, self-learning via technology and reflection in the writing class. Though instructor’s choices in training methods and tools impacted students’ engagement and autonomy in writing. Improvement in teaching methodology and change in technology tools in cycle 2 lead to the discovery of an effective writing model. Students reported gains from online peer feedback via Google Drive in cooperative skills, language awareness, task awareness and critical thinking. Also, self-assessment and critical thinking were cultivated via reflection in vlogs. Overall, students claimed that they have benefitted from autonomous learning by using modern technologies since they developed a collaborative culture, engaged in online writing in and out of class, developed their digital literacy and built their confidence in writing.
**Contribution:** This study provides a distinct perspective on the ESL writing context, taking into account students’ perceptions. Research findings contribute to the current literature in Action Research in English language teaching, in autonomy research and finally in CALL research and applications of innovative teaching models in higher education.

**Future research:** Research is proposed in the field of autonomy in digital learning environments and specifically correlational studies on the effectiveness on different synchronous and asynchronous learning environments in promoting autonomy.

**Keywords:** autonomy, academic writing, peer-feedback, reflection, ESL, wikis, blogs, Google docs, vlogs
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Table of Contents

Chapter I: Introduction 13
  1.1 Theoretical background: Social constructivism 16
  1.2 Purpose and motivation of the study 22
  1.2.1 Definition of terms 23
  1.2.3 Significance of the study 24
  1.3 ESL classes 26
  1.3.1 Using wikis as e-portfolios in ESL students: Identification of a learning problem in the ESL writing class 27
  1.3.2 Other researchers and the originality of my study 32
  1.3.3 Aims of the study 35
  1.4 Outline of the PhD thesis 36

Chapter II: Literature review 38
  2.1 Introduction 40
  2.2 Part one: What is autonomy? 41
  2.2.1 Characteristics of autonomous learners 45
  2.2.2 The continuum of autonomy: Action-interaction-reflection 50
  2.3 Part two: The role of CALL in SLA 55
  2.3.1 The changing role of the teacher 56
  2.3.2 Higher education reform via blended learning 54
  2.3.3 Approaches to ESL writing 65
  2.3.4 New literacies and EAP writing 70
  2.3.5 Peer feedback: A constructivism approach in ESL writing 75
  2.2.6 Wikis and Google Drive as peer feedback platforms to promote autonomous writing 69
  2.2.7 From blogging to vlogging: Benefits and challenges for enhancing reflective thinking and autonomous writing 81

Chapter III: Research methodology and methods 87
3.1 Introduction 88
3.2 Research paradigms and their interpretation 76
3.2.4 The positivist/scientific paradigm 93
3.2.5 The critical-transformative paradigm 80
3.2.6 The interpretative/constructivist paradigm 95
3.3 Research methodology: Action research 98
3.3.1 Models of action research 103
3.3.2 Enhancing quality in action research: criteria for good practice 89
3.3.3 Criticism of action research 109
3.3.4 Methods for assuring the quality of analysis 92
3.4 The framework of research design in this study 101
3.4.1 The context of the study: ESL department 102
3.4.2 Sampling-population 104
3.4.3 Research design changes in cycle 2 106
3.5 The rationale of the choice of data analysis method: Thematic analysis 109
3.5.1 The rationale of the choices of data collection methods 111
3.5.2 Semi structured interviews 111
3.5.3 Online Documents 114
3.6.1 Video guided think aloud protocols 114
3.6.2 Research questions Cycle 1 115
3.6.3 Research questions Cycle 2: 117
3.6.4 Data analysis 118
3.6.5 Preparation for data analysis 118
3.6.7 Semi-structured interviews 118
3.6.8 Google Drive docs 119
3.6.9 Video reflections 119
3.7 Data coding and analysis 120
3.7.1 Coding the data into categories 120
3.7.2 Reviewing themes 121
3.7.3 Defining and naming themes 122
3.7.4 Producing the report
3.8 Research ethics
3.8.1 Limitations of the methodology
3.8.2 Delimitations
3.9 Chapter summary

Chapter IV: Cycle 1 data analysis and discussion
4.1 Introduction
4.2 Outline of the Action Research process: Cycle 1
4.2.1 The ESL 2 writing class
4.2.2 Participants’ brief description
4.2.3 Research design
4.3 Data coding and analysis
4.3 Research Question 1
4.3.1 Engagement in peer reading promoted awareness on writing skills development
4.3.2 Students do not rely on peer feedback: The impact of quality and trust
4.3.3 Giving feedback was challenging: Responsibility attitudes, collaboration issues, and competency
4.4 Research question 2
4.4.1 Blogging encouraged exploration on language development but clearance of goal task and privacy issues discouraged reflection
4.4.2 Blogging promoted class and instructor evaluation
4.4.3 Interesting essay topics encouraged reflection on the writing process
4.5 Research question 3
4.5.1 Blog and wikis encouraged: Awareness on writing skills, reflection on the writing class, digital literacy and collaboration
4.5.2 Instructor choices on training and tools impacted autonomy
4.6 Chapter summary-reflections and identifications of learning problems at the end of Cycle 1

Chapter V: Cycle 2 data analysis and discussion
5.1 Introduction
5.2 Outline of the Action Research process: Cycle 2 211
5.2.1 Participants' brief description 213
5.2.2 The ESL 3 writing class 217
5.2.3 Research design 217
5.2.4 Data coding and analysis 222
5.3 Research question 1 231
5.3.1 Online peer feedback encouraged cooperation and interdependence 231
5.3.2 Peer feedback encouraged language awareness 234
5.3.3 Peer feedback as a process of contributing to others’ autonomy 237
5.3.4 Peer feedback encouraged the use of metacognitive strategies: Monitor and plan 240
5.3.5 Peer feedback encouraged self-assessment and critical thinking 246
5.4 Research question 2: 274
5.4.1 Vlogs encouraged awareness of writing strategies 274
5.4.2 Vlogs encouraged self-assessment 276
5.4.3 Vlogs encouraged reflection via self-assessment 279
5.5 Research question 3: 281
5.5.1 The value of pre and post collaboration culture 281
5.5.2 The engagement in writing via in and out of class activities 284
5.5.3 Empowering students’ digital literacy autonomy 285
5.5.4 Google Drive and vlogs shaped students’ self-efficacy and confidence 288
5.6 Chapter summary 291

Chapter VI: Conclusion 292
6.1 Introduction 292
6.2 Description of this study 292
6.2.1 Summary of findings related to research questions of Cycle 1 294
6.2.2 Summary of findings related to the research questions of Cycle 2 296
6.3 Contributions to theory: Autonomy, peer-feedback, reflection 298
6.3.1 Contributions to action research methodology 301
6.3.2 Implications for Higher Education curriculum designers and managers 305
6.4 Limitations and delimitations of this study

6.4.1 Researcher's bias

6.4.2 Recommendations for future research

6.4.3 Final reflections

References

Appendices

Appendix I: The consent form for Cycle 1

Appendix II: Cycle 2: Interview Questions

Appendix III: Research Ethics Checklist Form RE 1

Appendix IV: Cycle 1 Interview labeling for perceptions for peer feedback in wikis

Appendix V: Cycle 1 Interview labeling for perceptions for reflective writing in blogs

Appendix VI: Labeling reflection posts in blogs

Appendix VII: An interview transcript from Cycle 1

Appendix VIII: Authentic material for the checklist of a summary

Appendix IX: Participant Information Sheet

Appendix X: Cycle 2 Interview questions

Appendix XI: Interview themes – labeling Cycle 2, perceptions for peer feedback

Appendix XII: Interview themes- labeling Cycle 2, perceptions for video reflection

Appendix XIV: Feedback documents for problem solution & opinion essays

Appendix XV: Peer feedback forms for argumentative essay

Appendix XVI: Reflection rubric for the writing class experience

Appendix XVII: Reflection questions for vlogs

Appendix XVIII: Video reflection labeling/Cycle 2

Appendix XIX: Jo Mynards’s Feedback on major emerged themes/Cycle 2

Appendix XXI: Accepted abstract for IATEFL Learning Technology SIG, 2015, International Conference in Dublin
Appendix XXII: Accepted abstract for: Rethinking Language, Diversity and Education, International Conference, Aegean University Rodos, May 2015 432

Appendix XXIII: Sample of students’ vlogs 432

Figure 1 Instructor’s welcome page in wikis .......................................................... 29
Figure 2 An example of a wiki portfolio from an ESL 1 student ............................... 30
Figure 3 An example of a successful collaborative writing project in wikis ............... 32
Figure 4 Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (Sincero, 2011) ....................... 55
Figure 5 Research gap in the literature: The emergence of the “digital noisis” model ... 85
Figure 6 Philosophies guiding this research ............................................................. 97
Figure 7 The Look, Plan, Act, Share, Reflect Cycle .............................................. 102
Figure 8 The framework of research design in this study ....................................... 116
Figure 9 Final reports for RQ1 and RQ2 in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 ......................... 135
Figure 10 Final reports for Q3 in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 ........................................... 138
Figure 11 A screenshot from the E-learning platform .............................................. 147
Figure 12 The “Digital noisis” model Cycle 1 ....................................................... 148
Figure 13 A screenshot from the E-learning platform ............................................. 149
Figure 14 Evaluation guideline for peer feedback in Cycle 1 ............................... 154
Figure 15 A screenshot from instructor’s blog ......................................................... 155
Figure 16 ESL 2 Writing activities ......................................................................... 156
Figure 17 Interview questions ............................................................................... 159
Figure 18 Major themes emerged from interviews ............................................... 162
Figure 19 Students engagement in peer feedback .................................................. 179
Figure 20 An example of non-constructive feedback ............................................. 184
Figure 21 A screenshot of student K wiki page ....................................................... 186
Figure 22 An example of peer feedback ............................................................... 187
CHAPTER I

1.0 Introduction

Autonomy is considered a goal in adult Higher Education. However, as Benson argues, the idea of autonomy has been neglected by researchers and teachers (2009). Although autonomy is not a new concept in pedagogy and even though there is a consensus on the value of autonomy in education, there is not a consistency in the literature as to its definition. Holec (1981, p.3) for instance argues that autonomy is an ability that is not inborn but must be cultivated systematically by formal education, while Dickinson (1987, p.11) states that autonomy equates to a total responsibility for learning and does not involve teaching and pedagogical material. This study will adopt a broad definition of autonomy that is being accepted by most researchers and which states that autonomy is the ability of learners to take control of their own learning via meaningful interaction and reflection (Benson and Voller, 1997; Little, 1991; Dickinson, 1995). Constructivism is a learning theory that encourages autonomous learning since it emphasizes that “knowledge cannot be taught but must be constructed by the learner (Candy, 1991, p. 252)”. Constructivist principles of learning will be further discussed in the literature review.

The advent of technology and the proliferation of the Internet have altered the scene in education. Computer-mediated Communication (CMC), since its implementation in education, became a significant element in learning environments. CMC is an umbrella term that refers to a form of synchronous (the same time) or asynchronous (anytime) communication/interaction via computer, between two or more people. Hiltz and Turoff (1978) first defined CMC as “the process by which people create, exchange and perceived information using networked telecommunication systems that facilitate encoding, transmitting and decoding messages”. A wide variety of CMC tools (e-mails, Facebook, podcasts, wikis, blogs, chat, forum, etc.) are being used for instructional purposes. CMC paved the way for new forms of education
such as e-learning, web-based learning, hybrid or blended learning. These virtual learning environments become attractive for higher institutions since they are flexible, create new educational opportunities, like collaboration, and provide opportunities for lifelong learning. Looking across research in Computer Mediated Communication environments it can be argued that the integration of educational technology can foster autonomous learning, since virtual learning environments provide opportunities for interaction, negotiation and critical thinking, and engage students in active learning (Asmari, 2013; Behera, 2013; Davies, 2011; Hockly, 2013; Hsu et al., 2014).

Web technologies are creating a “tectonic shift” in the world. Web 2.0 tools such as blogs, wikis, social networking software, media sharing and others allow anyone not only to publish and share online whatever happens in the world but also to collaborate in the creation of large storehouses of information. The Read/Write Web (Web 2.0) has created a “society of authorship” where every person can contribute to knowledge, share experiences and participate in the writing of human history in real time (Rushkoff, 2004). Wikis have attracted the attention of second language teachers and researchers due to their popularity on the web. A wiki is a “collaborative web space where anyone can add content and anyone can edit content that has already been published” (Richardson, 2006, p. 8).

I propose that wikis, Google Drive, blogs and vlogs are cutting edge technology tools that can be implemented in the syllabus of an ESL Class and assist the delivery of writing in terms of autonomy. The applications of web 2.0 tool are in line with the constructivist learning approach that embraces the notion that learning can be better achieved through active engagement, analysis, manipulation and structure of novel information (Alavi, 1994, p.161).

In the next section, I will sketch out the historical background and discuss principles of constructivism.

1.1 Theoretical background: Social Constructivism

Constructivism learning theory supports the cultivation of learner autonomy and emphasizes learner-centered approaches. With constructivist learning
theory, autonomy advocates that learners construct their own multi-angle knowledge hierarchy via active engagement in learning, social interaction and reflection. In the section below the principles of constructivism will be discussed and the implementation of technology oriented constructivist approach will be articulated.

In the early part of the 18th century Giambatista Vico, a philosopher, first used the word “construction” to describe the individual process of knowledge construction (as cited in Von Glaserfeld, 1995). Immanuel Kant adopted Vico’s insights and developed new conceptions towards constructivism. Many scholars cite Kant as the first constructivist (Green and Gredler, 2002). In his “Critique of Pure Reason”, Kant, similarly to Rousseau rejected the traditional thought of education and asserted that experience is of foremost importance in process of knowledge development. Particularly, Kant noted “the subject has no direct access to external reality and can only develop knowledge by using fundamental in-built cognitive principles “categories” to organize experience” (Hacking 2000, p. 34).

Traces of the thought of constructivist learning can be found in the educational practice of the Greek philosopher, Socrates. Socratic Learning Method (“maieutic” method) was based on the conception that the teacher cannot transmit knowledge (Vlastos, 1983). Socrates, believed that a person needs to seek for the truth and to generate his own hypotheses given “signpost” by the teacher. The teacher can only draw learner’s attention and guide him by giving hints (Anscombe, 1981). In this light, Socrates made a distinction between learning and knowledge and emphasized the importance of self-examination and self-analysis.

Another philosopher whose educational conceptions relate to constructivist theory is J.J. Rousseau. As a proponent of “natural education” and having received no formal education, Rousseau proposed a model of education in his famous novel ‘Emilie”. The philosopher suggested that teachers should allow learners to follow their natural inclination and support them to be responsible learners. In Rousseau’s model, learners should discover knowledge by
themselves. Teachers should only nourish learners’ curiosity, suggest them problems and then let them find solutions.

One of the most influential proponents of constructivist movement is Jean Piaget. His theory of cognitive development has influenced not only the field of psychology but also teaching practices (Piaget, 1972). The learner is brought into central focus in his action-based theory, which is mainly concerned with the process of learning. Piaget supported that cognitive development is a process of maturation. He suggests that individuals construct their personal meaning, as they develop from infancy to adulthood, interacting with the environment and making sense of subjective experiences. Piaget was criticized for placing emphasis on maturation and subjective experiences in his effort to describe the learning process, whereas he made little reference to the significance of teacher intervention and instruction.

An important advocate of Piaget’s ideas has been Jerome Bruner. Bruner, a committed educationist influenced western educators on topics such as the structure of the curriculum. The notion of the spiral curriculum “the foundations of any subject may be taught to anybody at any age in some form” (Bruner, 1960, p.12) has been extensively used in second language syllabus. Bruner suggested that instructors should encourage learners to try to discover the solutions to educational problems.

Constructivism approach was developed as an alternative approach to the school of cognitivism in 1990s and dates back to the works of Vygotsky, Piaget, Bruner and Von Glasserfeld (Hadjerrouit, 2005). The important work of the Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, and his ideas about language, culture and cognitive development influenced the western world and contemporary education. Vygotsky is considered as one of the foundations of social constructivism since he “brought the importance of culture into the discussion about human thinking and cognition”. He also argued “human psychological development takes place in a historical cultural setting and cannot be understood apart from this setting” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.46).
Vygotsky’s Social Development Theory highlights the importance of social interaction in the process of cognitive development.

Constructivism theory assumes that the acquisition of knowledge is a process of knowledge construction. The core element of this assumption is that learners activate prior knowledge to interpret latest information. Constructivism implies that learners instead of being passive transmitters of knowledge by teachers or other authority (books) are encouraged to construct their own knowledge in realistic situations instead of decontextualized formal situations such as propagated in traditional textbooks, and together with others instead of on their own (Kanselaar, De Jong, Andriessen and Goodyear, 2001). By doing so, there is an increase not only in learners’ retention but in interest and motivation as well (Forbes, Duke, and Prosser, 2001).

A second assumption put forward by constructivist theorists is the idea that social negotiation and interaction among fellow-students, teachers or others competent peers are crucial factors in the process of knowledge acquisition. Vygotsky suggests that teaching and learning are “social activities that take place in social between social actors in socially constructed situations (Moore, 2000, p.15). Cooperative learning, an offshoot of constructivism focuses on the idea of active engagement and collaboration among students towards a shared goal for a deep learning experience. By doing these learners can explain and justify their thinking, evaluate arguments, build and articulate theories and through continuous negotiations build a personal interpretation of the world.

A third assumption put forward in constructivist theorists is that effective learners process and use their metacognitive skills in order to regulate their own learning (Paris and Paris, 2001; Zimmerman, 1989). Self-regulated learners are engaged in academic goal setting, self-observation, self-assessment, and self-reinforcement. To be able to plan, monitor and organize most aspects of learning tasks is viewed as the key to successful learning in school and beyond (Boekaerts, 1999).
The philosophy of constructivism contrasts sharply with traditional Western theories of knowledge namely objectivist epistemology and positivism. Constructivism replaces the traditional notion of objective and absolute truth and postulates that knowledge is not discovered but relates to the observer and the interpretation of the external world (Glasserfeld, 1995, p.8). Constructivism posits that knowledge is not received from the world or any authoritative source, but, individuals through meaning making construct the principles of knowledge (Maclellan and Soden, 2004). This view implies that learners are actively engaged in the learning process through problem-solving and questioning and are not passive empty vessels waiting to be filled. Instruction is primary based on the development of learners’ intellectual abilities through discourse (Maclellan and Soden, 2004).

Literature suggests that there are five different facets and multiple perspectives of constructivism in terms of methodological, radical and dialectical considerations. Yet, many scholars identify three distinct categories: sociological, psychological and radical constructivism. Phillips (2000) has explained social constructivism as an approach that centers on the ways in which bodies of knowledge such as politics, values, religious beliefs and economy determine the way that people build no constructs about the world and form knowledge.

Psychological constructivism relates to a learning theory that suggests that the development of meaning is actively constructed through social interaction and depends on learners’ background knowledge. Radical constructivism, which was introduced by Ernst von Glass weiß d er assumes that it is impossible to judge knowledge as an ontological or metaphysical reality (Terhart, 2003). Influenced by rationalism, radical constructivism emphasizes subjectivity in knowledge construction and argues that individuals discover new knowledge by logically adding to or to changing old ideas.

Francis Bacon and John Locke challenged the notions of rationalism and proposed that learning occurs because of an external agent such as the instructor (Caverly and Peterson, 1996). The teacher provides students with the information that they need to acquire new skills and master them by
practicing. The empiricist approach to teaching was adopted by cognitive learning and instruction in constructivist classrooms. Proponents of this approach integrated didactic, memory-oriented models in education. Constructivism on the other hand rejected traditional instruction and suggested that teacher oriented pedagogy undermines students’ individual constructions of knowledge (Caprio, 1994 and Richardson, 1997). Hendry (1996) summarizes the nature of knowledge as a constructivist approach:

a. Knowledge exists in the mind of people only: specifically, in the classroom setting knowledge exists only in teachers and students mind. Knowledge does not exist in other pedagogical tools such as books, computers, blackboard, activities or teacher talk.

b. Individuals construct meaning and interpret the world according to their existing knowledge and beliefs.

c. Knowledge can never be certain, as it is open to reexamination and revision.

d. Students construct new knowledge through active participation and communication with the teacher or peers.

Constructivism is in considerable agreement with the use of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), the promotion of interaction and collaboration with more knowledgeable peers, the engagement in reflection and the development of autonomy. Principles of constructivist learning are implemented in this study with the aim to encourage autonomy in ESL writing via mediation tools (wikis, Google Drive, blogs, and vlogs) and following the pedagogy of peer feedback and reflection (Burden 2009).
1.2 Purpose and motivation of the study

This project is motivated by the belief that there is a need for a next generation of CMSs that will be centered on learners’ needs and not on the courses administration.

The aim of this research project is to investigate learners’ perceptions for online peer feedback and reflection in the writing class and explore the effectiveness of the implementation of CMSs tools in cultivating learners’ autonomy. In such context, this study employs Web 2.0 tools to explore core elements of autonomy: collaborative learning, active participation, co-creation, interdependence and reflective thinking. Specifically, this study was motivated by my personal experience as an ESL instructor in a private higher education college in Athens. After implementing a CMS in an adult class I asked for feedback and I realized that students were not motivated enough to use the online Moodle platform for writing assignments. Although students enjoyed practicing grammar exercises and quickly reviewing course material they were not satisfied with the affordances of the platform related to their writing assignments. The fact that there was no interaction in the platform affected their engagement level, which was low, particularly, in writing assignments. Perhaps the chief reason for this lies in the fact that writing is the most demanding and challenging activity for ESL students. Also, as we move towards a new genre of literacy known as digital literacy, there is a need to reconsider pedagogy and autonomy for teaching writing. Taking into consideration the advent of web 2.0 tools and particularly wikis and blogs I integrated them in the ESL classroom and redesigned course’s syllabus with the aim to motivate students to take responsibility for their own learning instead of relying on me for editing and revising. I wanted to provide them the chance to compose and write in a public environment, to reflect, evaluate and modify their learning process by active participation and collaboration with their peers.
1.2.1 Definition of terms

In this section, a brief definition of the main terms being used in the thesis is given to provide the reader a clear understanding of key terminology. The following terms will be extensively discussed in Chapter 1 and 2 of the Literature Review respectively.

**Autonomy:** is the ability of learners to take control of their own learning via meaningful interaction and reflection (Benson and Voller, 1997; Little, 1991; Dickinson, 1995).

**Peer feedback** can be defined as ‘a communication process through which learners enter dialogues related to performance and standards’ (Lui and Carless, 2006, p. 280).

**Reflection:** Is a cognitive process whereby learners become aware, monitor and evaluate their thinking process via mediation or social interaction with the aim to examine practical solutions, set new goals and solve current problems (Atkins and Murphy, 1993; Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985; Dewey, 1993; Mezirow, 1991).

**CALL:** “Any process in which a learner uses a computer and as a result improves his or her language” (Beatty, 2003, p.7).

**CMC:** An umbrella term that refers to a form of synchronous or asynchronous communication/interaction via computer, between two or more people.

**Blended learning:** A flexible pedagogical approach that combines face-to-face instruction with educational technology tools.

**CMS:** A software system that is used to organize and facilitate collaborative content creation.
**VLE:** An online platform for delivering learning material. Moodle is an example of an open-source software system.

**Web 2.0:** Second generation technological tools that enable interaction and collaboration.

**Wiki:** An asynchronous communication and collaboration tool that enables participants to freely create and edit the content of web pages. Wikipedia is a prime example of this quality.

**Google Drive:** An online storage, creation and sharing technology. It is a free app with 15 gigabytes of cloud storage.

**Blog or weblog:** A text based online journal.

**Vlog:** A form of blogging for which the medium is video (Wikipedia, 2008).

**Noisis:** cognition

**Amfoteronomy:** interdependence

### 1.2.3 Significance of the study

The adoption and use of Course Management Systems in Higher education have revolutionized the learning process worldwide. With the proliferation of ICT and the Internet in education a new landscape is emerging and Greek Academic Community has already implemented e-class in about 30 public and private educational institutions. Most Colleges and Universities in Greece have made massive investments in technology to enhance the e-quality, satisfy students’ needs and help them integrate better into the campus experience. However, educating the Net Generation (Prensky, 2004), which is the primary goal of all institutions, remains a challenge. In this thesis, I am going to present an option of how instructors could employ constructivist pedagogy principles to foster autonomous behavior in writing through the implementation of wikis, blogs, Google drive and vlogs. There has been a plethora of studies that examine the perceptions, behavior and usage of web 2.0 tools by college students. However, there is little research in Higher
Education that examines the integration of web 2.0 tools in the writing class for the cultivation of autonomy. Additionally, the adoption of blogs, vlogs, wikis and Google Drive as pedagogical tools in higher education is a new concept for Greek instructors and students.

Web 2.0, also known as the read and write web has created a new paradigm shift in higher education. According to Bernard Glenson (2001, p.89), “The emergence of the internet and Web access to all university services will force institutions to rethink everything from institutional image to systems architecture, new business and instructional models, and the information technology organization”. At the same time the recent economic crisis and unemployment in Eurozone has stimulated a rise of interest among adults to return to higher education. The adult of today is more likely not to be taking classes for their own interest, but to remain competitive in today’s global economy. Almost 80.0000 students are enrolled every year in Greek Universities. It is important to notice that there is a 119 percent increase in the number of postgraduate students during the last 12 years (Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, 2016). Despite the high interest for higher education studies and lifelong learning, the Greek educational system was slow to take advantage of the benefits of emerging technologies. According to Europeans Commission’s annual report on students digital literacy skills (2014) Greece is ranked in the 26th out of 28 countries.

Nowadays, instructors in Higher Education face the challenge not only to transfer their knowledge, but also to provide students with the necessary skills to become autonomous learners and multiple skilled future professionals. In this thesis, I explore the effectiveness of digital technologies and particularly wikis and blogs, Google Drive and vlogs in the training and development of learner autonomy and I propose an innovative model of use of web 2.0 tools for cultivating autonomy in writing in the ESL class.

In the higher education context, second language writing is an especially important academic skill. Students are required to produce a substantial number of high quality different written texts such as: reports, essays,
PowerPoint presentations, examination papers and research projects. It is thus the responsibility of language teacher to prepare students through systematic instruction to meet the challenges of this cognitively demanding task that incorporates a broad spectrum of knowledge. According to the natural order hypothesis (Krashen, 2009), second language learners appear to follow a predictable acquisition order regardless of explicit instruction. The skill of writing is considered to be the language skill obtained last (Widdowson, 1983 and Smith 1989) and together with reading is an act of literacy. As Scribner and Cole (1981, p.236) put it “literacy is not simply knowing how to read and write a particular script but applying this knowledge for specific purposes in specific context to use”. Literacy is a loaded term that can be used to label people, categorize them, include them or exclude them from specific social settings. Especially nowadays there are high literacy demands in several aspects of cultural life such as: academic literacy, legal literacy and workplace literacy. This encourages the idea of putting more emphasis on the academic writing curriculum in Higher Education.

1.3 ESL classes

This study was conducted in a private higher education College in Athens, Greece. For reasons of confidentiality, the research location is referred to as ‘the College’ in this thesis. Students who apply for an undergraduate or postgraduate programme and their first language is not English must demonstrate that they have sufficient English proficiency to study at the college. Applicants may take any version of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam that suits their needs. Applicants must achieve a score of 550 on the paper-based exam, 213 on the computer-based exam or 79-80 on the TOEFL (iBT) Internet-based exam. All courses in the College are taught exclusively in English, therefore, students who score lower than 550 have to attend Intensive ESL courses during the first year of their studies.

The ESL program is a non-credit program designed to develop students’ language proficiency in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing to prepare them for college level courses. The ESL courses are divided into
four proficiency levels, ESL 1: which is a required course for students who are beginners and thus lack any awareness of the English language. Incoming students are placed in ESL1 when their Institutional TOEFL score is between 330 and 400 (Paper-based) or 40 and 100 (Computer-based). This course introduces students to the basic skills needed to survive in a country where English is either natively spoken or used as the language of wider communication. ESL 2: This course is geared toward Intermediate level students who have either attained a score between 400 and 459 on the paper-based official or institutional TOEFL test or have successfully completed ESL 1 at the College. ESL 3 is an Upper-Intermediate English language course which is open to students who have successfully completed ESL 2 or new incoming or transfer students who have received a score ranging between 460 and 499 on their paper-based TOEFL Placement Test.

Unfortunately, there is not an additional writing assessment for students’ placement so instructors have no picture of students writing profile before they are placed in an ESL class. The fact that, was an additional motivation for me to use initially wikis to create a portfolio for the cohort of ESL bachelor students and help students and instructors to co-reflect on their academic progress.

1.3.1 Using wikis as e-portfolios in ESL students: Identification of a learning problem in the ESL writing class
In this section I describe my experience and my reflections on the use of wikis as a writing platform in the ESL class. This “laying the ground phase” was important for me as an instructor and helped me to familiarize with wiki technology and reflect on challenges that instructors and students may face during the implementation of technology in the writing class. The researcher did not collect and analyze data from this phase, but reflected on this experience, which was also a diagnostic process of this action research project before the implementation of web 2.0 technology in Cycle 1.
I first implemented wikis in two English language classes (ESL 1 & ESL 2) in the College, in Athens, during Fall and Spring Semester in 2012-2013. The course is intensive (10 hours per week) and is being hold in a lab. ESL 1 is, to a considerable extent, a student-centered course. Students are encouraged, and in fact required, to participate actively in the learning process. Furthermore, it is a skills-building course in which students assume responsibility for their own learning process by doing group work and engaging in peer learning. Students are also strongly advised to use the e-learning platform, where they can find not only course material, but also further exercises for practice to boost their communicative skills.

Students were trained how to use wikis during the first week of their course and were given time to experiment with the unfamiliar environment. Wikispaces, an open-source free software was used for the study. I did not ask students to create a personal account in Wikispaces, because I wanted to monitor their page. Most of them showed enthusiasm with the modern environment and were motivated to create their own pages. Students who lacked computer skills were stressed when I first asked them to write their first assignment on wikis. In their first writing assignment students were given an example of a wiki page that the teacher had created to introduce herself. Also, the instructor facilitated a workshop on the affordances of wikis and presented to students examples of good practice in wikis from college students. Then, students were asked to write a short paragraph about themselves and present their page in class to give their classmates the chance to learn them better. They were encouraged to embed videos with their favorite music or movie, to upload a profile picture or pictures of their favorite travel destinations, hobbies, food etc. As students were not familiar with wiki software, they spend much time experimenting with widgets and they mainly focused on wikis features than on the writing procedure itself. An hour was given to students to finish their task, however, not all students managed to finish their writing as they spend much time surfing the net or trying to upload images. Although the teacher was monitoring closely the procedure and asked several times students if they need any help, most of students preferred to work alone and
take responsibility for their own learning. After finishing the assignment, each student presented his page to class and asked for oral peer feedback.

Figure 1 Instructor’s welcome page in wikis

Most students were reluctant to give feedback to their peers and they just made positive comments like: very good, well done, etc. Wiki environment was used on weekly basis in ESL 1 class and students created a portfolio of their writing. I realized that it was really difficult for beginner students to give feedback to their peers so I just used the environment to motivate them to write, make a portfolio of their assignments and have fun. At the end of the semester I asked students to evaluate their progress on writing based on the feedback that I gave them during the semester. Some of the students were amazed about the quantity and quality of their writing, while others were surprised negatively when they compared their wiki pages with their classmates. Some students realized that they hadn’t worked as hard as they thought. Taking into consideration my reflection notes, students wiki pages and their feedback it can be suggested that wiki environment motivated students to write, to make research on the web and to be creative in the ESL classroom. Thus, it can be indicated that wiki is an environment that can be successfully implemented in beginners’ ESL students to change their attitude towards writing and promote writing skills.
Wiki platform was also implemented in an intermediate level English class (ESL 2). This course is geared towards Intermediate level students who have either attained a score between 400 and 459 on the paper-based official or institutional TOEFL test or have successfully completed ESL 1 at the College. ESL 2, also referred to as Advanced ESL, takes students from an Intermediate and Lower Intermediate level to an Upper-intermediate level and prepares them for the challenges of ESL 3, also known as Academic ESL.

In this class wiki environment was used to investigate wikis potentials for collaborative learning. Specifically, the instructor aimed to familiarize students with collaborative writing and invite students to work in groups in a variety of projects (make a research about death penalty, write summaries of graded reader books, create a grammar portfolio, etc.). Students were divided in two groups of four and were assigned distinct roles in every project to reassure a smooth collaboration. Though, it was very difficult and sometimes impossible for students of the same group to keep up with deadlines and finish their projects. Collaborative writing proved challenging for some of the students who did not feel very much connected with their peers due to culture differences (Mixed group: Greek and Albanian students). As Jones and Issrof
(2005) indicate, social affinity and the sense of belonging to a community are key elements for successful collaboration. This feeling affects interaction and active engagement in the community, as students need to trust each other. Students had also debates on choosing appropriate material for the projects, on the quality and quantity of information, on the writing style (grammar, syntax, spelling) and page format. I tried to intervene as little as possible only to ensure that the collaboration was smooth and I gave feedback mainly at the end of the assignment. At times, some students quitted their team and asked me to allow them to work alone on the same project. Rovai & Jordan (2004) argue that students with low sense of community have more possibilities to drop out from a course. When students were asked to finish their projects at home because of inconvenient time management during class, they did not take responsibility for the assignment and the project remained incomplete. However, there was a group of students who managed to collaborate successfully and finish an extensive reading/writing project. Surprisingly, contrary to previous studies (Mynard, 2007; Lee, 2010; Kessler, 2009; Metaferia, 2012; Yang, 2009; He, 2011; Sun and Chang, 2012), that supported that students enjoy collaborative writing, Greek and Albanian students of my class had a strong resistance on collaborative writing and reported that writing is an individual activity. Students showed preference towards working alone instead of collaborating and taking responsibility for a group activity.

Taking into consideration first year's implementation of wikis (students strong preference for individual writing, the potentials and pitfalls of collaborative learning in wikis and the effect of portfolio activities on students' self-reflection), I decided to use wikis in Cycle 1 as a platform for individual writing and to implement peer-feedback pedagogy to encourage students' interaction and strengthen their collaborative skills. Students positive attitudes to the use of wiki technology, their motivation to explore the affordances of the online environment, their reflection on their writing portfolio and their interaction with their peers via the wiki online community urged me to implement wikis in the writing curriculum and further explore their potentials for enhancing collaborative learning via peer feedback and promoting autonomous writing.
Also, to further promote students’ engagement in self-evaluation I decided to implement blogs, a promising web 2.0 tool for online-reflection.

In a nutshell this “laying the ground phase” confirmed previous research that suggests that many students need to improve their information literacy and online communication skills ((Davies, 2011; November, 2010a; Oh & Reeves, 2014). By integrating technology in the class and specifically peer feedback and reflection, students are given the opportunity to use “emerging technologies appropriately and effectively for learning (Oh & Reeves, 2014, p. 825). As they critically reflect, co-create, self-monitor and self-evaluate their learning via the use of technology, they take responsibility for their own learning and they acquire the skills required in higher education in this global economy (Coppola, 2004; Davies, 2011; Davies & West, 2014; November, 2012; Prensky, 2010;).

1.3.2 Originality of research project

In this section I aim to show how my research is informed by the previous research on the autonomy and to articulate the originality of this study. Particularly, I am interested in investigating whether the combination of online peer feedback and reflective practice can cultivate students’ autonomy in
writing. Although there are many studies that examine the implementation of a variety of tools for the enhancement of autonomy there are not many studies that combine peer feedback and reflective pedagogy that focus on academic writing. My research questions are close to Kennedy’s (2010) study who blends wikis and blogs and e-portfolios in a qualitative case study to enhance students collaborative writing skills, encourage peer-feedback, self-reflection, promote motivation and finally improve their composition skills. Kennedy investigated whether the specific technologies can have a real effect on students’ learning. Being confident with the use of technology, he designed an innovative blended curriculum for the composition class with emphasis on the mix of online and traditional pedagogy. I embrace his view on using a variety of tools in the classroom to compare and contrast the effectiveness of different technologies, however I could not implement his approach in my classroom due to time restrictions and the slow adaptation of my students in the use of innovative technologies in the writing class. Although Kennedy (2009) provides a detailed picture of the research design of the study he does not adequately present how he validated the quality of this study (peer debriefing, member checks, etc.). Also, the research question on whether students have developed their own voice after the end of the project is not answered satisfactory. Finally, Kennedy (2009) is mostly interested in actual learning while my emphasis is on autonomous learning.

Regarding data collection methods, I concur with Hashimoto (2012) who uses think aloud protocols to cover the deficiencies of interviews. Hashimoto (2012) explains that when students are asked to talk about their experiences and specifically to describe their learning strategies it is not always easy for them to recall their actions with accuracy. I similarly introduced spoken reflection through video to capture students in action reflections and avoid asking students to recall detailed information. Contrary to my study, all participants in Hashimoto’s (2012) research were familiar with the use of blogs. Hashimoto (2012) empowered students by giving them the freedom to write for topics of their interest and encouraged them to use their own resources. Similarly, although my students did not select all their essay topics due to syllabus
restrictions, they were given a variety of topics to select for their argumentative essay and I recommended them to use their own resources on condition that they share them with their audience. Regarding peer feedback technique Hashimoto (2012) had a team of 18 Japanese native speakers and teachers to support students with further feedback. The resources available to me limited adoption of the techniques used in this project. Finally, comparably to my research Google drive technology was used to monitor students’ portfolio.

Concerning students’ perceptions on peer feedback, I was sensitive to Cheng’s (2009) criticism that argues that language teachers should train learners and equip them with linguistic strategies. I trained students on giving feedback and we had many class discussions on the advantages and challenges of giving and receiving feedback. Cheng (2009) introduced 2 cycles of both online and face-to-face peer review following the writing process model pedagogy and enhance students’ interactions. Similarly, I used one cycle of group feedback in Google drive and a second cycle or online peer feedback for students’ second draft to enhance the quality of feedback and give students the opportunity to further discuss about their online interaction. I agree with Cheng (2009) that online feedback is not just another form of feedback, but students’ need time and training to adjust in an online environment. Cheng (2009) conducted focus group interviews to explore students’ experiences on peer feedback while I preferred one to one interviews. Although focus group interviews have potentials to empower participants and give them the opportunity to collaborate with the researcher so at to initiate change, I decided to conduct one to one interviews for three main reasons: First, being familiar with the attitude of my students I was aware that only few students will dominate the discussion while shy students will just wait for instructor’s intervention to take turn. Secondly, focus group discussion would be challenging for my class since 2 of my students are not fluent in Greek and would not feel comfortable listening to their peers. Thirdly, on a practical note, focus group discussions need a moderator to move things forward or to challenge participants and keep the discussion focused. The
presence of a moderator would not be possible in this research.

Finally, most researchers in the field of autonomy that are close to my study (Hashimoto, 2012, Kennedy, 2009, Cheng, 2009, Welch, 2015) have selected to analyze data using qualitative methods and particularly a case study approach which is suitable for exploring human behavior and experiences. However, I believe that the action research approach and specifically individual teacher action research is suitable for my study. Since the aim of my study is threefold: to explore students’ perceptions on online peer feedback and reflection, to investigate the impact of a technology rich environment on students’ autonomous writing and to reflect on my own practice, action research was selected as a flexible method for this study.

1.3.3 Aims of the study

Based on the above, the study reported in this thesis aims primary to examine via an individual teacher action research the implications of the use of cutting edge technology in teaching autonomous writing. Also, the study aims to shed light on students’ perceptions for online peer feedback and reflection, pedagogies that are linked to the development of autonomy. The researcher implements two Cycles of action research to lead students towards the spectrum of autonomy and to explore students’ perceptions for the effectiveness of different web 2.0 tools in the writing class. Final aim of this thesis is to understand the complex nature of autonomy so at to further develop my practices in teaching writing and contribute to the literature of autonomous pedagogy.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. How first-year university students perceive peer-feedback in the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?

2. How first-year university students perceive reflection in the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?
3. What are the implications of combining peer feedback and reflection for teaching autonomous writing?

1.4 Outline of the PhD thesis

As stated in the previous section, the principal purpose of this study is to explore students' perceptions on the use of online peer feedback and online reflection and how web 2.0 environments may be effectively used to support autonomous English language writing. Additionally, action research as a research methodology has been undertaken in this research project in order to better improve the teacher and researcher's teaching practice and professional development. The thesis consists of six chapters. This chapter presented first the theoretical background of the study, social constructivism and the purpose and motivation of the current study. Next, a brief definition of key terminology used in this thesis is given. Also, the research project background information, the ESL Department in the College and key learning problems of teaching writing with the use of wiki technology are identified. Next, the researcher reflects on plausible solutions taking into consideration the literature in autonomy and identifies a research gap in the literature in order to secure both the feasibility and originality of the study. Finally, the aims of the study are highlighted.

The second chapter of this dissertation paper is divided in three parts due to the substantial number of multifactor issues that needed to be examined to shed light in the concept of autonomy in second language learning. The first part presents the historical background of autonomy in the literature and the effect of learner-centered approach in modern andragogy. Then, definitions of autonomy are being discussed alongside major differences on the conceptualization of autonomy among scholars. Next, the problematic measurement of autonomy is being articulated. The chapter continues with the characteristics of autonomous-good learners as there have been analyzed in the works of Hedge (2000), O'Maley and Chamot (1990). Specifically, three fundamental conditions for the development of learner autonomy are being
presented: responsibility, motivation, use of metacognitive strategies. Finally, three major components of autonomy: interaction, reflection and experimentation are being examined.

The second part of chapter two deals with the changing role of the teacher in the development of autonomy and the challenges that instructors face in digital environments. Next, different approaches to ESL writing are discussed. Furthermore, the impact of new literacies on the nature and teaching of ESL writing is critically discussed. Finally, the role of peer feedback in promoting autonomy in writing is articulated and the suitability of wiki environment for the enhancement of the above components is being articulated.

The third part of the chapter starts with a critical review of the literature on the impact of cutting edge technology that can be used to support an autonomous writing model, which is based on line peer feedback and online reflection pedagogy. Specifically, research on the effectiveness of two writing platforms: wikis and Google drive on promoting autonomy is presented. Finally, literature on the benefits and challenges of reflection via blogging and vlogging is discussed.

The third chapter of this dissertation justifies the selection of action research methodology for the study, articulates researcher’s epistemology, ontology and axiology and briefly discusses other research paradigms. It also presents research procedures and choice or research instrumentation. Next the data analysis methods, adopted in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 alongside data coding following a thematic analysis approach are discussed. The chapter ends with researcher’s reflections on ethics alongside with the limitations and delimitations of the study.

Chapter four describes the detailed research process and reports and analyses the findings of Cycle 1. Reflection on instructor’s role, students’ experiences and identification of learning problems in teaching writing via wikis and blogs lead to changes in pedagogy and tools. Finally, the researcher redesigns an innovative writing model to improve peer feedback experience, enhance reflective learning and promote autonomous writing.
In chapter five the learning problems of cycle 1 are addressed by the researcher’s new teaching model for writing, named “digital noisis”. During action research Cycle 2, wiki platform is replaced with the synchronous Google Drive environment to enhance the problematic interactivity of cycle 1 and peer feedback forms are improved. Also, vlogs replace blog environment to facilitate reflective thinking and reflection rubrics are introduced to solve some problems left over by Cycle 1. Next the major findings of the study are analytically presented and research questions are responded. The chapter ends discussing the implications for the use of Google Drive and vlogs for teaching autonomous writing.

Chapter six summarizes the major findings with respect to the research questions. The contributions of the study in the literature of autonomy, peer feedback and reflection are discussed. Also, contributions to action research methodology are articulated. The chapter ends with recommendations for further action research in autonomous writing and researcher’s final reflections.
CHAPTER II

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

In the introduction, I have outlined the contextual background for this study. I have also provided the aims of the study, the purpose and motivation of the study and the significance of the study. A brief definition of the key terms of the thesis is given above as well. The outline of the thesis is also explained. In this chapter I shall present research and critically discuss pertinent literature about autonomy, peer feedback, reflection and the CALL impact in second learning and writing.

This chapter has been divided in three parts due to the substantial number of issues that needed to be investigated to provide an in-depth look at various facets of research that are necessary to consider for this thesis project. The first part of this chapter sketches out the theoretical and historical background of autonomy and reviews key issues and debates on autonomy literature. Next, characteristics of autonomous learners are being discussed based on scholars’ effort to define autonomy. Following, conditions for the development of learner autonomy: action, interaction and reflection are being analyzed. The second part of the chapter begins with an overview of the role in CALL in SLA theories and the design of English language learning curriculum. Then, the changing role of the teacher is being described alongside challenges and potentials for autonomy in CALL environment. Then, different writing models are critically presented. Next, the transformative impact of new literacies in writing is articulated and an innovative model for teaching academic writing in Tertiary Education is being presented. The “digital noisis model” is based on a mix of the process and genre approach and aspires to encourage students to develop both personal and social autonomy in writing via reflective pedagogy. The third part of the chapter reviews the benefits and challenges of peer feedback in the writing class, following a constructivism learning approach. Next, research on impact of two online writing platforms, wikis and Google
Drive is critically presented. Finally, potentials of blogs and vlogs to promote reflection and lay the ground for autonomy in writing are highlighted.

2.2 Part one: What is autonomy?

Autonomy, self-directed learning and self-regulated learning are not teaching methods but approaches of learner-centered education in the field of English language learning that emerged over the last 20 years in adult education. Learner-centered approach views students as active participators in the teaching process and requires increased involvement in the syllabus and high motivation level. In contrast to traditional classrooms, the teacher's role in a learner-centered curriculum is not dominant. Nunan (1989) states that teachers and learners work collaboratively and make decisions on content selection, methodology and evaluation. Tudor (1995) suggests that learner-centered classroom should focus on two complementary aims: students' decision on what they want to learn and how they want to learn. Putting an emphasis on the learner, learner-centered pedagogy enables students to understand lesson goals and objectives, choose materials and work cooperatively (Altan and Trombly, 2001).

The concept of autonomy was closely associated with individualization (individualized learning, individualized instruction) as both approaches suggest a focus on the learner. However, individualization and autonomy do not overlap. According to Riley (1986, p.32) individualized learning, which is based on behaviorist psychology has no correlation with autonomous learning. It is in fact individualized teaching, as teachers make all choices regarding methodology and course materials and try to adapt them to learners' need. Riley (1986) argues that although learners' needs are taken into consideration, learners do not direct learning because they have no freedom of choice, which is essential for the development of autonomous behavior.

In the twentieth century, there was a growth of interest in autonomy as an educational goal. The emergence of the concept of autonomy in language
learning was in part a response to the changes that occurred in social science, psychology, political science and educational philosophy. At the same time, rapid changes in technology and communications (Pemberton et al. 1996) encouraged the development of new educational structures where learning to learn was viewed more important that knowledge.

In 1971, the Council of Europe’s Modern Languages Project established the Centre de Researchers et d’ Applications on Languages (CRAPEL) at the University of Nancy, France aimed to provide opportunities for self-directed life-long learning. The first self-access language-learning center at CRAPEL (Riley and Zoppis, 1985) has been established with the rationale to provide access to a rich collection of authentic material on language learning and offer learner opportunities for experimentation. Self-access centers employed educational technologies and very soon technology-based learning was connected to autonomous self-access learning.

Self-directed learning as it was practiced at CRAPEL aimed to train learners to develop skills related to self-monitoring and self-assessment. The idea of learner training became widespread in the 1980s and practitioners in the field of autonomy linked learner training to active engagement in the learning process (Dickinson, 1992). According to Holec (1980, p.42) the basic methodology for learner training should be that of “discovery”. Learners should discover knowledge by trial and error and train themselves how to find answers to the problems that they face during the learning process. Teaching students how to think, how to learn and how to take control over their learning is emphasized in recent literature (Cole and Chan, 1994, Boekaerts, 1997). Self-regulated skills are considered crucial for autonomous lifelong learning.

Although the value of autonomy in pedagogy and andragogy is acknowledged there is little conception as to the definition of the term. Dickinson (1987, p.11) for instance conceives autonomy as a situation in which the learner is independent and responsible to implement his/her decisions on learning without the involvement of a teacher or an institution. Dickinson, takes a broader definition on autonomy taking into consideration lifelong learning, thus
the above definition describes a full autonomy situation. Although, Dickinson explained that independent learning is not associated with isolation from the classroom context but equates to active engagement in the learning process.

Holec (1981, p.3) in the report to the Council of Europe described the characteristics of autonomous learners based on his basic definition for autonomy: “to take charge of one’s own learning”. It is important to attempt to describe autonomy in terms of observable behavior for two major reasons: First, to conduct effective and valid research it is vital to measure an observable behavior and second, practitioners on autonomy are likely to design more effective programs if they have a clear understanding of the characteristics of autonomous behavior that they aim to develop. Holec (1981, p.4) argues that autonomous learners can exercise control at successive stages of the learning process to: “determine learning objectives, define the contents and progression, select the methods and techniques to be used, monitor the procedure of acquisition and evaluate what has been acquired”.

Benson (2001) states that this definition is problematic because it does not include the cognitive factors involved in the development of autonomy. Benson (2001) suggests that autonomous learners are those who have a level of control over “cognitive process, learning management, and learning content”. Benson describes control over cognitive process as an active learners’ engagement with linguistic input. Attention, reflection and metacognitive knowledge are particularly concerned with the level of control. In contrast, Little’s definition (1991), which is complementary to Holec’s, adds a psychological dimension in autonomy. Little describes responsibility for one’s own learning as “a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action” (p.4).

Little (1991) argues that it is not easy to define autonomy shortly and has stated that there are five misconceptions regarding autonomy. According to his conceptualization autonomy does not mean learning without a teacher (self-instruction) nor is it a teaching method. In autonomous learning, learners are not left alone in the classroom context nor do teachers give up their
responsibilities. Autonomous behavior is not steady and cannot be easily described and achieved by learners. Additionally, Little argued that autonomous behavior can be manifested in many different ways and it is possible that learners with a high degree of autonomy in one area not to be equally autonomous in another.

Finally, Benson (2001) defines autonomy as the capacity to take control of one’s own learning. Benson argues that there is no need for a more precise definition of autonomy because it is a multidimensional capacity. Taking control of learning (not charge or responsibility) is a process that differs among individuals and may take different forms in different contexts. Benson (2001) concluded that there is no single definition that can cover all aspects of control over learning and emphasized that there are three interdependent levels of control in language learning that can adequately describe autonomy: learning management, cognitive processes and learning content.

Autonomy is as aforementioned a multidimensional construct and thus its measurement in practice is problematic. Although there are several definitions of autonomy and scholars clearly describe characteristics of autonomous learners there is little evidence to suggest which are the components of autonomy and whether autonomous characteristics are the same for all learners, no matter individual differences, age, culture or proficiency level. As Little (1991, p. 4) argues: “Autonomy can manifest itself in many ways”.

Another problem in the measurement of autonomy concerns the nature of the construct itself. According to Holec (1981, p. 3), “although autonomous learners are capable of taking charge of their own learning that does not automatically imply that they will put this knowledge into practice. Learners’ willingness as well as social and psychological constraints play also a key role in practicing autonomy.

Benson (2001, p.54) states that “If we aim to help learners to become more autonomous, we should at least have some way of judging whether we have been successful or not”. However, the developmental nature of autonomy and
the fact that it is not a stable situation that can be equally transferred to all
domains of learning is a challenge when attempting to measure autonomy in
terms of product. It is easier for researchers to measure degrees or
dimensions of autonomy aspects of learning rather than autonomy in general.

Studies that try to measure how much autonomous learning skills assist
learners to develop language learning skills are likely to be limited as there
are other interrelated factors that might affect learning such as previous
learning experience or level of interest for a subject (Dam and Gabrielsen,
1996).

2.2.1 Characteristics of autonomous learners

It is not easy to suggest a single definition for autonomous learners. Many
researchers associate autonomous learners with “good learners”. Particularly,
Hedge (2000) analyses the characteristics of “good learners” and describes
them as self-reliant learners, willing to take risks and make guesses during
the learning procedure, well-motivated learners, enthusiastic towards learning,
ready to look for opportunities to use the target language in and out the
classroom context and prepared to take responsibility for their own learning.
Autonomous learners are active participants in the learning process and try to
find opportunities to discover knowledge in and out of the classroom context.

Dickinson (1993) states that there are four major characteristics that
autonomous learners have. First, they can identify course’s syllabus and are
able to connect previous knowledge to new knowledge. For example, a
learner who studies a new syntactic rule must be able to find the relationship
with what has been previously taught. Secondly, autonomous learners set
their own learning objectives rather than being the complete pursuer of the
teacher. For instance, autonomous language learners try to find opportunities
to practice in the target language by reading literature, watching TV
programmes or corresponding with native speakers. The third characteristic of
autonomous learners is the use of learning strategies to aid acquisition,
storage and use of information. O’Malley and Chamot (1990) argue that good
learners are effective users of a wide variety of learning strategies (cognitive, meta-cognitive, socio-effective) and state these actions play a dominant role in the enhancement of learner autonomy. Finally, autonomous learners can monitor the learning process and critically reflect on the effectiveness of the use of their strategies.

Candy (1991, pp.459-466) to profile autonomous language learners, listed more than 100 competencies associated with autonomous behavior. These competencies are grouped under 13 heading: According to Candy an autonomous learner will:

- be methodical and disciplined
- be logical and analytical
- be reflective and self-aware
- demonstrate curiosity, openness and motivation
- be flexible
- be interdependent and interpersonal competent
- be persistent and responsible
- be venturesome and creative
- show confidence and have a positive self-concept
- are independent and self-sufficient
- have developed information seeking and retrieval skills
- have knowledge about, and skill at, learning process
- develop and use criteria for evaluating.

Benson (2001) argues that most of the studies that attempt systematically to compile a list of autonomous behaviors are mainly concerned with non-observable behavior and encounter the danger of either being incomplete or creating a psychological profile of the ideal learner rather than focus on the cognitive skills need to be acquired to move towards autonomy.

Benson’s classification of autonomy has exerted considerable influence in the literature (Blin, 2005). However, Oxford (2003, p.76) critiqued Benson’s model as “fragmentary”. He also reported that sociocultural perspectives of
autonomy are being neglected and there is not a clear correlation among different versions of autonomy in language education and constructs such as context, agency, motivation and learning strategies. Benson (2011, p.62) admitted that his attempt to categorize different versions of autonomy seems to become less helpful because “it often refers to differences within approaches that are typically oriented to learning management, psychological version of cognitive processes and learning context at one and the same time”.

In this section I shall discuss Oxford’s (2003) conceptualization of autonomy since the emphasis on the social perspectives is strongly correlated with the 21st century skills and the new concept of social communication and culture that students need to develop while using social media tools for academic purposes. Although Oxford (2003) tried to ameliorate Benson’s model by adding new dimension-version in the concept of autonomy, it is important to note that, “in real educational setting such perspectives are not black and white alternative” (Holliday, 2003, p.4). Also, a new conceptualization of autonomy will be given based on the high impact and need for digital literacy skills in higher education.

The technical version of autonomy has been described by Benson (2006) as the process of learning a language outside of an educational setting, without the intervention of a teacher. From this perspective, the main concern of the teacher is to equip learners with the skills and techniques to be able to construct knowledge autonomously. This approach can be placed within the framework of positivism, which postulates that the only authentic knowledge is that which is based on actual sense experience (Bryman, 1988).

Sinclair (2006) pointed that Benson’s technical view of autonomy is not an actual version but can be considered as a part of the learner training process, which is necessary for developing the capacity of autonomy. Oxford (2003) argues that to promote learner autonomy or self-regulation outside the educational context, the teacher should first create situational conditions that encourage learners to get greater control over curriculum and access to
resources. In this vein learners who access online environments should be equipped with the skills to evaluate and control these environments. Technical knowledge and training are not sufficient to help learners develop autonomy in an online environment. Digital literacy skills are crucial for promoting online autonomy. Although 21st century learners are regarded as digital natives they do not have the inborn ability to find, evaluate and critically synthesize information from the web.

As it has already been mentioned, autonomy is neither a linear process nor an all or nothing process. Learners can only work towards autonomy. There are some fundamental conditions for the development of autonomy. Dam (2000) describes the elements of an autonomous language-learning environment as follows:

I define a learning-centered environment as one in which the teachers’ knowledge about language learning – what to learn and how to learn – is combined with the learners’ knowledge about themselves, their background, their likes and dislikes, their needs, and their preferred learning styles. To me a learning-centered environment is an environment in which the learners are:

- given the possibility of being consciously involved in their own learning;
- expected to be actively engaged in their own learning and thus made aware of the different elements involved in the learning process – an awareness to be made use of in other contexts (Dam, 2000, p.20).

In addition, Dam suggests that students should regularly be given the opportunity to evaluate their progress either via collaborative activities or through journal-diary writing. In the same line Holec (1979) described the conditions that need to be fulfilled to foster autonomous learning in the classroom. First, learners need to acquire knowledge on how to make decisions about their learning. Second, there must be a learning structure on which learners will have the chance to practice on how they can take charge
of their learning. These two conditions, knowledge and practice are regarded as crucial elements of autonomous learning environments.

Autonomy is not a linear process. Most scholars (Nunan, 1997; van Lier, 1990; Kohonen, 2001, Littlewood, 1997) would agree that there are various stages/levels that represent learners’ progress towards autonomy. Nunan (1997) provides a five levels model, which is based on the view that language learning is a matter of degree. Autonomy levels in this model are not necessarily developed on a continuum, but can happen simultaneously. During the first stage: awareness, learners become aware of the pedagogical goals and context of class syllabus and can identify their learning strategies. Involvement is the next level where learners are involved in choosing their learning goals from a range of options. Nunan (1997) states that choosing is the most important part of that task. In the intervention level, learners are able to modify learning goals and objectives, while in the creation level students create their own personalized goals and learning objectives. Finally, at the transcendence level, according to Nunan’s Autonomous Language Learning Model (NALLM) learners make use of authentic materials are able to apply knowledge beyond the classroom environment and students become language researchers (2003).

Autonomy and responsibility are apparently very much interrelated (Little, 1991, p.7). Dam (1995) suggests that responsible learners should be able to act independently and in cooperation with others and accept the idea that their own efforts are crucial to progress in learning. Responsible learners can monitor their own progress and are willing to take advantage of the available opportunities to reinforce their learning process (Scharle and Scabo 2000). Finally, responsible learners set up a personal agenda and in the light of this agenda, plan, monitor and evaluate their progress. Responsibility in learning is a capacity that can be transferred to other areas of life and lead to autonomy.

Another condition for the development of learner autonomy is motivation. Most scholars seem to agree that motivation is a necessary precursor of
autonomy (Dickinson, 1995, Dorney, 1998, Deci and Ryan, 1985). For instance, Dickinson (1990) concludes that enhanced motivation is strongly related with taking responsibility for learning and affects students’ academic success more than factors that are out of student’ control. Additionally, a link between intrinsic motivation and autonomy appears in the work of Deci and Ryan (1985). Intrinsic motivation refers to motivation to “engage in an activity because the activity is enjoyable and satisfying to do so” (Deci and Ryan, 1985, p.39). Deci and Ryan (1985) concluded that self-determined learners are more likely to demonstrate autonomous behavior and leads to higher academic achievement.

A third factor that is closely linked to the development of learner autonomy is the implementation of metacognitive strategies (Fleming and Walls, 1998). Oxford (1990) supports that metacognitive strategies help language learners not to lose control over their learning. Wenden and Ruby (1987) suggests that metacognitive strategies are directly related to language learning and can be used to oversee, regulate and self-direct the learning process through: planning, setting goals and self-management.

2.2.2 The continuum of autonomy: Action-interaction-reflection
One of the most important goals of learner autonomy is the development of critical reflection. Second language learners should critically reflect on the learning process, re-evaluate their strategies and develop linguistic and metalinguistic awareness (Schwienhorst, 2011). The clinical psychologist, Kelly (1955), emphasizes in the Personal Construct theory the key role of reflection and self-awareness in learning. Kelly proposed that individuals act like personal scientists and interpret the world and construct their own unique version of reality, using a hierarchical system of personal constructs. This notion is reflected in autonomy theory where “the successful learner is increasingly seen as a person who is able to construct knowledge directly from experience of the world” (Benson, 2001, p.19). Similarly, Kohonen (1992, p.24) argues that “raising the awareness of one’s own learning and gaining an understanding of the process involved is thus an important key to the
development of autonomous learning. Conscious reflection with other learners in cooperative groups makes it possible to increase one's awareness of learning”.

There is a wealth of literature that suggests that reflection is the catalyst for deeper learning, problem solving and professional development in adult education (Bloom, 1956; Brown, Bransford, Ferrara & Campione, 1983; Dewey, 1933; Flower & Hayes, 1980; Schön,1983, Clare, 2007; Davys & Beddoe, 2009). However, one of the difficulties of studying the literature on reflection is that research on reflection emanates from distinct disciplines such as psychology, education, philosophy and sociology. Additionally, the concept of reflection is sometimes used interchangeably with critical thinking, experiential learning, problem solving, metacognitive awareness, reflective practice or reasoning (Moon, 2005).

John Dewey, the eminent philosopher, was an early advocate of reflection. He first introduced the concept of reflective thinking in education in 1933, when he published the book *How we think: A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process*. Dewey defined reflection as “active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends” (1993, p. 9). He believed that learners are not able to think, capture or understand any concept unless they engage through doubt and questioning in deep-reflective thinking of experience. Particularly, Dewey (1993) suggested that:

...[reflective thinking] emancipates us from merely impulsive and merely routine activity [and] ...enables us to direct our activities with foresight. ...[Reflection] enables us to know what we are about when we act. It converts action that is merely appetitive, blind, and impulsive into intelligent action, (p. 17)
Dewey (1993) aligned reflection with critical self-examination of one’s beliefs that originates in a state of doubt and turns into “an act of searching, hunting, inquiring to find material that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose of the perplexity” (p. 12). Particularly, reflective thought is considered a scientific inquiry process that consists of five stages: a) suggesting solutions to a problem, b) realization of the perplexity that one must deal with, c) hypothesis generation to deal with the origin of the problem, d) building an assumption or possible theory through reasoning, e) testing the hypothesis in action. Based on the belief that reflection, as a conscious action occurs when one is making meaning from experiences, Dewey (1993) pointed out the importance of interaction with other people and the environment and suggested that reflection is built from personal experience. Similarly, Boud (1985) stressed the importance of evaluating experience in reflective thinking. He advocated that learning how to think, integrating existing knowledge with new knowledge and applying new understanding into one’s personal framework is a core element of reflective thought. During reflection, learners become aware of current problems and implement strategies or test some hypotheses to examine workable solutions. The reflection process is complete when solutions are found to the problem-perplexion and new knowledge structures are formed (Atkins and Murphy, 1993).

Based on the notion that reflection is an intellectual activity that is built upon learner’s exploration of experiences, many thinkers attempted to describe and explain this process from various contexts (Schön, 1987, Boyd and Fales, 1983, Kolb, 1984, Boud et al.,1985, Mezirow 1991, Fogarty, 1994, Langer, 1997, Moon, 1999a, Kember et al. 2000, Hay et al. 2004). This study aims to explore learners’ experiences and perceptions on online written reflections on blogs and online oral reflections via vlogs.

Wikis and Google Drive, blogs and vlogs are being used in this study as online learning environments, which allow experimentation, interaction-collaboration and provide opportunities for critical reflection. Specifically, wiki is a stress-free environment for learners, as teachers do not supervise it at all
times. Therefore, learners are more likely to experiment and take risks. Wiki as a digital writing tool provides students opportunities for academic reading and writing. Wells asserts, “in writing the individual is made most aware of the symbolizing function of the language…” (1981 c, p.254). Written text can serve as a resource that can be analyzed, manipulated and edited in a variety of ways (Wells, 1981 c). Writing as a process can also be thought as an external memory and as a cognitive amplifier (Bruner, 1972). Many scholars are consistent with the use of learner diaries or other forms of written documents (Dam, 2000, Little, 1997a, Gabrielssen, 1991) because they believe that the written use of the target language increases metalinguistic awareness.

Autonomy is not a solely individual cognitive process of independence and self-determination. Interdependence is equally important for the development of autonomy (Schwienhorst, 2011). The importance of social interaction and peer support in the development of mental abilities and learning is central to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory “The Zone of Proximal Development” (ZPD). “It is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Scholars in autonomy have acknowledged the importance of social interaction for the development of learner autonomy. Benson (1996) views autonomy in language learning as a socially mediated process and notes that students' collaboration can lead to the development of high order thinking skills.

There are many ways to foster interaction and collaboration in an ESL classroom (role-play, project-based learning, etc.). However, most researchers agree that virtual learning environments provide a wide range of opportunities for interaction and collaboration using synchronous and asynchronous web tools (chat, blogging, forum, wikis, web-mail, etc.). Current research has indicated that students who are engaged in the use of wikis as a collaborative writing tool value the opportunity to communicate online and
share feedback with more knowledgeable peers. Corrective feedback by peers, either written or oral, gives learner the opportunity to become more aware of their thoughts, to modify and develop them (Schwienhorst, 2011). Thus, corrective feedback provides more than mere correction. Particularly, written feedback can work towards the development of greater language and linguistic awareness.

The language learner apart from being supported to take control and assume responsibility for his own learning needs to be put into a position where he can reflect on his learning and experiment with authentic language learning materials (Schwienhorst, 2010). “Learners who are exposed to authentic materials have more possibilities to move towards autonomy because they have a more positive attitude towards language learning when they are assigned tasks that are meaningful and enjoyable for them” (McGary, 1995, p.3).

The Internet offers, without doubt access to a large variety of authentic language resources. Exploring the web for learning resources has become an important literacy skill. Web 2.0 provided learners more opportunities for interaction and experimentation with dynamic Internet resources as it enabled learners to contribute in several ways (posting comments in forums and blogs, constructing wikis, taking part in webquests, creating videos etc.). Particularly, wikis provide rich opportunities for learners to take a more active role and contribute to the online learning process (Benson and Samarawickrema, 2007, 2009). Wiki is a virtual learning environment that motivates learners to search for language resources, evaluate them and experiment in writing for an audience.

The notion of exploration and active participation in the learning process is emphasized in constructivism. Constructivist theories view language as an active process of continuous knowledge construction, as a result of investigation, manipulation and invention of information and interaction with the environment and experiences. Social constructivist researchers argue that CALL environments provide opportunities for a learner-centered pedagogy,
promote active engagement in the learning process, promote interaction, foster critical thinking and give students more control on their own learning (Benson, 2001; Blin, 2004; Leahy, 2008).

Figure 4 Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (Sincero, 2011)

2.3 Part two: The role of CALL in SLA

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) appeared in the 1950s at the dawn of computer emergence to educate and encourage language teachers to apply ICT tools and computers in language practice. Beatty (2003, p.7) defines CALL as “any process in which a learner uses a computer and as a result improves his or her language”. There are many definitions for CALL in the literature, although Beatty’s definition is adopted here as it depicts the changing nature of CALL and encompasses the wide range of activities that can be implemented through CALL and broad spectrum of current practice. The history of CALL is relatively small. Broadly speaking, CALL has given rise to the interest of researchers for the past 20 years and even today the effectiveness of CALL in second language instruction remains at the core of research studies. CALL embraced SLA theories and according to methodological implementation approaches that followed, three
developmental phases of CALL can be identified: Structural or Behaviorist CALL, Communicative CALL and Integrative or Constructivist CALL (Warschauer, 1996).

Behaviorist CALL dates to the 1960s and was influenced by the principles of behaviorism for language learning. Behaviorism is a psychological theory that founded by J.B. Watchon and advanced in America in the early decades of the 20th century. Basically, “the behaviorist theory of stimulus response learning, particularly as developed in the operant conditioning model of Skinner, considers all learning to be the establishment of habits because of reinforcement and reward” (Wilga, Rivers, 1968, p.73). The notions of behaviorist theory were adopted by the audio-lingual learning method, which supported that “a learner was expected to learn a language by listening to it and trying to speak it through imitation and practice”. (Drew and Sørheim 2004, p.20). Accordingly, CALL materials were based on textbook drills, as language learning was believed to depend on reinforcement and formation of habits. The rationale behind drills was based on the behaviorist idea that repetitive exposure to course materials through a mechanical tutor (computer) is beneficial to learning. The PLATO (Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching), a sophisticated tutoring system, was developed by the late 1970s, based on behaviorist notions. The Plato project was mainly used as a tool for practicing vocabulary, grammar drills and tests. (Ahmad, Corbett, Rogers and Sussex, 1985). The PLATO-based language learning was innovative for two reasons: 1) it enabled learners to practice course materials at their own pace and 2) provided them with immediate feedback. The independence given to students by this system was characterized by Higgins as “autonomy” (Higgins and Johns, 1984, p.17). The rejection of the theoretical and pedagogical principles of behaviorist theories by SLA scholars and the introduction of microcomputers in the late 1970s paved the way for a new phase of CALL: Communicative CALL.

Proponents of the communicative approach criticized drills and practice programs of the previous decade and highlighted the importance of authentic communication in language learning and meaning focused language use rather than corrected reproduction of forms. Communicative CALL puts emphasis on implicit (in context) language learning, and learners’ interaction in front of the computer. Personal
Computers (PC) provided a wide range of opportunities for language learners for using the language not in a drill format but in life-like communication. Furthermore, microcomputers offered big possibilities for individual work, greater degree of student choice and interactive experiences. CALL software of this period, Communicative CALL, (Kern & Warschauer, 2000; Underwood, 1984; Warschauer, 1996a) included simulation tasks and text reconstruction programs. In this phase although the computer is still being used as a tutor and as “the knower of the right answer” it has some advantages over behaviorist CALL. The computer is also used as a stimulus for discussion (negotiation of meaning), active learner participation and critical thinking (Warschauer, 2000).

Multimedia computers and the “domestication” of the Internet initiated a new phase of CALL: integrative / constructivism CALL that dominates in the 1990s and 2000s. Multimedia products combine image, color, motion and sound allowing learners to practice an endless variety of interactive tasks aimed to improve vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing skills simultaneously (Davies, 2003). Multimedia entails hypermedia. Negotiation of meanings through exposure to real life situations is the basic characteristic of this model. Applications of constructivist CALL can be found in virtual reality environments such as Multi User Domain Object Oriented systems (MOOs).

Currently teachers who implement CALL in ESL classroom follow pedagogical methods and combine principles from different theories according to students’ needs. A wealth of research (Cobb, 1999b, Goodfellow, 1995, Groot, 2000) indicates that the integration of CALL in second language classroom has revealed positive results. One of the advantages of CALL is that it creates a relaxed environment for learners and teachers. Students feel free to experiment with computer activities without the fear of being exposed to their classmates or teachers in case they can’t perform well in a task. A learner with “low affective filter” is more receptive to comprehensible input. (Krashen,1982). Especially shy or low profile students appreciate this “sheltered environment” and take initiatives and responsibility for their own learning. This tension free environment makes
learners more positive towards language instruction and facilitates acquisition process.

The multimodal environment in CALL combines images, graphics, videos, sound and games immediately draw learners’ attention, and trigger students’ motivation. Motivation is a key factor in SLA theories and contributes to the language learning process. Highly motivated students facilitate the teacher's' work and have greater chances of learning more efficiently. Modality of input is also believed to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. “Authentic video materials stimulate language acquisition and are thus an excellent source of comprehensible input” (Ciccone, 1995, p. 206). Additionally, the use of graphics is believed to “create mental images that help to improve recall, retention, and imagination of information being learned” (Rieber 1994; Ciccone, 1995).

CALL provides a student-centered environment. Teachers act as facilitators of knowledge while learners act autonomously as researchers. This change in roles makes learning experience more solid. According to constructivism theory “people learn through active exploration” (Levy, Stockwell, 2006 p.122). Students can act independently and learn at their own pace according to their needs. However, the learner-center environment that CALL provides may not help technophobic students. Some learners are not familiar with computer technology and feel more comfortable being in a traditional classroom than in a lab. Also, some learners prefer explicit instruction and a teacher-led environment because they need more guidance and they can't take responsibility for their own learning. In addition, students can easily lose their focus and interest while using computer software. Particularly, when the aim of the computer-activity is not clear, students just concentrate on the graphics and videos or engage with the technology itself and neglect the target language items.

Therefore teachers should be very well trained and feel confident with technology in the classroom. In addition, they should follow pedagogical principles and have an alternative plan in case of an unexpected problem. Finally, students need to feel that the teacher has not abandoned them but is available to support and motivate them. This section discussed the impact of CALL in SLA and potentials of
CALL for autonomous learning. The next section articulates that the ESL teacher has to adapt to a new role in the digital era. Teachers should be in line with the new literacies pedagogies and act as advocates of transformation in higher education so as to promote a democratic, digital and global learning environment.

2.3.1 The changing role of the teacher

The centrality of the teacher was the norm in the traditional ESL classroom for an extended period. Indeed, many language-teaching methods such as grammar translation and audiolingualism reflected this notion. As Bivens and Taylor (2008) observe, traditional learning is:

“Premised on the assumption that students are empty vessels that need to be filled up with information. The flow of information is one way, from teacher to students. The teacher controls the...experience, while the role of the student is to receive knowledge passively (p. 282)”.

However, the advent of educational technology has helped to create more flexible learning environments, which offer the learner a wide variety of materials and sources of information and give more opportunities for active engagement and autonomous learning. To this extend, the role of the teacher has changed from being the “sage of the stage to the guide in the side” (Tella, 1996, p. 6). Little (1990, pp.11-12) comments that “it is not easy for teachers to let learners to solve problems for themselves: for that takes time and there is always so much ground to cover. Committing oneself to learner autonomy requires a lot of nerve”.

Ely and Plomp (1986) defined the new technological dimension in the teacher’s role as a teacher who becomes a guide (Barnett, 1993), a resource expert (Willets, 1992), a resource provider and a mentor (Pennington, 1996) and enumerated competencies that should have teachers who implement CALL technologies in their classes. Chapelle (2003, p. 31) stresses the need for computer expertise in language teachers and notes that teachers need to “engage in innovating teaching and assessments using technology”.

59
Voller (1997) classifies the teacher's role into three categories: teacher as a facilitator, teacher as a counselor and teacher as resource. The term facilitator of learning is widely used in the literature alongside autonomous learning and includes two complimentary roles (Holec, 1985), namely, technical support and psychosocial support. The technical support provided by the teacher includes helping learners set objectives, planning, organizing and evaluating their learning and finally, helping learners to acquire the skills needed to carry out their independent language learning. The psychosocial support provided by a teacher as facilitator includes: motivating students towards the development of a sense of responsibility for their own learning, avoiding manipulating, being non-judgmental and raising awareness of the necessity for autonomous life-long learning.

The new teacher’s role does not only involve a pedagogical dimension but also a technological one. In this new setting of blended, hybrid or fully online learning environments the teacher has to take into consideration additional layers of learning experience that are related to the human-computer-human interaction environment (Desjardins, 2005). Particularly, the instructor should secure the authenticity of learning activities (Herrington and Parker, 2013). Including students in an authentic learning context, giving them the choice of authentic learning activities, allowing them to take risks, collaborate and reflect on their learning is of primary importance. Flint and Johnson (2011) concur, and indicate, “if students do not see the relevance of a task, they get frustrated and annoyed” (p. 74).

Additionally, the teacher needs to raise students’ awareness of their active role and encourage them to take ownership of their own learning (McCarthy, 2013). Co-developing assignments, authentic assessment, peer feedback and reflection should be an integral part of the learning curriculum. Chen, Wang, Yang, Lu, and Chang (2013) refer to a “digital playground” (p. 172), and they state that ideal and interactive learning activities have ten basic design elements, including, “real world relevance, ill-defined problems, sustained investigation, multiple perspectives, collaboration, reflection, interdisciplinary
perspectives, integrated assessment, polished products and multiple interpretations” (p. 173).

A key aspect in the new teacher role in promoting autonomy in ESL classroom is the ability to take advantage of innovative technology tools and carefully evaluate the software before integrating it to the curriculum. Teachers should be aware that not all students benefit equally from multimedia technologies. Individual differences and learning styles should be taken into consideration to teach effectively in a blended or online class where the focus is on supporting individualized modes of learning with optional forms of cooperation (Dalsgaard & Paulsen, 2009; Paulsen, 2003, 2008).

Another task in the new teacher’s role is a positive attitude towards the integration of CMC technologies in second language (L2) classroom. Lack of motivation and enthusiasm on the part of the teacher can negatively affect students’ attitude and lead to the failure of the curriculum (Claxton and Murrell, 1987). Teachers’ positive attitude towards educational technologies may be affected by various causes such as: the lack of resource access, technological challenges, institutional traditions, etc. The teacher needs to act not only as a facilitator but also as an integrator (implement digital technologies responding to learners’ diversity), as a researcher (being able to access electronic resources and tools for language analysis), as a designer (construct CALL materials), as a collaborator (corporate with other teachers and learners) and finally as an evaluator of software and critical choice of online information (European Directorate General of Education and Culture, 2003).

To address authenticity and autonomy in a digital environment and invite students to become co-designers and critical collaborators in social learning environments it is essential to promote two important elements for engagement in network communities: peer feedback and reflection.

As McCarthy (2013) states, “one of the distinctive characteristics of the millennial generation is the desire for continuous feedback and rewards for
achievement, and they continue to seek feedback both in their studies and the workplace” (p. 81).

Incorporating reflection in assignments and learning tasks is vital to ensure that students not only engage critically with the theory but they understand how it applies in their own practice, (McCarthy, 2013, p. 83).

The world is changing around us and education will not be immune to these shifts. Learners in the twenty first century have been web consumers for much of their lives and they now demand more than lectures. They want learning experiences that support participation and promote interaction and collaboration with their peers. As a result, many educators need to implement in the ESL curriculum the tools and technologies that the new Web (Web 2.0) provides to create a rich and collaborating learning environment. This section described the changing role of the teacher in the technology era. Next section analyzes the efficiency of blended learning model in transforming 21st century learners’ educational experience.

2.3.2 Higher Education reform via blended learning

Although the majority of institutions have made considerable investment in technological infrastructure, the maximum utilization of these resources and best practices applicable are not yet available (Rubio & Thoms, 2014; Vaughan et al., 2013). Participants in the higher education enterprise and especially higher education leaders should address the changing expectations regarding the quality of learning experiences and evaluate weather the current pedagogies are congruent with the technological innovations and meet institutional needs imperatives for efficiency and social accountability (Picciano et al., 2013). In literature, it is argued that although online learning is getting popular with working students or students living in remote locations, approximately 30% to 50% of distance learning students and specifically low income and low competency students fail to complete their course (Horzum, 2011). The main reasons that students report for their low engagement is the
level of difficulty of the course, motivation and course satisfaction. Taking this feedback into consideration many faculty have become to question the dualistic thinking of face to face or online learning, which was mainly used with the format of Learning Management systems, and report that blended learning is a promising approach that embraces the traditional values of higher education and optimally integrates the strengths of technology. Specifically, in the teaching of English as a second language the employment of blended learning is reported to offer an ideal environment for addressing individualized learners needs and facilitating active, reflective and collaborative learning (Rubio and Thoms, 2014).

There is not a universally accepted definition for blended learning in the literature due to the fact that the term can be used to refer to various dimensions and aspects of teaching and learning. It can be used to emphasize the combination of different delivery media and technological applications (synchronous and asynchronous learning activities), pedagogical approaches and learning directions, which are represented in the designs of learning curriculum. In this study blended learning is defined as a thoughtful infusion of educational technology and face-to-face instruction, aiming to transform the learning experience and increase the critical engagement of students via collaboration and reflection in new literate environments.

Effective implementation of blended learning model could increase students satisfaction (Safranj, 2013) “offering an “ideal site” for innovative pedagogy to optimize students’ active and interactive learning (Riley et al., 2013, p. 161), address the enrolment pressures of higher institutions, reduce the cost and the demand for quality teaching staff (Rubio et al., 2014, Moscal et al., 2013).

There are different types of blended hybrid learning in higher education. In terms of its learning scope, blended learning can be categorized into: enabling blend, enhancing blend and transformative blend (Graham, 2006, 2012). Enabling blends is not transforming pedagogy but is considered as a choice for on-campus students since it focuses on access to learning resource and convenience. This type of blend has received criticism for reinforcing non
participatory learning (Lindquist, 2012). The most common type is enhancing blends. The learning scope of this pedagogy is to provide supplementary online learning material so as to replace class lectures and to spend time in giving feedback to students. In this study the term blended learning is used with reference to transformative blend, since it mixes thoughtfully the pedagogy of face-to-face instruction with ICT with the aim to improve teaching methodology and facilitate students’ active and independent learning (Riley et. al., 2013). Research suggests that the transformative blend can bring numerous benefits for all stakeholders in education: students, instructors and higher education institutions (Graham, 2012; Oliver & Stallings, 2014; Picciano, 2006a).

The critical review of different blended learning models is beyond the scope of this study, but the pedagogical choice of the Community of inquiry (CoI) model will be articulated in accordance to Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory. The CoI model has been developed by Garisson et al. (2000) and is grounded in three elements of educational experience that are considered crucial for successful on line learning in higher education: cognitive, social and teaching presence. Social presence is established in a CoI when learners have a sense of belonging in the learning community and feel secure to share their emotions and collaborate in academic tasks. Social presence is a precondition for establishing cognitive presence. Cognitive presence is a process that encompasses active participation in the learning process through engagement in exploration of knowledge, co-creation, information exchange, testing of ideas and solving of problems. Both social and cognitive presence cannot secure the success of a CoI without the unifying force of teaching presence. Research suggests that students value instructors' online time and expect structure and leadership in a blended learning environment. Conrad (2005) reports in her research that students stated that “Good instructors created community; poor instructors didn’t” (p.12).

Garrison and Vaughan (2017, p.15) argue that “education defined as a process of inquiry goes beyond accessing or even assimilating information.
Inquiry joins process and outcomes (means-end) in a unified, iterative cycle. It links reflection and content by encouraging students to collaboratively explore and reasonably question the organization and meaning of subject matter. The CoI framework was built on socio-constructivism, reflective thinking and practical inquiry (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008) and is in line with the aim of this project to enhance autonomy via collaboration and reflection.

In the next section, different approaches to ESL writing are discussed and the adoption of the genre approach is articulated. Autonomy, Vygotsky’s ZPD theory, peer feedback and reflection drive instructor’s choices regarding the writing model. The researcher will attempt to link new teacher’s role with different pedagogical theories for teaching ESL writing and will finally claim that the nature and instruction of writing have also changed due to technology advent.

2.3.3 Approaches to ESL writing

Different pedagogical approaches to L2 writing as well as their contribution to developing students writing skills will be discussed in this part according to the general chronological order of their appearance. Firstly, the main reason for including this section is to discuss theories that informed L2 practices and approaches and highlight what we already know about L2 writing. Secondly, I will examine how developments in technology have influenced writing instruction.

The first writing approach is the product approach, which was dominant in the 1960’s and 1970’s and is still favored by many ESL instructors in Greece. This product-based instruction emphasized the linguistic features of the text and organizational structures and may be further categorized as controlled composition and current-traditional rhetoric. The teaching of writing known as controlled composition was influenced by a structuralist view of language and learning theory (Silva, 1990). The primary concern for the ESL teachers that adopt this approach is to help students to manipulate complicated grammar and sentence structure and produce the language through habit formation.
exercises (Leki, 1992). Thus, learners are required to produce a text with focus on the quality of formal language structure and where teachers are focused on correcting the language errors they find in the texts (Silva, 1990). However, this writing orientation has been criticized as insufficient to prepare students to view writing beyond formal structures and write extended written discourse (Matuda, 2003). The product-centered pedagogy is teacher-centered pedagogy as learners’ final products are corrected and commented from the teachers with no additional input. Also, some scholars argue that through this approach learners were discouraged to think creatively and produce original texts.

Taking into consideration the limitations of this approach, teachers turned to the “current traditional rhetoric” which is defined as “the method of organizing syntactic units into longer patterns” (Kaplan, 1967, p.17). Kaplan also recommended that the instruction of writing should emphasize “more pattern drill, not at the rhetorical rather than at the syntactic level” (Kaplan, 1967, p.17). This method puts emphasis on rhetoric functions and organizational features of the texts and students are encouraged to compose extended written text imitating model paragraphs (Matsuda, 2003). Although free composition is encouraged the context of writing is not the major concern. Teachers’ responses to writing to this perspective focus on identifying students control on patterns and the mechanics of writing. In sum, the role of the teacher in this approach can be viewed as a proofreader (Macdonough and Shaw, 2003) who judges the final written product. The product approach has several advantages for learners and particularly for lower level students. The constant focus on grammatical accuracy, spelling and vocabulary encourages students to improve these skills and become aware of the mechanics of writing.

On the other hand, this approach has also been criticized for several reasons. For example, students might become frustrated and demotivated when they are required to write according to perfect models of writing and their goal is to produce similar coherent and error free texts. Also, modeling discourages
creativity as students have to use the same forms and regardless of the context, a fact that inhibits learners rather than empowers them. The lack of authenticity and creativity of this approach is being described by Silva (1990, p. 13):

“The text becomes a collection of sentence patterns and vocabulary items - a linguistic artifact, a vehicle for language practice. The writing concern is the ESL classroom; there is negligible concern for audience or purpose”.

The outcome of the re-assessment of the product approach is the emergence of the process writing approach, which revolutionized the teaching of writing. “Writing in process approach is seen as predominantly to do with linguistic skills, such as planning and drafting and there is much less emphasis on linguistic knowledge, such as knowledge about grammar and text structure” (Badger and White, 2000, p. 154). Contrary to the product oriented culture, the traditional methods of writing the process approach is learner-centered and focuses on the writer and the composing process as a non-linear, exploratory and generative process. From a historical perspective, this approach stems from cognitive process theory and rests on three key points involved in composing: planning, translating and reviewing.

The implementation of process-oriented instruction puts emphasis on the linguistic skills of the students such as re-writing, brainstorming outlining, proofreading, referencing and editing (Badger and White, 2003; Trible, 1996, White and Arnold, 1991). Students are engaged in multi-task pre-writing activities that help them to understand the nature of writing, make connections and raise questions instead of delivering a final product (Hyland, 2003). This knowledge-transforming model stresses the need for students to participate in a variety of cognitively challenging writing tasks. Teachers who adopt a process orientation act as facilitators and guide students through the writing process. In practice advocates of process pedagogy allow students to choose essay topics of their own interest, use peer and teacher feedback to encourage revision and provide students with authentic audience. In recent
years, however, the process approach has come under serious scrutiny. Johns (1995) for instance expresses her view against the process movement:

“This movement's emphasis on developing students as authors when they are not yet ready to be second language writers, in developing students’ voice while ignoring issues of register and careful argumentation, and in promoting the author’s purpose while minimizing understanding of role, audience have put our diverse students at distinct disadvantage…”

The main concern that scholars express for the process approach is that it neglects grammar and structure in favor of fluency and individuality. The process movement has changed the general perception of writing instruction and suggested that writing is a recursive creating process that consists of two components: awareness and interaction (Sugger, 1994).

Genre theorists (Hyland, 2003a; Johns, 1995) criticized process-based approaches for failing to explain how learning is socially constructed. Especially in classrooms in which learners are culturally and linguistically diverse it is important that students are aware of the social context to achieve writing for different purposes in different social contexts. Hyland (2003a) also argues that the process approach represents writing as a “decontextualized skill by foregrounding the writer as an isolated individual struggling to express personal meanings (2003a, p. 18).

The process approach ignores social factors and disadvantages students in understanding why certain linguistic and rhetorical choices the writers use. In the same line, Cope and Kalantzis (1993, p.5) report that the teacher’s role in the process approach has diminished since the process relies on students’ intuitive understanding of the use of language and self-expression. Inductive learning does not allow students to develop metacognitive awareness of the writing process as teacher’s role is limited to create a self-expression and stress free environment (Swales, 1990, p.220). In sum the process writing approach is important in raising students’ awareness on what the writing involves and allows students to express themselves. It does however ignore
important influences of context, gender and ethnicity and ultimately overemphasizes psychological factors in writing.

Unlike the process approach, the genre approach, which emerged in the 1970’s as an outcome of the communicative language teaching, was concerned with the social purposes of language. English for specific purposes and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) are early examples of genre-based approaches. Teachers who take a genre orientation to writing instruction argue that we do not just write, we write something to achieve a social purpose of communication, to tell a story, to request an overdraft to describe a technical process, to acknowledge someone’s contribution and so on.

The genre approach largely draws on the theory of systemic functional linguistics (SFL), known in the United States as the “Sydney School” with its basis in Hallidayan functional linguistics (Halliday, 1994). SFL supports that language is a system from which users make choices and express meanings related to social contexts. Contrary to the process approach the focus on the genre approach is on the reader and the conventions that writers need to follow so as to produce a text that is socially accepted by its readership. SFL opponents argue that there is a correlation between language and social context. In other words, the social purpose and the immediate environment in which the text is actually functioning shape the forms of the language. Genre is a term for grouping texts together representing how writers typically use language to respond to recurring situations. Every genre has a few features, which make it different to other genres: each has a specific purpose, an overall structure, specific linguistic features that are shared by members of the same culture. For many people, it is an intuitively attractive concept, which helps to organize the common sense labels we use to categorize texts and the situations in which they occur (Hylland, 2009, p.15).

There are three different schools of genre pedagogies that have interpreted and researched the notion of genre in a variety of ways: The English for Specific Purposes School (ESP), the Sydney School (SFL) and the New Rhetoric Group (NRG) influenced by post structuralism in North America.
Flowerday (2002) further separated these schools into two groups: the linguistic approach (Sydney School and ESP) and the non-linguistic approach (NGR) according to the pedagogy that each approach implemented in the composition classroom. In the ESP tradition main concern of the teacher is to raise students awareness of recursive features of the academic essay and to provide clear guideline in how to construct different kinds of written texts (proposal, dissertations, conference abstracts) and help them gain control on language use in a professional setting and communicate successfully in particular communities (Cheng, 2006; Hyland, 2003b, 2007).

The Sydney School genre theorists classify genres into seven text types and provide a curriculum based on three phrases: modeling, negotiation, and independent phase. This curriculum is named the “Teaching Learning Cycle” (Rose, 2004) and has been influenced by the work of Vygotsky and the ZPD theory. During the modeling phases the role of the teacher is crucial and is placed in an authoritative position regarding guidance. Teachers are concerned with raising students’ awareness of the recursive features of linguistic patterns through direct instruction. Then during the joint negotiation phase teacher’s role diminishes enabling students to act autonomously.

In this thesis the researcher attempted to design the writing syllabus taking into consideration the beneficial aspects of the process approach, namely, planning, drafting, editing and enhanced this approach by applying clear instruction and modeling following the genre approach. The instructor aimed to provide learners with a concrete opportunity to become aware of the recursive features of academic essay. In the next section the author argues that though new literacies have impacted the nature of writing, the genre approach can be applied and possibly enhance students’ metacognition in online writing if instructors take into consideration principles of digital literacy.

2.3.4 New literacies and EAP writing

“Of all skills students say they want to strengthen writing is mentioned three times more than any other” (Light, 1992, p.5).
Most students that become accepted in the College realize quickly that the writing demands placed on them have changed dramatically in comparison to high school. University students are expected to learn to write and identify diverse types of texts according to the academic field and genre. Also, they must learn to incorporate and synthesize diverse sources of knowledge, integrate authoritative others into a multi perspective and critically evaluate the work of researchers. These skills are challenging for novice learners that consider academic writing as “a collation of other people’s views, objective and impersonal” (Foster, 2002). Students need sufficient practice in multiple genres and rhetoric modes and sufficient exposure in a diversity of linguistic resources.

Hadley (2015, p.23) describes EAP as “tertiary level English instructional training that enables learners to improve their language proficiency within higher educational institutions, irrespective of the country within which the instruction takes place”. This literature aims to shed light on the ever changing and evolving discipline of EAP (Bruce, 2017) and showcases the new landscape of academic writing, which combines multiple literacies. The historical background of EAP and the analysis of different educational models are beyond the scope of this review. The instructor’s approach to academic writing was influenced by criticalism and digialism.

Critical literacy examines language as ideology, urges students to gain a critical understanding of their discipline (Hyland, 2006) and encourages them to connect knowledge with social realities, consider its ethics and become more attuned to social justice. As an instructor, I believe that I should ensure that in a continuously transforming digital era where English is considered the lingua franca, students; rights to information is protected. Also, learners should be aware that as global citizens they should investigate and evaluate the way we use language, question the academic status quo and act as critical constructors of knowledge who imagine a more just world.

In reference to the growing abundance of digital research, I defined EAP as multiple literacies because I want to emphasize that the focus of this approach
is not only on language as linguistic trace, but on the development of academic skills, critical thinking and digital literacy skills. 21st century learners are not simply text producers and instructors should be aware that having the ability to produce and understand text-visual interrelations is now an essential component of an academic literacy” (Hyland and Hamp-Lyons, 2002, p.8).

The integration of technology in the L2 classroom has had a massive impact in the writing instruction and writing research. Particularly, the advent of Web 2.0 tools encouraged collaborative pedagogy both within and beyond classroom. Although not all teachers have welcomed these developments enthusiastically, the pressure on teachers to integrate technology-based pedagogies is becoming difficult to resist.

Information communication technologies had a major impact on the way we write, the genres we create and the way we engage with the readers. Today’s landscape has altered fundamental notions of what writing is. Nowadays students are writing more than any previous generations. They post their thoughts on Facebook, they tweet, they give feedback on LinkedIn, they chat online, they blog, they Google to find information online. It is noticeable that the major focus on today’s writing is on communication. Also, the audience has changed considerably over time. The popularity of social media has altered the form and the practices used so far and encouraged a conversational style in writing.

Computer-based writing encourages nonlinear writing and allows writes to combine written texts with visual and audio media. Writing now means assembling texts and images. Images are now being used to make semiotic meaning and have a structure like writing. (Kress and van Lesuwen, 2006). Composing online differs dramatically from paper -based writing. Our writing habits have undoubtedly been influenced by word processing features, which allow editing, spelling, grammar check, copy and paste and formatting a text with ease. Electronic writing includes hypertext, a feature that enables readers to construct different pathways though the text and gives them more freedom
in how they can approach text. Douglas (1998, p.55) reports on the beauty of hypertext that:

“It is an environment more conducive to relativistic philosophy and analysis where no single account is prevailed over any others yet, because it is written in code, writers can ensure that readers traverse some bits of the argumentative landscape more easily and frequently than others, or that readers are left to make their own connections between one bit of text and another”.

Clearly there are new literacy skills involved, named digital literacies that present challenges to writers and open new genres and communities to them. The terms digital literacies, new literacies and media literacy are being used interchangeably in the literature. Due to this inconsistency, there are debates regarding the definition of digital literacy and its correlation with knowledge. Douglas (2011) suggests that there are eight essential elements of digital literacies: cultural, cognitive, constructive, communicative, confident, creative, critical and civic.

The cultural aspect refers to the need to understand various digital contexts, norms and habits of mind surrounding technologies used for a purpose. For example, college students should understand that the Moodle platform is a different semiotic domain to Facebook. Immersion in a range of digital environments is the key to the development of the cultural element. The second element of digital literacies, the cognitive element is the psychological part of literacies. This part is being described by John (2008, p.42) “as the ability to use a set of cognitive tools”. This “mind-expansion” comes through exposure to many ways of conceptualizing and interacting in digital spaces. The third essential element of digital literacies is the constructive element. This includes awareness to appropriately use digital tools to create something original. For instance, learners should understand how they can use online contexts, share it online or over mix it. The communicative element is pivotal in digital literacies. Communicating effectively involves understanding and applying certain norms that are essential for social networking. Learners
should become aware of ethics and protocols they must follow to communicate effectively in digital networked environments.

Being a confident user of digital technologies involves the competency to manage one’s own learning, assess, review and reflect on his/her own practice in online environments. Confident users take advantage of the affordances of technology to progress their skills and attributes (Belshaw, 2011).

Creativity includes the element of engaging in taking risks online, experimenting and discovering a problem to solve or discovering a solution to a problem. This requires a shift in thinking and adds an extra dimension in the classroom. Students become creative and may contribute to classroom research by becoming problem finders instead of engaging in a test focused learning environment. Encouraging students creativity online requires instructors to redesign learning activities taking advantage of the affordances of technology, securing a safe and free at some level learning environment and being ready to share some power with their students (Belshaw, 2011).

Online security, audience awareness, thinking of your own literacy practice—digital identity and online data management are principal elements of critical learners. The critical element is important both offline and online and involves reflection on one’s actions and how these actions affects others. Closely aligned to the critical element is the civic element (Belshaw, 2011). The focus here is on the ability to make use of digital technologies in order to fully participate in society. Developing awareness of the use of social media encourages learners to become global citizens and to contribute to the democratization of knowledge and power.

Taking into consideration core elements of autonomy, action, interaction and reflection and the transformative power of new literacies in writing I decided to apply an innovative writing model, the “digital noisis model” by adopting elements of the process and genre approach and applying them via cutting edge technological tools.
In this section I discussed how technology has affected the nature and genres of writing and I articulated that digital literacy is closely linked to online writing. In the next section I will discuss the implementation of peer feedback in the writing instruction and I will argue that the genre approach mixed with the process approach can be effectively applied and promote autonomy in the writing instruction.

2.3.5 Peer feedback: A constructivism approach in ESL writing

This section begins with a brief discussion about how peer feedback has been defined in literature and progressively a detailed overview of the advantages and challenges of implementing peer feedback on ESL writing class is given. Peer feedback or peer review is a cooperative activity in which students make comments on their peer’s written work with the purpose to encourage them to re-edit their own drafts and improve their written work (Nelson and Murphy, 1993). Peer feedback is being used in this study as a writing technique that follows the principles of constructivism pedagogy according to which students should be given the opportunity to act autonomously, take responsibility for their own learning and scaffold via interaction with more knowledgeable peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Peers are being used as a source of face-to-face or online feedback not only in educational settings but in professional as well (Toegel and Conger 2003; Haswell 2005).

Liu and Hansen (2005) defined peer feedback as “the use of sources of information and interaction between each other”. Scholars view peer feedback in its broader sense as a type of communication where students exchange information with their peers and try to construct new knowledge (review their work) based on the feedback given. Particularly, scholars stated that peer feedback is a process where students assume roles and responsibilities normally taken on by trained teachers, tutors or editors in commenting on and critiquing each other’s drafts in both written and oral format.

Peer feedback may take different forms. Stern and Solomon (2006) categorized peer feedback into four levels:
a) Global comments categories, which include comments that refer to the overall quality of the paper such as structure, organization, writing style and creativity.

b) Middle level comments, which include comments on the quality of claims and argumentation, request for clarification as well as paragraph and sentence structure issues.

c) Micro level comments, which include grammar, punctuation corrections or word choice and phrasing issues.

d) Other comments may include scholarly advice, personal expression of an offer to provide further clarification.

Several studies have recommended the implementation of feedback in the ESL writing class and confirmed its significance in the development of students writing skills as well as the development of social, cognitive and metalinguistic skills that are crucial for becoming successful language learners and professionals (Mory, 2004).

Peer learning is a method that can encourage deep and meaningful learning as students communicate and interact with a dual purpose: to teach and learn from each other (Kepel, Au, Ma and Chan, 2006). Learners who give and receive feedback engage in a less formal dialogue related to performance and standards (Lin and Carless, 2006). This communication process encourages students to formulate their writing in line with the characteristics and demands of the reader (Rolinston, 2005, p.25). Contrary to teachers’ feedback that has been criticized for making students uncritical and passive recipients of information, peer feedback is found to be more authentic and honest.

Peer feedback gives students the opportunity to realize that they share the same challenges with their peers in writing apprehension and thus become more confident of their own writing skills. As Storch (2004) and Ferris (2001) suggest, peer feedback helps learners to become more self aware in a sense that they realize how their peers perceive writing. Reviewing someone else’s work is beneficial for writers who have the chance to
practice their critical thinking skills, reflect on the writing process and evaluate their own writing skills. Students who give and receive feedback spend more time in the writing process and engage in a cycle of actions than help them to develop critical reading and writing skills: proofreading, decision making, editing, and tutoring (Yarrow and Topping (2001).

Although many scholars suggest that peer feedback is a technique that can promote learners’ achievements in the ESL writing class (Hyland 2000, Ulicsak, 2004, Rollinson, 2005, Ferris and Hedgock, 2005) some instructors raise concerns on the implementation of peer feedback in their writing classes and warn that unless certain measures taken into consideration participants and students may experience undesired results. Ulicsak (2004) suggests that instructors who are interested to apply peer feedback in the university context must carefully plan a supportive and collaborative environment, which fits to the unique needs of the learners involved. It is important to have in mind that collaboration is not an inborn capacity nor an intrinsic skill but a learned skill.

There are several skills that need to be acquired so that learners provide their peers with beneficial feedback. (Saito and Fujita, 2004). It is not easy to for students to assess their peers’ work and provide constructive feedback. It is very important that instructors have trained students on how to give feedback by using explicit assessment criteria (Falchikov, 1995). A response sheet (Berg, 1999) or a checklist guide can be used from students to help them avoid ambiguities and general comments. Instructors who want to integrate peer feedback technique in the class syllabus can ideally apply it to freshmen students because they are more willing to experience innovative ways of learning. It is suggested that at early stage students should start with small and easy tasks so as not to get discouraged and demotivated. It is instructor's’ responsibility to create a comfortable classroom atmosphere, motivate students to participate in feedback tasks and help them to understand the significance of peer feedback in academic writing development. To avoid bias and subjectivity
students can use “safeguard techniques” such as anonymity and a common agreed marking scheme. Also, it is suggested that each script to be corrected by more than one student.

Introducing peer feedback technique in an adult ESL writing class can be a challenging experience. Tutor written response is still prevalent in traditional writing class and students have learnt to depend on teachers’ feedback and regard it crucial for the development of their language skills (Hyland, 2003). Several scholars argue that peer review has limited value in the L2 classroom (Nelson and Murphy, 1993, Zhang, 1995, Saito and Fujita, 2004). Research has indicated that students with limited linguistic ability and experience may influence the quality and validity of feedback. Students may simply not be able to understand assessment criteria or feel reluctant to criticize their peers (Orsmond, Mery and Reiling, 2002).

In this section the value of peer-feedback, a collaborative constructivist pedagogy has been discussed. Also, research indications for the implementation of peer feedback in the ESL classroom have been presented. In the next section, I will present two online collaborative learning platforms, wikis and Google Docs, that can be used to support peer feedback activity and autonomous writing.

2.3.6 Part three: Wikis and Google Drive as peer feedback platforms to promote autonomous writing

Much research has been carried out in the field of autonomy in second language learning. However, there are not many empirical studies that explore how autonomy can be fostered in technology-rich environments. Research that focuses on how the CALL research project promotes autonomous learning indicates that network-assisted environment is a promising approach for autonomous training. Ying (2001) asserts that in CALL projects students have more chances to control the content and the structure of the learning. Specifically, Hamed (2012) confirms that CALL projects that involve self-assessment, peer-editing and group evaluation raise learners’
self-consciousness in learning and enable them to continue monitoring their learning outside of the class. In the same line, Dang and Robertson (2010) explored the impacts of the employment of a web 2.0 Learning Management System (LMS) on learner autonomy in EFL learning. According to research LMS was reported to support students’ initiating their learning, however the level of effect was not the same for every student. The LMS was also reported to have effects on students’ ability to monitor the learning process, to encourage active participation in the course and facilitate social interactions.

Kessler and Bikowski (2010) investigated the effect of the implementation of a wiki project on students’ collaborative autonomous language learning abilities. The authors concluded that 80% of the students demonstrated autonomy as collaborative learners by either adding additional information on the wiki project, either deleting or elaborating information. In general, the authors suggest that wiki is a flexible learning environment that promotes collaborative autonomy and provides students the chance to decide when, what and how much they will contribute. However, the limited attempts that students made to synthesize information in the wiki space indicated that students avoid tasks that require much critical thinking.

Similarly, Eola and Oskoz (2010) revealed that according to students’ perceptions the pedagogical approach of collaborative writing improved written grammar as well as the structure and the content of writing. Authors concluded that the use of wikis supported learner’s autonomy by encouraging them to make decisions, share ideas and collaborate for creating a source of knowledge for a broader audience. Additionally, 50% of students expressed their preference for writing in wikis in comparison to traditional writing.

In the same line, Pellet (2012) reported that the integration of CMC and wiki in an advanced undergraduate French content-based course had positive impact on the engagement of students with course content and encouraged students to develop a sense of community. Finally, the study suggests that the read and write web and the implementation of the constructivist approach in the foreign language classroom can help students to develop autonomy.
and metacognitive skills.
In a case study design, Woo et al. (2011) investigated how wiki facilitated second language writers to develop through collaborative writing. Findings suggested that the application of wikis perceived positively and promoted teamwork. Results showed that engagement in creative problem solving and peer critique helped students to use their critical thinking and creative reasoning skills.
Arnold (2012) examined the potentials of online writing in 53 intermediate German university students. Students collaboratively created a wiki page with background information about a novel read in the class. Study’s result indicated that group members engaged in the project to varying degrees and used both cooperative and collaborative strategies. Group members took responsibility for the text and made formal revisions and content changes. The study highlighted wikis potential for collaborative and autonomous work and underlined the importance of teacher’s guidance and feedback for keeping students focused on comprehensible and explicit tasks.
Another online writing platform that can be applied in the ESL classroom is Google Docs. This synchronous web 2.0 writing technology offers a rich learning environment for L2 writers who can benefit from the affordances of this app and use it for collaboration and co-authorship in educational and professional contexts. Though there is a body of research that suggests that Google Drive is an outstanding application for content sharing, co-creation, collaborative and individual writing (Dekegser and Watson, 2006; Firth and Mesnreur, 2010; Istaiwa and Abulibdeh, 2012; Kongchan, 2013; Zou, Simpson and Bomizi, 2012), there is a gap in the literature in the use of Google Docs for promoting peer feedback and autonomy in the writing class. Oxnevad (2013) examined the effects of Google Docs technology on students’ writing and collaborative skills. The researcher revealed that the application of Google Docs in the ESL class had a positive impact on students’ attitude towards collaboration on writing assignments due to opportunities for immediate peer or teacher feedback and sharing content. Furthermore, the study reported that students exhibited responsibility for their
assignments while working together and reflected on prior and acquired knowledge.

In the same line Kongchan (2013) reports on students’ experiences on the use of Edmodo and Google Docs in the writing class. The aim of the study was to investigate how Web 2.0 tools could change the traditional writing class. Findings from focus-group interviews revealed that students were satisfied with the use of Google Docs and valued the affordances of the environment (working online in real time, sharing content, receiving teacher’s feedback).

Finally, Suwantarathip and Wichabee (2014) conducted an experimental study with undergraduate English Language students at Bangkok University to investigate the effect of Google Docs on learners’ collaborative writing activities and writing skills. Results indicated that students in the Google Docs group had a better writing performance than the face-to-face group. Students reported that they were provided with opportunities to read, review and correct their peers’ writing using Google Docs. Also, the study highlighted that participants expressed a positive attitude towards collaboration in writing assignments. The author suggested that further research is needed on the use of Google Docs in comparison with other educational tools to explore the impact of web 2.0 technologies on students’ autonomy and critical thinking skills.

2.3.7 From blogging to vlogging: Benefits and challenges for enhancing reflective thinking and autonomous writing

A blog or a weblog is an easily (no technical knowledge required) created and updateable website that allows an author to publish instantly to the web from an Internet connection. Blogs have become a global phenomenon. According to annual report of technocrati, a search engine that contains updated information on blogs, approximately 12,000 new blogs are being created daily. There are diverse types of blogs, depending on the software used. A typical blog usually has the following features: a name that reveals the content of the
blog, reversely chronological entries, a section for comments and an archive that shows past entries, links to other resources to the web and finally a list of blogs read by the owner of the blog. The content of blog is publicly accessible and the evolvement of blog depends on bloggers' interaction.

Blogs have become popular in educational settings due to their collaborative nature: personal editorship on one hand gives students the capacity to use them as a self-reflection tool, while public access to the content of blogs on the other hand provides opportunities for collaborative learning activities and enhancement of critical thinking skills (Chen et al., 2005, Xie and Sharma, 2008; Fisher et al., 2010). There are many free blogging platforms available in the web that can be used either for social or educational purposes (www.blogger.com, www.edublogs.org). Similarly to wikis, creating a blog requires no programming language. Although blogs are generally text based, allow users to embed different forms of media (widget, mushup).

Instructors all over the world have recently adopted blogs in K 12 and higher education and have successfully integrated them in the curriculum as: class portals, content management systems, online filing cabinets for students work, e-portfolios and school web sites. Using blogs as a class portal can facilitate student-instructor interaction. Instructors can use blogs to communicate information about the class such as: syllabus, homework assignments, rubrics and archive course material. Easy access of course material and automatic notification of additional information help students to remain updated. Students can also post their assignments and create their own e-portfolio. One of the biggest potentials of blogs is the ability to create an online space where students can collaborate.

Research on the potential of blogs in education indicates that the blog is an online environment that promotes authentic writing practice (Brooks, Nichols and Priebe, 2004), provides learners the opportunity to recycle vocabulary (Pinkman, 2005) and develop audience awareness (Dalfreyman, 2004a; Ward, 2004). While blog is an online environment that encourage learners to construct knowledge at their own pace and demonstrate independent action
participating in a writing community, little research supports the potentials of blogs for autonomous learning and critical thinking (Kajder & Bull, 2003; Oravec, 2002). Students, who keep blogs, must take responsibility for their own writing and make several decisions regarding the content, stylistics and the quality of their posts. Given that blogs provide students the freedom to choose the topic of their interest and communicate their personal views in a wide audience it can be articulated that it an activity that enhances motivation level (Wards, 2004). Blog writers can spark debates with their posts, exchange ideas with people who share the same interests, receive feedback and comments of sympathy and encouragement from a real audience.

Exchanging ideas in blogs and engagement in an environment with multicultural audience, enhances, not only students' motivation level but also their critical thinking skills. Blogs can be used, as online journals where students could describe their learning experiences, share learning strategies and critically reflect. As Mortensen and Walker (2002, p.254) pose it blogging influences the way you “think about thinking”. Information contained within a blog is frequently updated and displayed chronologically at the top of the page. Blogs content may vary depending from the blogger. According to Hong Kong Blogger Survey Report, blogs are commonly used by net generation mainly as an online diary tool.

Through blogs, students from different countries can communicate, interact, collaborate and share learning experiences. In doing so, they may become aware of problem-solving techniques that more competent learners use and help them to develop their skills. Blogs provide an audience for learners. The action of writing in blogs is not a monologue but an open dialogue with a small or big community of writers who share the same interests with the learners.

Another social media tool that involves interaction and sharing online is the video blog or vlog. As it has already been mentioned the advances of ICT have not only created the need for new literacy skills (Hafner and Miller, 2011), but also urged instructors to rethink the ways in which they construct the syllabus in their classrooms (Nikitina, 2009). In this vain, video project is a
practice that has been adopted by ESL instructors in an effort to enhance language skills and enrich language-learning process of digital native learners. A number of educators suggest that video has flexible applications in educational setting and can be used as a literacy tool or even as a super tool for learning (Beach, Campano, Edmiston and Borgmann, 2010, Miller and Borowicz, 2005). Research reports that with the help of video projects ESL students practice the target language in a dynamic, enjoyable and interactive environment. Also they have the chance to foster autonomy through collaboration and peer learning (Masats, Dooly and Costa, 2009).

Hafner and Miller (2011) pointed out that digital video tasks appear to have the potentials to facilitate reflection on language learning as learners can capture and playback their performances. Jensen, Matheis and Johnson (2011) concluded that video projects promote positive interdependence and individual accountability. In the same line Masats et al. (2009) suggested that video is an effective integrative tool that provides opportunities for learners to engage in cooperative intellectual and emotionally challenging tasks.

Studies on the application of video in the second language classroom were originally focused on the “static” use of video, such as watching a movie or reading and translating the subtitles (Lin, 2001. 2002; Stewart and Pertusa, 2004). Following, the potentials of dynamic employment of video in promoting students’ learning skills and engagement level have been well explored in the literature. Yang and Wu (2012) concluded that the implementation of video project increased understanding of course content and critical thinking skills. Beack (2012) suggested that video projects are effective for enhancing visual awareness. Several studies have reported positive effects of video in students’ engagement level and students’ satisfaction from kinesthetic modalities (Brass, 2008, Miller, 2011).

The effectiveness of video projects in college students’ composition skills has been explored by Bruce (2008). Based on his study, Bruce (2008) reported that students who used videos demonstrated enhanced composition skills in planning, drafting and revising in comparison to paper writing. According to
the National Commission on Writing (2006), "Thinking on the screen" is as important as "thinking on paper" in the 21st century (p. 15). Video is regarded a composing tool that shares analogous features with print and involves the same stages: planning, drafting, editing and publishing. Bruce (2008a, p. 17) places emphasis on the commonalities that different composing tools have, and argues that video may be a “complimentary” rather than a “competing” writing tool that can be included in the writing instruction in what Leander (2009) terms as “parallel pedagogy”. Using print literacy as a thinking device and transferring their understanding and experiences about print composing through a different sign language system-video is the literacy strategy of “transmediation” (Albers, 2006, p.90). The concept was first introduced by Suhor (1984) who asserted that transferring knowledge across sign systems “stretches the receptive and productive capacities of the students” (p. 254). Transmediation can be a powerful tool for digital native learners who constantly move across sign systems while using new media literacies. Twenty first century learners use emoticons in their posts and text messages and express themselves by combining the format of Youtube videos with audio messages. It is a familiar practice for students to use smartphone or ipad apps such as wondershare or animoto video editor where they can create and edit video, photos and audio and use versatile text effects. Siegel (1995) supports that transmediation can used to shift the “verbocentric ideology. The graph below illustrates the research gap in the literature that drove the first Cycle of this action research project, which was based on the implementation of the “digital nosis model”.

Figure 5 Research gap in the literature: The emergence of the "digital nosisis" model
The researcher conceived the “digital noisis model” based on the following reflections as discussed in the above literature:

Regarding the format of delivery of the writing, the instructor took into consideration research (Graham, 2012; Oliver & Stallings, 2014) that suggests that blended learning has transformative power in higher education, increases students satisfaction and addresses 21st century learners needs for innovative pedagogy. Specifically the researcher adopted the CoI model (Garrison and Vaughan 2017) which promotes active engagement, interaction and reflection and emphasizes the importance of three major elements for a successful blended learning experience: cognitive, social and teaching presence. As concerns the writing approach, the instructor embraced elements of the process approach: Emphasis was given on the development of a learner-center environment where teachers act as facilitators of knowledge. The instructor included challenging learning activities such as brainstorming, planning, outlining and editing (Hyland, 2003) to help students understand the nature of the language. This approach was also selected because it highlights the importance of feedback, which should be an integral part of an innovative curriculum since it is related to authentic learning (McCarthy, 2013). To advance the social-communicative purpose of the language, which is of crucial importance in the age of social media, the researcher included elements from the genre approach. Specifically the instructor aimed to develop learners’ collaboration and reflection skills since she views language as a social activity where interactions play a crucial role in the construction of knowledge. Including technological tools such as wikis and blogs the instructor aims to encourage learners to collaborate, reflect and take control of their learning in authentic social communities. The instructor applied the principles of criticalism (Hyland, 2006) and digitalism (Hyland and Hamp-Lyons, 2002). The instructor aims to develop learners who are critical constructors of knowledge and global citizens. Writing collaboratively in wikis and reflecting in blogs urges learners to become aware of the social realities and investigate language as global citizens. Regarding digitalism the researcher claims that the “digital noisis” model could develop the eight
essential elements of digital literacy that have been discussed in the literature (Douglas, 2011): cultural, cognitive, constructive, communicative, confident, creative, critical and civic. The ultimate goal of this model is to encourage learners to become autonomous in the new literacy environment.

This chapter sketched out the theoretical background of autonomy, discussed characteristics of autonomous learners and presented the core elements for the development of autonomy: action, interaction and reflection. Within constructivism framework, technology is viewed as a tool for the learner that can help him to expand his cognition (Duffy and Cunningham, 1996). The second part of the chapter discussed the role of CALL and emerging technologies in SLA and the emergence of new literacies, which have altered the nature of writing in adult Higher Education. In the third part, the effect of peer feedback in second language writing is discussed and research studies on the impact of web 2.0 tools (wikis and Google Drive) in learners’ autonomy are being reviewed. Finally, the author reviews research studies on the potentials of blogs and vlogs as reflection tools in the autonomous writing class. The next chapter articulates the research methodology and methods that employed for selecting and analyzing data in research project.
CHAPTER III

Research methodology and methods

3.1 Introduction

In the literature review chapter, the key terms of learners’ autonomy in writing, online feedback, online and off reflection and students’ perceptions on the impact of technology on their writing skills were investigated to map the territory of autonomy.

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the selected research paradigm as a philosophical stance, which includes discussions of epistemology and ontology, and also present a detailed description of the action research method employed for collecting and analyzing data. The limitations of the methodology, and the role of the researcher including ethical considerations, are also outlined.

The methodology chapter is divided into three main sections. In the first part the author discusses different research paradigms and their interpretation, articulates the choice of the interpretative paradigm and presents her ontological, epistemological and axiological stance. In the second part the characteristics of the selected Action research methodology are presented and the merits of drawbacks of AR methodology are critically discussed. Also, methods for assuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research data are presented. Next, the researcher describes the framework of the research design of this study and justifies the rationale for data analysis and data collection methods. Finally, the chapter ends with the critique of limitations and delimitations of the research design.
3.2 Research paradigms and their interpretation
The polysemantic term “paradigm” is a point of reference, semantic ambiguity and controversy for the researchers. Historically speaking the Greek word “paradigm” means a theoretical pattern that acts as a template to be followed (Baillie and Miller, 2003). A sound philosophical basis is an element of validity in a research project. Thus, it is crucial for researchers to deeply understand research paradigms and decide which philosophical framework should be employed to study a particular phenomenon. Masterman (quoted in Willet, 1996, p.6) grouped scientific paradigms into three categories based on Cuhn’s conceptual delimitations of what constitutes a paradigm. Cuhn stated “the paradigm is what functions when there is no theory”, (Willet, 1996, p.3).

A paradigm consists of the following components: ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods. Ontology is the study of being (Crotty, 1998, p.10). Ontological assumptions are concerned with questions about the nature of reality, of how the world is built and whether there is a real world independent of our knowledge. Different ontological assumptions distinguish researchers to realists and nominalists. Knorr-Cetina (1999, p.253) refers to ontology as a “potentially empirical investigation into the kind of entities, the forms of being, or structures of existence in an area”. Blaikie (2000, p.8) defines ontology as “claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other”. Researcher’s ontological position reveals their approach to social inquiry justifies their methodological option and validates the adoption of their research methods.

Being an insider researcher with the aim to intervene and change the current educational practice in the writing class, I embrace the relativism ontology. As opposite to positivism, subjectivist ontology rejects the notion of objective reality, which this research project cannot adopt for several reasons. First, during the process of conducting this research I did not try to silence my own voice, but taking the first-person stance I aim to present the knowledge that
has been constructed via my interaction with research participants and other stakeholders of this study (academic staff of the College), and I admit that I tell the story about the College students that have attended the ESL classes. I have a special bond with the educational setting where I am conducting this research, since I have been studying and teaching in the College and, thus, I am aware of my personal objectivity constraints. I disagree with Pennycook (1994) who highlights that: (the third person pronoun) can be seen to function to establish objectivity, to generalize, and to conceal the existence of a specifically located subject with opinions. This occurs typically in academic prose and similar attempts to claim authority (1994, p. 177). I believe that academic research writing should relate to the researcher’s epistemological and ontological position. Therefore, I take the responsibility that burdens authorship in academic writing and I report of this thesis carries my cultural and individualistic ideologies that have been filtered via personal, epistemological and methodological reflexivity.

I have been teaching and studying in the College for five years. I also have ten years of experience in teaching Modern Greek and Ancient Greek to adults and teens. I am now in charge of ESL programs in the College and I am the director of the Writing Center. Although my approach to teaching ESL has evolved over the years, I can argue that my teaching methods were always focused on innovation, critical thinking, learner-centered pedagogy and collaborative learning. Having this background, I designed my courses with the aim to empower students to take control of their own learning and motivate them to become lifelong learners and critical citizens of the world. I am particularly concerned about the democratization of education and I believe that technology could play a crucial role towards this purpose. Action research methodology is a dynamic process that has affected my philosophy for education, strengthened my belief in the power of active (Dewing, 2008) and work-based learning (Manley et al., 2009) and inspired me to value the integration of students in the process of knowledge creation and transformation. Critical use of online resources and effective online writing in social media are considered an integral part of professionals in all fields. I
have embraced Socratic Philosophy that suggests that we “can only teach students how to learn”.

Proponents of constructivists namely, Socrates, Dewey, Bruner and mainly Vygotsky shaped my epistemology. I believe that dialogue and interaction can promote knowledge through meaning negotiation, scaffolding and collaboration. “I do not see the world simply in colour and shape but also as a world with sense and meaning. I do not merely see something round and black with two hands; I see a clock…” (Vygotsky, 1934, p. 39). Finally, I believe that reflection is a skill that should be cultivated education because it is linked with personal and social autonomy and leads to what ancient Greeks called “paideia” Cornelious Kastoriadis, an advocate of social autonomy induced me in the notion of social autonomy which ensures the validity of institutions to provide not only educated human beings but also social responsible individuals (Kastoriadis, 1991). One of the most important Greek poets and a Nobel Laurette, Giorgos Seferis quoted in his book Dokimes “responsibility starts from dreaming”. I regard responsibility as a cornerstone in all aspects of social life. It is not enough wishing and dreaming to save the world. Dreaming should go hand in hand with responsibility. Young people are full of dreams. They should realize that only if they take control of their life they could fulfill their dreams.

By positioning thematic analysis, a method that is not linked to any epistemological position, I adopt the notion that the boundaries in epistemology should be open to different theoretical approach. A social constructivist thematic analysis approach was selected for this study to contribute in the field of qualitative interpretative research. I also report that my main focus is to make sense and interpret participants’ multiple subjectivities via analyzing patterns of their talk and the “self-steering mechanisms” that shape individuals’ experience through the powerful use of technology (Gordon, 2011).

Regarding ethics, I declare that this thesis is an act of Parrhesia -frank-speech (Foucault, 2011). I presented data being aware that my role is to
present the truth of data and acknowledging the risks of my personal subjectivity due to my dual role as a researcher-participant observer.

Both teachers and learners should act and interact as autonomous agents of knowledge. Both should be prepared to learn, unlearn and relearn. I agree with Angelo and Cross (1993), who assert: “The quality of student learning is directly, although not exclusively related to the quality of teaching. Therefore, one of the most promising ways to improve learning is to improve teaching” (p. 7).

Epistemology is complimentary philosophy to ontology and is concerned with “the nature of the relationship between the knower or would be knowers and what can be known” (Guba and Lincoln, 1998, p.201). Taking the social constructivist approach, I gained knowledge from individual views and experiences via prolonged engagement with the participants in their natural “loci”, to understand their behavior in an online writing environment, empower them to overcome challenges and solve the problem of traditional passive behavior that students typically show in the academic writing class. (Cresswell, 2013). My choice of a qualitative interpretative approach flowed logically from the fact that as a researcher I am “less concerned with the discovery of truth that with the creation of meaning… the creation of images that people will find meaningful and from which fallible and tentative views of the world can be altered, rejected or made more secure” (Eisner, 2005, p.74).

“...Methodological decisions in educational research are informed by axiological as well as ontological and epistemological considerations” (Taber, 2014, pp.1863). Axiology is a branch of philosophy that deals with values, personal or social values that are adopted by the researcher and impact his/her individual thinking. Values drive our actions and define our motives. Values as ideals are being shaped by our culture, nation, religion or social life. Action research addresses the axiological question of human flourishing via social participation and emancipatory learning. Inherent in action research is the goal of involving people in every social context, in decision-making and cooperation so as to achieve autonomy and control of their lives (Tompson,
Axiology impacted data collection and data analysis of this study since this is an action research method and I was a participant researcher and the study took place in my class. The philosophical underpinnings of three major educational research paradigms: scientific, interpretative and critical will be analytically discussed in the next section and the choice of interpretative paradigm will be articulated.

### 3.2.3 The positivist/scientific paradigm

The positivist paradigm is “based on the nationalistic, empiricist philosophy that originated with Aristotle, Francis Bacon, John Loc, Auguste Compte and Emmanuel Kant (Mertens, 2005, p.8). It is well worth mentioning that Auguste Compte was the first philosopher who invented the term positivism and since then it was adopted by social scientists (Cohen et al., 2000). Researchers who adopt a positivist orientation hold the view that knowledge and human behavior can be interpreted through pragmatic thinking, sensory experience and observation. They assume that reality can be explored independently and objectively through scientific and conventional quantitative methodologies.

The epistemology of the positivist researcher is based on dualism and objectivism. Therefore, its role is to examine phenomena as independent entities, from distance impeding the research procedure. Positivist methodology is concerned with identifying causes and control and manipulates variables to subject to test pre-decided questions and hypotheses. Their research is related to quantitative (experimental or nonexperimental) research. To generate quantitative data, researchers use different tools such as: standardized tests, close-ended questionnaires, structured interviews and standardized observation tools. The reliability of a quantitative method depends on three factors: stability, internal reliability and inter-observer consistency. The positivist paradigm has been criticized for failing to distinguish human behavior from natural objects. Finally, it is difficult to control and simplify variables in the complex educational context and thus findings cannot be easily generalized.
3.2.4 The critical-transformative paradigm

The critical-transformative paradigm arose during the 1980’s and 1990’s (Mertens, 2005) because a group of researchers argued that the interpretative/constructivist approach and the dominant research paradigms did not deal effectively with issues of social justice and marginalized people (Cresswell, 2003, p.9). To fill this gap, the critical research paradigm focuses on the lives and experiences of oppressed groups, analyses how inequalities (gender, race, sexual orientation) might affect social relationships and explores possible correlations of inequities with political and social action. The transformative paradigm was informed by critical theory and post-structuralism (Carspecken, 2008). Budd (2008) defined critical theory as:

"… a foundational perspective from which analysis of social action, politics, science and other human endeavors can proceed. Research drawing from critical theory has critique (assessment of a current state and the requirements to reach the desired state) at its center. Critique entails examination of both action and motivation; that is, that includes both what is done and why it’s done. In application, it is the use of dialectic, reason and ethics as means to study the conditions under which people live" (Budd, 2008, pp.174-175).

The transformative paradigm is not in line with my philosophical framework since the major purpose of this study, the center, is not to address issues of social justice and critique but mainly, understand, discuss and make recommendations for the adjustment of the ESL writing curriculum towards the new digital rhetoric, (Tashakkori and Teddie, 2010). Also, although as a researcher, I aim to empower my students through an innovative intervention to the writing curriculum and I believe in the democratization of knowledge I do not adopt, similarly to critical researcher, an empowerment methodology. Namely, I do not give equal access to participants in planning, analyzing and interpreting research data, but I relinquish the authority of truth provider (Kincheloe, 2008) and I invite them to a dialectical process with the aim to
bring together their reflections, to act and interact as co-creators of knowledge. Finally, I believe that sharing power with research participants and particularly students can be really challenging in praxis and presupposes a maturity level from students’ side. Though I tried to create a more equitable human relationship with my students and I did not present myself as an authority figure as the “knower”. I feel the need to articulate my philosophical stance (similarities and differences) regarding the transformative paradigm because I believe that constructivism has some affinity with the transformative paradigm and I agree with Mertens that philosophical borders are permeable rather than closed. (Mertens, 2010a, p. 2) Therefore, I do not want to create confusion to the reader because of the selection of terms that I use in this thesis that have been connected with critical theory such as: empowerment, critical friends, transformation, optimal use etc. This is part of my philosophical notion that dialogical openness among research paradigms can help researchers to work creatively and contribute to knowledge generation since it is part of their responsibility to consider the implications of their work in society.

3.2.6 The interpretative/constructivist paradigm

The ontological position of interpretative paradigm is based on relativism (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Relativism is the view that knowledge and meaningful reality emerges when individuals interact with the world. The interpretative paradigm within the social sciences emerged in contradistinction to positivism for the exploration of individuals’ perceptions and understanding of the social reality. According to Crotty (2003), this approach “looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world (p. 67).

Interpretative researchers are anti-foundationalists who believe that there is no objective knowledge, no correct or incorrect theoretical methods to knowledge. They attempt to understand phenomena by observation and interpretation of individuals’ subjective experiences. Reeves’ and Herberg (2003, p.32) note “the interpretivist paradigm stresses the need to put analysis
in context”. The aim of the interpretative research is not to generate a new theory but to evaluate and refine theories. Put it another way, researchers are concerned with the “why” and the “how” as well as the outcome of the process. Thus, interpretivists attempt to gain a deep understanding and opinion of human behavior and to represent a “slice of life” of individual, historical and cultural context. Interpretivists adopt the hermeneutic philosophy and dialectic research strategy to interpret and analyze worldly phenomena. (Heidegger, 1997). The hermeneutic cycle of understanding is characterized by the researcher’s openness to the interpretation of a phenomenon beginning by the examination of its constituent parts (Habermas, 1980). Qualitative research methods that interpretivists apply include: grounded theory, case study, ethnography, phenomenology, narrative research, ethnomethodology, historical and documentary research and symbolic interactionism (Shan and Al-Bargi, 2013). Researchers pose broad research questions and use qualitative methods such as interviews, focus group discussions, observations or open-ended questionnaires to generate data. Researchers’ findings are considered of good quality based on the below criteria: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability.

My research questions lie in the interpretative/constructivist paradigm (Leedy and Ormarod, 2005). Taking primarily the social constructivist approach to this qualitative methods study, I aim to develop my own practice on teaching writing and empower my students’ autonomous writing skills “through understanding the world of human experience” (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.36). I believe that “reality is socially constructed”, (Mertens, 2005, p.12) by individuals via interaction. I embrace O’ Leary’s argument (2004) that there are multiple realities and “what might be truth for one person or cultural group may not be truth for another (p.6). I analyzed structured interviews, students’ online documents and I had face to face interactions with the participants in order to gather mainly qualitative data in order to understand the impact of the innovative technology on students’ autonomy This longitudinal study helped me to gain a deep insight of students’ experiences from different perspectives (multiple realities-different groups of students) and via constant comparison of
different cycles of data. Furthermore, a natural setting, students’ classroom was selected to explore autonomous behavior and an insider. Finally, I adopt Seymour and Davies (2002) position that the interpretative paradigm is for people not only about them. The table below summarizes the researcher’s philosophical position.

**Figure 6 Philosophies guiding this research**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| Purpose of research: solve a problem         | Encourage students to cultivate autonomy  
Understand and interpret students’ perspectives on the impact of technology in the cultivation of autonomy in online writing. |
| Ontology/ Relativism                         | There are multiple realities.  
Lived world is in media regards individuals as agents who are involved in a meaningful interaction with the world. |
| Epistemology: Interpretative/constructivist paradigm | Knowledge is gained through a strategy that “respects the differences between people and the objects of natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action” (Bryman as cited in Grix, |
3.3 Research methodology: Action research

The term action research was first used by a social psychologist, Kurt Lewin in the 1930's who has developed this methodology as a means of democratic social change (Mills, 2011). Lewin supported that we cannot understand a human system and change it unless we get involved the members of the system in a process of inquiry. He used this methodology at his work with people affected by post-war social problems. By focusing on a cyclical phase of action: planning, acting, observing and reflecting, Lewin tried to narrow the gulf between theory and practice. Lewin’s ideas were spread in educational setting in the late 1950s (Horace-Mann, Lincoln Institute at Teachers College, Columbia University, Cambridge Institute of Education). The movement of action research has gained support in education for several reasons. According to Mills (2011) the importance of action research lies on its democratic approach to education, as it encourages the involvement and collaboration of many individuals (teachers, researchers, administrators,
students, counselors) on projects that aim to address practical issues in the classroom. Educators-researchers test new ideas, practice them and reflect on their practices with the aim to encourage changes and innovation in education.

Action research, a socially engaged and democratic approach to knowledge generation is adopted by the instructor/researcher in this study with the aim to develop an innovative method of teaching writing that has the potentials to promote students’ autonomous writing behavior. Action research is the most applied and practical of all research designs (Kessler, J., 2012) and it is concerned with how to improve educational practice and reform education through a rigorous and methodical intervention. Although there is not a universally accepted definition for action research in the literature, most scholars define action research by putting emphasis on its dual purpose to bridge theory and practice (Costello, 2011) and agree that action research can be well incorporated in the educational settings. Particularly, Harris (2000) called it, ‘a natural extension of a teacher’s professionalism, … where reflection and development of one’s practice is crucial’ (p.65) To accomplish this twin goal (professional development and teaching transformation) educators need to reflect on their own practice and generate new knowledge by testing innovative ideas.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) focus on the emergent nature of action research and define it as an:

“Essentially an on-the-spot procedure designed to deal with a concrete problem located in an immediate situation. This means that ideally, the step-by-step process is constantly monitored over varying periods of time and by a variety of mechanisms (questionnaires, diaries, interviews and case studies, for example) so that the ensuing feedback may be translated into modifications, adjustment, directional changes, redefinitions, as necessary, so as to bring about lasting benefit to the ongoing process itself rather than to some future occasion” (p. 192).
Mills (2011) defines action research based on the methodological principles that differentiate this approach. “What distinguish action research from traditional educational research are the following characteristics: it is constructivist, situational, practical, systematic and cyclical” (Mills, 2011, Stringer, 2008).

This thesis adopts Bradbury-Huang’s (2015, p. 1) definition: “Action research is a democratic and participative orientation to knowledge creation. It brings together action and reflection, theory and practice, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern. Action research is a pragmatic co-creation of knowing with, not on about, people”.

Based on the literature definitions on action research, I employed the below characteristics in the following way:

Situational (Mills, 2011): I conducted both the pilot and the research study in students’ natural “loci”, the College and particularly in the ESL 2 and ESL 3 class to address the difficulties of ESL college students to act as autonomous writers in the Academia and particularly in the complex and perplexing writing environment.

Emergent nature (Cohen & Morrison, 2000): The research project was initiated under the emergent need to adjust the ESL curriculum to the new philosophy of the digital writing environment and prepare students to deal with these challenges successfully.

Experimental: Aristotle states in his Nicomachean Ethics (Book 2, chapter 1, p.1): “For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.” During this longitudinal research project, I experimented with new writing tools, I went through self-training before training research participants, I planned, acted and reflected on actions and interactions so as to move from praxis to scientific knowledge.

Collaborative/Participative (Reason & Bradbury, 2011): This project would not be completed without the participation and collaboration of the students,
the Dean of the English Department and the support of the IT Department. I collaborated with all stakeholders, but mostly with ESL students at various stages of this project: during piloting, during training, during class time, during interviews. Hughes (1995, p.27) points out, the principal features of an action research are change (action) or collaboration between the researchers and researched. Action researchers are concerned to improve a situation through active intervention and in collaboration with the parties involved”.

Interpretive and reflective (Kuit et al., 2001, pp. 131-132): Action research is considered a form of “reflective teaching”. During piloting, I interpreted data from three different tools: questionnaires, online documents and interviews to reflect on them and design a new plan for action. In this study, I used reflective journal writing, reflective videos and I orally reflected during presenting my findings in seminars and conferences.

Preliminary Investigation-Diagnostic Thinking: Cycle 1 was aimed at exploring students’ perceptions on the effectiveness of online peer feedback and online reflective writing and diagnosing gaps in my teaching methodology. During Cycle 1 I realized that students need further training and guidance on peer feedback. Also, I noticed some shortcomings on wikis regarding sharing options and finally I decided to take advantage of the reflective nature of blogs and make the reflection assignment more creative by changing it to vlogs.

Cyclical (Mills, 2011; Stringer, 2008): In this study, I adapted Stringer's “Look, act, think” cyclical model on action research process inquiry. During the look stage (laying the ground phase) I carefully observed students’ attitudes towards technology in the writing class for two semesters and I diagnosed the problem. Next, I reflected on workable solutions and I designed a plan for action. Following I implemented the plan (Cycle 1), I collected data, I disseminated data to conferences, I reflected and I designed a new plan for action. Finally, I implemented the new plan (Cycle 2), I collected and analyzed final data. The figure below illustrates the cyclical model that has been implemented in this action research project.
Aims at change via intervention: I monitored students’ in class and online praxis and I intervened by giving feedback and inviting them to one-to-one consultations to discuss their progress and their perceptions for the project.

Dissemination: To report the study piloting results, I participated in the International TESOL Greece Convention in March 2013, where I facilitated a workshop titled: The wiki way of learning Supporting vocabulary, grammar & writing skills in ESL classroom.

On March 2014 in the Annual International Educational Technology Summit, Ed Tech Summit in, Bahchesehir University in Istanbul, I presented my research with a paper titled: Cultivating autonomy in an online environment: An action Research study. Also, in March 2015 I was invited by the University of Aegean in Rhodes to give a speech on: Rethinking autonomy through multilateralism pedagogy under the framework of an International Conference on Rethinking Language and Diversity in Education.

In June 2015, I shared my reflections on the use of web 2.0 tools in Higher Education during Vocational Technology Enhanced Learning Conference,
which was held in Athens and funded by European Union. My abstract was titled: Using Blogs and wikis to understand autonomy: An action research case study. Finally, in November 2016, I was an invited speaker at the Digital ELT Conference in Ireland, LT SIG, IATEFL where I first shared my reflections on the limitations of the first cycle of my project and discussed my new pedagogical considerations on a speech titled: Rethinking autonomy through multiliteracies pedagogy.

3.3.1 Models of action research
According to Mills (2011) two modes of action research can be distinguished: Practical action research and Participatory-critical-emancipatory action research. The first model is an individual teacher or team-based action research that involves small-scale research projects being undertaken by teacher-researchers committed to continued professional development, as a systematic approach to reflect on their own practices. This form of action research seeks to improve specific, local issues that are identified by teachers-researchers with a view towards improving a specific school situation and teaching practice. Teachers identify an area of focus (diagnosis), reflect on the problem, review related literature and design a plan for action. Teachers-researchers adopt the role of reflective practitioners; engage in data collection, reflection on data and improvement of the action plan via spiral cycles of action. Individual teacher action research was applied in this study since the focus of this project was twofold: to enhance students’ autonomy in online writing and to develop my own practice-autonomy in teaching writing via technology. Participatory (PAR) or critical action research is geared towards involving research partners in the production of knowledge in order to gain a deeper inside of the participants/co-researchers life and experiences, give them voice and empower them. Particularly, PAR emphasizes on research that contributes to emancipation or change in our society and aims to improve the quality of marginalized individuals and organizations in educational setting, communities and family lives (Stringer, 2007). PAR was not appropriate for this research project for a number of reasons: First, from
content perspective the aim of the project was not related to issues of marginalization or social justice. Second, from methodological perspective, research participants were first year college students who do not have the skills to get involved to a rigorous method of data collection and analysis. From ethical perspective, I am sensitive to Dodson’s et al. criticism that: that “collaboration and the conventions of research methodology are uneasy partners” (2007, p.823). Finally, I took into consideration Quigley’s critique regarding ownership and dissemination to data in PAR: “The most problematic areas of research ethics in communities are about data control, confidentiality, interpretation of results, ownership, publication of results and dissemination procedures” (2006, p.142).

3.3.2 Enhancing quality in action research: criteria for good practice
Action research is an applied and flexible research methodology, however there are certain academic criteria, methodology steps and ethical principles that need to be taken into consideration to secure the quality of an action research project.

Creswell (2012) identifies six steps that researchers need to consider before initiating action research. These steps have been taken into consideration to ensure the quality of this project. First, it is crucial to determine if action research is the best design to use. Action research is an applied form of inquiry that requires much time to collect diverse types of data quantitative, qualitative) and ideally collaborators with whom you share your ideas, reflections, or even help you to collect your data. Action research is the best research design for this project since my focus as a researcher/teacher is to investigate a problem that concerns my class-students’ autonomy in the digital writing environments and to improve my own practice. Also, action research with its flexible nature allows me to test new innovative methods and collect classroom data from different cycles of action. I agree with Ado (2013, p. 133) who argues that action researcher rests on the beliefs that educators better serve their students when they examine and reflect upon their practice and
when they specifically consider ways to address challenges that exist in their practice”.

Second, Creswell (2012) suggests that action researchers should identify and deal with the problem that they need to solve in their community. Through extensive piloting during the “laying the ground cycle which was extended during two academic semesters, I gained a thorough overview of students’ attitudes towards writing. I identified that students are mostly teacher depended and they have limited control of their own learning. Thus, this study was initiated with the aim to give a solution to students’ low independent engagement level and encourage autonomy in the writing class. Also, Next, I examined resources and tools that I could use in the class and teamed with knowledgeable colleagues (English language instructors and the Director of studies in the English Department). Also, similarly to Creswell’s step four suggestions, I explored the literature to identify the information needed and I concluded that collaborative writing platforms such as wikis and blogs have potentials to encourage engagement, collaboration, reflection and autonomy in language learning. Another consideration is the type of data that will be collected (Creswell, 2012). At this stage I collected systematically data using interviews, student’s online wiki and blog pages (documents) and my personal reflection journals. Specifically, both wikis and blogs have a history record that saves the activity and interaction of online users. I used different data collection techniques in order to ensure data triangulation. According to Mills (2011) there are three data collection techniques: Experiencing (Through observation and field notes), Enquiring (Through interviews and questionnaires) and Examining (Using archival documents, journals, audio and videotapes). The more sources used and the more triangulation among them, the abler will be the researcher to have a clear understanding of the problem and develop an action plan (Sagor, 2005). According to Mills (2011) during step 5, in an action research project the researcher must continuously be on alert so as to keep an accurate record of the information collected and organize data. Online data facilitated me to keep, organize and easily track records of students; interactions. Regarding interviews, they were audio
recorded and saved in a mp3 format in Google drive. During step six the action researcher needs to analyze data so as to develop a plan for action. I analyzed data from interviews, wikis and blogs following the steps of Braun and Clarke (2006) in thematic analysis. After data analysis, I reflected on students’ interviews and online documents and decided to develop a second cycle/plan for action based on the following limitations of cycle 1:

a) Wikis limitation as a teaching tool according to teacher and students’ reflections

b) Blogs limitation as a teaching tool according to teacher and students’ reflections

c) Students’ feedback activity

d) Students’ reflective writing activity

e) Limitations on methodology

The reflection analysis of the above subjects is being discussed in detail in Chapter 4 in the Data Analysis section. Finally, I proceeded with the design of a new plan for action, which led to the second circle of action research, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

3.3.3 Criticism of action research

Implementing action research in higher education is rather challenging since it is a fast-changing environment that involves a substantial number of pressures and constraints. As academics, we must be proficient and expert in pedagogical issues, enhance students’ learning experience and help them to acquire employability skills. Finally, we should contribute to new knowledge.

Conducting action research and teaching in the same institution raises several ethical dilemmas. First, the participants are usually our students and although their participation in the research is voluntarily it is likely to overpower them, especially freshmen students and make them comply with our demands. Research in social psychology (Asch, 1955; Milgram, 1974) suggests that
humans are in many cases reluctant to disobey to authority or group pressure because they are afraid of social consequences. However, this is not a unique characteristic of action research but is something common of most research frameworks.

Although there are several advantages of action research mentioned above, its disadvantages cannot be ignored: the quotes below are from Denscombe (2007, p.131) and the analysis is my personal reflection and action that was taken to deal with the limitations or as mention below-challenging characteristics of action research methodology. “The necessary involvement of the practitioner limits the scope and scale of research. The “work–site” approach affects the representativeness of the findings and the extent to which generalizations can be made based on the results”.

It could be argued that educational action research that aligns with the interpretative research paradigm focuses on identifying, understanding and solving a problem in researchers working environment. Therefore, purposeful or convenient sampling is commonly used from researchers, as they cannot find the ideal participants for their study. I do not think that this is a limitation of action research methodology, but going back to action research definition I would support that Denscombe here states that this is an inner characteristic and refers to the nature of action research. Regarding the generalization of the findings, one could argue that research studies that apply qualitative methodology (case studies, ethnographies, action research) have a different research purpose: to showcase a specific problem and share pedagogical insights that can contribute to further research. Generalization is a powerful characteristic of quantitative research, which was not appropriate for the aim of this project. Also, autonomy as a multi-facet phenomenon cannot be easily measured in a predetermined valid way. “The nature of the research is constrained by what is permissible and ethical within the workplace setting” (Denscombe, 2007, p.131).

Conducting research in your workplace and at the same time being an insider researcher raises many ethical dilemmas. Specifically, issues that are related
to power and the policies of the workplace need to be addressed. However, complying with the ethical requirements of your workplace is not a limitation that is being posed only for action researchers, but it is a typical procedure that needs to be followed by both insiders and outsider researchers according to BERA protocol. Also, negotiating access to the research participants, confidentiality and anonymity are being restricted by the research setting either this is researcher’s workplace or not especially for qualitative research studies where researchers need to spend a considerable amount of time within the setting and with participants. (Patton, 2002; Shenton and Hayter, 2004). Particularly, the College I did not face restrictions that caused limitations to my research, on the contrary, I was very welcomed and supported to do research and innovate. After getting a signed permission by the Head of the English Department who was informed about the nature and the duration of the research, I gained access to participants as an instructor.

Also, McLaughlin (2004) states that doing work-based research creates: “issues of identity, power, status, language and communication”. During this study, all stakeholders (researcher/instructor, participants and Head of the English Department) were informed about the detailed process of the research project and their role was clarified. Namely:

Head of the English Department: Approved the ESL curriculum, signed a consent form and gave me access to the participants.

Participants: Adults learners who signed a voluntary consent form to participate to in the study. Their grades did not affect by their participation.

Researcher/instructor: Designed and applied the new curriculum for writing.

Since stakeholders did not get involved in the projects as co-researchers or there are not major issues of identity and power in this study

I collaborated with each student individually to reassure that had equal opportunities to participate to this project: access to the web at home, mobile technology, familiarization with Google Drive, the skills to complete the
feedback form. So, I can reassure that no participant is marginalized and all voices are included. I tried to see “learning through the eyes of the students”, (Hattic, 2009, p.22). Although this project does not fall into the category of PAR, I took into consideration group dynamics to deal effectively with Cooke’s and Kathari’s criticism (2001), namely “the tyranny of participation” or “group tyranny”. Finally, I am aware that some students may hesitate to communicate me any difficulties or problems associated with peer interaction during the project.

“Ownership of the research process becomes contestable within the framework of the partnership relationship between practitioner and the researcher”. (Denscombe, 2007, p.130)

Although I would agree that in participatory action research projects in which participants act as co-researchers and contribute to the development of new knowledge sometimes the balance between the researcher and the participant might be not clear. However, this is an individual action research project where participants did not take part in researching and collecting data so there is no issue with the ownership. “Action research tends to involve an extra burden of work for the practitioners, particularly at the initial stages before any benefits feedback into improved effectiveness” (Denscombe, 2007, p.130).

According to Cain and Harris (2013) and Patthey and Thomas-Spiegel (2013), AR can be time-consuming, face threatening, unpaid, and loaded with ethical issues, which may threaten the aims of any AR project. My perspective is different. It is true that conducting action research and teaching full-time might require much more time and workload than conducting any other research as an outsider. However, it can be argued that teachers should not act only as knowledge implementers but they have to use classroom as labs to test educational theories and generate new knowledge (Borg, 2010). The dual role of teacher/researcher is challenging, but at the same time it is a valuable chance for self-reflection, professional development and innovation.
“Reflection is a current vogue term used widely and often loosely. There is certainly greater need for clarity and precision in the use of this term in teacher education and research more broadly. The distinction between reflection and description is often not fully understood. Reflection can generate into anecdotal description” (Hitchcock and Hughes, 2002, p.30).

Kant stated “sapere aude” (dare to know), knowledge construction is a major characteristic of research. Action research, within education is an attractive option for teachers and school stakeholders since it offers beneficial opportunities for those working within the teaching profession to improve educational practices though the construction of new knowledge and enhance the lives of children (Mills, 2011; Stringer, 2008). Also, action research can be seen as an extension of the new role of teachers as a reflective lifelong teaching practitioner who takes the responsibility of his professional development and collaborates effectively with all stakeholders in the educational community (Holter & Frabutt, 2012; Perrett, 2003). In teacher’s action research, practitioners should adopt a deep approach to learning and critically examine their own practice. However, practitioners’ research was criticized for low quality of contribution to academic knowledge (soft-science) since it was argued that teachers/practitioners are not proper researchers, do not have the necessary skills to engage in meaningful inquiry and do not always follow a systematic ‘observe-reflect-act’ process (Stringer, 2008). This criticism is well worth careful consideration as it concerns teachers’ ability to reflect on research findings. Research suggests that teachers do not see themselves as researchers, are struggling to form research questions and analyze data. (O'Connor, Greene and Anderson, 2006). To deal with these issues effectively, Universities have started to invest in action research-based programs training programs for teachers to equip them with the necessary skills so that “each degree candidate designs, executes, reflects upon, and disseminates an original, context-specific action research project” (Holter & Frabutt, p. 258).

Finally, regarding my research skills related to action research and my
capacity to reflect, I report that both my M.A degree and my MPhil were research based and I attended research methodology courses and seminars in educational research. Concerning the above criticism on teacher’s capacity to reflect I believe that each person’s capacity to reflect is different and depends not only on years of experience but on inner motivation as well. As a comparatively novice teacher and not having the experience of leadership and management in Higher Education, I took into consideration suggestions of critical friends during dissemination of research findings and I acknowledged the contribution through critical discussions with my supervisor and the Head of the English Department of the College. Finally, I believe that I am in the same line of thinking with McNiff’s and Whitehead’s (2006) position: “There is urgent need for practitioners in other professions to make their stories of learning public so that others may learn from them” (p. 234). Being consistent to this belief, I disseminated the findings of my study in a few different educational seminars, workshops and conferences that I have mentioned in this chapter.

3.3.4 Methods for assuring the quality of analysis
Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested four criteria for judging the trustworthiness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Credibility is defined as the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002; Macnee & McCabe, 2008) Qualitative researcher can adopt different strategies to secure the correct interpretation of findings such as: peer debriefing, triangulation, member checks and progressive subjectivity longitudes of the and negative case analysis.

a) Prolonged engagement in research site
I have been engaged in this research project for four academic semesters. During training and class time (120 hours per semester, 480 hours in total during this project) I had the opportunity to effectively capture individual views
of writing through class observation, interviews, focus group discussions and
informal discussions.

Prolonged engagement and persistent observation can enhance trust
between the researcher and the participants (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).
Also, establishing a good rapport with participants is essential for a smooth
collaboration. Krefting (1991) observed that “extended time period is important
because as rapport increases, informants may volunteer different and often
more sensitive information than they do at the beginning of a research project”
(p. 217-218). As a Director of the Writing Center in the College, I had the
opportunity to further discuss students’ concerns about writing as well as their
research skills during one to one tutorials that I offer them. Finally,
researcher’s self-immersion is crucial for the deep understanding of context
and for minimizing bias (Bitsch, 2005). I can argue that I have a holistic view
of students’ academic profile in English since I have been monitoring
students’ progress in the same field for almost two years.

b) All research is subject to researcher bias. The researcher has to find a
balance between his/her own views and participants’ views that emerge from
data so as to carefully interpret their joint data that represent their reality. To
minimize bias during this longitudinal study I kept a reflective journal and I
also used video to record my thoughts to document changes in my
assumptions and identify emotional changes. Rallis (2003) recommended
using the “community of practice” made up of knowledgeable colleagues to
engage in “critical and sustained discussion” (p. 69) and enhance reflexivity.
Peer debriefing is a crucial factor concerning credibility as it helps the
researcher to critically reflect on his research design and his role during the
inquiry (Creswell, 2013; Houghton et al., 2013 Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln
& Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Weiss, 1994). Also as researcher, I presented
this project to 2 International Conferences for Education and Language
Learning in Greece, an International Summit on Innovative Technology in
Istanbul, an international SIG Conference on Technology and Autonomous
Learning in Dublin, and a European Researchers Summit in Greece.
received valuable feedback from colleagues on background information, data collection methods and process, data management, transcripts, data analysis procedure and research findings (Pitney & Parker, 2009) and I had the chance to continuously reflect on my methodology and the interpretation of data with the aim to minimize personal bias.

b) Member checking
Additionally, member checks can enhance the credibility of the study (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012, Merriam, 2009, Yin, 2014). I had the opportunity to share and discuss the interpretation of the data with participants after the end of Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 to ensure that there is a consistency between what participants said during the interview and how accurately as a researcher I reported these data. I invited the participants to make further comments on their interviews and reject interpretations made by the researcher that might be inaccurate (Schwandt et al., 2007).

c) Polyangulation
Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods of data or source collections to ensure the validity of the study. Patton (1999) suggests that there are four distinct types of triangulation: theory triangulation, data source triangulation, investigator triangulation and method triangulation. This study puts forward the method of polyangulation (Mertler, 2016), which has emerged in social research as an alternative to triangulation and focuses on the perception that social reality exists in multiple layers and requires multiple dimensions of analysis. Specifically, the researcher investigated the complex concept of autonomy in the same educational setting, but in two different ESL classes and in two different cohorts of students. Also, different sources of data have been used to capture participants multiple reality: wikis, blogs, audio-recorded interviews, Google Drive, vlogs, video recorder interviews, researcher’ reflection journal. The richness of our data sources bring together synchronous and asynchronous online writing tools while data collection methods capture participants perceptions from multiple language
perspectives, written language (blogs, wikis, Google Drive), oral language and visual language (videos) and achieve a better approximation of reality.

d) Dependability
Dependability in interpretative inquiry is an equivalent of reliability in positivist methodologies. Guba and Lincoln (1989) point out that data stability over time is an integral part of the inquiry process. Contrary to the positivist paradigm, methodological shifts are not considered a flaw in interpretative research design but are a sign of maturation of the inquiry, provided that these changes can be “tracked and trackable” (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p.242). The researcher ensured that data of this study can be accessed for peer reviewing since this is a project that has been completed online and all students’ and instructor’s interactions (emails, feedback, students’ reflections instructor’s reflections, interviews) are saved and secured in Google drive and iCloud. Dedendability has been established in this study using the strategy or peer examination (Chilisa & Preece, 2005; Krefting, 1991; Schwandt et al., 2007). An expert in autonomy, Dr. Mynard was invited to validate and comment on the data coding process (See Appendix XIX).

e) Confirmability
Confirmability in interpretative inquiry seeks to ensure that researcher's own assumptions or personal bias has not determined the interpretation of the data. Ensuring objectivity in qualitative approaches means that data such as interviews, transcripts, audio or visual material should be available to the reader (Patton, 1990; Richards, 2005). A further key issue is that the researcher may select the sample or the data that support his prior assumptions and thus inevitably to allow his personal bias to influence the coding of the thematic analysis of data (Costa, 1992).

Finally, Angen (2000) suggests that ethical and substantive validity should be addressed in an interpretative research. Ethical validity is related to researcher's recognition and responsibility regarding the impact of his work on
the target population. Researchers need to self-reflect on their own maturation and transformation over the lifespan of their study, so as to enhance substantive validity. Particularly, during the 2 cycles of this project the researcher kept a reflection journal in cycle 1 and video reflection in cycle 2. Using research journals is — one of the most effective research tools to mine the rich personal experiences and emotions of participants' inner lives (Smith-Sullivan, 2008, p. 214).

f) Transferability
Transferability involved the capability of the research findings to be transferred to another context or situation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2013; Houghton et al., 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). This longitudinal action research study provides a detailed and thick description of autonomy through field notes, audio and video interviews, online archived data, and questionnaires. Both the field of inquiry and participants' background is being analytically presented and further illustrated by member checks. Research design is clearly presented and thus it can be argued that this study helps other researchers and policy makers in the field of SLA to translate and apply the findings and the philosophy of this study to other contexts (Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Merriam, 2009).

3.4 The framework of research design in this study
The author articulated in section 3.3 the selection of Individual teacher action research methodology to investigate the complex problem of autonomy in second language writing. Base on Kui et al. (2001), Cohen and Morrison (2000), Mills (2011), Stringer (2008) and Sagor (2005) I designed my own framework of research design in this study (See figure 10 in detail) A thorough description of the research design of the two cycles of this action research project is presented in Chapters IV & V correspondingly.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Methodology</th>
<th>Individual Teacher Action Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Methods Cycle 1</td>
<td>Individual Teacher Action Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methods Cycle 2</td>
<td>Individual Teacher Action Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection Tools Cycle 1</td>
<td>Semi-structured Interviews, Wiki posts, blog posts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection tools Cycle 2</td>
<td>Vlogs, Google Drive documents, Semi-structured video interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis Methods Cycle 1</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis Methods Cycle 2</td>
<td>Thematic Analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**3.4.1 The context of the study: ESL department**

This part tackles issues more focused on the research population of this study and presents the educational setting of the College and specifically the ESL department.

The College is a group of educational institutions offering a wealth of degrees in different fields from foundation courses (preparing you to study for a Bachelor’s Degree), Undergraduate Degrees and Postgraduate Degrees through its academic collaboration with American and British universities. Students who register for a Bachelor degree program have to meet specific
entry requirements such as: a high school transcript, GED or TASC score report/diploma.

Students whose first language is not English must demonstrate that they have sufficient English proficiency to study at the College. Undergraduate applicants may take any version of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam that suits their needs. Applicants must achieve a score of 550 on the paper-based exam, 213 on the computer-based exam or 79-80 on the TOEFL (iBT) Internet-based exam. All courses in the College are taught exclusively in English, therefore, students who score lower than 550 should attend intensive ESL courses during the first year of their studies.

The ESL program is a non-credit program designed to develop students’ language proficiency in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing to prepare them for college level courses. The ESL courses are divided into four proficiency levels, ESL 1: which is a required course for students who are beginners and thus lack any awareness of the English language. Incoming students are placed in ESL1 when their Institutional TOEFL score is between 330 and 400 (Paper-based) or 40 and100 (Computer-based). This course introduces students to the basic skills needed to survive in a country where English is either natively spoken or used as the language of wider communication. ESL 2: This course is geared toward Intermediate level students who have either attained a score between 400 and 459 on the paper-based official or institutional TOEFL test or have successfully completed ESL 1 at the College. ESL 3 is an Upper-Intermediate English language course which is open to students who have successfully completed ESL 2 or new incoming or transfer students who have received a score ranging between 460 and 499 on their paper-based TOEFL Placement Test.

Unfortunately, there is not an additional writing assessment for students’ placement so instructors have no picture of students writing profile before they are placed in an ESL class. The fact that, motivated me to integrate technology to create a portfolio for the cohort of ESL bachelor students and help students and instructors to reflect on their academic progress in writing.
After passing successfully ESL classes, all students are required to complete two compulsory courses in writing: Composition I and Composition II.

Academic writing is a very challenging task for ESL Bachelor students who come to the College with little or no experience in essay and report writing. All freshmen are required not only to master the mechanisms of writing but also to become proficient in using online library resources and apply plagiarism check technology such as Turnitin to secure that their assignments are original and of high quality. To cater for the needs of non-native English speakers and international students who study in American or U.K. universities, apart from attending intensive ESL courses, students can benefit from the services of the Writing Center of the College which offers seminars and one to one tutorials to further support ESL students’ writing skills. It is undeniable that academic success is dependent on successful academic writing (Kelley, 2008) therefore securing that students are satisfied from the quality of their writing classes is crucial.

3.4.2 Sampling-population

In this research project sampling procedure used by the researcher falls under the label of convenience/ non- probability sampling. This one of the most commonly used sampling procedures in analyzing data in teacher action research and second language acquisition research due to the fact the classroom or school setting usually define the sample (Juppe, 2006). Convenience sampling strategy contributes to fast and easy access of research participants that are willing, available to volunteer at certain time and for the purpose of the study.

Participants consisted of a convenience sample taken from two sections each of the College ESL 2 and ESL 3 courses during fall 2015, and spring 2016 semester. For the fall 2015 semester- Cycle 1 a total of 17 ESL 2 students completed the course with 15 students giving written consent to use their online writing assignments in wikis and their reflection blogs. For the spring
2016 semester-Cycle 2, a total of 15 ELS 3 students completed the course with 12 giving written consent. In total, 27 ESL students took part in this action research project.

All students were required as part of the curriculum, to submit their writing tasks online and participate in peer feedback and reflection activities given over the course of the semester. However, only those students who gave written permission to use their responses were used for the purposes of this study.

Convenience sampling is likely to be conductive to bias (Mackey and Gass, 2005) since the self-selection of participants, administrative decisions and classroom constrains pose a threat to the generalization of the research findings. Though, to secure descriptive validity the researcher precisely reported the research context and the conditions under which the study was conducted (Maxwell, 1992).
The participants ranged in age from 18 to 30 (mainly freshmen undergraduate students), were from diverse socio-economic, cultural and racial backgrounds, and were majoring in different academic fields. Of the 12 students who participated in this study during fall 2015 semester 6 were identified as Albanians, 5 as Greeks and 1 as Lybian. For the Fall 2016 semester of the 12 students giving their written consent to use their online documents and videos, 8 students were Greeks, 1 was Polish, 1 was Congolish, 1 was Georgian, and 1 was Albanian. The College Records Office provided demographics of gender and age. Students who were identified as having learning disabilities have been excluded from this study. An analytic description of participants’ profile is provided in Cycle 1 Data Analysis Chapter 4 and Cycle 2 Data Analysis Chapter 5.

To protect participants’ identity and other personal information the researcher used pseudonyms and applied the principles of “confidentiality”:

“The right to confidentiality is embodied in the principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Generally, confidentiality involves both an individual’s right to have control over the use or access of his personal information as well as the right to have the information that he or she shares with the research team kept private. The researcher is responsible not only for maintaining the confidentiality of all information protected by law, but also for information that might affect the privacy and dignity of research participants” (Marczyk et al, 2005, p. 244).

3.4.3 Research design & changes in Cycle 2

I will briefly sketch out in this section the research design and findings of cycle 1 to justify changes in the methodology and teaching style in Cycle two. A detailed description of the research design in steps, data labeling, description of online tools, writing class assignments timeline, data analysis and identification and reflection of learning problems in Cycle 1 & 2 can be found in Chapters IV & V correspondingly. The cohort of participants was under the
label of convenience sampling. Particularly, I used data from 12 ESL 2, non-native freshmen college students who registered in Fall Semester in the College. Students attended intensive ESL classes from Monday to Thursday (8 hours per week). In these courses, I spent two weeks training students how to use wikis and taught them how to avoid online writing pitfalls such as plagiarism. Students were asked to create personal wiki accounts and invite two of their classmates to join them. They were assigned to write mainly summaries of the reading texts that have been taught in class following a guide with useful expressions for summary writing. Next, students posted their summaries on wikis and asked from their joined friends to give them feedback. I advised them to use a rubric for feedback but I did not insist on following that strictly. Students were free to make comments on their classmates’ writings and interact with them both online and during class time.

Regarding the introduction of blogs, they were used only for four weeks due to academic syllabus time constraints and the fact that it was quite challenging for the students to familiarize with the blog environment and start engaging in online reflective writing. So, I spend two more weeks than I initially estimated to monitor and coordinate this project. During the final four weeks of fall us Semester I created a blog in WordPress.com and I asked students to do the same but assign me as the administrator of their page. I trained students on how to write reflective posts in blogs via class discussion and providing examples of good practice and asked them to reflect on their writing experience in the ESL class. I also gave them some oral guidelines/questions to use as a starting point for reflecting writing and asked them to write one post per week.

During week 15, students were invited to a face-to-face semi-structured interview. Their answers were audio recorded and transcripted to a word document. I interviewed 15 students and the mean time of each session lasted approximately 10 minutes. Data from wikis and blogs and interviews were labeled and coded following a thematic analysis approach (See Appendices). Reflecting on the findings of cycle 1: students’ distrust on peer
feedback, their difficulties to give quality feedback, the limited interaction that offered the wiki environment, students inadequate understanding of the use of reflective writing in blogs as part of their writing class and their natural tendency to use dialogue to reflect on their learning I did the following modifications: Instead of the wiki task, I selected to introduce Google Drive Docs to enhance interaction options among students and augment the monitoring of the writing activities. Also, students were given a written detailed guideline on how to give feedback and were trained on how to follow it instead of writing other comments. Next, to prepare students to share their writing and make reflections on their essay drafts, I created a shared document for the class where students had to write their essay plan and share sources with their classmates. Finally, I re-designed the goals of the reflection activity. To save time, further motivate students to use technology and give students more choices for reflection; I introduced video blogs. A rubric with reflection questions was given to students to help them on the procedure. Also, students could choose the language that they felt comfortable to use (English-Greek). Data collection methods were also improved: data were collected from online documents, video reflections and video interviews. I adopted the video oral reflection activity (output) to promote students metalinguistic and reflective thinking (Swain, 2001). So, I followed the model below: I encouraged students to engage in reading their peers’ essays and the comments on the shared essay plan (comprehensible input) give and receive feedback (which is comprehensible since their peers are either at the same level or more capable) and finally asked them to produce a written draft and orally reflect on this process (written and oral product).
3.5 The rationale of the choice of data analysis method: Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis, one of the most common qualitative data analysis techniques in social science (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994) is used in this study.

“Thematic analysis is a data reduction and analysis strategy by which qualitative data are segmented, categorized, summarized, and reconstructed in a way that captures the important concepts within the data set. Thematic analysis is primarily a descriptive strategy that facilitates the search for patterns of experience within a qualitative data set; the product of a thematic analysis is a description of those patterns and the overarching design that unites them. Thematic coding is the strategy by which data are segmented and categorized for thematic analysis” (Ayres, 2008, p.867).

Theme identification and coding are typical characteristics of qualitative research. Some researchers utilize software programs such as NVivo in order to analyze and group data in similar ideas while others prefer to do it manually (Kelle, 2004; Seale, 2000). I decided to do this procedure manually because I was sensitive to Welsh’s (2002) criticism on computer assisted qualitative data analysis software in comparison to manual methods. Welsh (2002) argues that combining both methods would be ideal for securing a rigorous qualitative analysis but relying heavily on software might be challenging. Additionally, Welsh (2002) states that “the software is less useful in terms of addressing issues of validity and reliability in the thematic ideas that emerge during the data analysis process and this is due to the fluid and creative way in which these themes emerge” (p.9).

Thematic analysis is considered the most appropriate for this study for the following reasons: First, it enhances researcher’s opportunity to deal with diverse subjects via interpretations (Boyatzis, 1998) and to understand widely diverse aspects and data that have been gathered in different situation at different times during the project (Marks and Yardley 2004). Second, the
flexibility of thematic analysis enables the researcher to apply both inductive and deductive methodologies (Frith and Gleeson 2004; Hayes 1997) to ensure that themes are effectively linked to the data (Patton, 1990) and can be achieved and in-depth analysis of participants’ behaviors actions and thoughts (Hatch 2002; Creswell 2003). Namey and Namey et al. (2008) endorse this view and claim that thematic analysis “May include comparing the relative frequencies of themes or topics within a data set, looking for code co-occurrence or graphically displaying code relationships.” (p.138). Finally, thematic analysis contributes towards understanding similarities and differences between participants’ perspectives, which leads to an appreciation of the whole picture (Joffe & Yardley 2004; Blacker 2009). Braun’s and Clarke’s (2006, p. 87) phases of data analysis have been followed. The table below summarizes the research methodology and methods of data collection that have been applied in this action research study.

3.5.1 The rationale of the choices of data collection methods

3.5.2 Semi structured interviews

Collecting data through interviews is a common technique in qualitative research. Demarrais (2004) defines an interview as “a process in which a researcher and participants engage in a conversation focused on questions related to research study” (p.55). The researcher uses person to person or group interviews in order to obtain information that cannot be understood through observations such as human behavior or feelings (Patton, 2002). There are different models of interviews: highly structured interviews (or standardized interviews), semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews. Semi-structured interviews have been applied in this study for the following reasons:

First, semi-structured interviews are consistent with participatory
methodologies that aim to explore and reflect on research topic by giving power and voice to participants and inviting them to reveal their constructions of reality (Punch, 2001). Also, the cooperative nature of semi-structured interviews allows probing and thus provides the chance to the researcher to establish a rapport with the interviewee and elicit rich data that truly reflect participants' opinions in their own terms. (Punch, 2001).

After obtaining a consent form from the 12 participants of Cycle 1, I interviewed them after class time at the last day of fall semester. All participants have been informed that their interviews will be audio recorded and will last about 15 to 20 minutes. To reduce anxiety, I briefly informed participants about the questions and I assured them that the interview would be held in the language of their preference (Greek-English). The interviews were recorded and transcribed for accuracy and authenticity (See Interview Questions Cycle 1 in Appendix II).

I first piloted interview questions with 2 college students who had been excluded from the study. Also, the researcher reviewed interview questions with the Dean of the English Department in the College and reflected on the feedback that she received.

In Cycle 2 the researcher followed a similar procedure to Cycle 1. Though the interviews were video recorded to enhance my reflexivity during data analysis (Lemke, 2009). The 12 ESL 3 students were invited to sign a consent form and participate in video interviews during the last week of the semester. The instructor informed the participants about the questions and answered to their queries so as to make them feel comfortable.

After receiving feedback from my supervisor and taking into consideration Patton’s (2002) recommendations on how to ask good interview questions I formed the below set of questions:

1) Do you prefer to learn individually or in a group and why?

2) Do you believe that giving feedback to your peers is helpful for you? Give examples.
3) How self-directed are in your writing? Give examples.

4) How peer feedback based on questions helped you in writing? Give examples.

5) Did the questions on reflection help you to think about your writing process?

Technology

6) Was Google drive helpful as a tool for peer feedback? Give examples.

7) Was video blog helpful as a tool for reflection? Give examples.

Also, in structuring the interview I tried to follow Rubin's suggestions (2005). Specifically, I asked seven main questions and I spontaneously generated several clarification-follow up questions during the interview, in response to participants’ answers. The above questions attempted to elicit information related to my research questions. Thus, the Interview transcripts were used as a source for coding and analysis. A reflexive approach (Alvesson, 2011) is driving Cycle 2 to address more effectively issues of interviewee power, impression management and rationality. Alvesson (2011) cautions:

"it is important not to simplify and idealize the interview situation, if the interviewee—given the correct interview technique—primarily is a competent and moral truth teller, acting in the service of science and producing the data needed to reveal his or her “interior” … and the “facts” of the organization". (Alvensson, 2011, p. 14)

Taking into consideration various interview dynamics, including the hierarchical power relationship that I held with the people that I interviewed, I tried to maximize the validity of the information that participants provided to me though I recognize that there is a possibility that participants’ answers might have been influenced by my dual role and/or my failure to navigate the dual roles optimally. Finally, by taking this approach I tried hard to make the participants feel comfortable during the interview and I attempted to reduce
any pressure or potential bias, though I cannot fully preclude this possibility.

3.5.3 Online Documents
The participants of this study produced a substantial number of online documents in wikis (written assignments and online interactions) and posted reflections in blogs. Also, they exchanged e-mails with the instructor to request help or express concerns regarding the learning experience. All these documents, and specifically, written assignments in wikis, alongside feedback comments and posts in blogs were archived and coded in coherent with data analysis at the end of the study (Rourke, Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001). Personal documents have been used in this study to reduce personal bias, breed credibility via triangulation (Bowen, 2009).

3.6.1 Video guided think aloud protocols
Retrospective Think-aloud protocols were selected as a data collection instrument to gauge students’ reflections on their writing skills. Oral reflection data were videotaped by students and were fully transcribed by the researcher. Although research in SLA supports the value of written reflection (e.g., Anderson, 2005; Butke, 2006; Pavlovich, Collins, & Jones, 2009; Varner & Peck, 2003), I tend to agree more with Emerson who supported that: “If you cannot talk about an experience, at least to yourself, you did not have it” (1996, p. 127). Additionally, taking into consideration written reflection data and students interviews I concluded that when blogging is combined with peer feedback students could view it as one more writing activity. Osten (2001) supports that think aloud protocols have potentials to engage students in scaffolding and enhance higher order thinking skills. Merchie and Keer (2014) have reviewed advantages and disadvantages of think aloud protocols and concluded that think aloud protocols are appropriate for gathering data without delay. This characteristic is empowered by the fact that using think aloud protocols as an instruction tool allows students to engage in a complex
cognitive activity without spending much time. Also, Merchie and Keer (2014) report other benefits from think aloud protocols such as: reduced memory failure and engagement in an activity that reveals the content of working memory. Disadvantages of think aloud protocols are limited in my study to oral fluency that could influence my participants to verbalize thinking process and verbalization stops that can disrupt comprehension. However, the use of video encouraged students who experienced verbalization stops during recording their reflections to stop the video, reflect and record again their thoughts.

3.6.2 Research questions Cycle 1
The problem to be investigated is how digital natives could use specific online tools along with peer collaboration to learn more autonomously. The research questions in this study are related to the concepts that have been discussed in the literature: learners’ autonomy, writing in the digital era, online feedback, online reflection and students’ perceptions on the impact of technology on their writing skills. They also link to one of the primary aims of this action research project, which is to promote autonomy in writing through the use of a mix of different web 2.0 tools.

Because of the experience of using CMS and web 2 tools with adult students in ESL classroom, with the aim to enrich their learning experience and encourage autonomy, the researcher decided to undertake this study so as to evaluate their use and perspectives in education. While there is some evidence in the literature that web 2.0 tools and particularly blogs and wikis can encourage autonomous action and support key elements of autonomy, such as independent/interdependent action (collaboration-peer-feedback) and reflection (Mynard, 2007; Lee, 2010; Kessler, 2009;Metaferia, 2012;Yang, 2009; He, 2011; Sun and Chang, 2012), no research has been undertaken to evaluate the combined used of these tools (blogs & wikis) in order to investigate the cultivation of autonomy in writing. To examine their use and
perspectives for initiating independent action and reflection, it was considered necessary to analyze students’ writing on wikis and blogs so as to investigate students’ behavior in these online environments, in terms of autonomy, and specifically the extent to which they take advantage of these tools and use them for collaborative purposes or as reflection tools. Students’ perceptions for the effectiveness of web 2.0 tools and their role in the enhancement of autonomous writing skills are also investigated via interviews. To achieve these aims, a number of studies have been taken into consideration, so as to justify an appropriate methodology and to ascertain whether the use of blogs and wikis encourages autonomous action in ESL classroom. Below are the research questions as originally developed at the beginning of cycle 1:

1. How first-year university students perceive peer-feedback in wikis in the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?
2. How first-year university students perceive reflection in blogs in the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?
3. What are the implications of combining wikis and blogs for teaching autonomous writing in the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?

Meanwhile, the questions were modified during Cycle 2 since the researcher reflected on the data and redesigned a new cycle of action. The researcher had to address the limitations of the free version of workspaces such as asynchronous interaction, limited shares features, that hindered smooth collaboration and interaction. Therefore, a new online writing platform was selected, Google drive, to support synchronous interaction of more than 10 people. So, the first research question was rephrased.

3.6.3 Research questions Cycle 2

1. How first-year university students perceive peer-feedback in Google Drive in the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?

At the same time the researcher reflected on the impact of free reflective writing in blogs and concluded that students preferred to use the blog to express their feelings and concerns about the English class. Also they did not
regard this activity very important since wiki was used as a platform for their assignments. Thus, the researcher decided to adopt another tool for online reflection, video, that would be less time consuming and more motivating. Finally, the researcher created a reflection rubric and asked participants to use it. Therefore, the second research question in the second cycle was also modified.

Research question cycle 2

2. How first-year university students perceive reflection in Vlogs in the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?

The final research question is a central and overall to this study and refers to students’ perceptions on the impact of web 2.0 tools on their writing skills. Also, this question has slightly modified in cycle 2 since the tools were changed and there were also changes in teaching methodology (guided peer feedback, cultivation of an online writing community, guided video reflection).

Research question Cycle 2:

3. What are the implications of combining Google Drive and Vlogs for teaching autonomous writing?

3.6.4 Data analysis

This section focuses on how I analyzed the qualitative data set during the research process. After I begin with the preparatory steps, the coding and thematic analysis strategies will be provided.

3.6.5 Preparation for data analysis

The focus of this study was on the development of autonomy in second language writing for ESL language learners who use online peer feedback and online reflection as part of their writing instruction program. Therefore, one important goal of the data analysis process was to find participants
perceptions for online peer feedback and online reflection. Finally, implications from the combination of different web 2.0 tools and the effectiveness of this pedagogy on the development of their autonomy in writing were investigated.

3.6.7 Semi-structured interviews
As the findings were reported in English (9 students preferred to be interviewed in their native language), the video interviews conducted in Greek were word-processed, transcribed, and translated into English. To secure accuracy and reliability of the transcription and translation, I watched the interviews for several times to familiarize with the data and correct transcription errors (e.g. omission, addition). The semi-structured interviews in the present study were content-based. I focused on participants’ verbal responses on their description of learning experiences and beliefs, and feelings towards the use of the technology (Google Drive and videos) and the effectiveness of the writing model they have followed in the ESL writing classroom. After preparing the interview transcripts, I added line numbers and a margin in the printouts to facilitate coding and note taking. Charmaz, (2000) noted that line by line coding along with constant review of the literature sharpen researcher’s focus and understanding. In the analysis of the data, special attention was paid to recurring patterns and themes (Merriam, 2009; Pavlenko, 2007).

3.6.8 Google Drive docs
Online documents were printed out, divided in three categories: students’ assignments, feedback forms and common Google Drive plans to make the patterns manageable (Anderson et. al., 1994) and coded line by line based on students’ interactions related to autonomous learning literature. As I read and re-reread each document separately themes emerged: students’ engagement in feedback activity, reflection during the feedback process, willingness to interact and collaborate, task awareness. Open coding, or coding at a macro level in Hood’s (2009) term, was first performed.
3.6.9 Video reflections
All participants’ videos were secured and saved in labeled folders in Google Drive and in iCloud. I watched the videos many times during data collection, since I was giving feedback to students in class. Next, I carefully transcribed them and I coded them manually drawing on the theoretical propositions about learner autonomy characteristics and specifically: reflection, self-evaluation and goal setting. Each participant had to complete 3 video reflections for their writing assignments based on a guided rubric. But, not all participants have completed this task, so instead of 36 videos that I expected initially to collect, I finally saved and analyzed 21 videos. Following Wells and Claxton (2002) recommendation, video footage was critically examined as it is not only language that creates identities “as action, facial expression, gesture and speech, aiding, demonstrating and commenting on the actions and objects involved, and explaining” all convey social messages (p. 4).

3.7.1 Coding the data into categories
First to explore students’ perceptions for online peer feedback, interview questions related to peer feedback and collaboration were highlighted and a table, which consisted of students’ responses, was created (See Appendices). Ryan and Bernard (2003) said, “We highly recommend pawing through texts and marking them up with different coloured highlighter pens.” (p.11)

To better understand students’ experiences in online feedback and to reflect on students responses, data from students’ portfolio (writing assignments and feedback forms were also coded. The researcher repeatedly read through the transcripts and examined the data with reflexivity to identify recurrent themes and salient comments on the benefits and challenges of peer reviewing activity. In Chapter 4 Data Analysis Cycle 1 and Chapter 5 Data Analysis Cycle 2 examples of coding categories can be found.

Next, the analytic interest of the second research question in Cycle 1 and
Cycle 2 was to investigate participants’ stances on online reflection. Interview questions and students online reflections were coded, following an inductive analysis approach and the researcher created a table with potential themes. In Chapter 4 Data Analysis Cycle 1 and Chapter 5 Data Analysis Cycle 2 examples of coding categories can be found. At the end of this phase the researcher found themes that did not seem to belong to any of the temporarily main themes or themes but did not discard them, instead miscellaneous themes were coded separately. Next the researcher proceeded to the phase of reviewing and refining main themes.

3.7.2 Reviewing themes

The main purpose of this procedure is to “build reliability in themes analysis coding” (Hosmer 2008 p.52). The researcher followed Miles and Haberman (1994) suggestion that argued that validating themes with an outsider reviewer at an early or late stage of analysis is crucial. At an early stage themes were reviewed an Educational Psychologist, also an expert in autonomy, Jo Mynard was invited to review themes by email at a later stage (See Appendices). By inviting two reviewers to validate themes the researcher aimed to establish a strong process for analytical credibility “like reliability from a positivistic perspective” (Hosmer 2008, p.52). The researcher evaluated the feedback, read again all the excerpts for each theme, confirmed that themes form a coherent pattern and discarded themes that did not fit into the main themes. The table below presents the main themes that emerged from the analysis based on research questions 1 and 2 and 3 in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 accordingly.

3.7.3 Defining and naming themes

At this stage the researcher identified the essence of each theme and further refined themes so as to reassure that there is not an overlap among themes.
Diverse or too complex themes have been further refined. Also, the researcher tried to identify the story of each theme and consider possible subthemes. At the final stage of this process the researcher considers the name that would be given in the final analysis of themes so as to give the reader a concise and clear idea of the essence of each theme. (Braun and Clark, 2006).

### 3.7.4 Producing the report

During the final phase, the researcher provided a concise, coherent and logical account of data and demonstrated vivid examples of each theme in order to tell the story of data beyond narrative and respond effectively to research questions. The table below illustrates the final report that was produced for the analysis of research questions (RQ) 1 and 2 for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2. To answer research question 3 another report was produced to capture the essence of the final corpus of data.

**Figure 9 Final reports for RQ1 and RQ2 in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions for peer feedback in wikis C1</th>
<th>Perceptions for peer feedback in Google Drive C2</th>
<th>Perceptions for reflection in blogs C1</th>
<th>Perceptions for reflections in Vlogs C2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Peer feedback promoted awareness on writing skills development</td>
<td>1. Online peer feedback encouraged cooperation and interdependence</td>
<td>1. Blogging encouraged exploration on language development but clearance of goal task and privacy issues discouraged reflection</td>
<td>1. Vlogs encouraged awareness of writing strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students do not rely on peer feedback: the impact of quality and trust</td>
<td>Peer feedback encouraged language awareness</td>
<td>Reflecting writing in blogs promoted class and instructor evaluation</td>
<td>Vlogs encouraged self-assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Peer feedback encourages the use of metacognitive strategies: monitor and plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Peer feedback encouraged self-assessment and critical thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Peer feedback encourages task awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 3. Implications for using wikis and blogs for teaching autonomous writing (Cycle 1)</td>
<td>RQ3. Implications for using Google Drive and Vlogs for teaching autonomous writing (Cycle 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog and wikis encouraged awareness on: writing skills, reflection on the writing class, digital literacy skills and collaborative competence</td>
<td>Google Drive and Vlogs promoted a collaborative culture in writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor choices on training and tools impacted autonomy</td>
<td>Google Drive and Vlogs encouraged students to engage in writing via in and out of class activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Google Drive and Vlogs Empowered students’ digital literacy autonomy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Google Drive and Vlogs shaped students’ self-efficacy and confidence in writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.8 Research ethics

Designing action research project raises complex ethical issues. Continuous, democratic and nonhierarchical collaboration with participants, close relationship between the researcher and the participants, central features of action research may present an ethical problem. As Mills (2011) comments:

“What makes the subject of ethics particularly challenging for teacher researchers is the intimate and open-ended nature of action research. The dual and ambiguous sometimes role of the teacher and the researcher may lead to ethical dilemmas. Mirvis and Seashore (1982) noted that most ethical dilemmas in such studies arise “not because roles are unclear, but because they are clearly in conflict” (p. 87).

Before initiating the study, the researcher obtained written permission to access the participants from the Dean of the English Department in the College and informed the organization in detail about the experimental procedure. All participants -volunteers for the study signed a consent form, they were informed about the likely risks involved in the research and the potential consequences and were assured that their wishes will be respected and their identity will be kept confidential (See Appendix I).

In the pursuit of an academically correct stance, I deployed Aristotle’s rhetoric appeal to be in accordance with the ethical framework underpinned by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2014) in which respect for the person, knowledge, democratic values, the quality of educational research and academic freedom is required. Providing ethical logos for this low-risk research, I respect all the people involved regardless of age, gender, race, religion political beliefs, lifestyle or any other significant difference among such people. The ethical logos and pathos of the researcher empathizes with the way participants think and feel, and avoids situations in the research studies in which perceptions of advantage to individuals over others are fostered. A Research Ethics Checklist (RE 1) submitted by the researcher to the University of Bolton. The researcher followed the University’s Code of
Practice on Ethical Standards in the conduct of her study (See Appendix III).

When the number of participants is small and the methodology requires thick and rich descriptions, care must be taken to preserve confidentiality and privacy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Richards & Morse, 2007). The code of research with the participants consisted of not causing any emotional discomfort or psychological pressure. No personal information is disclosed either verbally, or electronically, written or by any visual means without the written permission of the participants. Participation was voluntary and participants were entitled to withdraw at any stage of the research. No payments or inducements were offered for participation as the research was grounded on the daily practices of the participants.

The transcriptions and the written notes were sent to the interviewees for examination and further reflection so that they could change or add any information they considered important before the data analysis. Compliant with what BERA regards good practice (BERA, 2004, p. 10), “participants that requested, prior, during or after the research, to be informed about the research outcomes and publications”.

### 3.8.2 Limitations of the methodology

A longitudinal action research study is challenging for novice researchers because of its over changing nature and the daunting amount of data that the researcher must deal with. During different cycles of this project the researcher made decisions about the experiment design while reflecting on data. In cycle one: the participants needed more time to familiarize with wikis, blogs and online peer feedback technique. Although I spend much classroom time to ensure that everyone was confident using the technology and I continuously monitored students’ interactions to verify that all students benefited from peer review I think that similarly to other studies (Welch, 2015;
Hashimoto, 2012) students needed more support with the use of technology and peer feedback rubric. A training group for extra class tutorials would be helpful to reduce participants stress on using this technology and allow them to focus on writing. In cycle 2 the researcher asked the students to orally reflect on their writing and send their video to the teacher for feedback. Some students were reluctant to present their videos in class and get extra feedback from their peers. Though, I believe that peer feedback activity would be more accurate if students had taken into consideration not only the feedback rubric but also the video where their classmates justified their writing choices and discussed about their strengths and weaknesses.

### 3.8.3 Delimitations

Delimitation in research refers to choices that the researcher makes for the study that are under the control of the researcher, according to Baltimore County Public Schools. The researcher must rationalize these decisions in a research proposal.

This research study was specifically delimited in 3 ways. First, participants were chosen through the following criteria:

1. ESL multinational college students aged 18 to 25
2. Non-native English speakers
3. Digital native students

Second, the pedagogical implications of the study are limited to educators who embrace the use of cutting edge technology and encourage social interaction and collaboration in their class instruction practices (Ally & Prieto-Blazquez, 2014; Baker, 2010; Deubel, 2003; Jonassen, 1991; November, 2010b; Oh & Reeves, 2014; Prensky, 2010). Therefore, the results of the study could be generalizable to: instructors who teach EAP in Colleges and Higher Education Institutions, to Academic Directors and Administrators in the field of Education and to policy makers. The intent was to encourage a dialogue and promote collaboration among all stakeholders with the aim to
advance the quality of teaching and learning experiences with the aid of technology.

Third, the researcher limited the scope of the study to explore the impact of innovative instruction on students’ autonomy in second language writing. The research did not identify factors dealing with assessment of technology and quality of writing, nor did she seek to measure autonomy via pretests and post-tests.

### 3.9 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the use of an individual teacher action research methodology. The research, which consisted of two cycles included: semi-structure interviews, online documents (wikis and Google Drive docs), blog reflection journals and video reflections. Cycle 1 was designed with the aim to promote autonomy in the writing class and to investigate students’ perceptions on the use of cutting edge technology. Participants of cycle 1 were asked to provide a retrospective account of the integration of wikis and blogs in the ESL writing class in relation to their autonomy. Data analysis and was reflections from cycle 1 led to changes in tools and pedagogy in cycle 2 where 12 students were asked to participate in the ESL writing class and submit their assignments using Google Drive Docs and reflect on their writing experience using video technology. In this qualitative study, data collection and analysis was an ongoing process. The data from the online documents, interview and videos were transcribed and word-processed. Next the data were coded and analyzed to identify categories and themes based on thematic analysis approach. Next Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 present: planning, action, analysis and reflections on Action Research Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 accordingly.
CHAPTER IV

Cycle 1: Data analysis and discussion

4.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter 3, this action research project consists of two cycles. Each action research cycle is explained and interpreted in an independent chapter. The present chapter discusses the findings of the implementation of wikis and blogs in the ESL blended learning writing class and particularly the effect of the pedagogy of peer feedback and reflective writing on students’ autonomous learning behavior and practice. Since this study is a teacher-as-researcher individual action research, the entire research process is conceived of as a continuous cycle: planning, action, observation, sharing and reflection. In Chapter 4, the main objectives of the ESL 2 writing course and participants profile are introduced briefly. Next, the research design and online writing platforms (wikispaces.com and wordpress.com) used for writing and the research design are briefly described. Then, I set about to address the research questions of this cycle using thematic analysis. The analysis of themes that emerged from three different data collection tools: semi-structured interviews; students’ interactions in wikis and their posts on blogs are presented. Finally, identification of learning problems during cycle 1 is discussed. Personal reflection and students’ suggestions lead to modifications in teaching style and tools in cycle 2.

The research questions that this cycle aimed to address are the following:
1. How first-year university students perceive peer-feedback in wikis in the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?

2. How first-year university students perceive reflection in blogs the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?

3. What are the implications of combining wikis and blogs for teaching autonomous writing in the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?
4.2 Outline of the Action Research process: Cycle 1

As it has been already stated in the introduction, the research following the cycle of plan, act, observe, share and reflect.

**Plan:** The instructor identified the learning problems that ESL students have in the writing class, taking into consideration writing portfolios of previous cohorts of ESL students. The instructor identified that students showed a strong preference for individual writing, they had limited collaboration skills; they rarely reflected on teacher’s feedback and thus had limited autonomy in writing. After identifying the problems the instructor designed the below action plan which lasted 15 weeks, with the aim to promote students autonomy in writing and develop her own practice.

**Act:** This stage describes instructor and students’ actions towards the enhancement of autonomy in writing.

**Action 1**

The instructor: Introduced students to Wikispaces, an online writing platform, trained them and asked them to use the platform for their writing assignments. Students: Created a Wikispaces account and experimented with the affordances of the wiki platform.

**Action 2**

The instructor: Introduced students to the concept of peer feedback and presented them a feedback rubric and examples of good practice. Finally, asked them to invite two of their peers as members in their wiki accounts, so as to be able to provide them feedback.

Students: Practiced giving and receiving feedback in class.

**Action 3**

Instructor: Introduced students to wordpress.com, a blog platform and trained them on the use of blogs for reflective practice. The concept of reflective writing was discussed in the class and examples of reflective writing were provided. Students' were asked to post their reflections on the writing class.

Students: Created their blog accounts, experimented with the affordances of blog technology and posted their weekly reflections for the writing class.
Observe

Wiki activity: The instructor monitored students’ activity in wikis and intervened in cases that students did not receive feedback from their member-peers in wikis or received poor feedback. Students were advised to ask for feedback from other classmates.

Blog activity: The instructor monitored blog activity, wrote comments on students’ posts, encouraged them to continue writing and asked them critical questions.

Share

Using thematic analysis, the instructor collected data from students’ interviews, wikis, blogs and her personal reflection log. Data were disseminated in three International conferences:

1. Ed Tech Summit: Instabul, Bahchesehir University: Cultivating autonomy in an online environment: An action Research study, March 2015,

2. Rethinking Language, Diversity, and Education, University of the Aegean, Rhodes, Greece: Rethinking autonomy through multiliteracies pedagogy, May 2015


Funded by European Union: Using Blogs and wikis to understand amfoteronomy: An action research case study, June 2015

Reflect

My reflections on the findings will be analytically presented at the end of the chapter. Feedback from scholars in the conferences, personal reflections on my own practice and students’ suggestions led to cycle 2.

4.2.1 The ESL 2 writing class

ESL 2 is an intermediate level English class that aims to introduce students to the principles of paragraph writing, enhance their summarizing skills and to
familiarize them with several types of essays (cause and effect, descriptive, argumentative essays). To familiarize students with the culture of autonomy, which does the instructor adopt, students were required to use apart from their textbook (Great writing 3, Cengage Learning) the College e-learning platform. As it is illustrated in the screenshot below, the instructor used the platform to upload extra material for self-practice, links for online-dictionaries, and to insert wikispaces and wordpress links to direct students automatically to their writing platforms. Students can also access the platform to get informed about notable events, deadlines and to upload their assignments.

Figure 11 A screen shot from the E-learning platform
The figure below illustrates the “digital noisis” model that was applied in Cycle according to the pedagogy discussed in the literature.

Figure 12 The "Digital noisis" model Cycle 1

“Digital noisis“

Stage 0: Modeling
Instructor and peers discuss and analyze texts, structure, content and language and trains students on the use of:

Writing Resources: The instructor uploads models/samples of good practice in

Stage 1: Prewriting: brainstorming activities/group discussion
Writing tool: paper
Audience: peers/instructor
Autonomy development: Digital literacy skills, engagement, motivation

Stage 2: Drafting
Stage 3: Revising

**Writing tool and process:** 2 peers leave comments on based on a feedback rubric.

**Audience:** a limited number of 3 peers and instructor

**Autonomy development:** collaboration, interaction, interdependence, engagement

Stage 4: Editing-Publishing

**Writing tool and process:** students accept or decline their peers’ revisions in wikispaces. The instructor adds his final comments and the student publish the final document

**Audience:** a limited number of 3 peers and instructor

**Autonomy development:** critical thinking, self-evaluation

Stage 5: Reflection

**Writing tool:** Students write their reflections on their writing experience in WordPress

**Audience:** instructor

**Autonomy development:** reflection, writing awareness, engagement, active participation, self-management, self-appraisal
4.2.2 Participants' brief description
The informants invited to participate in this study are college freshman students majoring in different fields who were enrolled in the ESL 2 Academic English course for Fall Semester 2014. Twenty mixed nationality students were invited to participate. Though, 8 students were excluded from this study since they did not attend the class regularly. Data obtained from 12 students who signed a consent form. Below there is a brief description of students' profile.

Student A.
Student A is a 19 years Psychology student. She is a motivated student who believes in lifelong learning and she loves learning languages. Student A reported that she knows French at an intermediate level and she wants to learn Spanish and Chinese. Although, she had no experience with group learning, Student A showed strong collaborative skills in the ESL 2 writing class, as she was willing to give feedback to more students than she was assigned to give.

Student B
Student B is a Greek female freshman student majoring in Psychology. She expressed her preference towards private classes and she mentioned that learning in a group does not suit with her learning style. She stated that she does not evaluate her skills because she believes that this is instructor's responsibility. Student B did not manage to collaborate effectively with her peers in wikis, since as she explained, she has poor time management skills. Also, she stressed that using technology for writing was not helpful for her.

Student C
Student C is a freshman female Greek student who majors in Psychology in Empire State College. Matina reports that she is not a technology enthusiastic, although she understands the necessity of using technology in
learning. She prefers learning in private classes because she finds it difficult to focus her attention. Also, she argues that writing in a paper is very important for her, as she can think and concentrate on her assignment.

Student D
Student D is an undergraduate Psychology student. She was not very confident in writing and she did not engage regularly in wikis and blogs. She reported that she enjoyed collaborative learning, but using technology was a big challenge for her since she stated that she is aware of the importance of technology in learning but she is not willing to do adapt to this “new style of learning”. Also, she did not seem to manage to keep in track with the timeline of the assignments. Due to work commitments she skipped some classes, which had been important for her progress.

Student E
Student is a male undergraduate Marketing student. He is confident with the use of technology and he reported that he enjoyed learning writing via wikis and blogs. Student E showed good collaborative skills and used blogs systematically to reflect on his learning experience and evaluate the learning content and teacher’s competency. He is open to criticism and is willing to share his knowledge. Although he is a working student, he managed to submit his assignments on time and attend classes regularly.

Student F
Student F is an 18-year male undergraduate student who comes from Albania. He studies Marketing in Empire State College. Student F is an enthusiastic learner with good collaborative skills. He is competent with technology and engaged systematically in both wikis and blogs. Although he was willing to give and receive feedback he stated that instructor’s feedback is very important to him.
Student G
Student G is an 18 years old Finance student who comes from Albania. She has been learning English for 9 years and she is a well-disciplined and highly motivated student. Student G has set high goals for the forthcoming academic year since she wants to skip a level in English, sit for a placement test and go immediately to the Composition class. She is very competitive and believes that learning can occur in groups of high proficiency students. Finally, she is very sensitive towards peer criticism.

Student H
Student H is a female undergraduate Psychology student. She has been learning English in private classes for five years. She is fluent in German and speaks Spanish. Student H was not engaged much in giving feedback because she reported she has been left behind with her assignment due to poor Internet connection at home. Collaboration was a challenge for the student as she had an unpleasant experience of peer feedback while working with Student G. Generally, Student H reported that she was afraid of criticism due to a traumatic incident with an English instructor at school.

Student I
Student I is an 18 years old freshman student who majors in Marketing. He stated that using technology was a stressful but interesting learning experience that helped him to gain confidence. Though he submitted most of his assignments on time he did not engage systematically in giving feedback. Also, Student I reported that he had no experience on self-reflection and evaluation.

Student J
Student J is a male undergraduate Albanian student who majors in International Relations. He was confident with technology and enjoyed learning English using wikis and blogs. He regarded peer feedback as a responsible act and he expressed his concern to manage to be objective
while commenting on his peers’ assignments. Student K did not engage systematically in blogs due to time constraints.

Student K

Student K is a male undergraduate Computer Science student. Though I expected that he would be enthusiastic with the use of technology in class, he was very negative towards the use of wikis and blogs in class. As he explained these tools could be helpful but he does not believe in collaboration and sharing of knowledge. She had no experience in group learning and he was not willing to acquire collaborative skills.

Student L

Student L is a male undergraduate Greek student who studies Business Administration in Empire State College. He does not believe in the effectiveness of technology in learning. He was willing to receive and give feedback, though he did not engage systematically. He also mentioned that he does not rely on peer evaluation.

4.2.3 Research design

During the first week, the instructor helped students to create a wiki account using wikispaces.com platform and asked them to invite the instructor and 2 of their classmates to become members of their wikis. Apart from lecturing on the use of wiki technology in higher Education, students had the chance to see examples of good practice from my previous ESL classes and reflect on the affordances of the wiki environment. As it has been clarified in Chapter three, (Wikis and Google Drive as peer feedback platforms to promote autonomous writing) research suggests that wiki is a flexible online learning environment that is positively perceived by students as writing tool. Implementation of wikis in the class promotes collaborative autonomy, engagement in peer critique and problem solving and critical thinking (Kessler and Bikowski, 2010; Eola and Oskoz, 2010; Woo et al., 2012; Pellet, 2012).
Next, the instructor trained students how to use wikis, encouraged them to overcome emotional and practical obstacles and smoothly pass from the traditional paper based writing to online writing. Following, students were informed about the role of sharing knowledge in academia and specifically about peer feedback in writing and the importance of advancing their collaborative learning skills. To successfully pass the writing class students had to submit three summaries, a descriptive essay and an argumentative essay. A sample of each of their assigned writing tasks was uploaded in the e-learning platform.

Regarding the peer feedback process, the instructor decided to train students on giving feedback using authentic material on effective summary writing. Students were not given a detailed feedback rubric to be more flexible to initiate interactions with their peers and to encourage them to read critically, evaluate and apply knowledge on effective writing using class material. Also, a general evaluation guideline was given to help them focus on specific areal while giving feedback. Students were informed that there will not be graded for their feedback skills but there will be an overall evaluation of their writing skills. Specifically, students had to prepare a draft of their assignment, invite members of their wiki page to give them feedback and make revisions on their paper until the due date. The instructor evaluated the assignments that had been submitted on time.

Figure 14 Evaluation guideline for peer feedback in Cycle 1

1. Ideas-content: The writing ideas are clear and focused with a central theme completely. The content can capture the reader's' interests.

2. Organization: Information is presented in clear sequence, making connections and transitions among sentences and paragraphs.

3. Punctuation and spelling: The writer uses correct punctuation, capitalization and grammar.
Although the implementation of blogs and wikis was initially planned by the researcher to run simultaneous, the instructor decided to train first students in the use of wikis and give them time to familiarize with wikis features and then, in week six, to introduce them to blogs, using wordpress.com. The fact that none of college students had previous experience with the use of blogs and wikis and most students had poor level of IT skills urged the instructor to alter the initial plan.

During week six students were introduced to the use of wordpress.com, a free blog platform that they could use as an online journal so as to write their reflections about the writing class. The instructor trained students on blog literacy and provided students example of reflective practice from different public educational blogs. Also, to motivate students to use the platform, the instructor uploaded posts and videos on topics of general interest. Students’ posts were private and could be viewed only by the instructor, who commented on their posts and encouraged them to reflect. Finally, students were not given a grade for their posts since the aim of the activity was not to evaluate their writing skills but to promote reflective thinking.

Figure 15 A screenshot from instructor’s blog
Below there is a table illustrating the weekly schedule of the ESL 2 writing class alongside instructor’s reflections during the implementation of the plan. As it can be seen in the table below, the instructor intervened only to solve technical problems that students had online and to facilitate the online writing process and to ensure that the collaboration was smooth. The instructor also kept reminding assignments deadlines and encouraged students to give feedback and write their reflections on the blog.

**Figure 16 ESL 2 Writing activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall semester schedule</th>
<th>Activity in wikis &amp; blogs</th>
<th>Instructor’s Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
<td>Introduction to wiki technology</td>
<td>Examples of good practice-Students explored the wiki environment and invite 2 peers to join their page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 2</strong></td>
<td>Introduction to summary writing - In class practice in giving feedback using the theoretical framework of summary writing</td>
<td>Students discuss in class the elements of an effective summary and give oral feedback. Instructor comments on the quality of feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 3</strong></td>
<td>1st assignment (summary)</td>
<td>Ask students to write a summary of an article (Textbook- Progressive Skills in English, Level 2, Garnet Education, Authentic Material for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Giving and receiving peer feedback</td>
<td>Monitor the process; reassure that students finished their assignments on time. Ask students who did not receive written feedback to contact their peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>2nd assignment (summary)</td>
<td>Discuss different types of peer feedback and give more examples of good practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Giving and receiving feedback</td>
<td>Present the wordpress.com online platform and show examples of good practice from college blogs and upload a reflective writing guide in the platform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7 –HOLIDAYS</td>
<td>NO ASSIGNMENTS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8-HOLIDAYS</td>
<td>NO ASSIGNMENTS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>3rd assignment in wikis (summary)- 1st post in blogs</td>
<td>Ask students to change members of their wiki pages if they are not satisfied with the quality of feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Introduction to descriptive essays/4th</td>
<td>Encourage students who did not participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Giving &amp; receiving peer feedback- 3rd blog post</td>
<td>Discuss on the challenges of reflective writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Introduction to argumentative essays- 5th assignment- 4th blog post</td>
<td>Invite students to participate in a class debate on Euthanasia. Reflect on the qualities of a balanced argumentative essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Giving and receiving peer feedback – 5th blog post</td>
<td>Monitor students’ activity and interactions in blogs and wikis and provide help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Final instructor feedback- 6th blog post</td>
<td>Ask students to read all their assignments and reflect on their writing progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 15</td>
<td>FINAL REFLECTIONS IN BLOG -7th blog post</td>
<td>Interview students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Data coding and analysis

This section presents the results of the thematic analysis and gives an outline of the procedure of data collection and coding involved in the process. A detailed overview of the stages of collecting, preparing and coding data has been presented in Chapter 3. In Cycle 1 the data were collected from students’ interviews, wikis archives and blog posts. Students’ wiki pages are examined with concern to activity level and frequency of feedback, online interaction with peers and students’ self-editing activity. Data from wikis are used to shed light to students’ interviews and to enhance the validity of the research. Due to the history function, it was feasible to track all contributions made on the wiki pages as well as comments in the discussion area. To investigate students’ perceptions for online reflective writing, 22 posts from students’ blogs were transcribed and coded. The coding process was inductive or data driven (Boyatzis 1998; Braun and Clark, 2006). Figure 6 presents my initial search for themes based on interview questions.

Figure 17 Interview questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview questions</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you prefer to learn individually or in a group and why?</td>
<td>1. Investigates perceptions for collaborative learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Investigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How self-directed are you as a learner?</td>
<td>3. Investigates perceptions-readiness for autonomy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. If there are any, what are the advantages of the project?</td>
<td>6. Investigates students' satisfaction from the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. If there are any, what are the disadvantages of the project?</td>
<td>7. Investigates students' perception for the chosen tools and pedagogy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Did the implementation of wikis and blogs help you to take the control of your learning?</td>
<td>8. Investigates the impact of the project on students’ autonomous writing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After familiarizing with data, student interviews and blog posts were translated and transcript. In the table below the emerged themes are presented, alongside indicative excerpts from students’ interviews and blog posts. Following Joffe’s advise “in the name of transparency, researchers need to present systematically a sufficient proportion of the original evidence in the written account to satisfy the skeptical reader of the relation between the interpretation and the evidence”(2012, p. 219).
Figure 18 Major themes emerged from interviews
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Emerged themes from interviews</th>
<th>Indicative Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reading peers’ essays and giving feedback promoted awareness on writing skills development</td>
<td>I could see my peers’ errors and reflected on them and I was learning via correcting others’ papers. Also, the contact with the instructor was not direct so I was not afraid of making mistakes, since I had the chance to get feedback and correct them. (Student A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wikis helped me to improve my writing. I learned new vocabulary. Everything was new for me and writing online using the internet was a new experience. I could see my classmates’ assignments; I could compare them with my essay and reflect on my errors. (Student H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I prefer to write traditionally using a pen and a paper. Though using wikis was a useful experience. I used wikis regularly and I could say that reading my peers assignments helped me to reflect on my grammar and brainstorm ideas on different topics. (Student C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using wikis helped me to learn because I could read my peers essay and take them as example. I especially</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
collaborated with Student H. (Student D)

2. Quality and trust impacted students attitude towards peer feedback

Sometimes I did not receive feedback and that did not annoy me but I felt that it would be useful to know others opinion about my assignment. It was more beneficial to receive that to give feedback. Generally, I do not rely on my peers’ feedback, I want my teacher’s feedback. (Student J)

I did not give feedback many times. I do not believe that peer feedback is helpful at that level. My peers have the same skills with me so I don't think that I can benefit at all from their comments. I don’t believe that wikis, technology in general or feedback helped me to improve to improve my writing. It is the lesson that helped me to improve and of course teacher's feedback. After all, feedback is teacher’s job: to correct and help students to learn. (Student M)
On the other hand, Student A gave me valuable feedback. But, still I was expecting your feedback to feel secure…

Also, someone might feel sad because of your feedback. Generally, I don’t believe that feedback was important. Only teacher’s feedback is important. I wanted to listen to other’s opinions but I could not trust them no matter their language level. (Student G)
3. Students’ felt that giving feedback is a stressful, challenging and responsible activity

I felt a bit uncomfortable when I gave feedback to Student B…I felt the burden of responsibility…I must make corrections to someone’s paper though I am not experienced in doing that…it was a challenge for me…it was difficult (Student C)

Giving feedback was difficult for me because I do not know whether I have the skills to give feedback. I do not know if I can be objective. I don’t want to be unfair with someone’s work and I don’t want to evaluate his work. I believe that receiving feedback for as many people as possible could be helpful but I am not sure if everyone could be objective or if everyone has the skills to correct papers. To be honest I did not like giving feedback because I respect my peers work and I felt bad when I had to make corrections (Student B)

At the beginning, I did not have confidence in writing and I felt embarrassed when I had to share my writing. I was not quite sure why I had to do that… When I was receiving bad comments, I felt stressed and I lost my
### Major emerged themes from blogs

#### 1. Blogging promoted self-evaluation

At the first time that I had been in the College was two months ago. When I came here my level was quite advanced and I had the ability to attend the English course fluently and do many presentations during the lesson. Moreover, when the days have left I was learning better this language especially Grammar rules, many difficult words, Reading and especially communicate and collaborate more easily with my friends here. (Student G)

I have three months at this class. All looks great, the teacher, the students, everything but I think I need more practice to my English lessons. First, I need to focus more at grammar, also sometimes I lost my way at summaries. But the positive is, I learned more thinks from past and I am little better than past. At new year I hope to be an interesting student with more knowledge to English language.
(Student L)

Good morning everyone, today i will write about my" travel" in the college. When is was came here my English wasn't good and my writing too. Now after 6 months here in the College i think my English level is better but i need more job. I hope that i will learn to write and to speak excellent English when i will finish my College. That's all! (Student F)

Just arrived the end of semester and i would like to express my opinion of English lesson. First, this lesson gave me much knowledge for many issues. I improved my English and my expressions. During this lesson, I corrected my mistakes in grammar and vocabulary. Last but not at least, I can communicate with other people in English language. (Student I)
2. Blogging promoted reflection on the effectiveness of class and instructor

The lesson is very interesting and we also practice a lot on the internet. This is very important cause internet is everywhere nowadays. Also, because I had to attend English lessons since 2010 I have forgotten many thing in grammar, but now I'm starting to remember them again. So, this class has been very helpful to me and my progress. I'm really excited about that and I hope that soon I will learn more things and I will improve more my English in order to be a native speaker. That's my goal. (Student A)

Every new week in this course is important for me… I have learning a lot of things and I remember a lot old one! I want to continue in this class, because we can communicate very good with my classmates and with my teacher. At the next week, we have the first mid-term for us. We are a little bit nervous but all of us have a big smile. Finally, if i continue with this way i will learn a lot of English in a small time!(Student D)

I am very glad, to be in this classroom, the environment is very positive, we are already have used some
interesting methods learning English by the internet. I expected that in the future I am going to advanced my English level very much in this project. (Student J)

This day is so important for me! I just learn a lot of things about essays. We just read 2 texts, but now i understand a lot of things how to write a correct essay. Also, I learned about drags, which can recover some people, and about abortion. Finally, now I know how to start and close my essay with the write way. Thanks, my teacher a lot! Goodbye…(Student E)
| 3. Blogging promoted reflections on essay topics | All the research about the euthanasia is so complicated and so important at the same time! I find a lot of articles with so valuable information about the problem. When I read them, I’m so confused about what happened in hospital.... Finally, all the people are bad until you can find exactly what they are doing in their lives! In these days, you mustn’t trust none doctor except if he or she is a good friend. Euthanasia is so bad method and so difficult choice. (Student E)  

Two days before I listened different stories about euthanasia and I wrote one also. My experience at this class for this topic was interesting and I think I will make a re-search at future about Euthanasia and people with disabilities. (Student L)  

This week we had to write an article about euthanasia and if we are against or in favor about it. Personaly I'm against it. In my article, I supported that with two arguments that I think that I explained in a very good way. My essay was big enough, and according to my opinion was very interesting. Although, my classmates did not find it |
very important or serious and I believe that they did not judge me fair. The whole experience of writing and finding the articles that we had to study was very helpful, because we had the opportunity to learn things about a very important issue. This exercise also forced me to make thoughts about euthanasia and the rights that have people in his own, or in the others death. In the end, about my presentation I'm very proud because I tried a lot, even I did not take the right grate from my classmates. (Student A)

4.3.1 Research question 1
How first-year university students perceive peer-feedback in wikis in the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?

In this section findings from students' interviews are being presented to answer the question related to students' perceptions for peer-feedback in the wiki environment. Interview data are being complemented with data from wikis to further shed light on the findings.
4.3.2 Engagement in peer reading promoted awareness on writing skills development

Active ownership of the learning experience involves not only individual decision-making and solving problems but also willingness to share decisions, ideas and experiences with a community for the benefit of the learning process (Murphy and Hurd, 2011, p.46). Autonomous learners may not necessarily enjoy teamwork but they recognize the value of interaction with teachers and peers and are willing to cooperate with others, negotiate or even change their ideas when appropriate and efficacious. Peer feedback as a collaborative activity was challenging for the participants of this study and most students did not engage in meaning negotiation while giving feedback. Though, students mentioned that they gained some insights from the interaction with their peers through online wiki feedback and especially via reading peer essays. Particularly, participants mentioned that peer feedback was a new experience for them that engaged them in reflecting on their writing skills via comparing their essays with their peers’ in terms of grammar, vocabulary development, structure and content. Student A, the students with the highest engagement level in peer feedback explained how peer feedback helped her to develop her writing skills. She also argued that the affordances of the online environment encouraged her to edit her paper and become more productive:

*I could see my peers error and reflect on them and I was learning via correcting others’ papers. Also, the contact with the instructor was not direct so I was not afraid of making mistakes, since I had the chance to get feedback and correct them.*
Also, I had the chance to write more online since it was easy to make corrections to rephrase my assignment and make changes easily. I was not very familiar with technology but with practice I became confident and I realized that this is the appropriate way to do assignments.

Student A interacted successfully with Student E and as both reported they had a mutual gain from their collaboration. The extract below is form Student’s E wiki page. Words highlighted in green are Student’s A suggestions/corrections.

Great Traditional events around the world

Summary 1: The Palio in Siena

The author is talking about Italy and specific at about the city of Siena. It is situated in central Italy! Also it has a day with horse races nearly since 3000 years old. From the Middle Ages have had a dress up event mean for men and women. Then in the afternoon they do some parades at the main square of the city. Finally, after at the last 90 seconds’ men and women prepare to carry their flags through the city for the winner!

I think that you have not written the important information about the article! You have used many words and phrases from the passage, and you had to write more things about the event. I believe that this is too small for this specific article

As it can be seen in the above excerpt Student A applied effectively knowledge from summary writing and highlighted key issues in her peers writing regarding quality of content, paraphrasing techniques and word limit. She also made minor grammar corrections. The fact that students had the chance to share their essays with their peers helped them to spend more time reflecting on their papers before the final submission. Also essay reading encouraged reflection to students who were not very active in giving feedback. As Student A confirmed, time management skills was a factor that affected the peer feedback process:
At the beginning, it was difficult to be coordinated with my peers, we had to be well organised and keep deadlines and that was difficult. But, then I get used to it.

On the same line Student B claimed that the feedback that she received from their peers helped her to improve her writing via reflecting on their peers' errors. Student B reported:

On the other hand, giving feedback to wikis helped as to identify our errors and encouraged us to learn new things. You could not correct someone’s paper without having enough knowledge on the topic.

It is interesting to note that the student was aware of the skills required to give appropriate feedback and engaged in extra reading to satisfy the requirements of this task.

Technology was a factor that influenced students’ online interaction and engagement in peer feedback. Student C, a student who reported that she does not feel confident using technology, did not engage regularly in giving feedback but as she confirms she used wikis systematically and she mainly benefited from reading peers’ essays:

I prefer to write traditionally using a pen and a paper. Though using wikis was a useful experience. I used wikis regularly and I could say that reading my peers assignments helped me to reflect on my grammar and brainstorm ideas on different topics.

Student I, is also an example of a student who did not benefit much from feedback since the collaboration with his peers was not very effective, but similarly to Student C, he states that using wikis was a helpful experience that encouraged him to reflect on his writing skills via sharing his papers with his peers and evaluating his own skills.

Wikis helped me to improve my writing. I learned new vocabulary. Everything was new for me and writing online using the Internet was a new experience. I could see my classmates’ assignments; I could compare them with my essay and reflect on my errors.
Finally, Student D, a student with very low engagement level in peer feedback but with systematic online writing presence explained that she was satisfied with the collaborative feature of the writing class.

*I found it very helpful to work in-group. I like to collaborate. I believe that there are students who are more knowledgeable than me and can help me to learn. Using wikis helped me to learn because I could read my peers essays and take them as example. I mainly collaborated with student H.*

As Ferris (2003) pointed out, “the mere act of rereading and rewriting, even without feedback from peers or teacher, may lead not only to substantive changes but improved writing quality” (p. 82)

Although peer feedback was introduced in the writing class to engage students in collaborative learning and provide them opportunities to interact with their peers and scaffold, most students did not engage systematically on giving feedback due to bad time management skills or luck of confidence. But they stated that engagement in peer reading was an activity that helped them to reflect on their writing skills. Contrary to Kennedy’s (2010) that supported that the implementation of peer feedback via wikis and blogs contributed to Composition students’ time management skills, participants of Cycle 1 found challenging to provide prompt feedback. Though it might be argued that Composition students have very good language skills and in comparison to ESL students are thus more confident to provide instant feedback.

Also, it is important to note that even students that engaged regularly in peer feedback they remained passive after receiving feedback. Students reported that the main reasons that discoursed them from being actively involved were: the absence of a collaborative community of trust, their attitudes towards the efficacy of peer feedback, their teacher-dependence and their lack of confidence and expertise on providing quality feedback. Some restrictions posed by the technical features of Wikispaces or students’ attitudes towards technology affected their online interactions. But, it can be claimed that the challenges that students faced during their online interactions encouraged them to reflect on the skills that they should acquire to sharpen their writing
skills and take advantage of the affordances of technology. Thus, students reflected on their collaborative competence, on their digital skills and engaged in developing evaluation and self-assessment skills.

Student J is an example of a student who did not benefit by feedback per se, since he did not manage to finish his assignments on time, but he argued that the engagement in a collaborative process and the pedagogy of evaluation that was promoted during this project impacted his progress.

Undoubtedly, I believe that wikis helped me to improve my writing and specifically I saw improvement in the structure of my essays in grammar and in vocabulary. Working with wikis can help you to work collaboratively, to engage in peer evaluation and to improve through this procedure.

**4.3.3 Students do not rely on peer feedback: the impact of quality and trust**

Data from wikis have been used to investigate whether the project encouraged students to collaborate and interact online. Students' wiki pages were examined with concern to activity level, specifically the frequency and quality of peer feedback as well as students' self-editing activity. Due to the history function, it was feasible to track all contributions made on the wiki pages as well as comments in the discussion area. Taking into consideration that the purpose of this project was to investigate students’ active engagement in the writing process, willingness to interact and reflect on their progress, the quality of peer feedback per se will not be analyzed in detail or further discussed though data from wikis will be used to further support data from interviews and reflect on students’ engagement.
Figure 19 Students engagement in peer feedback
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Number of completed assignments</th>
<th>Frequency of received feedback</th>
<th>Frequency of given feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Student A</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>4 comments</td>
<td>43 corrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 correction from Student B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Student B</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>1 comment</td>
<td>14 corrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 corrections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>from student C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Student C</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>14 corrections</td>
<td>2 comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Student D</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>10 corrections</td>
<td>5 comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Student E</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>5 comments</td>
<td>10 corrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 comments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Student F</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>4 comments</td>
<td>4 comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Student G</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>1 correction from Student B</td>
<td>3 times rewrote 3 texts to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 to Student C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 comment to student J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Student H</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>1 correction from student G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11 corrections from Student A</td>
<td>3 comments corrections from Student G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Student I</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>4 comments from student G</td>
<td>2 comments to student L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Student J</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>2 comments</td>
<td>4 comments from student G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Student K</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>0 comments</td>
<td>0 comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Student L</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>2 comments from student G</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be seen in the above table, almost half of students did not give or receive feedback systematically or even in the case they received feedback they were either not satisfied from the quality or remained passive. In contrast to Kessler’s and Bikowski’s (2010) findings, where the majority of students (80%) felt comfortable to edit and critique their peers assignments and moved towards collaborative autonomy, the students in this project did not always engage in meaningful collaboration. Students mentioned a different number of reasons to justify their poor or unsuccessful collaboration with their peers. Trust among peers, students’ attitudes towards peer feedback, the quality and consistency of feedback and the limited interactivity of the asynchronous wiki environment were among the factors that students reported that impacted
their online behavior. Student L is a student that expressed his distrust on peer feedback as a method for improving writing. He argues that only teachers are qualified to give feedback. Student L was not active in giving feedback though his was submitting his assignments regularly. He argues that peers should not bear the responsibility of contributing to students’ learning.

*I did not give feedback many times. I do not believe that peer feedback is helpful at that level. My peers have the same skills with me so I don’t think that I can benefit at all from their comments. I don’t believe that wikis, technology in general or feedback helped me to improve to improve my writing. It is the lesson that helped me to improve and of course teacher’s feedback. After all, feedback is teacher’s job: to correct and help students to learn.*

In the same line Student G has expressed her concerns regarding the efficacy of peer feedback and the style and the language that some students used while giving feedback.

*I believed that I have achieved most of my goals in this course. We engaged in an active learning procedure, we did many things in the writing class more that one could imagine that could do in a group class. We engaged in giving feedback, we learned how to use technology and tools such as wikis and we collaborated. I enjoyed learning in a group but I would rather learn in a group that is better that me so as to have the chance to learned as much as possible.*

Student G had the highest Toefl score when she first enrolled in ESL 2. The first impression that I got when I first met student G in class is that she is a very demanding and confident student. She was always coming on time, well prepared for the course and willing to participate in all class activities. She also used to ask me to assign her extra material for homework. Her main concern was to advance her level of English to retake the Toefl test.
Student G was complaining from time to time that the Toefl test that she took at the beginning of the semester did not reveal her prominent level of English as she believed that she was the best in her class and she wanted to transfer to WAP which is an academic writing course for students who score 500 at the Toelf test. She expressed this sense of superiority from her peers in her interactions with her peers. Although she was confident and willing to give feedback to her peers she was not willing to take into consideration feedback from students that she regarded that they were at a higher proficiency level than her. For example, student A tried to collaborate with student G but student G felt that her criticism was not appropriate for a student. Student G reported:

Student B gave me valuable feedback. But, still I was expecting your feedback to feel secure. Students should not be strict when they give feedback, they should be cooperative. Student B was very strict. This is teacher’s role not students’ responsibility. Personally, I do not believe that I was strict when I was giving feedback; I was trying to add simple things and make the writing comprehensive. This is not easy because sometimes it is not easy to be fair with everyone. Also someone might feel sad because of your feedback. Generally, I don’t believe that feedback was important. Only teacher’s feedback is important. I wanted to listen to other’s opinions but I could not trust them no matter their language level.
The above screenshot has been taken from student H’s wiki page and illustrates an example of corrective but non-constructive feedback that was given from student G. The student preferred to rewrite her peer’s summary instead of making corrections or adding comments. This action caused annoyance to student H who denied to further collaborate with her. Student G was not able to collaborate smoothly with most of her peers. Apart from the fact that she did not trust them even in the case of student B that her level was advanced, student G showed resistance to her criticism. It can be supported that student G was not willing to share her writing because she could not deal with criticism.

At the beginning, I did not have confidence in writing and I felt embarrassed when I had to share my writing. I was not quite sure why I had to do that… When I was receiving bad comments, I felt stressed and I lost my confidence. I want to receive gentle comments.

Another reason that students mentioned that discouraged them to engage more actively in peer feedback was the fact that Wikispaces were limited to five members and students could not share their papers with other members easily. As student L mentioned the sense of being part of a community was important for him:
If wikis were not limited to five members it would be more interesting for me to give feedback. We would have the chance to interact and communicate more often. I would have the chance to get more feedback and possibly I would have developed trust. Students would have the chance to give feedback to papers that attracted their attention. And that is important for me, because I would be able to understand that my paper is interesting from the number of comments that I would have received.

Some student groups did not manage to collaborate effectively and this impacted their perceptions for peer feedback. So, members of these groups become demotivated. Collaboration cannot be fully controlled by the instructor, but strengthening students’ collaborative skills and using more effective media could enhance it. As Cecez-Kecmanovic and Webb (2000) pointed out, “learning through a collaborative process cannot be forced upon or induced through outside forces: it has to be internally created, mutually accepted as valid and valuable, and enacted by students” (section 2, para. 4). This limitation will be further discussed in the section of Problems during cycle 1.

4.3.4 Giving feedback was challenging: responsibility attitudes, collaboration issues, and competency

The project proved to be very demanding for this cohort of ESL students for several reasons: first most students did not have previous experience of learning English in a class. So, they stated that although learning in a group was an enjoyable experience, learning how to collaborate was a new skill that they had to acquire. Also some students reported that they preferred to learn
in private classes because the instructor could focus only on them. Student K, argued:

*When I learn a new language, I prefer to be alone with the teacher so as to have his full support. I cannot easily concentrate when I am in a group. Also, I do not want to hear other students’ opinions… I did not read my peers’ essays and I did not give feedback because I was not interested in their thoughts or their writing style. Though I improved using wikis alone and searching on the web for resources or looking up words in online dictionaries.*

Student K did not enjoy using wikis and blogs for the writing class. He strongly believed that learning is an individual process that can be advanced only with the help of the teacher. He did not complete most of his assignments on time though his level of English was not lower that his peers to feel uncomfortable to share his assignments. Also, he did not give feedback and he did not engage in meaning negotiation with his peers.

*Figure 21 A screenshot of student K wiki page*

It is important to point out here that his peers, student K and student L did not help him enough to improve his collaborative skills since both of them had the same negative attitude towards collaborative learning and peer feedback. As it has been stated above George expressed his disbelief towards the efficacy of this pedagogy. Regarding student I, though he suggested that he enjoyed learning in a team he admitted that he was not very active in giving feedback.
since his peers did not interact with him. Thus, it can be claimed that the success of a collaborative assignment is related to the attitudes of its members.

Another factor that was reported to influence students’ interactions while giving feedback was the sense of responsibility that students’ must take while commenting on a paper. Student C stated:

_I felt a bit uncomfortable when I gave feedback to student B…I felt the burden of responsibility…I had to make corrections to someone’s paper though I am not experienced in doing that…it was a challenge for me….it was difficult…_

The screenshot below indicates that the feedback that student C gave to student B was very poor. She avoided correcting or suggesting and she preferred to praise her peer’s work. Her comments, as it can be seen in the screenshot are:

1. Keep up the good work!
2. I think it is all correct, grammar and summary.

Figure 22 An example of peer feedback
In the same line, student B expressed her concern for her feedback skills and mainly she was sensitive towards fairness:

*Giving feedback was difficult for me because I do not know whether I have the skills to give feedback. I do not know if I can be objective. I don't want to be unfair with someone’s work and I don't want to evaluate his work. I believe that receiving feedback for as many people as possible could be helpful but I am not sure if everyone could be objective or if everyone has the skills to correct papers.*

Student’s B concern was valid, since it has been proved that some students were not willing to give feedback because they felt that they needed more guidance, training or practice on this pedagogy. The absence of a detailed feedback rubric made students to feel that there were not objective criteria that they could follow to give correct feedback. However, it should be mentioned that the students were given a detailed guidance on summary writing that could have been helpful (See Appendices). Orsmond, Mery and Reiling, (2002) confirm that students’ limited linguistic ability discourages them to feel confident and provide feedback. Although the use of rubric is regarded controversial by writing researchers (Crusan, 2015) and it is considered to focus the writers attention only on error correction (Balester, 2012; Weigle, 2007), the researcher might examine the implementation of a rubric that gives the opportunity for positive evaluation, increases reliability, decreases anxiety, promotes transparency and encourages the development of voice (Panadero and Jonsson, 2013)

The issue of the peer feedback rubric will be further analyzed in the section *Problems in Cycle 1.*
Similarly, student J discussed his concern to provide suitable feedback and reflected on his effort to be as much objective as possible while critiquing his peers:

If I must mention a disadvantage in the pedagogy of peer feedback is that sometimes the feedback that you received was not objective, but I believe that after all it is an interesting method of learning. Giving feedback is a procedure that I enjoyed more than receiving feedback, though it was a complicated process since you had to be very diligent and fair with your criticism and pay attention so as to give appropriate feedback.

Students were given the freedom to use apart from a general feedback rubric, other ways to provide feedback using the affordances provided by wikis such as: editing or inserting comments. They could decide on the way and the amount that they would like to intervene to their peers’ essays. In the case of comments, students had to think deeply on the language that they would use so as not to offend or hurt their peers’ feelings. But, as it has been previously mentioned, some students like student G proved to be sensitive to criticism or
others, like student C were discouraged to give feedback because they were afraid of their peers’ reactions. Though the instructor had explained the rationale and the procedure that students had to follow to provide feedback, still students felt that the process could be sometimes unfair and risky. Finally, it can be concluded that the fact that most students had no previous collaborative experience made their interactions more challenging.

4.4 Research question 2

How first-year university students perceive reflection in blogs in the blended learning environment (BLE)?

The introduction of blogs in the writing class aimed to encourage students to reflect on their writing skills and engage them in critical thinking. As it has been previously stated blogs were implemented in the class after students’ familiarization with wikis, to give students enough time to feel comfortable with wiki technology and focus on peer feedback. Data from interviews and blogs were used to investigate how did students perceive reflective writing in blogs. In total, 30 reflective blog posts were coded and labeled. As it can be seen in the table below, students’ engagement level in blogs was not very high.
### Figure 24 Students' engagement in blogs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Number of Posts</th>
<th>Reflection topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student G</td>
<td>2/7</td>
<td>Personal development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student H</td>
<td>4/7</td>
<td>Instructor/ class - writing development-essay topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student A</td>
<td>4/7</td>
<td>Instructor/ class- writing development-essay topics-evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student L</td>
<td>3/7</td>
<td>Instructor/ class- writing development-essay topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student B</td>
<td>1/7</td>
<td>No reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student F</td>
<td>5/7</td>
<td>Instructor/ class- writing development-essay topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student E</td>
<td>4/7</td>
<td>Instructor/ class- writing development-essay topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student J</td>
<td>1/7</td>
<td>Instructor/class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student C</td>
<td>3/7</td>
<td>No reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student K</td>
<td>3/7</td>
<td>No reflections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 25 Major themes emerged from blogs
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major emerged themes from blogs</th>
<th>Extracts form blogs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blogs encouraged self-evaluation</td>
<td>Moreover, when the days have left I was learning better this language especially Grammar rules, many difficult words, Reading and especially communicate and collaborate more easily with my friends here. (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inside this lesson I corrected my mistakes in grammar and vocabulary. Last but not at least, I can communicate with other people in English language. (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I think I need more practice to my English lessons. First, I need to focus more at grammar, also sometimes I lost my way at summaries. But the positive is, I learned more thinks from past and I am little better than past. (L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs encouraged class and instructor evaluation</td>
<td>Because my registration in college was late I have not attended many lessons,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
so my experience here is not big. Although I have learned some things and I have improved my vocabulary and my writing, because in this class we do a lot of exercises here. The lesson is very interesting and we also practice a lot on the internet. This is very important because internet is everywhere nowadays. (A)

Every new week in this course is important for me… I have learning a lot of things and I remember a lot old one! I want to continue in this class, because we can communicate very good with my classmates and with my teacher. (E) I am going to present my experience as a student in English lessons with Anna Bougia. I am very glad, to be in this classroom, the environment is very positive, we are already have used some interesting methods learning English by the internet. (J)

Blogs encouraged reflection on essay topics

All the research about the euthanasia is so complicated and so important at the same time! I find a lot of articles with so valuable information about the problem. When I read them, I’m so confused about what happened in hospitals. (E)

Two days before I listened different
stories about euthanasia and I wrote one also. My experience at this class for this topic was interesting and I think I will make a research at future about Euthanasia and people with disabilities. (L)

The whole experience of writing and finding the articles that we had to study was very helpful, because we had the opportunity to learn things about a very important issue. This exercise also forced me to make thoughts about euthanasia and the rights that have people on his own, or in the others death. (B)

4.4.1 Blogging encouraged exploration on language development, but clearance of goal task and privacy issues discouraged reflection

Although students reported that they preferred wikis to blogs and their engagement level was not very high (see the table below), it can be argued that their engagement encouraged them to evaluate their language development, evaluate class syllabus and instructors’ effectiveness and to reflect on essay topics.

Student G did not engage much in blogs. She expressed her concern about
the content of blogs and particularly about the impact of self-evaluation on instructor’s attitude. She said:

_I did feel comfortable writing in blogs because I believed that you would take into consideration our self-criticism and that would negatively affect you. But at the end I realized that it was helpful writing in blogs because you could reflect on your weaknesses. Though, I believe that there was no reason to reveal them…_

So in her post below student G mainly reflected on the skills that she further advanced in the writing class. She did not focus on her writing skills but described superficially her development in the English class:

_At the first time that I had been in the College was two months ago. When I came here my level was quite advanced and I had the ability to attend the English course fluently and do many presentations during the lesson. Moreover, when the days have left I was learning better this language especially Grammar rules, many difficult words, Reading and especially communicate and collaborate more easily with my friends here._
Contrary to student G who did not benefit from the integration of blogs, it is interesting to note that some students, who did not show strong collaboration skills in wikis, enjoyed writing in blogs and regarded them a helpful reflective experience. Student H reported:

*It was interesting to write in blogs because at the end of the day I could reflect on what we have been taught in class, the knowledge and the skills that we had acquired.*

Student H appreciated blog environment and felt free to share her thoughts not only regarding her language progress, but she also shared personal feelings concerning her student experience.

*Just arrived the end of semester and i would like to express my opinion of English lesson. First, this lesson gave me much knowledge for many issues. I improve my english and my expressions. Inside this lesson i corrected my*
mistakes in grammar and vocabulary. Last but not at least, I can communicate with other people in English language.

Student L was also one of the students that did not engage actively in giving feedback in wikis, but he used blogs to evaluate his strengths and weaknesses. Although he vaguely described his learning progress, he tried to set new goals and tried to focus on his language development.

I have three months at this class. All looks great, the teacher, the students, everything but I think I need more practice to my English lessons. First of all, I need to focus more at grammar, also sometimes I lost my way at summaries. But the positive is, I learned more things from past and I am little better than past. At new year I hope to be an interesting student with more knowledge to English language.
As it has been previously mentioned the focus of this paper was not to analyze the level and quality of students’ reflections but to encourage them to engage in an autonomous learning procedure and understand their perceptions and actions while blogging. Regarding self-evaluation, it should be mentioned that students might not engaged in reflective thinking but there is evidence that they engaged in self-exploration into knowledge and skills, which is a step towards autonomous learning (Clegg, 2004). Students’ attitudes on self-assessment affected their writing and level of engagement in blogs. Student G is an example of student who did not understand the purpose of implementing blogs in class and at the beginning showed a resistance towards self-evaluation. As it has been mentioned before, student G was afraid that if she had written in blogs about her weaknesses the instructor would get negatively affected. Also, student G stated that sometimes she did not know what to write in blogs since there was not a guide for reflective writing. In the same line, student B admitted that writing in blogs was not an enjoying or helpful experience for since her posts would not grade. Concerning self-evaluation in blogs she reported:

*I do not evaluate myself, I do not know why but I think that this is not my responsibility. This is teacher’s role… I cannot support that writing in blogs was important for me because it was not a traditional writing assignment. I mean no one was correcting my paper and I could not see my peers’ blogs, so it was not interesting…*
Goal Clarity, expectations clarity and the form of training can affect students’ engagement in blogging (McGarr and Moody 2010; Sharma 2010; O’Connell and Dyment 2011). Although it was spent time after each writing class to engage students in reflective dialogue before they write their blogs, it was still not clear for most students the nature and value of reflective writing.

The private settings of blogs and the absence of very motivating essay topics was also among the reasons that have been mentioned to influence students’ reflective engagement in blogs. Both student B and student F reflected on their progress and took the chance to share their thoughts on their writing skills after receiving negative and positive peer feedback correspondingly for their presentations about euthanasia. In a nutshell, it can be claimed that oral peer feedback during class discussion triggered reflection. However, this topic will be further discussed in the next section.
4.4.2 Blogging promoted class and instructor evaluation

Personal blogging was used in this study to encourage reflective thinking and give learners the chance to express their concerns on writing in an online environment. As it has been established from the interviews most students had no experience in collaborative-group learning. Many of them reported that they strongly rely on teacher’s skills concerning learning. Since most of the students have learned English in private tutorials it was not surprising that they showed more trust on this method of learning. So, personal blogging was perceived by students as a chance to express their appreciation for their instructor, to evaluate class curriculum and to express their emotional experience in the class. Particularly, students reported that they appreciated the integration of technology in the class, the workshop style teaching, the positive learning environment and the writing curriculum. The instructor was praised for her good communicative skills, the creation of a friendly learning environment, her innovative teaching methodology and her competency to transfer her knowledge. Finally, students expressed their emotions for the blended learning experience: enthusiasm, positivity were the dominated feelings.

Student’s A post is an example of a student who used blogs to reflect on the effectiveness of the blended learning writing class on her progress and the application of acquired knowledge in everyday situations. Student A, also connected previous knowledge with the new and expressed her satisfaction with her language development. The integration of technology in the writing class urged students to practice and experiment with the new tools. The innovative curriculum promoted Student’s A motivation and encouraged her to set new learning goals. Although in another post she had mentioned that technology is not her strong point, she reflected on the possible transferability of these skills in her future life.
Because my registration in college was late I have not attended many lessons, so my experience here is not big. Although I have learned some things and I have improved my vocabulary and my writing, because in this class we do a lot of exercises here. The lesson is very interesting and we also practice a lot on the Internet. This is very important cause internet is everywhere nowadays. Also, because I had to attend English lessons since 2010 I have forgotten many things in grammar, but now I’m starting to remember them again. This class has been very helpful to me and my progress. I’m really excited about that and I hope that in the near future I will learn more things and I will improve more my English in order to be a native speaker. That’s my goal. In the same line, student F assesses his experience in the ESL class, reflects on his weekly progress and stresses the impact of the writing class on his language development. Student F values the positive classroom environment and mainly his teacher’s communicative skills. The collaborative and interactive atmosphere in the class increased students’ motivation.

Hello everybody!!! Every new week in this course is important for me… i have learning a lot of things and I remember a lot old one! I want to continue in this class, because we can communicate very good with my classmates and with my teacher. At the next week, we have the first mid-term for us. We are a little bit nervous but all of us have a big smile. Finally, if i continue with this way i will learn a lot of English in a small time!

Student F, though he was a hard-working student, he attributes both his personal and language development to his instructor. The interaction with the teacher is very important for Greek and Albanian students, since they are educated in teacher-centered learning environments. Teacher has the power to alleviate students’ confidence, inspire them to learn and convince them to engage in learning.
At my first time that i had been in the University of the College was 3 months ago! When i came here my English level was low and didn’t have confidence about my self! My English teacher is very skilled at English and she helps me a lot all this months here to advance my English! Now i’m pretty good at my English and i hope that i will continue to advance my level.

Student E also reflects on the learning gains from the writing class, describes the learning procedure and praises his teacher skills. Since the teacher was the only audience of their blogs, students felt the need to express their satisfaction with the course and to share their feelings with the instructor.

This day is so important for me! I just learn a lot of things about essays. We just read 2 texts, but now i understand a lot of things how to write a correct essay. Also i learned about drags, which can recover some people, and about abortion. Finally, now i know how to start and close my essay with the write way. Thanks to my teacher a lot! Goodbye…

The participants of this study were freshman students and the ESL class is important for their studies, as it is a prerequisite for them to register to University level courses. It is not surprising that most participants discussed the importance of this class for their successful integration in Higher Education. Students’ posts revealed their anticipation that the instructor would lead them to do the next step, to advance their level of English and then to gradually gain their language autonomy.

4.4.3 Interesting essay topics encouraged reflection on the writing process
Euthanasia was the last essay topic that was assigned to students. It was evident during in class discussion that though the topic was demanding, students were willing to engage in class discussions, to make and present their research on the topic and finally to organize a debate. It is interesting to
mention that in 7 out of 22 posts students reflected not only on euthanasia but also on their research and writing experience. Student E reflected on his blogs on the inconsistency of research regarding euthanasia and the ethical concerns that doctors should have. Engaging in research was interesting and challenging for most students since their level of English was not very advanced and their research skills were limited.

**Figure 30 An excerpt from student’s E post on euthanasia**

```
All the research about the euthanasia is so complicated and so important at the same time! I find a lot of articles with so valuable information about the problem. When I read them, I’m so confused about what happened in hospital…. Finally, all the people are bad until you can find exactly what they are doing in their lives! In these days, you mustn’t trust none doctor except if he or she is a good friend. Euthanasia is so bad method and so difficult choice.
```

Student A, also discussed about euthanasia on her blog, but apart from sharing her considerations on the topic she reflected on the quality of her argumentation skills and the content of her essay.

```
This week we had to write an article about euthanasia and if we are against or in favor about it. Personally I’m against it. In my article, I supported that with two arguments that I think that I explained in a very good way. My essay was big enough, and according to my opinion was very interesting. Although, my classmates did not find it very important or serious and I believe that they did not judge me fair.
```

Student A presented her research on euthanasia in class and participated in a debate. Her classmates gave her feedback and graded her presentation. This experience encouraged student A to argue about quality in writing and
The whole experience of writing and finding the articles that we had to study was very helpful, because we had the opportunity to learn things about a very important issue. This exercise also forced me to make thoughts about euthanasia and the rights that have people in his own, or in the others death. In the end, about my presentation I’m very proud because I tried a lot, even I did not take the right grate from my classmates.

Figure 35 Student A shares her reflections on the writing class

Another student that expressed his motivation to learn and write more about the assigned essay topic (euthanasia), student L confirmed that in class dialogue and debate could promote motivation and increase engagement in reflective writing. Student L wrote:

Two days before I listened different stories about euthanasia and I wrote one also. My experience at this class for this topic was interesting and I think I will make a re-search at future about Euthanasia and people with disabilities.
Finally, student F confirmed that the three factors that motivated students to reflect on their writing skills were the in-class debate-presentation, the significance of the essay topic and peer evaluation. During the interviews, many students suggested that reflection on blogs would be a more interesting experience if they were assigned essay topics were more thought provoking. Also, the importance of self-selecting the topics was neglected by the instructor during cycle 1. Student A confirmed:

*Writing summaries in wikis was helpful for our writing development but it did not provide us the opportunity to acquire new knowledge on a topic. So, I can say that this was a disadvantage in the wiki project. On the other hand, when we had to write about euthanasia I was enthusiastic about the topic because I was learning interesting things and I had to do research.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major emerged themes for the implications of using wikis and blogs in the autonomous writing class</th>
<th>Indicative excerpts from interviews and instructor’s reflection log</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Wikis and blogs encouraged students’: collaboration, self-learning via technology and reflection</td>
<td>I found it helpful to work in group, I like to collaborate. I believe that there are students who are more knowledgeable than me and can help me to learn. (H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working with wikis can help you to work collaboratively, to engage in peer evaluation and to improve through this procedure. (J)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Though I was not familiar with technology and at the beginning of the semester I felt weird writing online, then I realized that this is the appropriate way to write assignments…you can learn the language more effectively with the help of technology, you can edit your writing, save and store your assignment in a portfolio… (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing online in wikis and blogs was different from traditional writing. It was very beneficial for my writing development, you could use the internet for self-learning, to check your grammar, you could access your</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An important element of an autonomous learning environment is to provide learners with “opportunities to make significant choices and decisions about their learning” in an informed way (Nunan, 2003, p. 290). This issue should be taken into consideration in cycle 2 since it was found to impact students’ motivation and engagement in the blogging activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Instructor choices on training and tools impacted autonomy</th>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>peers’ assignments, correct your errors, you could improve… (I)</th>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>I was not strict when I was giving feedback. I was just trying to make some corrections to make the text eligible. It is not easy to give feedback. You could be unfair with your peers and affect them negatively. I just wanted to help them understand the purpose of the assignment. (G)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I prefer wikis to blog. In blogs we were writing about our personal development, but that was interesting only for us…(A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

An excerpt from student's G blog on euthanasia.

The articles that I read for Euthanasia were very interesting! At my class, we do an article about Euthanasia and people with disabilities! Then we presented our articles at our classmates and then they graded us about our article! My article graded with 93% and I think I deserve this degree! I will write again…see you soon!

Figure 33 An excerpt from student's G blog on euthanasia
4.5 Research question 3
What are the implications of combining wikis and blogs for teaching autonomous writing?

As it has been stated in the literature, autonomy is defined in this study as the ability of learners to take control of their own learning via meaningful interaction and reflection (Benson and Voller, 1997; Little, 1991; Dickinson, 1995). Analyzing data from students’ interviews, wiki pages, blogs and instructor’s reflection log, two major themes emerged related to: a) students’ autonomous actions in the online environment and b): instructor’s pedagogical and tool choices that affected autonomy according to students’ perceptions. Specifically, the study concluded that the implementation of web 2.0 tools could pave the ground for an autonomous learning writing environment. Though, the choices that instructor made regarding technology and pedagogy impacted the level of students’ online interactions, collaboration, their attitude towards technology and finally, the level of their autonomy. In the section below students’ autonomous activity encouraged by the implementation of web 2.0 technologies in the ESL 2 writing class is being discussed.

4.5.1 Blog and wikis encouraged: Awareness on writing skills, reflection on the writing class, digital literacy and collaboration
Wiki technology could be used as an online writing platform to support collaborative/peer learning, promote students’ awareness on their writing skills, and encourage reflection on the importance of digital literacy. Most students appreciated the collaborative pedagogy and reported that learning how to collaborate was a valuable experience since their had the chance to reflect on their learning style, their collaborative skills, self and time
management skills, sensitivity towards criticism and their social skills. In the excerpt below student H acknowledges the power of collaborative learning in terms of sharing knowledge and viewing peers as learning sources:

*I found it helpful to work in group, I like to collaborate. I believe that there are students who are more knowledgeable than me and can help me to learn.* (H)

Another value of collaborative learning via wikis was the engagement in peer assessment, that though was found to be challenging, engaged students in peer evaluation and awareness of their writing skills. Student J reported:

*Working with wikis can help you to work collaboratively, to engage in peer evaluation and to improve through this procedure.* (J)

In the same line with Lee’s (2008) findings, peer assessments encouraged students to develop their interpersonal skills and evaluate their contribution to the collaborative task and become aware of the need to further develop their interpersonal communication. Self and peer evaluation are major elements of autonomy and are linked to raising awareness and decision-making (Dam and Legenhausen, 2010). Reflection of the acquired knowledge is a prerequisite step prior evaluation. Also, students reflected on their own competencies, strength and weaknesses as well as the progress of their learning process in an online environment.

Digital literacy is also a skill that students acquired to some degree during this project. All participants reported that they were not digitally literate or experienced with the use of technology for language learning. The combination of wikis and blogs in the ESL 2 writing class supported the process writing approach familiarized students’ with: the benefits and challenges of an online writing environment and the concept of portfolio thinking, introduced learners to digital literacy, which is a prerequisite for effective learning in a blended learning environment (Eshet, 2004). Student A described the benefits from the implementation of technology in the class:
Though I was not familiar with technology and at the beginning of the semester I felt weird writing online, then I realized that this is the appropriate way to write assignments...you can learn the language more effectively with the help of technology, you can edit your writing, save and store your assignment in a portfolio... (A)

Ten out of 12 students also emphasized the importance of social interaction via technology and reported that they valued the familiarization with web 2.0 tools since they have become an integral part of the writing process. Student I described his online writing experience and confirms that he managed to improve his skills during the project:

**Writing online in wikis and blogs was different from traditional writing. It was very beneficial for my writing development, you could use the Internet for self-learning, to check your grammar, you could access your peers’ assignments, correct your errors, you could improve... (I)**

Regarding the implementation of blogs, it can be articulated from students’ blog that online writing paved the ground for the cultivation of reflection in language learning. Eleven out of twelve students reported in interviews that they rarely used journals to reflect on their learning. Also, most students stated that they reflected on their progress only when they had to deal with a problem. Though blogging was not as engaging and preferable environment in comparison to wikis, students who blogged systematically showed evidence of reflection on the learning experience and on the assigned essay topics. Blog posts were also helpful for instructor’s reflection. Reading participants post promoted my reflexivity, since I could get feedback for my teaching skills. Students commented on my qualities as an instructor and expressed their enthusiasm for the class. Also, students discussed in blogs strengths and weaknesses of the selected teaching methods, issues in class management and critiqued on class material. Engagement in the task, online interactions, on time task completion and the quality of the assigned tasks were also data that were stored and archived by the blog environment and encouraged me to
reflect on my pedagogical choices.

4.5. 2 Instructor choices on training and tools impacted autonomy

According to data from students’ interviews, peer learning was a challenging and in some occasions a stressful procedure for both advanced level students and low achievers. Although the communication protocol-peer feedback has been discussed in class, students claimed that it was still difficult for them to give feedback without further guidance. Thus, instructors should reassure that the training time is adequate for all the participants; the feedback rubric is well accepted and comprehensible by students’ and the communication protocol satisfies students’ needs.

Another crucial decision that instructor made was the choice of the online collaborative writing platform. The instructor reviewed the literature on the effectiveness of different writing platforms and focused her evaluation on the below criteria: students' satisfaction, interactivity, user friendly and free of cost. Also, the instructor had the chance to use the wikispaces platform to support the ESL writing during Spring 2012 to evaluate the affordances of the platform and reflect on them. The instructor chose the free version of wikispaces.com to support online writing. The collaborative platform was limited to three members. That proved to be a disadvantage for some students that had invited peers to become members of their wiki page, but provided them little or no feedback. Specifically, student I, student L and student K reported that they did not engage regularly in peer feedback not only because they were not willing to interact with their peers, but, also because they were members of a restricted community. Student L pointed out that he was not motivated to write in wikis since his audience was limited and thus the feedback that he received was limited too. Also, student L mentioned that wikis were not” user friendly” and characterized them as “confusing and boring”. Also, student I claimed that he would like to get more feedback since his peers student K and student L did not interact regularly in wikis.
Another choice that instructor made and affected students’ engagement in reflective writing was the privacy of blogs. Though the instructor asked students’ consensus regarding the privacy of the blogs in praxis that proved to discourage some students to post regularly. Student B reported that the blog activity was “not meaningful “for her since she could not communicate with her peers and see their posts. She also mentioned that “since she I would not receive a grade for this activity I thought that it was not important”. So, grading is a key factor for students and should be considered in the next cycle. Reflection was not a natural habit for many of the participants of this study and blog environment discouraged participants to share their thoughts and feelings with the instructor via online writing. Finally, student B reported that though she had realized during this project the importance of technology in her academic life, she was not able to “interact with the computer”.

In the same line student C mentioned:” It was difficult to write about me and
my feelings in an online environment. I was not familiar with technology and I needed to take my time to feel comfortable writing online. I know that I have to learn how to use technology and I would not suggest you change the tool, but personally I have connected the production of writing with the paper.” Also, the language was a barrier for me since I do not have an advanced level of English to adequately express my feelings”

Student’s C and student’s B comments on the use of blogs as an environment for reflective writing highlighted the importance of introducing reflection as a natural habit and not as part of a learning task. However, it cannot be concluded that blogging could not be an effective environment for reflection since other students reported that they benefited from online writing in regard to self-evaluation. Instead it can be suggested that students should be given choices concerning tools and language to reassure that they engage in a meaningful experience.

Training choices and evaluation criteria could also affect students’ autonomous behavior in wikis and blogs. The instructor spent two weeks in total to introduce students to wikis and blogs technology. In class discussion, videos and posts in wikis and blogs were written from the instructor to further inform students on the significance of web 2.0 tools in Higher Education. This had a positive effect on students’ attitude towards the use of technology and even students that were technophobic such as student D, student C and student B. reported that this project helped them to realize the affordances of technology.

Figure 35 Reflections and identifications of problems at the end of Cycle 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning problems in wikis</th>
<th>Data from interviews – wikis</th>
<th>Learning problems in blogs</th>
<th>Data from interviews – blogs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback was not timely or consistent for all students</td>
<td>Poor time management skills</td>
<td>Reflective writing was not goal oriented</td>
<td>Students posts were mainly descriptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback was not actionable- interaction was low</td>
<td>Students did not report many benefits from feedback but from peer reading</td>
<td>Reflective writing in blogs was not focused on the writing activity</td>
<td>Students reflected mainly on class experience, instructor evaluation and essay topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance to peer feedback and criticism</td>
<td>Students reported that they do not rely on peer feedback</td>
<td>Students expressed their preference for a public reflective dialogue</td>
<td>Students suggested that dialogue triggers their reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback training/ general rubric was inadequate</td>
<td>Students reported that they felt bad when they could not give feedback due to lack of competence</td>
<td>Reflective writing in blog did not satisfy students</td>
<td>Absence of a clear goal &amp; Limited audience discouraged students to write on line</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6 Chapter summary-reflections and identifications of learning problems at the end of Cycle 1

This chapter discussed major finding of cycle one in reply to each of the research questions. Question 1 focused on investigating students’ perceptions for peer feedback in wikis. Students revealed that engagement in peer reading and not peer feedback per se enhanced their writing skills awareness. Also, students reported that the quality of peer feedback comments was not always effective and expressed their preference towards instructor’s feedback. Finally, students viewed peer feedback as a stressful and responsible activity and expressed concerns for their competency to provide high quality feedback.

Question 2 investigated how students perceived reflection in blogs. Interview questions and students’ reflection posts were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. Blogging activity was not perceived as important as wikis. Students expressed limited task awareness and reported that they did not engage regularly in blogging. Though analysis of students’ blogs revealed that students used blogs to reflect on class material, instructor’s competency, to evaluate essay topics and make self-assessment.

The results to Question 3 were found by analyzing interview questions by focusing on elements of autonomy. Data revealed that the implementation of blogs and wikis encouraged awareness in writing skills, reflection in the writing class, cultivated digital literacy skills and collaboration skills. Reflection and positive interdependence are major elements of autonomy. Identification of learning problems in cycle 1 was crucial for enhancing the quality of teaching in cycle 2. Data from students’ interviews showcased that instructor’s choices on pedagogy and tools impacted autonomy. Particularly, the students ‘biggest problem in wikis was the limitation of members that kept their only community restricted to 5 participants. Also, the asynchronous e-learning environment posed challenges for students’ online collaboration. Regarding peer feedback, students suggested that a more analytical feedback rubric
would be helpful in terms of quality and trust. Also, eleven out of twelve students suggested that though they enjoyed collaborative learning, they needed more time to familiarize with this teaching methodology. Research confirms (Vaughan and Garrison, 2006) that participants in a CoI need time to develop and project themselves emotionally and academically in the CoI. Some students did not feel emotionally secure to engage in open communication, others did not feel the responsibility to and sense of commitment as members of the community. Establishing social presence should be the primary concern of Cycle 2. Blended learning research (Vaughan and Garrison, 2006) capitalizes the major role of media in stimulating purposeful and reflective interaction. Taking this into consideration the researcher decided to implement new media in Cycle 2 so as to strengthen his online presence and shape online interaction into reflective and critical discourse. The ultimate goal is to create a CoI where learners are fully engaged and autonomous. Regarding blogs, eleven out of twelve students claimed that they prefer to discuss their reflections instead of writing them online. Also, many students argued that the purpose of blogging was not clear for them and reflective writing was not goal oriented. This critique refers to my teaching methodology and I must address it in Cycle 2. Hashimoto (2012) suggests that instructors that implement reflection activities should promote task-knowledge, self-knowledge, and strategic knowledge. Instructors should emphasize the goals of the reflective task and help students to understand what kind of responsibility is required to take on for their learning. In the Figure 41 above, an overview of the problems in Cycle 1 is provided. The next chapter discusses the research design of Cycle 2, explains instructor’s changes in pedagogy and tools and analyzes the finding of the study.
CHAPTER IV

Cycle 2: Data analysis and discussion

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of my research is to expand what is known about integrating web 2.0 tools in the ESL writing class, in the context of an action research project that seeks to empower students to take control of their writing and become autonomous learners. To accomplish this purpose, I documented the process of online peer feedback and video reflections, I describe the perceived impact of these pedagogies on students’ autonomous writing and draw lessons from an action research qualitative project that attempted to accelerate learning and innovation at the English Department of the College. This chapter is organized according to my three research questions.

In the first section of this chapter, I take up Research Question 1: How first year university students perceive peer-feedback in Google Drive in the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?

In this section, I will analyze what my findings (interviews-on-line data) revealed about the effect of peer feedback interactions in Google Drive environment on the management of their learning through the use of metacognitive strategies.

In the second section, I consider Research Question 2: How first-year university students perceive reflection in Vlogs the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?

The answers to these questions are based upon participants’ interview responses and video reflection data.
In the third section, I will discuss Research Question 3: “What are the implications of combining Google Drive and Vlogs for teaching autonomous writing in the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?”

Here, I will analyze the positive contributing roles and potential drawbacks of online peer feedback and video reflection into the writing class and specifically implications for teaching autonomous writing.
5.2 Outline of the Action Research process: Cycle 2

Taking into consideration learning problems in Cycle 1, a new cycle of action was designed.

**Plan:** The instructor identified the learning problems that ESL students had regarding interactivity in wikis and introduced a more flexible online writing platform, Google Docs. Also, to enhance students’ feedback skills and advance the quality of peer feedback, a guided feedback rubric was given for all writing assignments.

The limited use of blogs and students’ inadequate awareness on the role of reflective writing urged the instructor to replace blogs with vlogs so as to make reflection part of students’ oral practice and motivate them to speak about their writing skills.

After careful consideration of possible problems the instructor designed the below action plan which lasted 15 weeks, with the aim to promote students autonomy in writing by advancing their collaborative skills and developing their reflection.

**Act:** This stage describes instructor and student’s actions towards the enhancement of autonomy in writing via the implementation of Google Docs and Vlogs.

**Action 1**

The instructor: Introduced students to Google Docs, a synchronous online writing platform, trained them and asked them to use the platform for their writing assignments.

Students: Created a Gmail account and a portfolio in Google Drive, where they practiced writing in Google Docs.

**Action 2**

The instructor: Introduced students to the concept of peer feedback and shared with them a feedback rubric. Finally, asked them to share their portfolio with two or more of their peers so as to be able to provide them feedback.

Students: Practiced giving and receiving feedback in Google Docs.

**Action 3**
Instructor: Introduced students to Vlogs and discussed the importance reflection in the writing class. Students' were asked to record their reflections on the writing class following a reflection rubric and post their reflections in YouTube or share them in Gmail.

Students: Created their Vlogs based on the reflection rubric and shared them with the instructor in Gmail.

Observe
Google Docs activity: The instructor monitored students’ activity in Google Docs and intervened in cases that students did not receive feedback from their member-peers or received poor feedback.
Vlog activity: The instructor monitored Vlog activity, orally commented on students’ vlogs, encouraged them to continue vlogging and presented examples of good practice in class.

Share
Preliminary data on the Action Plan for Cycle 2 were disseminated in IATEFL international conference, Digital ELT Ireland in November 2015.

Reflect
Reflections on the findings are critically discussed in detail at the end of the chapter.

5.2.1 Participants’ brief description
This cycle includes a total of 12 non-native English speakers college students who enrolled in ESL 3 class in Spring Semester 2015. Ten of the students were freshmen Bachelor students who registered in the College, while 2 of them were M.B.A students. The table below gives demographic information about research participants. Following, brief information of the selected participants is presented.

Figure 36 Participants in Cycle 2
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student A</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Albanian</td>
<td>B.Sc. Psychology</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student B</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>B.A Communication</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student C</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>B.Sc. Psychology</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student D</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kongolese</td>
<td>B.Sc. Computer Science</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student E</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>B.Sc. Psychology</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student F</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>B.Sc. Computer Science</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student G</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>B.Sc. Business</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student H</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>B.A International Relations</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student I</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>B.A International Relations</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student J</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>B.Sc. Business</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student K</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>M.B.A</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student L</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>B.A Communication</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student A** is a female, first-year Albanian student majoring in Psychology. She has attended an intensive English summer course in the College in order
to get prepared for the TOEFL exams. Her previous experience in learning English was in a tuition school (frondistirio) two years ago. She described it as a good experience since she passed successfully the Michigan ECCE exams. Student A is a highly motivated learner who participates in all class activities and attends seminars for self-development.

**Student B** is a Greek male freshman Communication student. He has been learning English for 5 years in a tuition school and he has passed successfully the Michigan ECCE exams. He reported that he wants to work as a TV presenter so he is really interested in learning how to write effectively using social media tools and specifically he wanted to familiarize with the video presentation. He is a very stressed student who has low-self esteem and is afraid of written exams. However he is working very hard to overcome this issue.

**Student C** is a Greek female undergraduate Psychology student. She is an enthusiastic language learner and she loves using technology for her studies. Her previous experience in learning English was at High School. Though she did not participate in any language exams. She is a collaborative learner that enjoys working in teams and she reported that she believes in the power of group work.

**Student D** is a female undergraduate Computer Science student in her second year of studying English in the College. Her native language is Swahili as she comes from the Democratic Republic of Kongo. She understands and speaks Greek at an intermediate level but she prefers to communicate with her peers in English. Student C stated that she enjoyed the integration of technology in the class but she was reluctant to reflect on her writing skills.

**Student E** is a female undergraduate student majoring in Psychology. She was born and raised in Poland. Although she understands some Greek she is not speaking Greek with her peers, but she uses English to communicate
inside and outside the college. This is her first year formally studying English in a class as in the past she preferred to take one-on one tutorials. She expressed her satisfaction on individual learning as she describes herself as a highly motivated student.

**Student F** is a Greek male freshman student majoring in Computer Science. He is motivated to improve his language level and he reported that writing is very important for his studies. Though he did not engage systematically in all feedback activities he claimed that he benefited from the collaboration with his peers and he particularly enjoyed giving feedback.

**Student G** is a Greek male undergraduate Business student. He is not a confident language learner and he finds learning English really challenging. He specifically expressed his weakness in writing. Student G did not engage systematically in giving feedback and he did not engage in video reflection.

**Student H** is a Greek female undergraduate in International Relations. She is interested in language learning and she is fluent in French and Japanese. Student H has been learning English in the College for two years in my ESL classes. She always expressed her anxiety towards the integration of technology in the class and particularly about the use of videos.

**Student I** is a Greek female undergraduate in International Relations and she has been learning English in the College for two years in my ESL classes. She is not a very confident learner and she is not very familiar with the use of technology. She is motivated to improve her writing skills and she is mainly interested in research.

**Student J** is a Greek male freshman in Business Administration. He has been learning English for five years in a tuition school. He is not confident with his writing skills and he did not engage systematically in writing activities. He
reported that he enjoyed collaborative learning and he benefited from peer feedback but he did not like the integration of videos for reflection.

**Student K** is a Georgian female postgraduate student. She is a motivated language learner who appreciated the use of technology in the class. She engaged systematically in peer feedback and video reflection and she reported that she enjoyed learning in a group.

**Student L** is a Greek undergraduate Communication student. He is a very stressed student who is not confident with his writing skills. He reported that the use of technology in the class was challenging for him and especially the use of video. Though he managed to complete all his writing assignments and he engaged in feedback activities, he did not complete video reflection activities.
5.2.2 The ESL 3 writing class

ESL 3 is an Advanced level English class that aims to introduce students to the principles of academic writing, enhance their planning, drafting and revising skills and to familiarize them with several types of essays (problem-solution, cause and effect, descriptive, argumentative). The goal of the course is to prepare students for the challenges of academic reading and writing and encourage their autonomy via engagement in peer-review writing activities, on-line research for out of class sources, collaboration and interaction with their peers and reflection. The figure below illustrates the development of the “Digital noisis model” in Cycle 2.

Figure 37 "Digital noisis" model Cycle 2

Stage 0: Modeling

Instructor and peers discuss analyze texts structure, content and language and trains students in the use of Google Docs and creation

Writing Resources: The instructor uploads models/samples of good practice in Google docs

Autonomy development: Digital literacy skills, confidence
Stage 1: Prewriting: brainstorming activities/group discussion

Writing tool: Students write their essay plan and insert useful resources with their peers on a shared document in Google Docs.

Audience: peers/instructor

Autonomy development: collaboration, interdependence, responsibility, active participation, research skills, interaction,

Stage 2: Drafting

Writing tool:

Audience: all peers and instructor

Autonomy development: collaboration, interdependence, responsibility, active participation, research skills, interaction,

Stage 3: Revising

Writing tool and process: 2 peers leave comments on Google docs based on a feedback rubric.

Audience: free to share with all peers and instructor

Autonomy development: critical thinking, evaluation, responsibility, interdependence, collaboration, confidence, problem-solving

Stage 4: Editing-Publishing

Writing tool and process: students accept or decline their peers’ feedback in Google docs. The instructor adds his final comments and the student publish the final document

Audience: free to share with all peers and instructor
Autonomy development: critical thinking, self-evaluation, collaboration

Stage 5: Reflection

Writing tool: Students create a vlog and reflect orally on their writing experience following a reflection rubric

Audience: instructor/peers

Autonomy development: active engagement, creativity, self-reflection, critical thinking, confidence, motivation, self-management, self-appraisal

5.2.3 Research design

The first day of the ESL 3 Course I welcomed the class introduced myself and then let the students have a brief presentation of who they were, came from, and why they have chosen to study in the College. Some students have already known me since I was their instructor in the ESL 2 class, so my presentation was short and I allowed students to get to know to each other since the nature of this course focuses on collaboration.

The first day of the class I did not write down notes in my journal since my main concern was on the overall feeling with the class and how the interaction between the class and me as an instructor was going to be. I was not very stressed since I had the chance to meet with the ESL students during the Intensive IELTS summer classes that the College has initiated to support freshmen students. What I noticed from the first time that I entered in this class was that the atmosphere was “positive and friendly”.

After students were comfortable with the environment, I went through the syllabus to explain the goals and objectives of ESL 3 and I mainly focused on the writing IELTS portfolio that students had to submit to pass successfully the
class. Next, I explained students that I am going to introduce them to an innovative approach of writing with the help of technology and particularly Google Drive and videos. Students were informed that I am a PhD candidate and I am interested in the use of technology in the academic writing class. Before moving to the explanations of the writing syllabus I showed to students a video on the Power of New Media and I asked them how comfortable they feel with technology and videos. Although I know that students use smartphones in their daily life I wanted to observe students’ reactions and feelings towards technology. All students reported that they are confident with the use of technology.

The next step that was important for me at the time was to explain the writing requirements of the ESL course, the deadlines and the procedure that students were required to follow. First, I explained that in IELTS writing students need to familiarize mainly with four different types of essay: reports, problem-solution essays, cause and effect essays and argumentative essays. The book that I recommended students to buy for the class is: *Great writing 4: Great essays* (Keith et al., 2015). My first goal was to make students understand that academic writing and academic reading is skills that are interconnected. Next, I explained the importance of feedback and reflection in academic writing and discussed principles of good feedback and elements of reflection. Particularly, I demonstrated to students’ examples of good practice from Cycle 1 activities in wikis and blogs and we discussed on the effectiveness of these pedagogies. Second goal was to train students on how to use Google drive and train them during class time to take advantages of the tools that this platform has such as: personal dictionary, research tool, reference tool, sharing features and translation. Third goal was to practice giving feedback at the beginning following the IELTS band descriptor and next using the feedback forms that I had prepared for each writing assignment (See appendices). This procedure took place during second week-the report assignment and is not included in data. Final goal was to discuss with students the reflection prompt and present them a reflective video that I had prepared to talk about my teaching experience. In the table below there is a
detailed timeline of the writing class. In total students were required to write 3 writing assignments: a cause and effect essay, a problem solution essay and an argumentative essay, to contribute to the shared essay plan in Google Docs, to give feedback to at least one of their classmates for each assignment and finally to prepare 1 reflection video for each assignment. Students had 1 week to complete a first draft and were given one more week to give and receive feedback and prepare the reflection video. After successful completion of this process, the instructor was giving the final feedback and final grade. Students were receiving an email every week with guidelines on their assignments to reassure that everyone has understood the requirements of the writing class and will not miss the deadlines.

Figure 38 Assignments timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Writing Assignment</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Videos</th>
<th>Instructor’s Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1 – October 15th</td>
<td>Introduction to report writing/ Focus on Comparison Report (This assignment is not included in the data).</td>
<td>Only the instructor evaluated this assignment. Principles of good feedback were discussed. But, the instructor explained them the IELTS Band writing descriptor.</td>
<td>Instructor showed to student’s examples of video activities from the students.</td>
<td>Students familiarized with the use of Google Drive and explored its potentials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2 – October 15th</td>
<td>Submission of 1st In class feedback on</td>
<td>In class feedback on</td>
<td></td>
<td>Instructor focused on using</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Assignment</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22nd</td>
<td>assignment: Comparison Report</td>
<td>students’ reports</td>
<td>Google drive not only as a writing platform but as a research tool as well.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3-Oct 29th</td>
<td>Introduction to Cause and Effect Essay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4-Nov 5th</td>
<td>1st Draft of cause and Effect essay</td>
<td>Familiarization with the cause and effect feedback form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5-Nov 12th</td>
<td>Final Draft of cause and effect essay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6-Nov 19th</td>
<td>No assignment Introduction to Problem-Solution Essays</td>
<td>Instructor’s Feedback &amp; Final Grade</td>
<td>1st Video reflection deadline Class Discussion on videos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7-Nov 26th</td>
<td>1st Draft of problem –solution essay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8-Dec 3rd</td>
<td>Final Draft of Problem solution essay</td>
<td>2nd video reflection deadline</td>
<td>Class discussion on videos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 9-Dec</td>
<td>No assignment Introduction to</td>
<td>Instructor’s feedback-final</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Assignment</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
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<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>Argumentative essay</td>
<td>grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 10-</td>
<td>First Draft of Argumentative essay</td>
<td>Familiarization with the argumentative essay feedback form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17th</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 11-</td>
<td>NO ASSIGNMENTS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holidays/ No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 12-</td>
<td>NO ASSIGNMENTS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holidays/ No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 13-</td>
<td>Final Draft of Argumentative essay</td>
<td>Feedback form Submission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td></td>
<td>3rd Video Reflection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td></td>
<td>Class discussion on reflection videos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 14-</td>
<td>Last day to make final revisions and changes to the writing portfolio.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>14th</td>
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<td>Week 15-</td>
<td>No assignments Video interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 16-</td>
<td>NO</td>
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5.2.4 Data coding and analysis

Because the study was a small-scale action research consisting of 12 participants with semi-structured interviews, 3 feedback documents and 3 reflection videos for each participant accordingly, as Merriam (2009) and Saldaña (2009) suggested, I coded the data manually. Coding is the process of assigning a marker to the data collected (Hood, 2009). Miles and Huberman (1994) assert that coding alone does not produce the level of insight required by a qualitative research; rather, “we need to understand the patterns, the recurrences, the plausible whys” (p. 69). Creswell (2007) encouraged qualitative researchers to “look for code segments that can be used to describe information and develop themes” (p. 153). While Simons (2009) made a clear distinction between data analysis and data interpretation, separating coding and categorization from the holistic understanding and interpretation of data, these steps in this research project have occurred in some occasions simultaneously and in synergy. Adopting an inductive thematic coding approach, and based on the research questions a code list was developed. In the process, the data was triangulated when possible (e.g. interview transcripts matched with online reflection data and peer feedback documents).
### Major emerged themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online feedback</th>
<th>and</th>
<th>Video reflection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
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<td>Themes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interdependence</td>
<td></td>
<td>Self evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language awareness</td>
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<td>Reflection on the writing task</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitor the LL progress</td>
<td></td>
<td>Confidence in writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contribute to other’s autonomy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Goal setting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plan the task</td>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness of writing strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task awareness</td>
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<td>Self evaluation</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions for peer feedback</td>
<td>Data from Interviews</td>
<td>Interview questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language Awareness Notification, Attention</td>
<td>Your peers who would possibly do similar mistakes inform you about your mistakes (A) I could pay attention to my mistakes (B) I believe that it is very important to give feedback because I can improve my writing skills and I can see potential errors. (E) Giving or receiving feedback from another student is very good because when you write something you think that it is correct and maybe you do not see the mistakes that you make but when you receive some feedback you can notice your errors and correct them; I think this is very helpful...(D)</td>
<td>After giving feedback I sometimes made</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning from others-positive interdependence</td>
<td>corrections to my writing as well (F)</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>You could notice the way that they compose and improve through that... (B) When you read an essay that is different from yours you can get ideas from others writing... (H) A peer might write an essay that is better than mine and I can take it as an example and learn through his writing ...(I) When you read an essay that is different from yours you can get ideas from others writing...(F) Giving feedback was useful because to give feedback you had to read essays so by reading you could get some ideas in order to improve your writing...(B) I trusted my peers. Every comment was different. Everyone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-evaluation</td>
<td>Giving feedback was helpful regarding evaluation, I mean you could enhance your critical thinking skills and be able to evaluate your own writing task and improve... (E) Giving feedback was very helpful for me because I could notice my peers’ errors so as not to do the same errors in my writing I could understand where I had to pay attention and it helped me to improve my critical thinking skills (B) For example if I had a</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
difficulty writing the introduction or the main body, I could have a look at someone’s essay and think what I could have done…I was reflecting that I should be more careful in my next writing (D)

Looking at someone else’s essay and I could evaluate mine and check whether they are similar or whether I have done something wrong…(C)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Monitor your progress</strong>: Checking, verifying or correcting one’s comprehension or performance (Chamot and Kupper, 1989, p.15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I tried to use most of feedback questions for my own essay as well (H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I used feedback questions for my essays as well (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I used the feedback questions to check whether I was out of subject or if I had forgotten to answer something (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the feedback questions was easy and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task awareness: Understanding task requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plan the essay task</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
by step and it was easy...(E)
Feedback questions were useful because they were very specific and guided me step by step...(C)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributing to other’s autonomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>While giving feedback I felt that that I was helping my peers and I was trying to improve their weak points (H) Feedback was also useful because I had the chance to help my peers... (C) Feedback questions were rather useful but I was also helped by the way that my peers answered these questions, it was a way for me to get familiar with the feedback procedure and reassure that I am going to give good feedback... (H) It was quite helpful to give feedback because I had to be on teacher’s shoes... for instance I had a different stance... (E)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
towards writing while writing an essay and a different attitude when I was reading someone else's essay. I had the opportunity to take the writing task more seriously. Both giving and receiving feedback was useful because I could notice my weak points by correcting others’ essays and looking at my peers’ corrections and I could improve...(B)

5.3 Research question 1

5.3.1 Online peer feedback encouraged cooperation and interdependence

Developing learners who are willing to take responsibility for their own learning in an online learning environment is regarded as a 21st century skill in Higher Education. Learning cannot be separated from context, so in today’s global education environment learning independently and learning in collaboration with others are of equal value and are considered a need for young professional. The participants in this project managed to shift the traditional student-teacher balance, take advantage of the online learner-centered environment and co-create knowledge as partners (Lamb, 2008).
Specifically, students reported that mainly benefited from giving and receiving feedback on specific content knowledge on the essay topic, on the use of writing strategies and on brainstorming.

A student reported:

*When you read an essay that is different from yours you can get ideas from others’ writings.*

It is important that students regard not only their instructor but also their peers as source of knowledge.

Another student confirmed that reading their peers’ essay was an activity that encouraged them to brainstorm and get inspiration for their own writing:

*Giving feedback was useful because to give feedback you had to read essays so by reading you could get some ideas in order to improve your writing.*

Autonomous individuals exhibit flexibility and openness and enjoy the exposure to new ideas without feeling threatened (Hodgins and Knee, 2002). Tolerance and acceptance of others’ ideas is an important individual characteristic in order to benefit from feedback and it is also related to culture sensitivity. Students enjoyed sharing ideas from peers with different cultural background, namely: African, Polish, Georgian, Albanian and Greek.

This study confirms Oxhevd’s (2013) finding and reports that students’ engagement in peer assessment via Google Docs had a positive impact on students’ responsible and collaborative attitude while interacting with their peers. Feedback, as a social interaction activity encouraged learners to put themselves in the center of the learning process and contribute to knowledge creation while working cooperatively and engaging in learning conversations for the writing task. Although reading essays is a cognitively demanding task, which is mainly focused on error correction, and it is traditionally regarded as teacher’s task, none of the participants complained about cognitive overload during the project. Also, participants did not seek opportunities for negative evaluation or error correction but they concentrated on getting mutual benefit
from their social interactions. Learners emerged in a meaning learning social interaction and valued their peers’ writing as authentic source of knowledge. It can be supported that peer activity in this project “is the process by which learners are integrated into a knowledge community” (Woo & Reeves, 2007, p. 18) and remain open to new ideas.

Another interesting aspect of peer interdependence is that students used their peers’ essays as an additional input for learning writing strategies:

*By giving feedback you could notice the way that they compose and improve through that.*

Exposure to different writing styles encouraged students to benefit from this open sharing environment and appreciate their peers as authors. Academic writing is challenging and usually students ask for model papers to have them as a guide. Taking examples from original papers in class cultivates an academic community of interdependence not only among students but also among future professionals in academia. Creating a knowledge sharing culture in the University is more important than sharing only information. In an interactive web 2 environment students can transfer logical, rational knowledge and emotional support (Boud, Cohen and Sampson, 2001). Knowledge sharing shows willingness to be challenged and openness to change. There are some determinant factors that may positively affect knowledge sharing such as cognition-based trust and affect-based trust (Chowdhury, 2005; Holste & Fields, 2010; Zhou, Siu and Wang, 2010).

Another student confirmed that in an online sharing environment peers could be seen as sources of tacit knowledge:

*A peer might write an essay that is better than mine and I can take it as an example and learn through his writing.*

Regarding conditions that encouraged knowledge sharing, participants reported trust on peers’ cognitive abilities and emotional trust:
I trusted my peers. Every comment was different. Everyone could comment on what he liked or didn’t like about the essay, so that was very good.

Contrary to cycle 1, where trust was found to negatively affect students’ attitude to peer feedback, in cycle 2 none of the students expressed concerns for the quality of peer feedback, or exhibited any emotional difficulty towards sharing. Also students appreciated the plurality of opinions in the online environment and acknowledged learning from others experiences. Murrell (2001) suggested that experiential learning placed learning in the context of lived world. Students reported that they enjoyed receiving feedback and supported that it was as good as instructor’s feedback:

*Receiving feedback from peers did not have many differences from instructor’s feedback… I had the chance to see how my peers evaluate my effort.*

Lee (1997) recommended that: “it is important that students work in a pair or a group where they feel comfortable. They also need to develop trust in each other” (p. 63). The fact that students had the choice to work with peers that they have selected as partners influenced positively the community of trust.

Finally, similarly to Kongchan’s findings, the participants in Cycle 2 were satisfied with the affordances of the Google Docs environment and felt free to share knowledge, resources and ideas in a user friendly online CoI. The environment encouraged the development of a strong social presence, a key element for a successful CoI (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).
5.3.2 Peer feedback encouraged language awareness

The community of trust that has been created by the participants during online and in class collaboration had also a positive impact on students’ attitude towards corrective feedback. Specifically, students reported that both giving and receiving feedback triggered their attention to formal aspects of language and urged them to question their own or others’ language use (Swain and Lapkin, 2001). A student reported:

*Receiving feedback was helpful because your peers, who would possibly do similar mistakes, inform you about your errors.*

Contrary to cycle 1 that some students reported that they did trust their peers’ linguistic skills and thus they doubted the effectiveness of feedback on raising awareness of their linguistic problems in cycle 2 students reported that they viewed their classmates as learning resources. This is not a surprising fact as feedback in cycle 2 was guided by a rubric, so feedback was somehow teacher-controlled. Also, most students contributed almost equally to feedback activities and thus students had no complains about that quality of corrective feedback that they received. Changing students’ training for giving feedback and spending class time for cultivating a collaborative atmosphere in an online environment improved the process of bidirectional feedback and promoted language awareness in peer interaction.

*Giving or receiving feedback from another student is very good because when you write something you think that it is correct and maybe you do not see the mistakes that you make but when you receive some feedback you can notice your errors and correct them; I think this is very helpful.*

Noticing, a cognitive process that has been activated from feedback, shifts students’ attention to the location of an error, pushes learners to a deeper cognitive engagement and can lead to language awareness (Svalberg, 2007). The explicitness of feedback is also a factor that can influence learners’
awareness. Contrary to cycle 1, where students engaged in direct feedback, in cycle 2 students gave indirect feedback following the instructor’s’ guided rubric and this process was evaluated by their peers as effective for their language development. Indirect feedback leaded to self-correction. Students’ acted autonomously and monitored their writing (Ferris, 2006; 2011) based on peer guidance. The fact that peers reviewed essay drafts before the instructor created a relaxed and non-judgmental learning environment. Students’ interacted with their peers in a mutual learning arena without the stress of being officially evaluated for their assignment, provided support and guidance to each other and managed to develop a more comprehensive idea of their own L2 knowledge (Ellis & Larsen-Freeman, 2006; Hall, 2004; Larsen-Freeman, 2007; Swain, Brooks, & Tocalli-Beller, 2002; Swain & Deters, 2007). It can be supported that the learners in cycle 2 were able to detect not only their partners’ language production but also to notice and correct simultaneously errors in their own speech. This manifests learners’ awareness of the fact that language control and production does not depend only on explicit teacher instruction but can be also ameliorated during meaningful peer interaction and during collaborative autonomous work on linguistic problems. Also, a Student reported raising language awareness can lead to language development. The students of cycle 2 recognized the value of peer feedback in strengthening their writing skills:

*I believe that it is very important to give feedback because I can improve my writing skills and I can see potential errors. After giving feedback, I sometimes made corrections to my writing as well.*

Learners engaged in focus on form and focus on content episodes while giving and receiving feedback and paid extra attention to language. This process urged them to notice and understand the use of language in specific writing tasks by applying recently acquired knowledge to give guidance to their peers. Students made explicit comments on their peers vocabulary, grammar, structure, argumentation, and cohesion and provided solutions. Student’s C completed peer feedback form for an opinion essay is an
example of a student that exhibited via feedback awareness on the structure, form, content of an opinion essay:

Your introduction it’s too small, you can write more things to improve it a little bit. You are not specific you just mention the topic nothing else. You can write your opinion or the you can explain a little bit more the topic.

In the second paragraph i don't understand what you want to say. Also, you say that you'll talk about the positive things you write three setenses and then in the same paragraph you start to talk about the negative things, you do the same in third paragraph. This is so confusing, you need to organise your ideas. In the second paragraph write the positive things and give examples to support your ideas and in the third paragraph write the negative things and do the same. Another thing is that you have a lot grammatical mistakes, review your grammar so you can write your setenses in the right grammatical structure.

In your conclusion, you propose a solution which is good but again it’s small. You can write your viewpoint to improve it. In general, your essay it’s small, you wrote 227 words and the limit is approximately 250.

It is interesting to note that although at the original peer feedback checklist (see Appendices) there are no questions about grammar competency or word limit, student C made additional comments for her peer. This behavior shows that the student was on language alert and engaged in this process with the aim to sharpen her language awareness skills and pass that knowledge to her peers as well. So, she contributed as much as possible to accomplish this purpose: linguistic awareness.
5.3.3 Peer feedback as a process of contributing to others’ autonomy

Students’ engagement with the feedback process was enthusiastic during the project. As an instructor, I was amazed by students’ willingness to help their peers either by sharing resources and their essay plan in Google drive or by completing the peer feedback forms. Five out of twelve students made lengthy comments in their effort to give guidance to their peers. Students’ did not follow only the rubric but they made additional comments on form and content and also encouraged their peers’ effort. Students’ understood that they are all members of the same writing community and they share a common goal: to improve their writing skills. To accomplish this goal, they realized that they have to collaborate and co-construct knowledge. Students’ felt committed to help their peers, since they knew that the instructor would intervene only for giving the final grade. Student F explained that during peer feedback he felt that he had the responsibility to contribute to his peers’ progress:

*It was quite helpful to give feedback because I had to be in teacher’s shoes…for instance I had a different standpoint towards writing while writing an essay and a different attitude when I was reading someone else’s essay. I had the opportunity to take the writing task more seriously...*

It can be supported that the student claims that he felt the inner need to respect his peers and change his attitude towards writing. Castoriadis, conceptualizes autonomy as an ongoing social project and he claims that there is an imperative need to “Become autonomous and contribute as much as you can to others’ becoming autonomous. Respect for others can be required because they are, always, bearers of a virtual autonomy-not because they are persons (1997, p. 402). Autonomy cannot only be viewed as an exercise of free will; online environments call on a more extensive range of skills such as sociality, helping others, exercising fairness, altruism and reciprocity (Tuomela, 2007). In social contexts learners have more choices but also they inevitably face group pressure or social commitment to participate and espouse shared goals. This collective commitment is
accordin according to Tuomela the stronger kind of cooperation and it is called we-mode cooperation (2007, p. 56).

Being in teacher’s shoes helped the students to deal with the challenges of writing both as authors and as reviewers. This reciprocal benefit of peer feedback is valued by the students’ who documented that writing is a social activity that can be enriched not only by working towards our personal autonomy but primarily by contributing to other’s autonomy.

Student E expressed her opinion on the effectiveness of feedback and stated that:

*Both giving and receiving feedback was useful because I could notice my weak points by correcting others’ essays and looking at my peers’ corrections and I could improve.*

Student E believes that the road towards personal autonomy is not lonely but social. Helping your peers is important for your own self-regulation. Milena exhibited an altruistic behavior during giving feedback. Taking into consideration the argumentative essay peer feedback form (See Appendices) she answered the questions in the checklist and also made additional in text comment to her peers’ essay. Below is an extract of an argumentative essay that student E reviewed and commented:

*Figure 40 Extract from an argumentative essay*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essay Topic: World Hunger/ Food Shortage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For healthy and proper performance of our body, every human (man, woman, children) must be well fed, and the food which is defined as any substance serve food has a living being should be made available and the doors of all. This expression cannot be used in an academic paper. Your thesis statement is clear.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
But actually, the world’s food situation is deteriorating from day to day which simply means that the food shortage has to take very serious. must be regarded as a serious problem.

Among foods causes are for example: the economic inaccessibility, the physical or geographical inaccessibility, food available but so expensive to buy.

War and climate problems FAO (Food Alimentary organization) estimates 868 million people are under food problems and 852 in developing countries meaning ⅙ person in planet. This is not a well organised paragraph (You should form 1 or 2 paragraphs and analyze causes of hunger. There is no meaning having a 3 line paragraph. Every topic-cause sentence has to be expanded-supported with examples or statistics.

Hunger is the basis of many health problems, diseases, and especially death, according to FAO over 6 million children who aged under 5 die every year of hunger consequences. Expand this statement. Write more about the detrimental effects of hunger.

(Guest post by Robert L. Freedman, Author of Indigenous Wild Food Plants in Home Gardens: Improving Health and Income - With the Assistance of Agricultural Extension) Please write references at the end of your essay.

Student E applied the knowledge that had gained during the feedback training and critically transferred these skills to give feedback by making corrections on grammar use, vocabulary use, structure and referencing. This behavior shows a motivated student that is willing to share knowledge and experience without waiting for a personal reward from her peer of the teacher.

It can be supported that a community of caring individuals was established during the project. Technology advanced students were helping their peers to
familiarize with drive and video technology. Also, students were engaged in
dialogue regarding the feedback process during class time so as to
demonstrate to their peers either techniques for giving feedback or to explain
their concerns in academic writing. Generally, students showed empathy
towards their peers and this was reported during their interviews but it is also
evident from their feedback forms. Student A supported that feedback is a
useful pedagogical technique because apart from the academic benefit that
she gained from this process, she had the chance to provide help to her
peers:

While giving feedback I felt that that I was helping my peers and I was trying
to improve their weak points.

In the same line, student F argued:

Feedback was also useful because I had the chance to help my peers.

A sense of responsibility towards others autonomy was developed
Feedback questions were rather useful but I was also helped by the way that
my peers answered these questions, it was a way for me to get familiar with
the feedback procedure and reassure that I am going to give good feedback

Finally, it is worth mentioning that students in this project tried to contribute to
their peers’ motivation level by using praise. Positive evaluation and praise
boost students’ confidence and make learners feel accepted and respected by
their peers’.

Your conclusion, it’s also appropriate and very specific. In the conclusion you
can mention your opinion if you want but that’s absolutely fine. Good job.

Your conclusion is appropriate. If you want to improve it you can use more
vocabulary. Well done! :)

This study confirmed Stern’s and Solomon’s (2006) research on the
importance of positive comments in students’ motivation. The rewarding
comments and praise that most students provided to their peers were
appreciated by students and helped them to be open to peer criticism.
5.3.4 Peer feedback encourages the use of metacognitive strategies:

Monitor and plan

The ability to take responsibility for your own learning is closely related to metacognitive knowledge, experience and the use of metacognitive strategies. There is evidence from students’ interviews and their peer feedback forms that they actively engaged in the use of a range of strategies which enabled them to monitor their peers’ and their own mental process. Peer reviewing provided the opportunity to students to engage in evaluative and reflective activities (Zimmerman, 2000). Reviewers practiced their self-regulatory skills by noticing, questioning, identifying strong and weak points that exist in peers’ texts, solving linguistic problems, drawing inferencing and explaining to peers what are the principles of proficient writing. Actually, reviewers examined peers’ text from the perspective of the audience helped their peers to monitor their writing progress and encouraged them to make self-corrections. Below there is an example of a feedback form from student C who encourages her peer to make self-correction in the introduction, in the structure of the paragraphs and finally in the use of vocabulary.

Figure 41 An example of a motivating peer feedback activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your introduction starts with a general statement, which is related to the topic. However, you could improve your introduction by expressing your point of view.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main body</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You grouped effectively your main body into paragraphs. Nevertheless, you didn’t use a paragraph leader to start with. For instance, you might start with a linking word or you can use an expression such as &quot;First of all&quot;, “Firstly”. However, you gave reasons and solutions effectively. I don’t think that you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

Your conclusion is appropriate. If you want to improve it you can use more vocabulary. Well done!:

Figure 42 An example of a well-balanced peer feedback activity

1. on this essay paper the central thesis is that hunger can not only affect third world country but the can but the issue can e found throughout worldwide geographical map.

2. the thesis statement is in the introduction however is does not content a course of action implied or stated because I think in this kind of topic the writer could explain more about famine and be more explicit.

3. in the only one main body that I have seen in this essay the writer emphasized on different kind of things that caused famine itself or poverty, and the leverage of global economy and social disparities.

4. The writer support her thesis, she make some clear point about topic but in general it was implied and not even well stated, however the some point as the causes or the effect of famine is well defined.

5. The writer need separate every main body for a good understanding of her essay.

strongest point: is that the writer thesis is very well made and I think she find online ressource.

6. weakens: the essay is not well made I mean the plan. I can just see the introduction; the main body and conclusion are all together. Her conclusion
summarizes the main point, but the essay was short for an argumentative essay, next time she needs to improve.

Both feedback forms are examples of students who transferred their acquired knowledge to new situations in the field of writing. According to Georghiades (2001) finding, this action is related to independent learning. The participants of this study showed strong self-regulation skills since they achieved to transfer their acquired knowledge while giving feedback to their peers and at the same time directed their thought process back to their own writing to make changes according to the new input that they received from their peers’ texts.

Student B confirmed:

_ I tried to use most of feedback questions for my own essay as well. I used the feedback questions to check weather I was out of subject or if I had forgotten to answer something._

Student D reported on the use of feedback questions:

_ Using the feedback questions was easy and helped me to make some changes regarding conclusion._

In the same line, student C stated that peer feedback questions encouraged her to review and edit her paper:

_ During Christmas holidays, I made some corrections on my essays based on peer feedback._

_Figure 43 A sample of a peer feedback form for argumentative essays_

| Writer’s name: Student B |
| Reviewer’s name: Student A |

1 On your partner’s paper, underline the thesis statement twice.

_Nowadays frequently we encounter the phenomenon of people and particularly of young people to meet constantly with pages of social networkings_
2 Answer these questions about the thesis statement. Mark each or X

Is the thesis statement in the introduction?
Yes, it is.

Nowadays frequently we encounter the phenomenon of people and particularly of young people to meet constantly with pages of social networkings

Does the thesis statement contain a course of action, implied or stated?
Your thesis contains a course of action and is stated

3 Underline the topic sentence of each body paragraph once.

1. According with statistics in 2011, those relationships that were heavily based in contact through social media outlets were much less substantial than those relationships where we kept in touch in person, over the phone, or via email on a regular basis.

2. Another reason that the social networks sites killing sincere relationships is the emotions that you are feeling and this it has negative effect for the relationship because you can not express that feeling.

3. On another hand there are people believe that social networks can help the relationships.

4 What types of support are used in each body paragraph?

Body paragraph 1: Examples (For example people believe that all of this relationships which they had in social networks sites based only typics things, in the other hand the relationships which based in face to face, it was more deeper).

Body paragraph 2: Statistics (Statistics have show that when you speak with your friend in the internet you don’t have memories of your friend).
Body paragraph 3: Research (On another hand there are people believe that social networks can help the relationships. Most importantly, which they think social media tools have the ability to serve as a stepping stone to deeper and more personal relationships with those we want to build them with).

5 Which are the writer’s strongest and weakest arguments?

Strongest: According with statistics in 2011, those relationships that were heavily based in contact through social media outlets were much less substantial than those relationships where we kept in touch in person, over the phone, or via email on a regular basis.

Weakest: I don’t think you have weak arguments

6 Can you think of any other persuasive arguments to support the writer’s position? You have covered the most important arguments to support your position.

7 Does the writer consider and address counterarguments for each argument? If not, what other counterarguments do you think the writer should consider?

You consider counterarguments for each argument effectively. I don’t think you need to change or add anything

8 Answer these questions about the conclusion. Mark each or X.

Does the conclusion summarize the main points of the essay?

It summarizes the main point

Does the conclusion end with a strong concluding statement?

Choose two or three sentences.
1. To conclude, although social networking sites have brought individuals closer together

2. That's why the users of social networks site they must try to talk with their friends or with their lovers face to face

9 Draw a star (★) in the margin next to your favorite sentence

Furthermore, another important thing it's the memories that you keep in a relationship. Statistics have show that when you speak with your friend in the internet you don’t have memories of your friend.

Put a question mark (?) next to any sentences that you didn’t understand.

Most importantly, which they think social media tools have the ability to serve as a stepping stone to deeper and more personal relationships with those we want to build them with.

10 Any other comments:

5.3.5 Peer feedback encouraged self-assessment and critical thinking

Harrison, O'Hara and MacNamara (2015, p76) argue, in 21st century “self- and peer-assessment is a sustainable lifelong learning methodology”. Participants of this study engaged in peer assessment by using different feedback prompts for their writing assignments’. The forms as students’ commented helped them to understand task requirements and guided them in the feedback process, as student J put it:

*Feedback questions were useful because they were very specific and guided me step by step.*
Understanding task requirements and assessment criteria is very important for students’ learning. Biggs (2007, p.163) again suggests “What and how students learn depends to a major extent on how they think they will be assessed”. Apart from understanding the academic standards of the class, students engaged in evaluating their progress and the produced outcome against certain criteria. Via peer assessment students started to develop an autonomous judgement. Student A stated:

*Giving feedback was helpful regarding evaluation, I mean you could enhance your critical thinking skills and be able to evaluate your own writing task and improve.*

Other students confirmed that peer assessment encouraged them to make judgments not only on the quality of their outcome but also on thinking process

*Giving feedback was very helpful for me because I could notice my peers’ errors so as not to do the same errors in my writing I could understand where I had to pay attention and it helped me to improve my critical thinking skills.*

During peer assessment students had to select and apply the optimal problem solving technique to identify weak points to their peers’ texts and make recommendation. Also, students had to activate their decision-making skills to provide accurate feedback. In the same line, student H evaluated the reciprocal benefit of giving and receiving feedback:

*Feedback was useful. For example, if I had a difficulty writing the introduction or the main body, I could have a look at someone’s essay and think what I could have done… I was reflecting that I should be more careful in my next writing looking at someone else’s essay and I could evaluate mine and check whether they are similar or whether I have done something wrong.*

The findings of this study are in the same line with Boud and Molloy (2013) who reported that the process of reviewing someone else’s work enable
students to reflect on and articulate their own ideas, develop their capacity to make evaluative judgments about their learning and monitor their learning independently of the teacher.

5.3.6 Peer feedback encourages task awareness

Autonomy in the language classroom depends much on the syllabus flexibility and instructor's autonomy level. The syllabus of this writing project was carefully designed to ensure that students have the freedom to make choices regarding their learning during all steps of this process. Specifically, regarding feedback, learners were given the opportunity to send their drafts to classmates that they believed that could really help them. The instructor did not intervene to their choices but allowed them to experiment with different reviewers each time and evaluate if they would like to continue receiving feedback from the same classmates or would prefer to benefit from other peers’ comments. It is interesting to note that quickly students strongly showed preferences for their reviewers and developed a two members team who worked with responsibility and tried to complete feedback forms as good as possible.

Figure 44 Engagement in peer feedback
Figure 45 Student applies knowledge on argumentative essay via peer feedback

This indicates that students understood that the main purpose of the peer feedback task was to raise awareness of their writing skills and help them to improve through scaffolding and social interaction.

Peer feedback is a learner centered pedagogy that aimed to empower students by giving them the control of their learning and allowing them to negotiate meaning with their peers, apply problem–solution strategies and take the responsibility to of accepting another author’s intervention in their writing or passively waiting for instructor’s feedback. Since most of the students of this project had no previous experience on collaborative writing and peer feedback, I had to train students on giving feedback through guided prompts and ensure that they have understood how to proceed with their assignments. However, two students missed classes and have been left behind on training. But they reported that receiving peer feedback helped
them to become aware of the requirements of the feedback task.

A student reported in the interview:

*Feedback questions were rather useful, but, I was also helped by the way that my peers answered these questions, it was a way for me to get familiar with the feedback procedure and reassure that I am going to give good feedback.*

Another student, who got confused with the assigned essay topic, receives feedback from a peer who kindly informs her about the misunderstanding:

*Even if the topic is very serious and inevitable this was not the essay topic that the teacher asked to do.*

With this comment, the student proved that she did not just follow the rubric to do the activity but she took the initiative to alert her classmate about the requirements of the writing task. So, the rubric did not restrict students from interacting because she was aware of the goal of this project which was meaningful collaboration.

![The student informs her peer that she misunderstood the essay topic!](image)

*Figure 46 Peer feedback encouraged task awareness*
Although peer feedback is regarded an activity that gives students more learner autonomy (Yang, Badger, & Yu, 2006), some researchers believe that rubric-referenced feedback is teacher focused and discourages students original interaction. In this project, the instructor did not aim to control students’ interaction but to guide them. Participants were informed that apart from feedback rubric they were free to make comments or chat with their peers. It is important to make this clarification at this point since allowing students to make changes in the syllabus and teacher created material is a crucial element of autonomy. I created the rubric-referenced feedback and I shared it with the students to review it and suggest changes and subsequently to discuss challenging questions. The students read carefully the rubric during class time and recommended to remove grammar questions since it was difficult for them to make corrections. However, students’ who felt confident with their grammar took the initiative to altruistic help their peers by making corrections to their drafts.

Figure 47 An example of a student who shows altruism in collaboration

Most participants expressed their satisfaction regarding the implementation of collaborative writing in the ESL class and evaluated the benefits of this pedagogy. Student D explained:
I think that learning writing in a group is better than learning individually because you have the chance to get ideas from your peers and they can also help you if you face difficulties.

Student H added: Working collaboratively was very easy and it is a useful skill to acquire for your future career, because when you work you can't do everything on your own but you have to cooperate with others.

The student justified the choice of collaborative writing and elaborated on potential benefits that can be acquired for the enhancement of their professional skills. Macaro (2008, pp. 59-60), puts it,

‘Having a choice in their own language learning means the language learner or user taking control not only of the language being learnt, but also of the goal and purpose of that learning.... Autonomy resides in being able to say what you want to say rather than producing the language of others...’ The learner identifies the ultimate purpose of learning a second language through collaboration which is the “why” of language learning which is part and parcel of becoming personally autonomous through language socialization (Ochs, 2002). A meaningful approach to autonomy in language learning should carefully consider the balance between the development of personal autonomy and language teaching goals. Language instructors in tertiary education struggle not only for learners’ autonomy but for their professional autonomy:

“Pedagogical hope and professional autonomy go hand in hand in our struggle for better education: education that is empowering for teachers and learners and ultimately contributes to the transformation of society at large. If this sound like a utopia, then it sounds right. Only ideals can push reality forward, an on being able to accomplish them is just one more reason to keep on trying. From this perspective dealing with complexity and uncertainty is integral to (re)dealistic professional lifelong learning. (Jimenez Raya et al. 2007, p.55).”
On the other hand, student F expressed his preference for individual writing and reported:

*Collaborative writing was difficult for me because I cannot listen to others’ ideas. I get confused…I prefer individual writing.*

*People who work in a group must be “equipped both to benefit from other’s input and recruit others to their point of view” (Meyers, 2000, p.174). Social interaction requires a level of individual autonomy. Although collaboration is a distinguishing human capacity, learning in social context can be challenging for learners who may have not developed self-management skills.*

Figure 48 Students practice on video reflection
5.4 Research question 2

5.4.1 Vlogs encouraged awareness of writing strategies

As it has been stated in the introduction the aim of this project is to encourage students to become autonomous in writing. The genre oriented approach that has been adopted for teaching writing required students to: plan their essay, prepare a draft, collaborate with their peers to get feedback, review their draft, reflect on their writing, submit their final draft to their instructor, receive feedback, reflect on the feedback and set new goals to advance their writing.

To enhance reflection, students were given a reflection rubric and required to create several vlogs. Findings from students’ interviews and reflection vlogs suggest that the implementation of vlogs encouraged students to speak online for their writing strategies, reflect on their effective use and report their beliefs regarding their writing skills.

Student A reported that oral reflection was a challenging self-talk during which students reported and become aware at the same time of their writing potentials:

*It was a discussion with your self in order to learn how you can learn better and improve for the next writing. Video was useful because you can listen to yourself and to your beliefs …especially if the video is spontaneous is more effective than thinking in advance and writing your thoughts in a paper.*

Video blogs were shared via Gmail with the instructor and with students’ permission vlogs were presented in class to stimulate discussion and inspire reflective discussions among peers. When reflection becomes a social process, student E reported that sharing video reflections can enhance her awareness regarding her writing skills:
Video reflection was very useful because you can watch yourself reporting your errors and sharing them with your peers so as to have a second opinion and not to depend only on your own opinion.

When students shared their videos, they had the chance to get feedback for their writing strategies and reflect on peers’ comments. In most vlogs students described and evaluated their pre-writing strategies, namely planning and researching. In the excerpt below, student C states that she became aware that planning could help her to control her writing while research on the web helped her to become more knowledgeable on the essay topic and more confident in independent vocabulary learning.

What I do before my writing is an essay plan and I do research of course about the topic. I think that it is an effortless way to write your essay so, I don’t think that I have any difficulties

Also, I used some linking words. The Internet helped me a lot to find some linking words. Also, I think I have in general good vocabulary which is also the Internet helped a lot.

In the same line student C evaluated the effectiveness of her research skills on writing. She concluded that research in combination with essay planning facilitate the writing process and help her to manage her time.

Well before I start writing my essay I did an investigation and tried to find information in the Internet and books about the topic. After that I did a plan and this is easy for me because I know what I want to write in the introduction, in the main body and the conclusion and I don’t lose time to think ideas when I am writing my essay.

An excerpt from student’s A vlog illustrates awareness of her planning strategies:
Hello, I would like to talk about my essay. First of all, when I started writing my essay I did a plan first which I wrote my ideas in bullets... Also I did a research on the internet about other essays which had the same topic with me.

Student E expresses her concern regarding the structure of the argumentative essay. She reflects on the difficulties that she had to deal with during the planning stage since she was not familiar with the structure of the argumentative essay and she concludes that she had difficulties in finding material for the essay topic.

Hello this is my reflection video about my argumentative essay. Before writing my essay, I did a plan first in which I wrote the introduction and the main body, which I like the most in my argumentative essay. At the planning stage I had a difficulty in writing all the parts because it was my first time to write an argumentative essay and I didn't know what to do. I don't think that it was easy for me something at the planning stage, I had difficulties in all parts... So I had to research a lot about the topic because it was very difficult for me.

5.4.2 Vlogs encouraged self-assessment
One of the most valuable tenets of constructivism is to engage learners in making judgments about their own learning to develop metacognitive learning competencies (Books and Brooks, 1993). Peer and self-assessment have been promoted in this study via the use of Google docs and vlogs. Many of the participants emphasized the value of vlogs and particularly the effectiveness of the reflection prompt. As it has been also stated in cycle 1 reflection is not an activity that students practice as a daily routine. Thus, learners expressed positive attitude towards the reflection prompt and pointed out that having a written guidance helped them to focus on their task. Student H compared the usefulness of peer feedback rubric and reflection rubric.
Reflection questions were more useful than feedback questions because video was a new tool, we didn't have any experience in learning via video so questions were a good guidance for us.

Specifically, student B regarded that answering reflection questions encouraged him to engage in self-evaluation and self-correction. Student B majors in Mass Media Communications, so for him it was equally important to assess his oral presentation skills:

Questions for video were helpful for my writing because they guided me to pay attention to my mistakes, identify my strong and weak point and improve. Reflection is very important for me because with this I can see the mistakes that I have done recently and I can improve and re-write some sentences. In my opinion the best video was one about the gap year because I speak more fluently and I used a lot of synonyms and words.

Some students felt the need to re-watch their videos so as to evaluate their final essay draft. Others re-watched their videos because they wanted to reflect on their speaking skills and the quality of their vlog. Although the purpose of this project was not to emphasize on students speaking skills, students’ paid attention to their oral fluency. Student D points out:

I have re-watched my videos and my essays and I believe that I have improved my speaking and my vocabulary. Video reflection was useful because from the moment that you record the video you have the chance to watch it again and evaluate whether you have said something wrong you can evaluate yourself and become critical on the quality of the video.

In the same line student H reflects on the progress of her speaking skills since she was a freshmen student and realizes that she made more progress that she tended to believe. Also, similarly to student A evaluated her writing but she did not proceed in self-correction. What is surprising in this confession is that student H did not realize that she had learned until she looked back on
the semester as she created her vlog:

Watching again my videos made me to recall my first year as a student when my level of English was very low and I believe that I did a great progress this year and this project helped me a lot…being in the class, talking, answering questions. After recoding the video, I went back to have a look at my essay and I saw that I could have corrected some errors…but I didn’t have the time to write the essay again…but I can say that video was successful in achieving this goal.

Another participant student C, considered that vlogs my not encouraged her to edit her writing, but she believes that video was a tool that sparked reflection on her strengths and weaknesses and gave her the chance to express her concerns on her writing abilities:

Usually I was re-watching my videos and I was comparing them to my essay but I have never made changes because I wanted to see first instructor’s feedback on my writing task. Video reflection was useful because I had the chance to reflect on my mistakes and make a self-evaluation. In my videos, I speak a lot about the introduction. Introduction is my strongest point because you can write it using the topic. Conclusion is my weakest point because I cannot summarize something well.

Most participants of this of this study indicated the problems that they faced while drafting their essays and it is interesting to note that they justified the origin of their problem to present the full picture of their writing skills. Also, students spoke confidently about their strong points as well as the strategies that helped them to develop these skills. The transcript of student’s D vlog is indicative of her effort to become critical towards her skills:

Hi! I am going to answer the questions about my essay. I’ve learned how to plan an essay, how to develop my thinking necessary for writing. I can write
an essay in short amount of time, I’m good in introduction because I’m trying to summarize.

I don’t understand how to write the main body if it is an opinion essay. You must write I think two or three main body paragraphs, so I do not understand how to write the first main body and the second different because it is the same idea. So often I have difficulty to understand the main body because some linking words are difficult and I don’t know how to use linking words. My best part is the conclusion because it’s my opinion and most of time it’s easy to write because you have already written the introduction the main body and the solution to the problem and the conclusion is just your ideas.

I don’t like the main body, I think it is boring because we focus a lot to external work. I think the main body is difficult to find the idea.

5.4.3 Vlogs encouraged reflection via self-assessment

Vlogs were used in this study to stimulate reflective practice. It is interesting to note that though students had no experience with video reflection, most of them showed willingness to participate in this task systematically. Participants reported that they engaged in a process of thinking about their progress and their writing skill. Another noteworthy fact is that since students had to record their thoughts to a video which would be publicly presented they had to step back and reflect, apart from their writing skills, on a number of issues related to video presentation, namely: fluency, quality of the picture and volume, appropriate body language, appropriate pronunciation, articulation and accurate grammar. They had to present a well-prepared talk. Many students expressed their concerns about the quality of the video and stated that they spend a great amount of time trying to record their best effort. Others worried about their fluency and preferred to write down their reflections, make a rehearsal and finally record the video. Students confirmed that reflection was not a routine activity for them so the reflection rubric was really important for
them in order to understand the task and focus their attention on their writing progress. Student C stated:

*Questions on video reflection helped me to create the video and to get an idea on how I should do the task, without these questions I was going to speak generally about writing.*

Similarly, student E explained the major role of questions on the stimulation of deep thinking and she asserts that developing her metacognitive skills is crucial for her writing progress:

*The questions on video reflection helped as to think what we have learned. So during reflection I can definitely improve my writing skills and the process of thinking. By recording the video, I can understand how to improve my mistakes and how to avoid them and this is very important.*

*Hi everybody I am going to talk about the second essay. It was a topic about how to take a gap year between graduation from High School and University. I have learned a lot of things. I have learned how to handle every paragraph because in the last essay it was not that simple to find ideas. I remember that reflecting was boring but in this essay, I have learned a lot of things so it was quite easy for me to find some advantages and some disadvantages so it was very good.*

Some of the vlogs uploaded by the participants, especially their first vlogs, did not center on their writing skills but on reasons that made them to choose certain essay topics. This can be explained because self-reflection was a difficult concept for them to understand since they had no previous experience. Although there was a very careful guidance from the instructor and they were receiving feedback for the effectiveness of their vlogs, Student D did not handle the task of self-reflection with ease. It was more natural for her to reflect about the product of writing than about the writing process. The excerpt below is from her final vlog where she confirms that at the beginning of the project she found reflecting boring as she could not realize the potential
benefits. However, she pointed out that her conceptualization on reflection had changed.

I am going to speak about argumentative essay. My topic is hunger and food centers.

First of all, I have learned a lot of things and I chose this topic because I have already known a lot about hunger. I saw some pictures from countries around the world that suffer and I think that it was the most important topic. I have explained the effect of hunger, the effect for our health and I think that everybody needs to eat and that is why I chose this topic. I explain why it is not a good thing in this century that there are a lot of people that suffer and they do not have food to eat. I think that in the other hand there are a lot of countries that waste food or don’t eat food. I think this is bad because the very first question comes if there is enough food for everybody. I think yes, if you get the food you waste in West and we can send this food in another country that they need to eat. I explained all these things in my essay and I think it was good to speak about hunger and food centers.

The findings of this study are in the same line with Wu (2012) who revealed that students who participated in a digital story telling project demonstrated significant improvement in writing and critical thinking and specifically in interpretation and evaluation of arguments.
5.5 Research question 3:
What are the implications of combining Google Drive and vlogs for teaching autonomous writing?

5.5.1 The value of pre-and post collaboration culture

This study’s findings have four important implications for promoting autonomy in the L2 writing class with the use of cutting edge technology. First, it can be justified that when designed appropriately, Google Drive technology can support both individualized and collaborative writing. It is not very easy to cultivate a collaborative culture in L2 writing and specifically in Higher Education where competition among students is very strong. Things become even more challenging for the instructor when there are mixed ability international students in ESL classes. Proficiency level and nationality are definitely crucial factors that affect students’ attitudes towards collaboration and self-management. Therefore, instructors should not provide their students with an online collaborative writing task that discounts the diversity of students’ culture towards collaboration and their proficiency level: one-size-fits-all may discourage some students to engage in the writing class. Initially, instructors must raise students’ awareness on the importance of collaborative learning skills and the significance of getting the chance to give and receive constructive feedback. Next, training on how to give and respond to feedback is crucial especially for low proficiency students. Most students confirmed that the feedback rubric was very comprehensive, guided them efficiently to provide constructive feedback and created an atmosphere of confidence and
trust. However, student H, a student with low proficiency level commented that:

*Some feedback questions were difficult but the main problem was that some essays were better than mine and I regarded them excellent in comparison to my level of English, thus I couldn’t make any comment or correct an error.*

Giving feedback is regarded traditionally instructor’s responsibility Using Google Drive Documents in the writing class for pre-writing tasks, I introduced to students a culture of sharing, openness and co-creation of knowledge. The online writing platform was used to draft essay plans, to share links, useful resources and research data. So, collaboration was introduced smoothly in the class and became routinely part of classes’ philosophy. This collaborative practice was obvious on students’ views:

Michaela pointed out that Google technology is associated for her with planning, drafting and sharing in the writing class:

*I think that Google drive is very helpful for us, for instance I have noticed that when we use Google drive we usually make some plan about the essay and we can get across these ideas with other friends in our group. I can write something and send it to someone for feedback and at the same time I can write my own comments at the same document. You cannot do that in a word document.*

The fact that students did not have to create an account in order to use Google Drive, but it was included in their Gmail account facilitated the collaboration and communication in the class. Building autonomy is not only a result of the individual qualities of the students. It also depends on the communication and the rapport with the instructor. Drive technology matched the needs of an autonomous writing curriculum as it offered students the freedom to interact with their peers while at the same time the instructor could monitor their online activities and was able to intervene so as to resolve potentials conflicts or to facilitate the interaction. Since autonomy and particularly collaborative autonomy is a key to lifelong learning, Higher
Education instructors should ensure that undergraduates achieve intellectual growth to be prepared to survive and contribute to the global employment market. Students appreciated the chance they had to build their collaborative skills in the writing class. Student F said:

*Working collaboratively was very easy and it is a useful skill to acquire for your career future, because when you work you can do everything on your own but you must cooperate with others. Through this project, I have learned how to collaborate with my peers and I believe that I have improved my skills.*

In the same line, student J commented:

*I think that learning writing in a group is better than learning individually because you have the chance to get ideas from your peers and they can also help you if you face difficulties. Also, it is more enjoyable… At the beginning of the semester I was afraid of collaborative writing but then I realized that it was not that difficult.*

Although vlogs did not require collaborative skills and were mainly introduced for students’ self-reflection, it is interesting that students emphasized the importance of sharing their videos and getting feedback from their peers. Thus, it can be supported that feedback and sharing became part of their educational philosophy.

Student E reports:

*Video reflection was very useful because you can watch yourself reporting your errors and sharing them with your peers to have a second opinion and not to depend only on your own opinion.*

The sense of being part of an interdependent community is a major characteristic of an autonomous writing environment. During the project, even when students had difficulties in familiarizing with the video technology or found the feedback process challenging their attitude towards the introduction
of this technology remained positive. Particularly, student B commented on the effectiveness of technology on the creation of a collaborative environment:

*Maybe some peers did not enjoy the video but the project was very nice and very helpful for my peers and me… Google drive is user friendly and it is helpful for sharing research and collaborative working.*

**5.5.2 The engagement in writing via in and out of class activities**

Autonomy is a multidimensional concept that can be enhanced at different degrees in a different learning environment. Though it is very important at the beginning of an autonomous learning experience to make sure that the instructor releases smoothly the control of the learning procedure, it is not always easy for learners to act, interact and get involved in a self-directed learning environment. Learners have the need to interact both with the instructor and with their peers in a controlled environment. However, this study showed that autonomy could also be fostered in an uncontrolled learning environment—students’ home. Learners were preparing the essay plan in class but they were giving feedback both in class and out of class. Regarding vlogs, this is an activity that students prepared and completed outside the classroom environment. The combination of Google Drive and vlogs encouraged learners to work towards proactive and reactive autonomy. Peer feedback via Google Drive involved learners in an active role in the writing class. They realized that writing is a challenging process because they have to apply a number of strategies to master their writing competency. Writing needs constant engagement in several individual cognitive activities, namely: brainstorming, researching, online reading, pre-writing activities, drafting and reflecting. Also, as it has been reported in students’ interviews, participants were willing to engage in activities that required interaction and collaboration with their peers and their instructor: intensive reading of their peers’ assignments, assessment of their peers writings, production of an
evaluation peer feedback report, contribution to a shared document-essay plan and self-correction of their own assignments. Students involved behaviorally, cognitively and emotionally in Feedback activities. Nine out of twelve students completed systematically all feedback forms. Students reported that they were aware of their responsibility to help their peers and for that reason they spent a considerable amount of time reading and revising their peers’ essays. Students were involved in a problem-solving continuum activity, where they devoted time and cognitive effort to work with their peers towards a common goal: to improve their writing skills. From students’ interviews, it can be supported that participants realized the importance of peer feedback and reflection and they believed in the effectiveness of this project. Trust among peers and the sense of belonging to a learning community motivated learners to invest time and energy and work hard for the success of this project. As data suggests, online peer feedback and vlogs enhanced learners’ opportunities to act as self-directed learners. Technology affordances motivated students to act, explore the learning environment and become more self-reliant. The engagement of participants on the training process at the beginning was important since autonomy depends on learners’ readiness to act as self-regulated learners in new environment. The embrace of a sharing responsibility culture facilitated them to make aware of the affordances of technology and their active engagement in planning, monitoring, self-assessing and reflecting on their progress helped them to develop an autonomous behavior towards learning. The authenticity of this project affected learners’ participatory role and their ability to exercise agency.

5.5.3 Empowering students’ digital literacy autonomy

Being autonomous in an online environment was challenging for the participants of this project. Although learners are engaging with technology in their everyday life they still need to sharpen their skills to apply technology
and enhance their learning. Autonomous learners should be able to access, analyze, and critically reflect on information and act. But, in an online environment they need guidance-net savviness on how to access information online resources, they need to apply critical evaluative techniques to check the trustworthiness of information and they need to exercise their digital visual literacy skills. Finally, action and participation in an online environment depends on students’ familiarization with technology affordances and their ability to manage their social and digital presence. Miller and Bartlet (2012) named this new mixture of competencies as digital fluency. It can be supported that the combination of Google Drive and vlogs enhanced students’ computer literacy, web literacy, raised students’ awareness on the importance of technology for their professional future and paved the way to digital fluency. Students’ appreciated the affordances of technology and they expressed their satisfaction from their engagement in a blended learning environment. Student C commented:

Taking part in this project was very helpful because of the integration of a variety of technological tools. Familiarization with technology will be a useful skill for our future.

Student F added as well:

The project was rather beneficial; you could all stay connected via technology. The use of technology was innovative and easy for us to follow since we are familiar with technology.

Participants also acknowledged the value of technology in their writing skills and critically reflected on their previous learning experience and the changes that should be done in the educational system to infuse technology in the language curriculum and focus on innovation since it is a need in Greek society. One of the aims of the project was to transform students’ learning experience. Participants confirmed that this goal has been achieved by expressing their satisfaction and pointing out the innovative aspect of this project. However, what is noteworthy is that participants were convinced that
there is a need for a broad transformation in the educational system. Student B reported:

This project followed a curriculum that should be adopted by the educational system. I would not change anything. The project was very innovative.

Dorcas confirmed that though the syllabus of the writing class was challenging for students, the instructor should be consistent with the use of this pedagogy.

The project was demanding but I do not have any recommendations or changes, just do the same and continue. The strong point of this project is that it gives you the chance to familiarize yourself with technology and collaborative learning.

Research and evaluation of online resources is an integral part of writing. Limited online research skills and web literacy can affect students’ ability to collect information, synthesize them and write an original paper. Student E explained that her ability to research on the web helped her to improve her argumentation and her writing skills.

My topic was terrorism, a major issue in the world and how terrorism affects innocent people. I also noticed that terrorism is at some point very popular in the internet and due to that fact, I could find a lot of information about the topic and I could better express and support my ideas by using statistics and facts.

Student C, also pointed out that she realized that her digital literacy skills need to be improved. On the other hand, she asserts that her online engagement helped her to identify useful resources and improve her vocabulary and her syntax. Thus, familiarization with the affordances of technology empowered students’ agency and responsibility in online writing.

An important thing is to do research to find ideas to write your essay easily and I had a difficulty because I didn’t write much information and ideas in my essay, which is bad because my essay is short…. The Internet helped me a
lot to find some linking words. Also, I think I have in general good vocabulary which is also the Internet helped a lot. Also, I was a little bit more specific and wrote some examples to support my opinions and of course my ideas. The most interesting thing is to improve my writing skills but also it is important the research because you can adopt some ideas and of course you learn new things.

Finally, student A confirmed that her engagement in the project gave her the chance to manage her online writing portfolio, save time, archive her writing material and experiment with Google drive tools.

Google drive was rather useful because we did not have to send documents we could simply share them with those who wanted to edit them…It was quickly Google drive was helpful for giving feedback because you could write online and do corrections at the same time. You didn't have to send an email…it is more direct than sending an email. We can save books, share everything, it is fast…also we learn how to use technology. It includes many tools, word count, dictionary, and spelling checker…

5.5.4 Google Drive and vlogs shaped students’ self-efficacy and confidence

The development of language awareness and self-efficacy are regarded key elements of autonomous and lifelong language learning (Zimmerman, 2000). Via peer feedback and vlogs students had the chance to become aware of their knowledge and skills and manage their learning process effectively. Although the writing project was really demanding in terms of engagement students managed to keep on track with the writing assignments and to maintain their enthusiasm until the last day of the project. That means that the task was interesting and meaningful for them. It also suggests that the training in the use of new media was effective, which was important for students’ agency in the online environment. Also, task requirements were clear,
manageable, soundly delivered by the instructor and well accepted by all students. The coherent and well-organized learning structure that guided students towards autonomy did not guarantee the success of the project but it motivated students to engage. As students explained in their interviews, feedback questions and reflection prompt were easy for them to follow and facilitated their learning. Satisfaction with the project was openly reported during class time and it can be claimed that it was evident from their body language in vlogs, that students were happy with their engagement in this project. Especially, in vlogs where they were given the opportunity to find their own personal voice and better understand their sense of self. Student F reports that the use of vlogs contributed to his self-efficacy. He starts by reporting that:

_It was a discussion with your self in order to learn how you can learn better and improve for the next writing. Video was useful because you can listen to yourself and to your beliefs …_

He concluded:

_Especially, if the video is spontaneous is more effective that thinking in advance and writing your thoughts in a paper._

Student D explained that video was a useful tool that enhanced their digital presence awareness and helped her to deal with public speaking stressors.

_It is better to record a video than writing because technology is in advance and video is a tool that will help as to overcome taboos and public speaking anxiety._

Most students preferred to reflect and write down their thoughts before they shoot the video, especially at the beginning of the project that they were stressed, few expressed the opinion that in action reflection is more effective than thinking and making rehearsals before they create their final video. Though all students, used vlogs to identify, evaluate their abilities and monitor
their progress. In the example below student C presented her strengths in academic writing:

*I have learned how to write a plan and a problem solution essay. I have learned how to organize and group the causes and solutions. I can write a conclusion because it’s the easiest part of the essay. Of course, I can write the conclusion because it’s the easiest part of the essay. Of course, I can write the introduction because the easiest thing that you can do is to paraphrase the topic. I have learned how to use grammar constructions. This is very important for the essay to be in grammatical sequence, to be logical and easy for the readers to read it.*

Awareness of one’s academic achievement boosted students’ motivation and self-confidence. Student E expressed her willingness to engage in the writing class and mentioned:

*First I would like to tell you that I would like to take part in the writing class because I can improve synonyms, grammar and of course words. In my opinion the most important thing is to improve adequate writing skills because without skills I am not able to write a strong essay.*

Positive self-efficacy was gradually developed to self-confidence and self-appraisal. Watching students’ vlogs, it can be supported that students’ felt confident and proud about their engagement in the project and believe that they have managed to successfully complete their writing assignments.

Student A concluded in her vlog:

*When I finished my essay, I felt very happy and very good because I felt that I wrote a good essay and I sent my essay to my classmates.*

In the same line, student C showed a positive attitude towards her final writing project and set new goals:

*When I finished my essay, I felt relieved because I finally did it. I edited my text, I sent it to my classmates for checking the essay and sending comments*
and I think… I hope to study more vocabulary to improve my writing and maybe more linking words.

Student B explained that he was satisfied with his writing product but he also acknowledged the help that he received from his peers. Peer feedback and appraisal that students received from their classmates helped them to develop not only self-efficacy but also self-confidence.

When I finished my essay, I felt very happy and very relieved finally because I did it. I sent it to two of my classmates for feedback, which helped me effectively.

Finally, student F expressed his confidence in his strong writing skills:

Also, when I finish my essay I feel proud because I think my essay was great. I don't think that I have a worst part in my essay, that's way I am proud of my essay.

The study confirms the findings of Koohang et al., (2009) and Neo and Neo (2010) who reported that students who actively engage in a digital story telling activity which is suited to their personal experiences gain confidence after completing a challenging, valuable and meaningful for them task.

5.6 Chapter summary

The second cycle of the study has sought answers to the questions below:

1. “How first-year university students perceive peer-feedback in Google Drive in the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?”

2. “How first-year university students perceive reflection in Vlogs the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)? “
3. “What are the implications of combining Google Drive and Vlogs for teaching autonomous writing in the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?”

Concerning the first research question, data revealed that students the implementation of peer feedback via Google Drive encouraged them to collaborate with their peers and view them as sources of knowledge. Peers critique was perceived as beneficial in terms for raising awareness on students’ writing skills and promoting their metacognitive knowledge concerning task awareness. Students also reported that engagement in peer feedback encouraged them to plan, monitoring and self-evaluate their writing process. Students viewed the implementation of vlogs positively. Thematic analysis of interviews and vlogs revealed that vlogging encouraged students to reflect on their writing skills, to develop their self-assessment skills and reflect on their writing strategies. Finally, the combination on Google Drive and vlogs in the writing class encouraged four elements of autonomous learning: engagement in writing via in and out of class activities, development of a collaborative culture, self-confidence and digital literacy.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

The results of this action research project were discussed in the previous chapters. In this chapter, an overview of this study, a summary of the major findings of Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 related to research question, a reflection on the research approach, the implications of using online environments in teaching academic writing are presented. Next, contributions to action research methodology will be discussed. Finally, limitations of the study and suggestions for further research are reviewed.

6.2 Description of this study

The purpose of this study was to support ESL students’ autonomy in academic writing using modern technology, enhance their learning experience, and improve my practice as an instructor at the College in Athens. The teaching materials were based on instructor’s authentic resources, Internet websites and the course books Great writing 3 (Cycle 1) and Great Writing 4 (Cycle 2). Although the courses are called Academic ESL 2 and Academic ESL 3, are mainly focused on improving students’ general English skills and especially familiarizing students with intensive reading and independent writing. The intention was to introduce students to the academic culture of learning writing via peer-feedback and reflection and to train them to use technology effectively so as to collaborate, share, research and critically evaluate online resources before proceeding to academic writing. Autonomy was the ultimate goal of this project. The research participants were freshmen undergraduate international students majoring in different fields. The action
research project consisted of two cycles and a laying the ground-piloting period. The teaching time of each cycle was 15 weeks, with eight hours teaching each week. During the research period of each cycle I discussed with students the requirements and challenges of academic writing and I focused on the need to develop information literacy skills. I used student-centered teaching approaches to teach them how to practice writing. Also, I guided them towards effective use of online dictionaries and online reading resources and I recommended useful websites for academic writing. One of the most important things that I taught them was the value of collaboration the transformative power of reflection on their writing autonomy. At the beginning of each cycle, I trained students on the use of technology (wikis and blogs in cycle 1 and Google Drive in cycle 2) since students had no experience of using these tools for learning. Also, I created feedback rubrics and a reflection rubric. In cycle one the rubric was broad since students mainly practiced on summary writing, also there was no rubric for reflective writing in blogs but mainly oral guidance. On the second cycle, taking into consideration findings of cycle 1, feedback rubrics were carefully constructed by the instructor and a reflection rubric was also introduced to students. At the end of each cycle, students submitted their final writing portfolio in order to assess their improvement. IELTS writing band descriptor was used for their final evaluation. Additionally, at the beginning of the course and at the end of each cycle, I collected data from students’ interviews, online writing interactions, blogs, vlogs and in class informal observations. From students’ feedback and personal reflection on their in class and out of class autonomous learning experience, I reconsidered my teaching style and I changed technology tools in the following cycles so as to improve students’ learning experience and enhance their autonomy. From the findings of each cycle, it was clear that the implementation of the writing process approach with the combination of technology students encouraged students to engage enthusiastically in the writing class and to exhibit autonomous behavior, especially in the second cycle. On the whole, it can be supported that students’ have benefited by their participation in the project, exercised their autonomy, improved their writing
competence, became aware of the importance of digital literacy and gained life long learning skills. Furthermore, in this study, the aim of using action research methodology was to develop an autonomous oriented curriculum for the ESL students and to contribute to my own professional In my teaching practice, I strictly followed the principles of action research project: planning, action, observation and reflection. Taking into consideration students’ feedback and taking time to step back and reflect on my own practice, helped me to improve my teaching methodology.

The most important finding from this action research project is that an innovating and promising approach for teaching writing to ESL learners has been developed. Students cultivated their autonomy with the use of technology and collaborative pedagogy and the instructor took advantage of the affordances of technology to act as facilitator and pedagogy mentor. Students’ engaged in planning, monitoring, evaluation, collaboration, reflection and finally creation of new knowledge. Finally, students cultivated confidence and self- efficacy skills, which are crucial for the development of autonomy. By using action research methodology to conduct this study, I have enriched my teaching practice in areas such as: writing instruction, development of writing materials, online writing platforms mentor, information literacy guidance and learner autonomy. In brief, the action research project that I undertook has achieved its aim.

6.2.1 Summary of findings related to research questions of cycle 1

The first cycle of this thesis aimed to answer the following questions:

**Research question 1:** How first-year university students perceive peer-feedback in wikis in the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?

Thematic analysis of students’ interviews, blog posts, wiki pages and instructor’s reflection journal revealed though students engaged in peer
feedback in wikis they perceived that reading their peers’ essays helped them to become aware of their writing skills. The quality of the comments that students receive from their peers was not reported to be very satisfactory. Also, students express their reluctance to trust their peers and reported that they did not rely on peer feedback. Finally, students reported difficulties in collaborating with their peers, expressed their concerns regarding their responsibility and competency to provide valuable feedback.

**Research question 2: How first-year university students perceive reflection in blogs in the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?**

Reflective writing in blogs was perceived positively by students. Though the engagement was not very high in comparison to wikis, students supported that blogs encouraged self-evaluation, reflection on class material and instructor’s competency and reflection on interesting essay topics. However, the absence of a detailed reflection rubric and the private status of blogs prevented students from remaining focused and engaged on the reflective writing task. Students’ reported that they needed more guidance on reflective writing and revealed that the purpose of the activity was not clear and goal oriented.

**Research question 3: What are the implications of combining wikis and blogs for teaching autonomous writing in the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?**

The combination of wikis and blogs in the ESL writing class encouraged autonomy in the writing class. Specifically, data revealed that students became aware of their collaborative skills and developed them. Also, students engaged in self-learning taking advantage of the affordances of technology. Finally, students reflected on the writing class and their writing competency. Learning problems in cycle 1, namely collaboration challenges in wikis, difficulties in providing qualitative feedback and not satisfactory engagement in reflective writing lead to changes in tools and pedagogy in cycle 2.
6.2.2 Summary of major findings related to the research questions of Cycle 2

The second cycle of the study has sought answers to the questions below:

1. “How first-year university students perceive peer-feedback in Google Drive in the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?”

As it was mentioned in the methodology chapter, a thematic analysis approach was used to analyze triangulated data from interviews, peer feedback documents and vlogs. In relation to the effect of peer-feedback on students’ writing, participants reported six major benefits: a) interpersonal-collaboration skills, b) language awareness, c) amfoteronomy, d) development of metacognitive strategies, e) critical thinking via self-assessment, f) task awareness.

One of the study’s most significant findings is that peer feedback encouraged learners to develop a collaborative culture towards learning. Openness to criticism and to different ideas are essential elements for cooperation and self-improvement. Being able to see others as source of knowledge and inspiration, participants benefited from peer dialogue. Also, knowledge sharing among peers was viewed as a prerequisite for mutual development.

Another important benefit of bidirectional feedback was that students focused their attention to the linguistic patterns that their peers marked as problematical and engaged in self-correction of their essays. The feedback rubric was applied effectively by most participants and guarantied the quality of the process. The cognitive demand of giving feedback urged learners to become more sensitive on language use and error detection. Amfoteronomy, a term that I invented for this project to explain the power of interdependence and the dynamic of pairs, was cultivated during this project. Apart from valuing
collaboration students moved a step further and engaged in a process of contributing to their pair’s autonomy. Especially, more proficient learners reported that they felt somehow accountable for the progress of their peers and not only helped them but also showed reciprocity and altruism. Students exercised their free will and contributed to their peers’ cognitive and emotional growth without waiting for a personal reward. Another advantage that students gained from their participation in the peer feedback activity is the improvement of metacognitive strategies. During completing the feedback forms, participants had to transfer their newly acquired skills so as to proceed to production monitoring, production evaluation and language evaluation. According to students’ views, feedback rubric, was clear and well designed and that helped them effectively to revise their peers’ essays and assess their final product. Students; were engaged in a process of problem-solving, questioning, debating, reasoning, argumentation and critical evaluation. Feedback forms and students’ reports confirm that extensive practice on peer-feedback could enhance critical thinking skills. Finally, students’ interactions and engagement in online feedback contributed to task awareness, which is essential for the development of self-efficacy and motivation.

2.“How first-year university students perceive reflection in Vlogs the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)? “

Another tool that was applied in this project to support students’ autonomy was vlogging. Participants stated that reflection via vlogs a) raised awareness on the use of writing strategies, b) encouraged self-assessment, c) stimulated deep thinking. Students’ used vlogs to reflect on their writing strategies, to describe the challenges that they faced during planning, to discuss about the importance of developing research skills and to justify their pre-writing strategies. Students’ supported that reflecting orally on camera encouraged them to think and analyze the efficacy of their writing strategies. Data from interviews and students’ vlogs confirmed that oral reflection urged students to assess their strengths and weaknesses in academic writing. Practicing self-evaluation students become critical towards their writing competence. Finally, intensive vlogging engaged students in critical thinking and raised their
awareness on the importance of reflection as an inseparable part of the writing process.

3. “What are the implications of combining Google Drive and Vlogs for teaching autonomous writing in the Blended Learning Environment (BLE)?”

Regarding the implications for practice from the combination of peer feedback via Google Drive and online reflection via vlogs, the findings of this study confirmed that ESL learners could promote their autonomy by the affordances of a flexible individualized and collaborative learning environment. The online writing platform offered a variety of tools for self-discovery independent learning but also provided options for sharing and collaborative practice. ESL instructors could apply Google Drive and vlogs technology to enhance students’ participation and provide them the chance to engage cognitively and emotionally in the writing course via in and out of class activities. Finally, the appropriate training and practice on the use of new media could advance students’ digital literacy skills, shape their confidence and strengthen their self-efficacy.

6.3 Contributions to theory: autonomy, peer-feedback, reflection

The present study viewed autonomy in writing as a socio-cognitive task that is being continuously developed via peer feedback, social interaction using technological artifacts and reflection. Taking into consideration the pedagogical implications of Vygotsky’s (1979) theory (ZPD and scaffolding) two innovating models were designed during the two cycles of an action research project.

The major aim contribution of this research is that it extended the literature of autonomy in the field of academic writing. Although there is a plethora of research suggesting that CALL environment promotes autonomy, there are
not many studies focused on writing, which is the most challenging skill in academic. The researcher used two different writing platforms and provided different affordances and different social and academic learning experiences to teach students writing and promote their autonomy in a blended learning environment. The impact of these tools and pedagogies were discussed through the lens of social constructivism. Research indicated differences in social interactions and quality of the writing environment between the asynchronous writing platform, Wikispaces, and the synchronous writing platform Google Drive. It can be claimed that Google Drive, although it has not been originally designed for teaching writing, supported better an updated process approach to writing. The affordances of the platform- online dictionary, sharing options, chat, research tools, provided more chances for autonomous learning. Thus, since the social environment plays an important role in learning the 21st century instructors need to be an effective designer of online environment. The less promising writing platform of Wikispaces urged me to reflect on the impact of the choices that instructors make on the quality of students’ experiences. The importance of the selection of tools that are in line with the pedagogical principles and follow the requirements of the writing curriculum is highlighted in this project. Instructors that try to apply technology in their classes must be digital literate, confident and well prepared to deal with a considerable number of data. They should train students on the use of new media and raise awareness on the importance of becoming effective online writers in a globalized learning and working environment.

Another important contribution of this study concerns the pedagogies that have been used to cultivate autonomy: peer feedback and reflection. The study shed light on the role of online peer feedback using two different approaches to feedback and two different platforms. In Wikispaces, students provided feedback without a readymade rubric, but taking into consideration self-monitoring strategies for effective summary writing, which have been trained to use in class with the help of the instructor. Also, the free version of the platform that was used for the purposed of this project offered limited sharing option. Results confirmed previous research that suggests that peer
feedback could be challenging for low proficiency level students and demotivating when the feedback quality is not satisfactory and evidenced that Wikispaces platform could discourage students’ interactions and make instructors’ online monitoring of students; activities a demanding and stressful process. On the other hand, the application of a highly-structured feedback rubric and the use of the synchronous Google Drive platform facilitated interaction and engagement. Study’s findings revealed that a well-designed feedback rubric could support students’ scaffolding, motivate low confidence students to engage in the feedback process and empower trust in the learning community. What is of major importance regarding feedback is the fact that participants of this study gave evidence that the level of the more competent peer that will support their scaffolding plays a key role. In a mixed ability ESL class, there are always students that are at different proficiency levels. High proficiency students could be regarded by their peers as experts, or second teachers, so their feedback could make them passive. Also, students that receive feedback from peers that regard them to be the same proficiency level with them could be ignored. My conceptualization during this 4-year research project is that feedback should be regarded as a form of input and thus could be more effective when it is comprehensible. Comprehensible feedback could be secured either with a well-designed feedback rubric or with a careful selection of peer groups. Scaffolding occurred in the 1st cycle of the project via wikispaces, instructors’ writing material and peer feedback. While on the 2nd cycle, scaffolding occurred more systematically and was better monitored by the instructor through the use of Google Drive, a writing platform that provides affordances for self scaffolding, guided rubric, peer comments and instructors remarks. Thus, peer feedback literature was enriched by this research and recommendations were made for ESL instructors and SLA researchers.

This study developed an innovative model to teach writing in Tertiary Education and promote autonomy. As it has been stated earlier in this chapter, autonomy was defined as a process of social interaction (peer feedback) and self-reflection. Two different artifacts, blogs and vlogs were used not only to gauge students’ perceptions but also to analyze their
reflective practice. Findings of cycle one confirmed previous research that suggested that blogging needs careful design when introduced for L2 learners. Also, it was evidenced that reflection as a cognitive activity for self-development is a challenging practice for students who need guidance and training on reflective writing. Instructors should use blogs as scaffolding artifacts and provide prompts to encourage reflective thinking and urge students to actively engage in a problem-solving process. Finally, time constraints can demotivate students to write in blogs systematically. Careful consideration of cycle’s 1 limitations and more research on innovating approaches for reflective practice, urged the researcher to implement vlogs. Many studies in the past focused on the use of video for reflective practice, but most of them were applied to ESL instructors who used videos for observing and reflecting on their own practice. In this project, the students participated actively in the reflecting practice by engaging in scripting, rehearsings, reporting, reasoning. Students’ vlogs showed evidence of academic reflection. The use of verbalization, private speech or languaging (Swain, 2006) suggested that speaking about writing via vlogs encouraged self-evaluation, critical thinking and self-efficacy. The findings of this study could initiate further research on the pedagogical benefits of vlogging for teaching academic writing.

6.3.1 Contributions to action research methodology

This study demonstrates the importance of action research methods literature to study such complex and multifaceted constructs as learner autonomy, peer feedback and reflection. Many of the most significant findings, such as the role of digital literacy, as a new form of intelligence, in the development of autonomy and the new dimensions of each construct, the importance of comprehensible feedback for self and peer scaffolding, the relationship between verbalization via vlogs and academic reflection and change over time would not be fully showcased without the flexibility, emergent and dynamic
nature of action research methodology and without researcher's active intervention in the research project. Since most studies that are designed to promote autonomy in Virtual Environments usually apply mixed methodology or case studies which allow limited options for the researcher to tackle potential challenges of technology, this study confirmed the suitability of action research as a method that provides enough room for exploration of surprising discoveries and unexpected findings. This study shows that action research methods can help in those circumstances where a quantitative case survey or a mixed methods approach might be difficult to interpret. For instance, the intricacies of wikispaces environment in the promotion of a collaborative culture, the transformative role of trust, instructors' leadership skills and the time constraints of blogging when combined with peer feedback would have not been discovered without Cycle 1 interviews. Likewise, understanding of the findings of Cycle 1, that revealed the need of a more interactive though carefully designed and structured model more the cultivation of autonomy would not have been possible without the analysis of the documents in Cycle 1 and the reflection pause of the researcher.

Neither would the sole use of one cycle in the present study have been enough to make certain conclusions about the perceived effect of peer feedback and reflection for the development of autonomy. Also, had I used an ethnography or a case study approach for my research, it would have been difficult to shed light on the changing nature of autonomy and its strong correlation with instructor’s efficacy, autonomy, and continuous development since these methods can provide rich data of phenomena observed at a specific setting for a specific period. This longitudinal three-year project (1 year laying the ground phase, 1 semester cycle 1, 1 semester pause for reflection, 1 semester cycle 2, 1 semester pause for reflection) project highlighted the transformative power of instructor’s reflection pause so as to get feedback and be able deal with the challenges of the action research project. During the laying the ground phase tough I used technology to introduce a different philosophy towards language learning and I gained considerable experience in the management of online resources and the
effectiveness of e-portfolios for the writing class. Also, the implementation of wikispaces for collaborative writing during the piloting phase notified me for the pitfalls of a strong-we mode collaborative approach for students with no experience in-group learning. The reflexivity period between cycle one and cycle two allowed me to consider not only how to promote autonomy in the ESL classroom but also to consider the current culture and educational philosophy of the staff and lecturers so as to communicate them the significance of my project, to ask their cooperation for the cultivation of a sharing culture via the use of technology and to introduce them to the advantages of online writing portfolios for monitoring students' progress and ameliorating their learning experience. Autonomy is a philosophy that needs time and appropriate setting to be cultivated. Communicating the finding of action research is a vital process of this methodology and could impact the degree of interventions in the next Cycle. I presented the findings of my 1st Cycle to International Conferences and I reflected on the feedback that I received from colleagues. So, I cannot ignore the contributions of other researchers and experienced colleagues in the refinement of the pedagogies of feedback and reflection and the selection of more sophisticated tools for encouraging autonomy in the writing classroom.
Had my study ended with Cycle 1, I would have only discovered that the constructs of peer feedback and reflection can have an impact on students’ writing autonomy over time but would have not understood their transformative power when combined with cutting edge technology. Final student interviews, documents and video transcripts via thematic analysis allowed me to use complex mixing at the data analysis stage of my study and to avoid weaknesses that come with each type of research, while utilizing their strengths to form a bigger picture of the main constructs.
As the discussion above suggests, this study contributed greatly to our knowledge of student autonomy pedagogies and action research methodology. It adds to the body of literature intending to clarify these obscure concepts. Moreover, it demonstrates that action research allow dealing with such complex concepts as learner autonomy, though it might be challenging for a novice researcher and instructor to manage and evaluate data during a longitudinal project. Despite these numerous contributions, there were several limitations to this study, which are discussed in the following section.

6.3.2 Implications for Higher Education curriculum designers and managers

The study’s findings confirmed that the integration of cutting edge technology could be an effective pedagogical approach in L2 learning and could enhance the learning experience and the quality of the writing class in higher education by engaging students in practicing digital literacy, developing collaboration and communication competence, promoting critical thinking and raising awareness of students’ digital identity. In the current dynamic and international environment, universities cannot ignore the societal trends related to information and communication technologies, since they must satisfy all stakeholders’ needs and expectations.

Thus, Higher Education Managers should promote a technology-oriented culture and invest time to train staff and academics on the effective use of technology. Encouraging collaborative action research projects, focused on the infusion of technology in the University would also contribute to professional development and cultivation of an innovative culture.

This study contributes to curriculum development by informing L2 researchers, academics and practitioners on the importance of rethinking the link among writing, information literacy and research skills. Digital natives
need to develop another form of intelligence, cyber intelligence. Familiarization with sophisticated social media tools such as wikis, blogs, Google Docs and vlogs is crucial and promotes students’ communicative competence, collaborative skills and media literacy skills. Particularly, wikis, provided that a paid subscription is an option for students, could be introduced for motivating freshman students to create their first writing portfolio and encourage them to reflect on their progress. Also, wikis could be used for collaborative writing projects if students are well trained in the use of wiki technology. Also, instructors should prepare a well-organized prompt to guide students’ effectively on the process of collaboration. They should train students and discuss with them the principles of effective feedback and finally they have to monitor students’ progress.

Regarding the use of blogs in the writing class, it should be highlighted that blogging can be an effective pedagogical tool for enhancing students’ reflection and engaging students’ in the writing class. Instructors who consider using blogs to promote autonomy are advised to provide pedagogical intervention for less proficient learners to ensure that they are aware of the task requirements and they can self-manage their blogs. Wordpress is a free educational blog, it is user friendly and it is a good starting point for instructors and students who are not experienced in blogging. Instructors are advised to act as administrators in students’ blogs, especially at the beginning of the semester to help students to manage their blogs step by step and monitor their activity.

Academic writing is an integral part of all university courses so academics should coordinate their efforts on the creation of open sharing materials for academic writing and could apply Google Drive for the development of writing portfolios for all university students. By doing this ESL instructors, academics, advisors, Deans, and managers will be able to access students’ writing and have a holistic view of their writing development in different fields. Sharing responsibility for the academic development of university students’ writing can enhance collaboration, coordination and quality in Higher Education.
Regarding the use of vlogs, the study confirmed that students viewed video as an engaging, innovative, creative and thought provoking activity. Academics can take advantage of the benefits of vlogging and apply them to promote reflection in university students, to get feedback on the quality of their lectures and to initiate debates. Also, instructors can create their own vlogs to reflect on their classes or recap the major points of their classes and engage colleagues and students in an online conversation.

Finally research findings and reflections from this study encouraged me to design a new course for Bachelor students “Digital literacy skills for academic success”. The Dean of the College and the academic Committee of a National American University approved the course. The objectives of the course were to: a) To raise students awareness on the importance of digital literacy skills, b) to encourage students to reflect on their self learning skills and implement a plan for improvement, c) to learn, research, practice and use a variety of advanced online tools to improve their academic reading, writing, speaking and presentation skills, d) to develop their ability to study independently in an effective and efficient manner taking full advantage of physical and online resources, e) to evaluate their critical thinking skills and collaboration in the digital era through reviewing and critiquing online resources, f) use video technology to improve visual communication skills. The course run successfully for the Spring 2017 Semester and was positively evaluated by students for lifelong skills development. The College asked me to run a workshop, based on the philosophy of this course, so as to educate writing instructors on new literacies, encourage them to use technology in the class, boost their confidence, and develop their autonomy in L2 research. Finally, the course will be presented to lectures to inspire them to redesign curricula based on the pedagogy of new literacies.
6.4 Limitations and delimitations of this study

There are inevitably limitations in this study that need to be acknowledged. They are divided into three main categories, depending on where they come from.

**Methods**

The study used the following data collection methods:

Cycle 1: audio recorded interviews, writing assignments in wikis, posts in blogs and instructor’s reflections.

Cycle 2: video interviews, writing assignments in Google Drive, video reflections, and instructor’s reflections.

The literature of classroom research suggests that data collection could have been enriched with observation protocols. Though, this was not possible for this study since the researcher did not have enough class time, since she had to teach, train students, resolve conflicts and monitor the class.

Also, video interviews that have been applied in the 2nd Cycle, might caused stress to some participants who could have been more willing to further analyze their thoughts if a voice recorder had been used.
Time
The duration of the teaching experiment for each cycle was short, just 13 weeks (one semester), 104 teaching hours in total. It would be valuable to spend at least two semesters (one academic year) in teaching the same students with this kind of action research project, to see if the participants’ autonomy level would change over time and if other issues begin to arise.

6.4.1 Researcher’s bias

Although the researcher did everything to her power to maximize the trustworthiness of the results of this study (follow up interviews, member checks, coding by a second researcher), researcher’s thinking, her views and her biases have inevitably influenced the direction and the results of this study. I raise this only to alert my readers to this possibility, as yet another caveat when considering my research, the limitations to this study should be acknowledged when conducting similar research projects in the future, so that the quality of research projects can be guaranteed.

6.4.2 Recommendations for future research

This study contributes to our understanding of EFL students’ experiences and perceptions of integrating online peer reviews and online reflection praxis into a blended learning college writing class. To be more specific, ESL teachers can gain insights into the benefits of these pedagogies, students’ perceptions towards peer feedback, reflection and web 2.0 technologies and the impact of an innovative writing model on students’ autonomy. There are many research questions that could be profitably explored, emerging from the current study.

First, it would be interesting to explore what are the factors that affect how students’ perceive online peer review comments and whether different feedback rubrics can affect students’ engagement in the feedback process and students’ attitudes.
The current study explored two collaborative writing platforms: workspaces and Google Drive and how participants utilized them to give and receive online peer review comments. They received and their reactions to the peer review process across assignments. Researchers can make comparisons on the effect of synchronous and asynchronous writing platforms on students’ online interactions.

Second, further research can be conducted to explore whether different writing proficiency pairing would influence the students’ perceptions of the usefulness of online peer review comments and whether this difference could possibly enhance trust.

Third, because the online reflection praxis in this study had two different formats: a written format in blogs and an oral format in vlogs and lasted only for eight weeks, future research could be conducted over a longer period of time to investigate whether students’ reflexivity and attitudes towards the usefulness of reflection would change.

Finally, a comparative study can be conducted to explore how the two different formats and media for reflection (vlogs and blogs) can encourage engagement and autonomy in the writing class.

### 6.4.3 Final reflections

The purpose of this project was to shed light on autonomy in language learning and to enrich action research literature. Findings from Cycle 1 indicated that applying technology in the writing class could engage ESL students. Specifically, wikis can be used to support collaborative writing via peer feedback. But, it is important to provide students with a feedback rubric to cultivate trust and secure the quality of the process. Regarding blogs, wordpress is a free platform that can be applied to engage students in reflective writing provided that students are given a reflection rubric to better focus on their writing skills. Findings from Cycle 2 suggested that Google
Drive is a flexible collaborative writing environment that can be used to support the peer feedback process. Peer feedback encouraged students’ autonomy in writing. Specifically, students reported that feedback promoted collaborative skills, language and task awareness. Finally, students concluded that the introduction of vlogs advanced their confidence, evaluation skills and critical thinking. The implementation of peer feedback and reflection via technology can encourage autonomy in the writing class.

Teacher’s role in promoting autonomy in online environments is significant. Teacher’s digital literacy skills can affect successful online learning and the quality of students’ learning experience. Teachers should be skillful to design writing curricula that have clear learning outcomes, but flexible learning tasks that can be modified, advanced or simplified, taking into consideration the affordances of different synchronous and asynchronous learning environments, students’ learning style, digital literacy, competence and level of collaborative skills. Integration of peer feedback, self-evaluation and reflection should be an integral part of the writing curriculum. Also instructors should engage students in the culture of online collaborative writing and help them to become aware of netiquette and digital ethics.

Regarding the profile of autonomous learners that Candy (1993) successfully sketched out, it can be supported that participants of this project evidenced the below seven characteristics of autonomous learners:

1. Methodological and disciplined actions in the online environments

Students’ managed to address the writing class requirements and control their writing skills in the online environment, following instructor’s guidance and peers’ suggestions and they managed to meet successfully task deadlines.

1. Reflective and self-aware

During this project it can be articulated that students managed to reflect on their academic writing skills, their ability to access and evaluate online information. Also students became aware of their digital identity.
Flexible

Participants of this study used a variety of learning tools to support their learning and managed to quickly familiarize and benefit from digital environments. Flexibility in online learning environments is a significant characteristic of autonomy.

2. Interdependent and interpersonal competent
Both in synchronous (Google Drive) and asynchronous (wikis) learning environments students practiced and evaluated their collaborative competence. Specifically, in synchronous learning environments students exhibited advanced collaborative skills and developed a culture of interdependence.

3. Confidence and positive self-concept
Students’ engagement in online writing tasks, continuous support from the instructor, positive evaluation from peers and successful use and control of technology promoted students self-confidence.

4. Information seeking and retrieval skills
Using wikis and Google Drive students encouraged practicing their digital research skills. This is very important for 21st century University students who have to become experts in using, sharing, saving and organizing online resources.

5. Develop and use criteria for evaluation
Interaction with more knowledgeable peers, interaction with the instructor, peer feedback rubrics and reflection prompts encouraged students to develop academic criteria for assessing the quality and outcome of learning tasks.
To conclude, this project suggests that teachers’ and learner’s autonomy are interdependent. Thus, instructor’s choices of pedagogy and tools and learner’s willingness and competence to engage in a digital learning environment are two interrelated factors that could impact autonomous
learning.

The final version of the “digital noisis” model expands writing beyond the domain of linguistics as it includes eyes, gesture, speech, image and writing, encompassing the entirety of what could be considered a sign (Bowers, 2013). The model was conceived with the aim to follow Jensen’s (2005) claim that instructors are “neuroplasticians” and should become experts in the organ that they teach, the brain. “Digital noisis” model includes elements of a brain-targeted pedagogy and suggests that writing should be transformed and developed to a new literacy skill, which combines written and oral composing so as to be a natural continuum of the new literacy environments (text, image, audio). The model was positively evaluated by the students and motivated them to write by releasing their digital dopamine. The digital brain releases dopamine when it is engaged in stimulating and innovative learning environments. Dopamine is related to pleasure, and as Wills (2006) confirms learners should be exposed to pleasurable learning experiences. Learning via the “digital noisis model” contributed to participants’ writing autonomy. The mix of the process and genre approach was improved in the final version of the model, since feedback was enhanced by carefully designed rubrics, improvising the modeling phase that the genre approach suggests. Also the process approach was applied in an environment that facilitated brainstorming, planning, and interaction. Google Docs was an environment that encouraged the active cognitive engagement, the cultivation of social presence and facilitated instructor’s presence. The implementations of vlogs as a digital reflection tool enhanced learners’ critical thinking, language awareness and metacognitive strategies. The model is promising in developing elements of digital literacy (Douglas, 2011). Specifically, it could be concluded that in the final version of the model the students immersed in different digital environments and developed the cultural element. Using a language in different semiotic environments helps learners to view language through different lenses and reflect on the norm, habits social context and cultural expectations of digital environments that will be using in their academic and work life (Douglas, 2013). The communicative element was
also enhanced with this model. Learners became aware of the affordances of different digital tools and the appropriate use so as to take constructive social action. The communicative element is symbiotic to the cultural element. Language has a communicative purpose and is subjected to communication protocols and norms. Learners experimented and reflected on the communication protocols of different language learning environments. Their ability to overcome the challenges of academic writing and develop digital skills improved students’ confidence. Learners reviewed their progress, received valuable feedback and developed their confidence via participating in a digital community. The engagement in the video activity helped learners to develop the creative element of digital literacies. Critical literacy was also developed. Learners navigated in different media, text, hypertext and videos and became aware of the variety of approaches that they need to follow to become autonomous in these environments and reflect on their media literacy practices. Las but not least students become empowered by enhancing the civic element of digital literacy. Students should not be only consumers of social media but have to become aware of their affordances so as to apply them for learning, self development and active engagement in a global environment.

Finally, the researcher suggests that this model could be enriched and applied in Higher education as an alternative or parallel Oral-Visual composition class to include students with different educational needs, to further promote civic literacy, autonomy for students with learning difficulties and raise awareness on the importance of media composition for the development of “noisis” and the democratization of education.
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355


Appendices

Appendix I: The consent form for Cycle 1
Dear students,
You are invited to participate in an audio-recorded interview and answer questions related to your learning experience in the ESL 2 class. The interview aims in exploring your perceptions on the implementation of online feedback via wikis and reflective writing in blogs and investigates its effectiveness in fostering autonomy in writing.
You are kindly requested to answer all parts of questions bearing in mind that your answers will be treated with anonymity and confidentiality. Interviews will last 15 to 20 minutes maximum. Your participation is voluntary and will contribute to my research. Honest answers will influence positively the results.
With many thanks,

The Researcher/ ESL instructor
Anna Bougia

Appendix II: Cycle 1: Interview Questions
1) Do you prefer to learn individually or in a group and why?
2) Do you reflect upon your learning? How?
3) How self-directed are you as a learner?
4) How do you evaluate your peer feedback experience in wikis?
5) How do you evaluate your reflection experience in blogs?
6) If there are any, what are the advantages of the project?
7) If there are any, what are the disadvantages of the project?
8) Did the combination of wikis and blogs help you to take the control of your learning?

Appendix III: Research Ethics Checklist    Form RE1
This checklist should be completed for every research project which involves human participants. It is used to identify whether a full application for ethics approval needs to be submitted.

Before completing this form, please refer to the University Code of Practice on Ethical Standards for Research Involving Human Participants. The principal investigator and, where the principal investigator is a student, the supervisor, is responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgment in this review.

This checklist must be completed before potential participants are approached to take part in any research.

Section I: Applicant Details
1. Name of Researcher (applicant):
| 2. Status (please click to select): |  |
| 3. Email Address: |  |
| 4a. Contact Address: |  |
| 4b. Telephone Number: |  |

**Section II: Project Details**

| Project Title: |
|  |

**Section III: For Students Only:**

| Course title and module name and number where appropriate |
| School/Centre: |
| 7. Supervisor’s or module leader’s name: |
| 8. Email address: |
| 9. Telephone extension: |

**Declaration by Researcher (Please tick the appropriate boxes)**

- [ ] I have read the University’s Code of Practice
- [ ] The topic merits further research
- [ ] I have the skills to carry out the research
- [ ] The participant information sheet, if needed, is appropriate
- [ ] The procedures for recruitment and obtaining informed consent, if needed, are appropriate
- [ ] The research is exempt from further ethics review according to current University guidelines
- [ ] Where relevant, I have read the ethical guidelines of the regulatory body that is relevant to my discipline and verify that the research adheres to these guidelines

**Comments from Researcher, and/or from Supervisor if Researcher is Undergraduate or Taught Postgraduate student:**

**Section IV: Research Checklist**

Please answer each question by ticking the appropriate box:

<p>| YES | NO |
|  |  |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tr>
<td>Will the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or who may be unable to give informed consent (e.g. children, people with learning disabilities, emotional difficulties, problems with understanding and/or communication, your own students)?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited (e.g. students at school, members of self-help group, residents of nursing home)?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will deception be necessary, i.e. will participants take part without knowing the true purpose of the study or without their knowledge/consent at the time (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places)?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will the study involve discussion of topics which the participants may find sensitive (e.g. sexual activity, own drug use)?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, alcohol, nicotine, vitamins) be administered to or ingested by participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>Will blood or tissues samples be obtained from participants?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will pain or more than mild discomfort be likely to result from the study?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>9. Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>Will participants’ right to withdraw from the study at any time be withheld or not made explicit?</td>
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<td>Will participants’ anonymity be compromised or their right to anonymity be withheld or information they give be identifiable as theirs?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Might permission for the study need to be sought from the researcher’s or from participants’ employer?</td>
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<td>Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS?</td>
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If ALL items in the Declaration are ticked AND if you have answered NO to ALL questions in Section IV, **send the completed and signed Form RE1 to your School/Centre Research Ethics Officer** for information. You may proceed with the research but should follow any subsequent guidance or requests from the School/Centre Research Ethics Officer or your
supervisor/module leader where appropriate. Undergraduate and taught postgraduate students should retain a copy of this form and submit it with their research report or dissertation (bound in at the beginning). MPhil/PhD students should submit a copy to the Board of Studies for Research Degrees with their application for Registration (R1). **Work which is submitted without the appropriate ethics form will be returned unassessed.**

If ANY of the items in the Declaration are not ticked AND / OR if you have answered YES to ANY of the questions in Section IV, you will need to describe more fully in Section V of the form below how you plan to deal with the ethical issues raised by your research. **This does not mean that you cannot do the research, only that your proposal will need to be approved by the School/Centre Research Ethics Officer or School/Centre Research Ethics Committee or Sub-committee.** When submitting the form as described in the above paragraph you should substitute the original Section V with the version authorized by the School/Centre Research Ethics officer.

If you answered YES to **question 14**, you will also have to submit an application to the appropriate external health authority ethics committee, after you have received approval from the School/Centre Research Ethics Officer/Committee and, where appropriate, the University Research Ethics Committee.

**Section V: Addressing Ethical Problems**

If you have answered YES to any of questions 1-12 please complete below and submit the form to your School/Centre Research Ethics Officer.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Project Title</th>
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<tr>
<th>Principal Investigator/Researcher/Student</th>
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<th>Supervisor</th>
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<tr>
<th>Summary of issues and action to be taken to address the ethics problem(s)</th>
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Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University’s Code of Practice on Ethical Standards and any relevant academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study. **This includes providing appropriate information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data.** Any significant change to the design or conduct of the research should be notified to the School/Centre.
Research Ethics Officer and may require a new application for ethics approval.

Signed: Principal Investigator/Researcher

Approved:

Supervisor or module leader (where appropriate)

Date:

For use by School/Centre Research Ethics Officer:

- No ethical problems are raised by this proposed study - Retain this form on record

- Appropriate action taken to maintain ethical standards

- The research protocol should be revised to eliminate the ethical concerns or reduce them to an acceptable level, using the attached suggestions
Appendix IV: Cycle1 Interview labeling for Perceptions for peer feedback in wikis

Student I: Wikis helped me to improve my writing. I learned new vocabulary. Everything was new for me and writing online using the internet was a new experience. I could see my classmates’ assignments; I could compare them with my essay and reflect on my errors. Although I am confident with technology I felt very stressed when I first used wikis. Now I can say that I have learned more that I have imagined and this was a helpful experience. Sometimes I did not receive feedback and that did not annoy me but I felt that it would be useful to know others’ opinion about my assignment. It was more beneficial to receive that to give feedback. Generally I do not rely on my peers’ feedback, I want my teacher’s feedback.

Student C: I prefer to write traditionally using a pen and a paper. Though using wikis was a useful experience. I used wikis regularly and I could say that reading my peers’ assignments helped me to reflect on my grammar and brainstorm ideas on different topics. I felt a bit uncomfortable when I gave feedback to Dimitra… I felt the burden of responsibility… I have to make corrections to someone’s paper though I am not experienced in doing that… it was a challenge for me…. it was difficult. I did not mind that student A made comments on my paper… I thought that she might know better than me.

Student L: I did give feedback many times. I do not believe that peer feedback is helpful at that level. My peers have the same skills with me so I don’t think that I can benefit at all from their comments. I don’t believe that wikis, technology in general or feedback helped me to improve my writing. It is the lesson that helped me to improve and of course teacher’s feedback. After all, feedback is teacher’s job: to correct and help students to learn.

If wikis were not limited to five members it would be more interesting for me. We would have the chance to interact and communicate more often. I would have the chance to get more feedback and possibly I would have developed trust. Because students would have the chance to give feedback to papers that attracted their attention.
Student B: To be honest, I used to write my assignments on a paper and then I copied them on wikis. I cannot get used to technology. What really helped me in wikis is the fact that I could read others’ papers, correct them or compare them with my assignments. Giving feedback was difficult for me because I do not know whether I have the skills to give feedback. I do not know if I can be objective. I don’t want to be unfair with someone’s work and I don’t want to evaluate his work. I believe that receiving feedback from as many people as possible could be helpful but I am not sure if everyone could be objective or if everyone has the skills to correct papers. On the other hand giving feedback to wikis helped me to identify our errors and encouraged us to learn new things. You could not correct someone’s paper without having enough knowledge on the topic.

Student A

Well, I have improved my English and I am more confident with technology and the use of the internet. I have learned how to collaborate and be part of a team and how to learn from a team. I could see my peers’ error and reflect on them and I was learning via correcting others’ papers. Also, the contact with the instructor was not direct so I was not afraid of making mistakes, since I had the chance to get feedback and correct them. At the beginning it was difficult to be coordinated with my peers, we had to be well organised and keep deadlines and that was difficult. But, then I get used to it. I can say that writing online using wikis helped me to monitor my spelling and advance my vocabulary by looking up for words online. Also, I had the chance to write more online since it was easy to make corrections to rephrase my assignments and make changes easily. Also, I was not very familiar with technology but with practice I became confident and I realised that this is the appropriate way to do assignments. Writing online helped us to take the responsibility and do the assignments on time because we knew that the instructor could have access at our paper any time. Also, writing online helped us to build a portfolio and check our progress and development.

Student H

Using blogs and wikis helped me to gain confidence in my writing because I had to change the way I used to think and understand writing. This was very helpful and very interesting for me.

Student G

I believed that I have achieved most of my goals in this course. We engaged in an active learning procedure, we did many things in the writing class more that one could imagine that could do in a group class. We engaged in giving feedback, we learned how to use technology and tools such as wikis and we collaborated. I enjoyed learning in a group but I would rather learn in a group that is better that me so as to have the chance to learned as much as possible.
I didn’t feel very well with the fact that student H did not give me feedback. I wanted to know her opinion and view her corrections. I would take her feedback into consideration even if I disagreed. I expected her to be cooperative but she ignored me. I asked her if she had any issue with the assignments and she told me that she did nit manage to make her own assignments so she did nit know how to give feedback and she was ashamed to share her assignments. On the other hand student A gave me good feedback. But I still I was expected your feedback to feel secure. Students should not be strict when they give feedback, they should be cooperative. Student A was very strict. This is teacher’s role not students’ responsibility. Personally, I do not believe that I was strict when I was giving feedback, I was trying to add simple things and make the writing comprehensive. This is not easy because sometimes it is nit easy to be faire with everyone. Also someone maigh feel sad because of your feedback. Generally I don’t believe that feedback was important. Only teacher’s feedback is important. I wanted to listen to other’s opinions but I could not trust them no matter their language level. At the beginning I did nit have confidence in writing and I felt embarrassed when I had to share my writing. I was not quit sure why I had to do that.. When I was receiving bad comments I felt stressed and I lost my confidence. I want to receive gentle comments.

Student J
Undoubtedly, I believe that wikis helped me to improve my writing and specifically I show improvement in the structure of my essays in grammar and in vocabulary. Working with wikis can help you to work collaboratively, to engage in peer evaluation and to improve through this procedure. If I have to mention a disadvantage I would say that sometimes that feedback that you receive might not be objective but I believe that after all it is an interesting method of learning. Giving feedback is a procedure that I enjoyed more than giving feedback, though it was a difficult process since you had to be very diligent and try to be objective with your criticism and pay attention so as to give appropriate feedback.

Student K
I didn't enjoy giving or receiving feedback. So, I just did my assignments in wikis I did not collaborate with anyone. I do not enjoy group learning. I am not interested in reading my peers’ essays. Everyone has his personal writing style and I do not want to read other’s opinion, I have my own ideas.

Student D
I found it helpful to work in group, I like to collaborate. I believe that there are students who are more knowledgeable than me and can help me to learn. Using wikis helped me to learn because I could read my peers essay and take them as example. I especially collaborated with student H.
Appendix V: Cycle1 Interview labeling for Perceptions for reflective writing in blogs

Blogs.

Student I
prefer wikis because most assignments were written in wikis, so I believe that wikis were more helpful. The benefit of writing in blogs is that you can better understand your skills and if you share you posts your classmates can help you.

Student C
I preferred wikis to blogs..I cannot specify the reason but I found blogging difficult for me..Maybe the fact that we had to write about our feelings was what was hard for me since I do not feel that I have a good level in English and thus I cannot express my feeling in English. I would suggest blogs to be in Greek and why not, open to public. I think that If my level of English was more advanced I would enjoy writing online.

Student B
Nobody could see or comment your blogs, so this was a disadvantage for me. I would prefer them to be public so as to be able to make comments. Sometimes, I did not know what to write in wordpress I could not express my feelings online.

Student A
We used blogs to reflect on our progress. This was very interesting and an individual writing task and helped as to realize how we started with writing in this class and what we managed to do at the end.

Student H
I was not familiar with reflective writing. Though I posted quite often in blogs and it helped me to have an overview of our class syllabus. Also It would be more interesting for me to reflect on interesting essay topics such as euthanasia.

Student G
At the beginning I didn’t know what to write in blogs. I needed more guidance. But slowly slowly I realized that writing in blogs helped me to understand my weaknesses. Though I did not feel very good writing in blogs because I was afraid that you would become affected negatively my self-evaluation.

Student D
I was thinking more in blogs, I had to deal with my self and solve my issues. I did not expect help from anyone. I believe that blogs were useful but personally I do not enjoy using technology, I am bad with technology and I do not want to learn how to use it.
Appendix VI: Labeling reflection posts in Blogs

Characteristics of autonomous behavior labeled in 22 posts
Self-evaluation
Plan
Comments on class material-teacher-reflection on syllabus
Goal setting

1. **Student G**
   Post 1
   My name is ..... and i am 18 years old. I have been studying at the university of .....College for 1 month. I decided to continue my studies at a Finance department to be a professional bank assistant. Furthermore, in 5 years from now i want to go in America to make a successful graduate for my field. Last summer i had the ability to work at my uncle's touristic office as a secretary experience helped me more to Accomplish my goal. I communicate with many tourists and i realised that i practiced my english very much.

Post 2

At the first time that i had been in the University of ....College was two months ago. When I came here my level was quiet advanced and i had the ability to attend the English course fluently and do many presentations during the lesson. Moreover, when the days have left I was learning better this language especially Grammar rules, many difficult words, Reading and especially communicate and collaborate more easily with my friends here.

2. **Student H**
   Post 1
   First of all, my name i.. I'm studying in Psychology Department. I decided to be a psychologist because i want to help people and advice them. Personally, i want to participate in criminal class. Moreover, i want to graduated with a good mark and after that i want to find a job.

Post 2

The impressions of 2013 are both good and bad. At first, the year was so well. I was with the friend and my family and i had a good time. Moreover, i began my own life without my family, i became independent. But this cause many problems to live .I started my studies in psychology. I improved my english.
On the other hand, I lost my grandfather and this fact was so influenced. It was so bad for me because he was growing me up.

Post 3

The last week we had an article of the euthanasia which is so important subject. Personally, I find some topics but I got confused because it’s so detailed. I had many thoughts for this thesis but we should have a balanced and neutralized. Apart from this, I don’t present my topic because I thought that it wasn’t good and correct because it was so short! But this exercise we got it. I had the opportunity to get in the other position. Finally, I’m concerned because the life is important, on the other hand, the people who suffer from illness and causing mobility problems is so hard for them.

Post 4

Just arrived the end of semester and I would like to express my opinion of English lesson. First of all, this lesson gave me many knowledge for many issues. I improve my English and my expressions. Actually, inside this lesson I corrected my mistakes in grammar and vocabulary. Last but not at least, I can communicate with other people in English language.

3) Student A

Post 1

Before three weeks I started in the College as a student. My name is.... and I want to be a psychologist. Because my registration was late I had many difficulties like my adaption in this new place. The subjects are very interesting, especially the subject of psychology. In this I have learned many things about people and their behavior and I believe that this is the most important science, because it helps you to improve yourself and also other people. But also there is a lesson that I cannot adjust. This is the lesson of computers. I was never good with technology and computers but I thing that it is also an important science, cause it helps you connect with people all over the world and also has many applications. Every week we have also a lesson which is called student development. I like this lesson because it is look like psychology so I am interested to this. Finally I attend English. I like it but I have forget them cause I have many years to practice them. Although I think that in the end everything is going to be alright, and I will become a successful psychologist.
Post 2

Because my registration in college was late I have not attended many lessons, so my experience here is not big. Although I have learned some things and I have improved my vocabulary and my writing, because in this class we do a lot of exercises here. The lesson is very interesting and we also practice a lot on the internet. This is very important because internet is everywhere nowadays. Also, because I had to attend English lessons since 2010 I have forgotten many things in grammar, but now I’m starting to remember them again. So this class has been very helpful to me and my progress. I’m really excited about that and I hope that in the near future I will learn more things and I will improve my English in order to be a native speaker. That’s my goal.

Post 3

Although I am here only a few weeks I have gained important things from this lesson. For example I have improved my English and I have learned to work in pairs with others. Also this lesson is very funny and entertaining in a good way of course. I think that I have so many things to take in the future and I hope to be a native speaker sometime. This is my plan and I think that I will make it. At the end I want to add that this lesson is not only good for our knowledge but also improve us as people because we learn to collaborate and take things from the others.

Post 4

This week we had to write an article about euthanasia and if we are against or in favor about it. Personal I’m against it. In my article I supported that with two arguments that I think that I explained in a very good way. My essay was big enough, and according to my opinion was very interesting. Although, my classmates did not find it very important or serious and I believe that they did not judge me fair. The whole experience of writing and finding the articles that we had to study was very helpful, because we had the opportunity to learn things about a very important issue. This exercise also forced me to make thoughts about euthanasia and the rights that have people in his own, or in the others death. In the end, about my presentation I’m very proud because I tried a lot, even I did not take the right grate from my classmates.

4) STUDENT L

Post 1
Last two weeks for me at this class was good. I wrote a subject about John Nash. It was interesting because I know many thinks about him and it was easy for me. In class now I feel good and environment is friendly. I sit with my friend Kxstantinos from the beginning of this class and sometimes we talk about games but we are focus at our teacher, our favourite teacher A.bougia. anyway, last two weeks were good for me and I dont have nothing more to write. all good and all normal for now.

Post 2

I have three months at this class. all looks great , the teacher , the students, everything but I think I need more practice to my english lessons. First of all I need to focus more at grammar, also sometimes I lost my way at summaries. But the positive is, I learned more thinks from past and I am little better than past. At new year I hope to be an interesting student with more knowledge to english language.

Post 3

Two days before I listened different stories about euthanasia and I wrote one also. My experience at this class for this topic was interesting and I think I will make a re-search at future about Euthanasia and people with disabilities.

5)Student B

1 post

My name is... and I am 21 years old. I'm studying finance in the College.

6) Student C

Post 1

My name is... and I am 21 years old I'm studying psychology

Post 2

The english course is not very easy for me because I am not familiar with english languange. In first week I found the course very difficult especially in
grammar and speaking. By the time I think I have progress especially in speaking but I need more help with grammar.

Post 3

I learn many things in this lesson. I learn a lot of things about assays, grammar and write a good summary. The most important thing I'm better with speaking and listening. I need more work with grammar and vocabulary. I think in final test I'm going better.

7) Student F

Post 1

My name is... and I'm 18 years old! I'm a student in the College in Athens and my major is business administration and all my courses are in English! In my first week I was very anxious! The courses here are difficult but I think I will pass successful the class! The teachers here are very good and they help me a lot about my courses!

Post 2

At my first time that I had been in the University was 3 months ago! When I came here my English level was low and didn't have a confidence about my self! My English teacher is very skilled at English and she helps me a lot all this months here to advance my English! Now I'm pretty good at my English and I hope that I will continue to advance my level!

Post 3

The articles that I read for Euthanasia were very interesting! At my class we do an article about Euthanasia and people with disabilities! Then we present our articles at our classmates and then they grated us about our article! My article grated with 93% and I think I deserve this degree! I will write again... see you soon!

Post 4
Today was a good class day! We learn how to correct essays and we talk about woman’s abort and how useful is marijuana! That’s all and have a nice day!

Post 5

Good morning everyone, today i will write about my "travel" in the college. When is was came here my English wasn't good and my writing too. Now after 6 months here in the College i think my English level is better but i need more job! I hope that i will learn to write and to speak excellent English when i will finish my College. That's all!

8) Student E

Post 1

My name is... and i’m 18 years old. This year i’m done with school and i decide to be a student to the College in Athens! I want to be business administrator. The courses here at the 1st semester are not so difficult and i so glad because i think i will pass with success! My teachers at this semester are very good and very friendly. I think i can pass the maths at the exams. Here is more different than school or private lessons. I love this place and i want to finish my career like student and find a job like business administrator in a great business.

Post 2

Hello everybody!!! Every new week in this course is important for me... i have learning a lot of things and also i remember a lot old one! I want to continue in this class, because we can communicate very good with my classmates and with my teacher. At the next week we have the first mid-term for us. We are a little bit nervous but all of us have a big smile. Finally, if i continue with this way i will learn a lot of English in a small time!

Post 3

All of the research about the euthanasia is so complicated and so important at the same time! I find a lot of articles with so important information about the problem. When i read them, i’m so confused about what happened in hospital.... Finally all the people are bad until you can find exactly what they
are doing in their lives! In this days you mustn’t trust none doctor except if he or she is a good friend. Euthanasia is so bad method and so difficult choice.

Post 4

This day is so important for me! I just learn a lot of things about essays. We just read 2 texts, but now i understand a lot of things how to write a correct essay. Also i learned about drags which can recover some people and about abortion. Finally, now i know how to start and close my essay with the write way. Thanks my teacher a lot! Goodbye…

9) Student J

Post 1

Hi, im..... im 21 years old. I m study International relations in the College in Athens. I am going to present my experiance as a student in English lessons with Anna Bougia. I am very glad, to be in this classroom, the enviroment is very positive, we are already have used some intresting methods learning english by the internet. I expeced that in the future i will going to advanced very much my english level in this project.

Appendix VII: An interview transcript from Cycle 1

Λοιπόν, τελείωσε το εξαμηνο θέλω να μου πεις τι σκεφτεσαι ότι έχεις παρει από αυτό το μάθημα.

Λοιπόν έχω βελτιώσει σε μεγάλο βαθμό τα αγγλικά μου επίσης είμαι πιο εξοικιωμένη με το διαδίκτυο και με τα blogs γενικότερα με το διαδίκτυο. Επίσης έμαθα πράγματα για την συνεργασία και την ομαδικότητα και έμαθα μέσα από αυτό γιατί και έβλεπα τα λάθη των άλλων και έμαθα και από τις διορθώσεις των άλλων πράγματα. Επίσης η επαφή με τον καθηγητή δεν ήταν τόσο άμεση οπότε δεν είχα το φόβο μήπως κάνω λάθη και είναι σημαντικό αυτό για τον βαθμό μου ή οποιοδήποτε.

Ωραία. Πώς προτιμάς να μαθαίνεις μια γλώσσα; Προτιμάς να τη μαθαίνεις μέσα σε μία ομάδα ή προτιμάς τα ιδιαίτερα μαθήματα; Έχεις κάνει καταρχήν ιδιαίτερα μαθήματα στο παρελθόν; Ναι, έχω κάνει ιδιαίτερα μαθήματα. Από την Aplus κάνω πάντα ιδιαίτερα μαθήματα.
Αυτή είναι η πρώτη φορά που κάνεις μάθημα σε τάξη;

Ναι έκανα μόνο στην A Junior και εδώ.

Ωραία, τι προτιμάς τα ιδιαίτερα ή το να μαθαίνεις σε ομάδα και γιατί;

Και τα δύο πιστεύω ότι μου προσφέρουν πράγματα. Στα ιδιαίτερα γιατί καλύπτονται μόνο οι δικές μου ανάγκες αλλά όταν είμαι σε μία ομάδα μπορώ να…να…. Σκεφτώ απορίες και να μάθω από τις απορίες των άλλων …ε…. και να είναι απορίες που εγώ στην πραγματικότητα δεν είχα σκεφτεί αλλά μπορεί να είχα.

Σε δυσκολεύει καθόλου η συνεργασία;

Στην αρχή με δυσκόλεψε λίγο …ε…. γιατί έπρεπε να είμαστε όλοι μαζί να είμαστε όλοι ορανωμένοι και αυτό είναι δυσκολό γιατί δεν μπορείς να έχεις το ίδιο πρόγραμμα με τον άλλον αλλά από ένα σημείο και μετά συνηθίσα και πλέον δεν έχω πρόβλημα.

Ωραία. Όταν μαθαίνεις μία ξένη γλώσσα με ποιον τρόπο προτιμάς εσύ να τη διδάσκεσαι;

Πιστεύω σε ταξη καλύτερα να τη διδάσκεσαι.

Σκέφτεσαι συχνά μετά το μάθημα τι έχεις μαθεί πάνω σε αυτά που έχεις μάθει; Δηλαδή κάνεις σκέψεις πάνω στο πλάνο του μαθήματος ή στο υλικό που σου έδωσε η καθηγήτρια;

Ε….ανάλογα με το μάθημα να πω την αλήθεια, όταν κάνουμε γραμματική όχι, μετά δεν μπορώ να σκεφτώ κάτι. Αλλά, όταν συζητάμε θέματα όπως το θέμα με την ευθανασία, μετά ναι, αυτό με εβαλε σε κάποιες σκέψεις. Δηλαδή σκέφτηκα ότι είναι πολύ ωφέλιμο να το κάνουμε.

Καταθετείς κάπου τις σκέψεις σου; Γράφεις τις σκέψεις σου για στο μάθημα;

Όχι.

Έχει τυχά ποτέ να συζητήσεις με κάποια φίλη σου πάνω σε αυτά τα που έχεις μάθει, όταν σε προβληματίζει κάτι, όταν δεν σου αρέσει κάτι το σκέφτεσαι Αναρωτιέσαι πως μπορείς να το διορθώσεις;

Ναι το σκέφτομαι.Έχει τυχά να ξανακοιτάξω εργασίες που έχω κάνει πάνω σε συγκεκριμένο θέμα, αλλά να το συζητάω με άλλον όχι.

Πιστεύεις ότι ένας φοιτητής ο οποίος μαθαίνει μία ξένη γλώσσα θα πρέπει να είναι αυτόνομος; Δώσε μου ένα παράδειγμα αυτονομίας.

Ναι, πρέπει να είναι αυτόνομος. Αυτό σημαίνει ότι… μπορεί να κάνει μόνος του τις εργασίες του ότι έχει την ευθύνη των πράξεών του να πει ότι θα κάτσει να διαβάσει κάποια πράγματα και όντως τα διαβάσει να μην χρειάζεται να παίρνει σημειώσεις από άλλους η να ρωτάει συνεχεια πράγματα από άλλους .
Ωραία. Εσύ για να ενισχύσεις την αυτονομία σου τι κανεις αναφορικά με τη γλώσσα; Κάνεις κάτι έξω από την τάξη όταν τελειώνει το μάθημα των αγγλικών;

Εεε... να προσπαθώ να βρίσκω εύχες λέξεις που μου αρέσουν στα ελληνικά και να τις βρίσκω πως είναι στα αγγλικά γιατί πιστεύω πως θα με βοηθήσει αναλόγως όσον αφορά τη βελτίωση του γραπτού σου λόγου;

Θέλω τώρα να συζητήσουμε για το μάθημα της ακαδημαϊκής γραφής.Πιστεύεις ότι η χρήση αυτών των τεχνολογιών, των wikis και των blogs που χρησιμοποιήσαμε καθ' όλη τη διαρκεία του εξαμήνου σε βοήθησε καθόλου όταν τελειώνει το μάθημα των ελληνικών;

Ναι, με βοήθησε τρόπο για να βρίσκω εύηχες λέξεις που μου αρέσουν στα ελληνικά και να τις βρίσκω πως είναι στα αγγλικά γιατί πιστεύω ότι το μεγαλύτερο μου πρόβλημα είναι στο λεξιλόγιο.

Πιστεύεις ότι έγραψης περισσότερα από ότι θα έγραφες αν οι εργασίες γίνονταν με τον παραδοσιακό τρόπο;

Ναι, με βοήθησε τρόπο για να βρίσκω εύηχες λέξεις που μου αρέσουν στα ελληνικά και να τις βρίσκω πως είναι στα αγγλικά γιατί πιστεύω ότι το μεγαλύτερο μου πρόβλημα είναι στο λεξιλόγιο.

Πολύ ωραία. Στο μέλλον θα ήθελες να μάθεις κάποια άλλη γλώσσα; Μιλάς κάποια άλλη γλώσσα εκτός από αγγλικά;

Εεε.. είχα ξεκινήσει γαλλικά αλλά δεν μου άρεσαν ιδιαίτερα ναι θέλω να μάθω ε... κυρίως κινέζικα και ισπανικά, αλλά πιστεύω ότι είναι δυσκόλες γλώσσες, οπότε θέλει πρώτα δουλειά στη σχολή μου και μετά να συνεχίσω σε κάποια άλλη γλώσσα.

Θα ήθελες να τη μάθεις χρησιμοποιώντας την ίδια μέθοδο που χρησιμοποιήσαμε εδώ και την ίδια τεχνολογία;

Ε... στην αρχή πιστεύω ότι θα ήθελα να κάνω κάτι μόνη μου γιατί θα είναι πολύ δυσκόλο για μια γλώσσα που δεν έχω χασακάνει γιατί είμαι και σε μεγάλη ηλικία πλέον( μείωση εντασης φωνής) αλλά μετά θα ήθελα να χρησιμοποιήσω τα ίδια εργαλεία αφού τώρα έχω μάθει κάποια πράγματα βασικά.

Ωραία. Θέλω τώρα να σκεφτείς ότι άρχισες να χρησιμοποιούντας την ίδια μέθοδο που χρησιμοποιήσαμε εδώ και την ίδια τεχνολογία;

Ναι, θυμάμαι ότι άρχισες να χρησιμοποιούντας την ίδια μέθοδο που χρησιμοποιήσαμε εδώ και την ίδια τεχνολογία

Ε... στην αρχή πιστεύω ότι θα ήθελα να κάνω κάτι μόνη μου γιατί θα είναι πολύ δυσκόλο για μια γλώσσα που δεν έχω χασακάνει γιατί είμαι και σε μεγάλη ηλικία πλέον( μείωση εντασης φωνής) αλλά μετά θα ήθελα να χρησιμοποιήσω τα ίδια εργαλεία αφού τώρα έχω μάθει κάποια πράγματα βασικά.
πρέπει να τις κανουμε με έναν τέτοιο τρόπο γιατί αλλιώς καποιος δεν θα πάρει
την ευθύνη από μόνος του να πει ότι θα κάτσω να κάνω μια εργασία και θα
την παραδώσω. Ενώ στο διαδίκτυο και μπορεί ο καθηγητής να τη δει ανα
πασα στιγμή και επισης μπορείς να έχεις και εσύ πρόσβαση ανα πασα
στιγμή.

Ωραία. Λοιπόν, αν αυτό το προτζεκτ που χρησιμοποιήσαμε στο μάθημα
των αγγλικών έχει κάποια πλεονεκτήματα μπορείς να μου τα αναφέρεις;
Αρχικά, θέλω να μου μιλήσεις για τα wikis και στη συνέχεια για τα blogs.

Εεεε παυση ναιαι αυτο που είπα και πριν σι μαθαίνουμε καλύτερα τη γλώσσα
giati διορθώνει απο μόνο του κάποια πράγματα και έτσι μπάινουμε στη
διαδικασια να διαγράφονται σωστά οι λέξεις εεεε..επισης εεεεεε εεεε μπορείς να
έχεις πολλά αρθρα και ανα πασα στιγμή να τα
deis όλα μαζι και έτσι να δεις την εξελιξη σου, γιατι αυτα δεν διαγράφονται ούτε
χαλονται όταν ένα χαρτί εεεεεεεε και σχετικά με τα blogs είναι πιο ενδιαφέρον.

Εγώ προτιμου τα wikis, αλλα εκει πέρα γραφαμε την εξελιξη μας την προοδό
μας και ήταν κάτι πολύ ενδιαφέρον αποκλειστικά και μόνο για μας. Δηλαδή
είδαμε από που ξεκινήσαμε και θα δούμε στο τέλος που θα καταλήξουμε.

Όσον αφορά τα μειονεκτήματα του project ποια πιστεύεις ότι είναι;
Εεε μειονέκτημα πιστεύω ότι θα είναι όταν κάποιος δεν έχει σαχοληθεί με το
διαδίκτυο θα έχεις δυσκολιες τέτοιες σίγουρα και επισης εεε δεν γνωρίζουμε
αν έχουν όλοι πρόσβαση στο διαδίκτυο απο το σπίτι τους δηλαδη
αναγκαστικά κάποιοι θα πρέπει να κάνουν εδώ πέρα τις εργασίες και αυτό
τους στερεί τη δυνατότητα να το κοιτάξουμε και στο σπίτι να
βελτιωθούν καλύτερα σε αυτο wikis blogs.

Appendix VIII: Authentic material for the characteristics of a summary.
Used by students to facilitate the peer feedback process

Characteristics of a summary

"The purpose of a summary (also known as: abstract, precis, synopsis) is to
give a reader a condensed and objective account of the main ideas and
features of a text. Usually, a summary has between one and three paragraphs
or one hundred to three hundred words, depending on the length and
complexity of the original essay and the intended audience and purpose.
Typically, a summary will do the following:
Cite the author and title of the text. In some cases, the place of publication or
the context for the essay may also be included.
Indicate the main ideas of the text. Accurately representing the main ideas
(while omitting the less important details) is the major goal of the summary.
Use direct quotations of key words, phrases, or sentences. Quote the text
directly for a few key ideas; paraphrase the other important ideas (that is,
express the ideas in your own words.)
Include author tags. ("According to Ehrenreich" or "as Ehrenreich explains") to remind the reader that you are summarizing the author and the text, not giving your own ideas. . . . Avoid summarizing specific examples or data unless they help illustrate the thesis or main idea of the text. Report the main ideas as objectively as possible. . . . Do not include your reactions; save them for your response.


Appendix IX: Participant Information Sheet for Cycle 2

Participant Information Sheet

Title of Project: Cultivating autonomy in digital natives: An investigation into the optimal use of CMS in Higher Education

Researcher: Anna Bougia
   Full Address: Fratti 8, 11742 Koukaki, Greece
   Tel: 00306937224352
   Email: annabougia.research@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. Chryssa Themelis

Email: cthemelis@gmail.com

Date: 20th November 2015

Dear students,

I would like to invite you to take part in my thesis research with the Institute of Educational Cybernetics in the Department of Educational Research at the University of Bolton.

Before you decide if you wish to take part you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.
This document includes:

- Information about the purpose of the study (what I hope to find out).
- Information about what participation means and how to withdraw when and if you wish (what you will be doing).
- Details of what notes, recordings and other sources of information may be used as ‘data’ in the study - for the group and with you as an individual.
- Information about how this data will be secured and stored.
- Information about how any quotes will be used and how you will be involved in checking, agreeing and consenting to their use.
- How the information will be used in the thesis and for other purposes such as conference presentations or publication.

The purpose of the study

This research is for my thesis on the PhD in the Institute of Educational Cybernetics with the Department of Educational Research at Bolton University. The research may also be used for journal articles and conference presentations. My research aims to investigate learners’ perspectives about the effectiveness of new media tools on the cultivation of autonomy in the ESL writing class. Specifically, the role of peer feedback pedagogy and the importance of reflection in the writing class are being further examined.

What participation involves and how to withdraw if you no longer wish to participate

Why have I been invited?
You have been invited because you are using new media tools in your ESL class. If you no longer wish to participate, you can withdraw from any stage of the research. You have to inform me though for the reasons that have led you to this decision and the transcripts of the interview will be destroyed.

Do I have to take part?

No, your participation is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, then please let me know. If you do not wish to be observed or recorded, please indicate this. Every effort will then be taken to ensure that your data/voice is removed from recordings by editing out where possible or excluding such data from any transcription.
You can withdraw at any time during the study and there is absolutely no obligation on you to continue nor penalty for withdrawing. Your related data (recordings, notes) can be destroyed and all reference removed at any time.

What would taking part involve for me?
An email message from you that states, “I agree to participate,” will be considered confirmation of your consent.

**What will I have to do?**
Your participation in this study will consist of writing assignments, reflection journals, video blogs and interviews.
We are going to arrange an interview via Skype, which will be recorded. The questions of the interview will be sent to you prior to the interview for you to be able to reflect on them. If you have more questions to pose, you can ask prior or during the interview.

**Protecting your data and identity**

**What will happen to the data?**
‘Data’ here means the researcher’s notes, survey results, workshop outputs, wikis and blogs documents, audio recordings, Google drive documents, video blogs and any email exchanges we may have had. The data may be kept for one year after the successful completion of the PhD Viva as per Bolton University requirements, and after any personal data will be destroyed. Audio recordings will be transferred and stored on my personal laptop and deleted from portable media.
Identifiable data (including recordings of your and other participants’ voices) on my personal laptop will be encrypted wherever possible. With devices such as portable recorders where this is not possible identifiable data will be deleted as quickly as possible. In the mean time I will ensure the portable device will be kept safely until the data is deleted.
You can request to view the field notes or listen to the audio at the end of the interview and any parts you are unhappy with will be deleted, or disregarded from the data. Data may be used in the reporting of the research (in the thesis and then potentially in any papers or conference presentations). Please note that if your data is used, it will not identify you in any way or means, unless you otherwise indicate your express permission to do so.
You have the right to request this data is destroyed at any time during the study as well as having full protection via the UK Data Protection Act. The completion of this study is estimated to be by December 2015 although data collection will be complete by September 2016

**How will my identity be protected?**
A pseudonym will be given to protect your identity in the research report and any identifying information about you will be removed from the report.

**Who to contact for further information or with any concerns**
If you would like further information on this project, the programme within which the research is being conducted or have any concerns about the project, participation or my conduct as a researcher please contact the researcher Anna Bougia:
Thank you for reading this information sheet.

Anna Bougia

Consent Form

Title of Project: Cultivating autonomy in digital natives: An investigation into the optimal use of CMS in Higher Education

Name of Researcher: Anna Bougia

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<tr>
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<th>Please Tick</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated ________________ for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I understand that my participation in this research study is voluntary. If for any reason I wish to withdraw during the period of this study, I am free to do so without providing any reason. I understand that my contributions to the workshop activities will be part of the data collected for this study and my anonymity will be ensured. I give consent for all my contributions to the workshop to be included and/or quoted in this study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I consent to the interview being audio/video taped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I understand that the information I provide will be used for a Ph.D research project and may be published. I understand that I have the right to review and comment on the information provided before the final submission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I agree to take part in the above study.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Name of Participant:

Signature

Date
Appendix X: Cycle 2 Interview questions

1) Do you prefer to learn individually or in a group and why?

2) Do you believe that giving feedback to your peers is helpful for you? Give examples.

3) How self-directed are in your writing? Give examples.

4) How peer feedback based on questions helped you in writing? Give examples.

5) Did the questions on reflection help you to think about your writing process?

Technology

6) Was Google drive helpful as a tool for peer feedback? Give examples.

7) Was video blog helpful as a tool for reflection? Give examples.

Appendix XI: Interview themes- Labeling Cycle 2, perceptions for peer feedback

Perceptions for collaborative writing:

Working collaboratively was very easy and it is a useful skill to acquire for your career future, because when you work you can do everything on your own but you have to cooperate with others.

I think that learning writing in a group is better than learning individually because you have the chance to get ideas from your peers and they can also help you if you face difficulties. Also it is more enjoyable.

I believe that learning writing in a group is better than learning alone because you students can help one another and it is more enjoyable.

Through this project I have learned how to collaborate with my peers and I believe that I have improved my skills.

Writing in a group is more pleasant and creative than writing alone because you can benefit from others’ opinions about writing, you can get more ideas.

Collaborative writing was difficult for me because I cannot listen to others’ ideas, I get confused…I prefer individual writing
Collaborative writing is better than individual writing because we can share ideas and discuss about the writing topic.

At the beginning of the semester I was afraid of collaborative writing but then I realized that it was not that difficult.

Perceptions for receiving feedback
1. Your peers who would possibly do similar mistakes inform you about your mistakes. (notification-attention)
2. You could notice the way that they compose and improve through that (learning from others-cooperation)
3. I could pay attention to my mistakes (attention)
4. I was trying to improve my writing in the forthcoming task (motivation)
5. Giving feedback was helpful regarding evaluation, I mean you could enhance your critical thinking skills and be able to evaluate your own writing task and improve. (self-evaluation-reflection)
6. Feedback was also helpful for improving vocabulary and grammar skills because (grammar-vocabulary)
7. this is my weak point and I believe that I benefited the most in that (evaluation)

Perceptions for giving feedback
9. When you read an essay that is different from yours you can get ideas from others writing (use peers as learning sources)
10. A peer might write an essay that is better than mine and I can take it as an example and learn through his writing (use peers as learning sources)
11. During Christmas holidays I made some corrections on my essays based on peer feedback (SELF-MONITORING-revisions)
12. I benefited from peer feedback mainly in argumentation in the main body we had to write and support our arguments (use peers as learning resource writing strategies)
13. Feedback questions were very specific and this was helpful to understand task requirements (awareness of task)
14. Helpful for me because I have difficulties in grammar and vocabulary. (grammar and vocabulary) FOCUS ON FORM
15. While giving feedback I felt that that I was helping my peers (EMPATHY and I was trying to improve their weak points. (COOPERATION USE OF SOCIAL STRATEGIES)
16. Giving or receiving feedback from another student is very good because when you write something you think that it is correct and maybe you do not see the mistakes that you make but when you receive some feedback you can notice your errors and correct them; I think this is very helpful (monitoring the progress).

17. Using the feedback questions was easy and helped me to make some changes regarding conclusion (MONITOR revisions).

18. I believe that it is very important to give feedback because I can improve my writing skills and I can see potential errors. (attention)

19. Feedback questions were helpful; especially I remember the questions about structure. In my opinion structure in writing essays is very important, mastering structure helps me to write more efficiently the introduction, the main body and the conclusion (benefits in structure - TASK AWARENESS).

19. Giving feedback was quite helpful because by reading an essay I could notice if my peer had made some errors and I was trying to spot it and correct it so I was learning through this procedure (EMPATHY - contribute to other's autonomy).

20. Feedback was mainly helpful for improving my structure because I was looking at someone else's essay and I could evaluate mine and check whether they are similar or whether I have done something wrong... (self-evaluation - monitoring).

21. After giving feedback I sometimes made corrections to my writing as well... (MONITOR - revision).

Feedback questions related to grammar were a bit difficult for me...

22. Giving feedback was very helpful for me because I could notice my peers' errors so as not to do the same errors in my writing. (attention)

23. I could understand where I had to pay attention (ATTENTION).

24. And it helped me to improve my critical thinking skills. (critical thinking).

25. Feedback was also useful because I had the chance to help my peers and to learn grammar, syntax and vocabulary. (Contribution to others autonomy - improve vocabulary).

26. Giving feedback was more helpful than receiving feedback because I was practicing how to manage a writing task (task awareness).
Feedback questions were useful because we had a plan to follow, we did the procedure step by step and it was easy. (plan-organize)

I tried to use most of feedback questions for my own essay as well (monitoring)

Giving feedback was useful because to give feedback you had to read essays so by reading you could get some ideas in order to improve your writing. (monitoring-somehow-processing)

For example if I had a difficulty writing the introduction or the main body, I could have a look at someone’s essay and think what I could have done...I was reflecting that I should be more careful in my next writing... (reflection)

Some feedback questions were difficult but the main problem was that some essays were better than mine and I regarded them excellent in comparison to my level of English, thus I couldn’t make any comment or correct an error. (self-knowledge-self-evaluation)

I trusted my peers. Every comment was different. Everyone could comment on what he liked or didn’t like about the essay, so that was very good. (Communit of trust: LEARNING FROM OTHERS)

Feedback questions were rather useful but I was also helped by the way that my peers answered these questions, it was a way for me to get familiar with the feedback procedure. (task awareness: RESPONSIBILITY)

and reassure that I am going to give good feedback (contribution to other’s autonomy)

It was quite helpful to give feedback because I had to be on teacher’s shoes...for instance I had a different stance towards writing while writing an essay and a different attitude when I was reading someone else’s essay. I had the opportunity to take the writing task more seriously... (RESPONSIBILITY task awareness)

Receiving feedback from peers did not have many differences from instructor’s feedback... I had the chance to see how my peers evaluate my effort (evaluation:intermediate-self-evaluation)

Comments on Feedback questions helped me to build my essays (benefit on structure-task awareness)

Both giving and receiving feedback was useful because I could notice my weak points by correcting others’ essays and looking at my peers’ corrections and I could improve (monitor the progress-self-evaluate/self-knowledge)

Feedback questions were useful because they were very specific and guided me step by step... (plan)
41. I used feedback questions for my essays as well (monitor the progress).

42. I used the feedback questions to check whether I was out of subject or if I had forgotten to answer something (monitor).

Appendix XII: Interview themes-Labeling Cycle 2, perceptions for video reflection

Perceptions for video reflection
1. In essence it was a discussion with your self in order to learn how you can learn better and improve for the next writing (self-reflection).

2. I did not like video I preferred paying attention to the feedback task. Negative aspects of the project: Resistance to video.

3. I did not like the fact that I had to speak in English and I had to think in advance how I could express my self in good English. Negative aspects of the project: proficiency level limitations.

4. If I could use Greek I would be able to say what I would like to correct in my essay. Negative aspects of the project: proficiency level.

5. Using video reflection was useful because I could say loudly what I was thinking about writing and what I would like to correct in my next writing task. (planning-goal setting)

6. It is definitely not a waste of time since you explore new ways that you can use to improve your effort in writing. (Practicing)

7. Questions for video were helpful because one could understand what she has to say in the video (task awareness).

8. Questions for video were helpful for my writing because they guided my to pay attention to my mistakes, identify my strong and weak point and improve. (pay attention-evaluate)

9. Video reflection is similar to writing in a paper plus the visual characteristics and the fact that you can see yourself. (self-knowledge)

10. I feel weird when I watch my videos because I have never done that in the past.

11. In my first video I had first read the questions and I had thought what I wanted to say (plan-reflect).
12. I have re-watched my videos and my essays and I believe that I have improved my speaking and my vocabulary. (monitor-self-evaluation)

13. Video reflection was useful because I had the chance to reflect on my mistakes and make a self-evaluation. (reflect-self evaluation)

14. The questions on video reflection helped as to think what we have learned and what was our weakest points or our strongest points. (task awareness-self-evaluation)

15. In my videos I speak a lot about the introduction. Introduction is my strongest point because you can write it using the topic. (monitor-self evaluation)

16. Conclusion is my weakest point because I cannot summarize something well. (self-evaluation)

17. My first video was stressful because I repeated the video 10 times. To do the video I read my writing and tried to answer the questions.

18. Video reflection was useful because video and images can stay longer

19. In the video you are able to do what you want you can speak, I am more open, I can express my ideas. Using a blog is just writing about something.

20. Reflection is very important for me because with this I can see the mistakes (self-evaluation) that I have done recently and I can improve and re-write some sentences. (monitoring)

21. So during reflection I can definitely improve my writing skills and the process of thinking

22. By recording the video I can improve my speaking skills. Sometimes it can be difficult because I don't have advanced language and I would like to improve... By recording the video I can understand how to improve my mistakes and how to avoid them and this is very important (monitoring)

23. In my opinion the best video was one about the gap year because I speak more fluently and I used a lot of synonyms and words...

24. I re-watched my videos because I like to analyze my potential errors and of course I would like to avoid the same errors in the near future, especially in speaking

25. It is very difficult for me to speak fluently in front of the camera; it's a little stressful situation for me (monitor-plan)

26. Video reflection was useful because from the moment that you record the video you have the chance to watch it again and evaluate whether you have said something wrong you (evaluation)
28. can evaluate yourself and become critical on the quality of the video. 
(evaluation-reflection)

29. I used to write down the questions and what I was planning to say in the video before recording the video. I was actually reading my answers. (plan, practice)

30. Questions on video reflection helped me to create the video and to get an idea on how I should do the task, without these questions I was going to speak generally about writing (task awareness)

31. Watching again my videos made me to recall my first year as a student when my level of English was very low and I believe that I did a great progress this year and this project helped me a lot...being in the class, talking, answering questions... (reflection-self-evaluation)

32. Video was useful because you can listen to yourself and to your beliefs ...especially if the video is spontaneous is more effective that thinking in advance and writing your thoughts in a paper (self-knowledge)

33. After recoding the video I went back to have a look at my essay and I saw that I could have corrected some errors...but I didn’t have the time to write the essay again...but I can say that video was successful in achieving this goal (monitoring-self evaluation-task awareness)

34. Video reflection was useful but I believe that it was not necessary to do that, it was not the most important task in writing (lack of task awareness)

35. Reflection questions were more useful that feedback questions because video was a new tool, we didn’t have any experience in learning via video so questions were a good guidance for as... (plan-task awareness)

36. Usually I was re-watching my videos and I was comparing them to my essay but I have never made changes because I wanted to see first instructor’s feedback on my writing task (monitoring)

37. Video reflection was very useful because you can watch yourself reporting your errors and sharing them with your peers so as to have a second opinion and not to depend only on your own opinion (self knowledge-cooperation)

38. It is better to record a video than writing because technology is in advance and video is a tool that will help as to overcome taboos and public speaking anxiety...(task awareness)

**Appendix XIII: Labeling-Perceptions for Google Drive and blogs-implications for autonomous writing**

**Perceptions for Google drive**
I can write something and send it to someone for feedback and at the same time I can write my own comments at the same document. You cannot do that in a word document. (GD FACILITATES INTERACTION-COLLABORATION)

No I did not try to explore Google drive technology I just did what I was required to do for the writing tasks.

Google drive is user friendly and it is helpful for sharing research and collaborative working (GD FACILITATES COLLABORATION)

Google drive was rather useful because we did not have to send documents. we could simply share them with those who wanted to edit them (SAVE TIME)

Google drive was quickly (SAVE TIME)

I think that Google drive is very helpful for us, for instance I have noticed that when we use Google drive we usually make some plan about the essay and we can get across these ideas with other friends in our group (SENSE OF COMMUNITY/COLLABORATION)

Google drive was helpful for giving feedback because you could write online and do corrections at the same time. You didn't have to send an email...it is more direct than sending an email. (GD FACILITATES INTERACTION-FEEDBACK)

Google drive is very useful because we can save books, share everything, it is fast...also we learn how to use technology (GD PROMOTES COLLABORATIVE CULTURE)

Google drive is a very useful tool for writing essays and writing in general…it includes many tools, word count, dictionary, spelling checker... (AFFORDANCES OF TECHNOLOGY FACILITATE INDEPENDENT LEARNING)

Evaluation of the project

Maybe some peers would not enjoy the video but the project was very nice and very helpful for me and my peers. (SATISFICATION-SENSE OF COMMUNITY)

This project followed a curriculum that should be adopted by the educational system. I would not change anything (SATISFACTION WITH THE SYLLABUS)

Taking part in this project was very helpful because of the integration of a variety of technological tools. (SATISFACTION-TECHNOLOGY)

Familiarization with technology will be a useful skill for our future. (SATISFACTION WITH TECHNOLOGY)
The project was very innovative.

The project was rather beneficial; you could all stay connected via technology. (SATISFACTION-ADVANTAGES OF TECHNOLOGY)

The use of technology was innovative and easy for us to follow since we are familiar with technology. (SATISFACTION-DIGITAL NATIVES APPRECIATE THE AFFORDANCES OF TECHNOLOGY)

The project was demanding but I do not have any recommendations or changes, just do the same and continue. (SATISFACTION-ENGAGEMENT-EVALUATION)

The strong point of this project is that it gives you the chance to familiarize yourself with technology and collaborative learning. (SATISFACTION-TECHNOLOGY-COLLABORATION)

The disadvantage is that we have not used this way of learning and we need some time to get used to it. (NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE PROJECT-TIME CONSTRAINTS)

Google drive is user friendly…it is more interesting and meaningful to use technology in the class because we live in the digital era (SATISFACTION-TECHNOLOGY)

The essay plan is not very useful at least for me…it was just more information…personally when someone suggests me new ideas I get confused and I find it difficult to think (NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE PROJECT)

I don’t think that the project needs improvement (SATISFACTION)

Appendix XIV: Major emerged themes for peer feedback/Cycle 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features of feedback related to autonomy</th>
<th>Data from Interviews</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notification Attention –</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Your peers who would possibly do similar mistakes inform you about your mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I could pay attention to my mistakes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I believe that it is very important to give feedback because I can improve my writing skills and I can</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
You could notice the way that they compose and improve through that

When you read an essay that is different from yours you can get ideas from others writing

A peer might write an essay that is better than mine and I can take it as an example and learn through his writing

When you read an essay that is different from yours you can get ideas from others writing

Giving feedback was useful because to give feedback you had to read essays so by reading you could get some ideas in order to improve your writing

I trusted my peers. Every comment was different. Everyone could comment on what he liked or didn't like about the essay, so that was very good

Receiving feedback from peers did not have many differences from instructor’s feedback… I had the chance to see how my peers evaluate my effort

I was trying to improve my writing in the forthcoming task

Giving feedback was helpful regarding evaluation, I mean you could enhance your critical thinking skills and be able to evaluate your own writing task and improve

Giving feedback was very helpful for me because I could notice my peers’ errors so as not to do the same errors in my writing I could understand where I had to pay attention and it helped me to improve my critical thinking skills

For example if I had a difficulty writing the introduction or the main body, I could have a look at someone’s essay and think what I could have done…I was reflecting that I should be more careful in my next writing

During Christmas holidays I made some
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>progress</th>
<th>corrections on my essays based on peer feedback</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giving or receiving feedback from another student is very good because when you write something you think that it is correct and maybe you do not see the mistakes that you make but when you receive some feedback you can notice your errors and correct them; I think this is very helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>looking at someone else’s essay and I could evaluate mine and check whether they are similar or whether I have done something wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I tried to use most of feedback questions for my own essay as well</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I used feedback questions for my essays as well</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I used the feedback questions to check weather I was out of subject or if I had forgotten to answer something</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Task awareness</th>
<th>I benefited from peer feedback mainly in argumentation in the main body we had to write and support our arguments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback questions were very specific and this was helpful to understand task requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giving feedback was more helpful than receiving feedback because I was practicing how to manage a writing task</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Feedback questions were useful because we had a plan to follow, we did the procedure step by step and it was easy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback questions were useful because we had a plan to follow, we did the procedure step by step and it was easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback questions were useful because they were very specific and guided me step by step</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Contributing to other’s autonomy</th>
<th>While giving feedback I felt that that I was helping my peers and I was trying to improve their weak points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback was also useful because I had the</td>
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chance to help my peers

Feedback questions were rather useful but I was also helped by the way that my peers answered these questions, it was a way for me to get familiar with the feedback procedure and reassure that I am going to give good feedback.

It was quite helpful to give feedback because I had to be on teacher’s shoes…for instance I had a different stance towards writing while writing an essay and a different attitude when I was reading someone else’s essay. I had the opportunity to take the writing task more seriously.

Both giving and receiving feedback was useful because I could notice my weak points by correcting others’ essays and looking at my peers’ corrections and I could improve.

Self-correction-revisions

Using the feedback questions was easy and helped me to make some changes regarding conclusion.

After giving feedback I sometimes made corrections to my writing as well.

Appendix XV: Feedback documents for problem solution& opinion essays (Cycle 2)

Feedback document 1

Your introduction is very good. It’s related with the topic and also, it’s very specific as it should be.

The main body it’s organised and grouped into paragraphs. You wrote the causes of the main problem and you explained the reasons of why they happened. You proposed solutions and gave examples, you have some grammar mistakes but you can correct it with some practise. In general The structure of your main body has a sequence and it’s appropriate.

Your conclusion, it’s also appropriate and very specific. In the conclusion you can mention your opinion if you want but that’s absolutely fine. Good job.
Feedback document 2

1. on this essay paper the central thesis is that hunger can not only affect third world country but the can but the issue can e found throughout worldwide geographical map.
2. the thesis statement is in the introduction however is does not content a course of action implied or stated because I think in this kind of topic the writer could explain more about famine and be more explicit.

in the only one main body that I have seen in this essay the writer emphasized on different king of things that caused famine itself or poverty, and the leverage of global economy and social disparities.

the writer support her thesis, she make some clear point about topic but in general it was implied and not even well stated, however the some point as the causes or the effect of famine is well defined.

The writer need separate every main main body for a good understanding of her essay.

strongest point: is that the writer thesis is very well made and I think she find online ressource.

weakens: the essay is not well made I mean the plan. I can just see the introduction, the main body and conclusion are all together. he conclusion summarize the main point, but the essay was short for an argumentative essay, next time she need to improve.

Feedback document 3

Introduction
Your introduction starts with a general statement and i think it is related with the topic. You become more specific about the topic and with your introduction i understand the topic. In your introduction you haven’t write state your viewpoint.

Main Body
I definitely agree with your advantages and i believe it’s very useful. Each of your paragraph i understand what you tell about the topic and i think it’s totally clear what you write. I don’t think you must remove something because it’s very useful and you help the reader with this viewpoint. I think your second paragraph concluding great but the third paragraph it could have done that close better.

Conclusion
I think your conclusion end great but i think that in all your essay you could have that write more clearly your opinion.

Thank you

Feedback document 4


Introduction

I believe that you start with a general statement about the topic but I can not see your thesis in the end of the introduction. She may rewrite her introduction or just enter her viewpoint, if she with pros or cons.

Main body
You grouped your ideas effectively through paragraphs and you order very well your ideas. I think that explain enough about the advantages and I can totally understand the main idea from the 2 paragraphs. I don't think that has to remove any unnecessary informations because all of them are relevant with the topic and she is very good at it. Moreover, she has a concluding sentences at the paragraphs. In the end I believe that she has a very good use of internet to find out about these topic and she had a very good productive paragraph.

Conclusion
I think that she could enter more informations in her conclusion and ended with her opinion because I can't understand if she is with the pro or con.

Feedback document 5:

In your introduction you talk about the topic in general. You mention about what young people do before they start university studies, you are not very specific. If you are want to improve it, you can write your viewpoint or be more specific about the topic.

Your ideas of your main body are grouped into paragraphs. You wrote the advantages and disadvantages of the topic, you don't have to change something but you can write examples to support your ideas and also make it clear to the reader. You don't have to remove something, your ideas is very good just add some examples.

Your conclusion in general it's appropriate. Write your opinion to be a little be specific. In general you did good job.

His essay it was good. He wrote arguments and support them with statistics. Also, he wrote what other people believe. He support his thesis statement clearly. (Michaela N.)

Feedback document 6

Introduction
Your introduction starts with a general statement which is related to the topic. However, you could improve your introduction by expressing your point of view.
Main body
You grouped effectively your main body into paragraphs. Nevertheless, you didn’t use a paragraph leader to start with. For instance, you might start with a linking word or you can use an expression such as “First of all”, “Firstly”. However, you gave reasons and solutions effectively. I don't think that you have to remove any information but you could add also a concluding sentence in the end.

Conclusion
Your conclusion is appropriate. If you want to improve it you can use more vocabulary. Well done!:)
(Marina)

Feedback form 7
Your introduction it’s too small, you can write more things to improve it a little bit. You are not specific you just mention the topic nothing else. You can write your opinion or the you can explain a little bit more the topic.

In the second paragraph i don’t understand what you want to say. Also you say that you’ll talk about the positive things you write three sentences and then in the same paragraph you start to talk about the negative things, you do the same in third paragraph. This is so confusing, you need to organise your ideas. In the second paragraph write the positive things and give examples to support your ideas and in the third paragraph write the negative things and do the same. Another thing is that you have a lot grammatical mistakes, review your grammar so you can write your sentences in the right grammatical structure.

In your conclusion you propose a solution which is good but again it’s small. You can write your viewpoint to improve it. In general your essay it’s small, you wrote 227 words and the limit is approximately 250. (Michaela N.)

Feedback document 8
It’s very good work with a nice vocabulary and expressions you explain your subject very well. But i think you can write more in the conclusion and the epilogue.

Feedback document 9
His essay it was good. He wrote arguments and support them with statistics. Also, he wrote what other people believe. He support his thesis stament clearly.

Appendix XVI: Peer feedback forms for argumentative essay
Specifically, social networks have replaced real-life relationships because people spend more time on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram other than with real-life people. However, this problem can be solved if people diminish the time that they spend on social networks.

2. Answer these questions about the thesis statement. Mark each or X
Is the thesis statement in the introduction?
Yes, in introduction her thesis statement it’s clear.

Does the thesis statement contain a course of action, implied or stated?
No, she doesn’t contain a course of action.

3. Underline the topic sentence of each body paragraph once.
On the one hand, a large range of people about 87% claim that social networks might kill a face to face relationship. People find it easier and more convenient to talk in front of a computer rather than in front of a person.

An other certain reason people believe that social network can kill relationships is because of the addiction.

On the other hand, social media isn’t just for entertainment. A smaller percentage about 13% say that social networks didn’t kill relationships.

4. What types of support are used in each body paragraph?
Body paragraph 1: Statistic
Body paragraph 2: Detail
Body paragraph 3: Statistic

5. Which are the writer’s strongest and weakest arguments?
Strongest: I believe her strongest part in her essay it’s the main body because she has good ideas.
Weakest: I don’t think so she has weak part in her argument essay

6. Can you think of any other persuasive arguments to support the writer’s position?
Furthermore an another important thing it’s the memories that you keep in a relationship. Statistics have show that when you speak with your friend in the internet you don’t have memories of your friend.

7. Does the writer consider and address counterarguments for each argument? If not, what other counterarguments do you think the writer should consider?
Yes the writer consider counter arguments for each argument.

8. Answer these questions about the conclusion. Mark each or X
a. Does the conclusion summarize the main points of the essay?
Yes she summarize the main points in conclusion
b. Does the conclusion end with a strong concluding statement? 
   I think her conclusion ends concluding with a strong statement.
9. Draw a star (★) in the margin next to your favorite sentences. Choose two or three. Put a questionmark (?) next to any sentences that you didn’t understand. There aren’t sentence that i can’t understand.
10. Any other comments:

**Peer feedback form 11**

Writer’s name: Nikos M.
Reviewer’s name: Marina Nt.
1. On your partner’s paper, underline the thesis statement twice. Nowadays frequently we encounter the phenomenon of people and particularly of young people to meet constantly with pages of social networking

2. Answer these questions about the thesis statement. Mark each or X
   Is the thesis statement in the introduction? Yes it is.
   Nowadays frequently we encounter the phenomenon of people and particularly of young people to meet constantly with pages of social networking

   Does the thesis statement contain a course of action, implied or stated? Your thesis contain a course of action and is stated

3. Underline the topic sentence of each body paragraph once.
   1. According with statistics in 2011, those relationships that were heavily based in contact through social media outlets were much less substantial than those relationships where we kept in touch in person, over the phone, or via email on a regular basis.

   2. Another reason that the social networks sites killing sincere relationships is the emotions that you are feeling and this it has negative effect for the relationship because you can not express that feeling.

   3. On another hand there are people believe that social networks can help the relationships.

4. What types of support are used in each body paragraph? 
   Body paragraph 1: Examples (For example people believe that all of this relationships which they had in social networks sites based only typical things, in the other hand the relationships which based in face to face, it was more deeper).

   Body paragraph 2: Statistics (Statistics have show that when you speak with your friend in the internet you don’t have memories of your friend).
Body paragraph 3: Research (On another hand there are people believe that social networks can help the relationships. Most importantly, which they think social media tools have the ability to serve as a stepping stone to deeper and more personal relationships with those we want to build them with).

5. Which are the writer's strongest and weakest arguments?
Strongest: According with statistics in 2011, those relationships that were heavily based in contact through social media outlets were much less substantial than those relationships where we kept in touch in person, over the phone, or via email on a regular basis.

Weakest: I don’t think you have weak arguments

6. Can you think of any other persuasive arguments to support the writer’s position? You have covered the most important arguments to support your position.

7. Does the writer consider and address counterarguments for each argument? If not, what other counterarguments do you think the writer should consider?
You consider counterarguments for each argument effectively. I don’t think you need to change or add anything

8. Answer these questions about the conclusion. Mark each or X.
   a. Does the conclusion summarize the main points of the essay?
   It summarizes the main point

   b. Does the conclusion end with a strong concluding statement?
   Choose two or three sentences.
   1. To conclude, although social networks sites have brought individuals closer together

   2. That’s why the users of social networks site they must try to talk with their friends or with their lovers face to face

9. Draw a star (★) in the margin next to your favorite sentences. Choose two or three. Put a question mark (?) next to any sentences that you didn’t understand.
Furthermore another important thing it’s the memories that you keep in a relationship. Statistics have show that when you speak with your friend in the internet you don’t have memories of your friend.
Most importantly, which they think social media tools have the ability to serve as a stepping stone to deeper and more personal relationships with those we want to build them with.

10. Any other comments:

Peer feedback form 12

Writer’s name: Nikos M.
Reviewer’s name: Michaela N.
1. On your partner’s paper, underline the thesis statement twice.
Also while it is believe that such of this sites are mainly beneficial to the people, that they have had damaging effect for the other people.

2. Answer these questions about the thesis statement. Mark each or X

Is the thesis statement in the introduction? YES

Does the thesis statement contain a course of action, implied or stated? No the statement doesn't contain a course of action but it is stated.

3. Underline the topic sentence of each body paragraph once.

An another reason that the social networks sites killing sincere relationships is the emotions that you are feeling and this it has negative effect for the relationship because you can not express that feeling.

4. What types of support are used in each body paragraph?

Body paragraph 1: statistics
Body paragraph 2: statistics
Body paragraph 3:

5. Which are the writer’s strongest and weakest arguments?

Strongest: According with statistics in 2011, those relationships that were heavily based in contact through socila media outlets were much less substantial than those relationships where we kept in touch in person, over the phone, or via email on a regular basis.

Weakest: I can’t find a a weak argument.

6. Can you think of any other persuasive arguments to support the writer’s position? Now, we are spending more time with our gadgets instead of spending time with our family or friends. For instance, with facebook you can’t do private conversions or get to know a person’s life. People fail to understand that social media helps to communicate not to conect with other people.

7. Does the writer consider and address counterarguments for each argument? If not, what other counterarguments do you think the writer should consider? I think he have counter arguments.

8. Answer these questions about the conclusion. Mark each or X.

a. Does the conclusion summarize the main points of the essay? YES, it summarize them.

b. Does the conclusion end with a strong concluding statement? To conclude, although social networkings sites have brought individuals closer together, it is disastrous because killing sincere relationships.

405
That’s why the users of social networks site they must try to talk with their friends or with their lovers face to face and with this way it is believe that the relationships would be better.

9. 9. Draw a star (★) in the margin next to your favorite sentences. Choose two or three. Put a questionmark (?) next to any sentences that you didn’t understand. There aren’t sentences that I didn’t understand.

10. Any other comments: His essay it was good. He wrote arguments and support them with statistics. Also, he wrote what other people believe. He support his thesis stament clearly.

Feedback form 13
Author’s name:Dorcas M. Ts.

World Hunger/ Food Shortage

For healthy and proper performance of our body, every human (man, woman, children) must be well fed, and the food which is defined as any substance serve food has a living being should be made available and the doors of all. This expression cannot be used in an academic paper. Your thesis statement is clear.

But actually the world’s food situation is deteriorating from day to day which simply means that the food shortage has to take very serious. Has to be regarded as a serious problem.

Among foods causes are for example: the economic inaccessibility, the physical or geographical inaccessibility, food available but so expensive to buy.

War and climate problems FAO (Food Alimentary organization) estimates 868 million people are under food problems and 852 in developing countries meaning a person in planet. This is not a well organised paragraph (You should form 1 or 2 paragraphs and analyze causes of hunger. There is no meaning having a 3 line paragraph. Every topic-cause sentence has to be expanded-supported with examples or statistics.

Hunger is the basis of many health problems, diseases, and especially death, according to FAO over 6 million children who aged under 5 die every year of hunger consequences. Expand this statement. Write more about the detrimental effects of hunger.

(Guest post by Robert L. Freedman, Author of Indigenous Wild Food Plants in Home Gardens: Improving Health and Income - With the Assistance of Agricultural Extension ) Please write references at the end of your essay. Food security, However is not exclusively a quantitative issue concerned only with increasing assuring security.

With the globalization of western food products over the past three decades, nutritionally -adequate traditional diets have been replaced by an increasing reliance on highly processed, refined, so-called fast convenience foods which have little or no nutritional value. This has created an epidemic of
dietary-related, noncommunicable diseases including anemia, cancer, diabetes, goiter, obesity and vitamin A deficiency-related infant and childhood blindness. This is not related to word hunger.

One of the best platform or humanitarian Organization ACF (Action against hunger).

This solidarity organization comprised of five independent non-profit organization with headquarters in London, Madrid, New York, Montreal and Paris ACF saves the lives of malnourished children while providing families with access to safe water and sustainable solutions to hunger. ACF bridges emergency relief with long term intervention in emergency situation of conflict naturel disaster and chronic food security. It is important to note that they have 46000+ field staff -seasoned professional and technical expert in nutrition, water and sanitation, public health and food security carry-out life-saving in more than 40 countries over the world. This program reach nearly five million people a year. (source http://www.actioncontrelafaim.org/fr/nos-combats/nous-connaître/organisation/un-reseau-international)

As from my side as an African this kind of Organization are among those which helps a lot of countries in my continent to fight against this disaster. Food shortage being one of the most complex issues in the world today concerns human population. The number of people living off the earth’s resources and stressing its ecosystem has doubled in just forty years in 1960 there were 3 billion of us, today there are 6 billion. We have no idea what maximum number of people the earth will support.

Therefore, the very first question that comes into people’s mind is that are there enough food for all of us in the future. According to the recent report by UNEP and the world Resources Institute (WRI), about one-third of all food produced worldwide, world worth around US$1 trillion, gets lost or wasted in food production and consumption systems. When this figure is converted to calories, this means that about 1 in 4 calories intended for consumption is never actually eaten, in a world full of hunger, volatile food prices and social unrest, these statistics are more than just shocking they are environmentally, morally and economically outrageous meanwhile in some place in the world there are lack of food.

As shown In northern Burkina Faso (to the west-Africa), women gathered on a sandy plain with their children. They were queuing for food. As the rain began to fall, a child cried, but everything was orderly. When they reached the head of the queue, the children received a portion of nutritious peanut porridge. This inexpensive paste is often what stands between these families and chronic malnutrition. This is a historical background and you should put it at the beginning of your essay.

In early 2012 the food in the sahel- a band of countries spanning the north of Africa from the Atlantic to the Red sea- was compounded by the already high rates of malnutrition in the region. The previous year’s harvest failed due to erratic rain, and this was the third time in ten years. Combined with poverty, high food prices and instability, many communities were unable to cope.
According to the United Nations in April 2012, more than 18 million people faced food insecurity, particularly in Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Gambia, Niger and Chad. (article at http://www.ifrc.org)

The major problem is that providing food would cost lots of money for the (African) government especially. Farmers and factories would have to produce more food and would need more supplies. Supplies cost money and that is why families are needy. Money causes all of these problems. If food were free, or the government figured out a way to provide food for free, I think no one would be hungry. I believe that if people really care, we could find a way to make sure that no one is hungry or needy. The government would not have to provide food.

Although ideally it would be better to get the entire world to a place of self-sustainability, it is not something that will happen overnight. In the meantime it is important to lend a helping hand. The impact of donations, both cash and food, have had an immense impact on world hunger. Organizations such as Food for All have customers donate $1-5 when checking out. Last year they raised a whopping $60 million to fight world hunger. (article by http://borgenproject.org/innovative-solutions-to-poverty-and-hunger)

Many families dealing with poverty need help transitioning into a state of self-dependence. 15 Feeds Family is an organization that helps with this transition.

They start by providing families with food, but then slowly find to empower families to be self-sufficient. This is important, because self-sufficiency allows for a certain food income, when relying on donations does not always guarantee food. This would be a good conclusion if you had used a linking word.

Peer feedback Form 14

Reviewer’s name: Milena

Paragraph 1: In 1960 there were 3 billion of us, today there are 6 billion.

Paragraph 2: According to the recent report by UNEP and the world Resourceses Institute (WRI) about one-third of all food produced worldwide, worth around US $1 trillion, gets lost and wasted in food production. (..)

Paragraph 3: “In early 2012 the food in Sahel, a band of countries spanning the north of Africa from the Atlantic to the Red Sea, was compounded by the already high rates of malnutrition in the region.” According to the united nations in April 2012, more than 18 million people faced food insecurity(...) Organizations such as food for all have customers donate $1-5 when checking out. Last year they raised a whopping $60 million to fight world hunger.

Answer 5

Strongest: According to the recent report by UNEP and the world Resources Institute WRI about one-third of all food produced worldwide, worth around US $1 trillion, gets lost or wasted in food production(...) this means that about 1 in 4 calories intended for consumption is never actually eaten(...) Weakest: -
answer 6
answer 7 no, the writer did not present any counterarguments

Conclusion
a) yes, the writer summarized main points
b) yes, there is a strong conclusion.

**Feedback form 15**
Author's name: Christos
b) the writer doesn't state her viewpoint clearly
c) the writer could improve a little introduction at the end. "even though we change the profession with the flow of time"

Paragraphing and organization
a) yes. essay is grouped effectively into paragraphs
b) the writer should end some ideas
c) yes each paragraph have a paragraph leader. "a break period after high school could be beneficial for young people"

"Sometime it can have a negative impact on people (...)d) the writer does not explain clearly the main idea in the second paragraph "young people may prefer to continue working and they may lack interest in studies (...) this sentence should be developed by writing more specifically regarding lack of interest .
e) yes the writer should add further information and examples regarding the disadvantages .
f) no,

**Feedback form 16**
Author’s name: Alexandros
1. on this essay paper the central thesis is that hunger can not only affect third world country but the can be found throughout worldwide geographical map.
2. the thesis statement is in the introduction however is does not content a course of action implied or stated because I think in this kind of topic the writer could explain more about famine and be more explicit.

in the only one main body that I have seen in this essay the writer emphasized on different kind of things that caused famine itself or poverty, and the leverage of global economy and social disparities.
the writer support her thesis, she make some clear point about topic but in general it was implied and not even well stated, however the some point as the causes or the effect of famine is well defined.
The writer need separate every main body for a good understanding of her essay.
Strongest point: is that the writer thesis is very well made and I think she find online resource.
Weakest: the essay is not well made I mean the plan. I can just see the introduction, the main body and conclusion are all together. the conclusion summarize the main point, but the essay was short for an argumentative essay, next time she need to improve.

Appendix XVI: Reflection rubric for the writing class experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>About my learning</th>
<th>About the writing class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have learned…</td>
<td>I like best…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can…</td>
<td>The most interesting thing is…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am good at…</td>
<td>I don’t like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I haven’t managed…</td>
<td>The most boring thing is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t understand…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have difficulty in…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix XVII: Reflection questions for vlogs

(1) What did I do before the writing my essay? (planning, reading…)
(2) At the planning stage what did I have difficulty with?
(3) At the planning stage what was easy for me?
(4) While writing my essay, did I have any difficulty? At which part?
(5) While writing my essay, which part did I write the best?
(6) When I finished my essay I felt….(adjective) because…..
(7) Did I edit my text? How?
(8) The best part of my essay is……
(9) The worst part of my essay is…..
(10) What do I need to study to improve my writing?

Appendix XVIII: Video Reflection Labeling/Cycle 2
**Student 1-Video 1**
Hello, this is my video reflection about my learning. I have learned how to write an argumentative essay.
I think that I can write an argumentative essay I don’t think that I have any difficulty actually. **Self evaluation**

The most interesting thing is the research about the topic that you have to do because you learn many things at the same time. **Reflection on the pedagogy**
I most like the main body because it is an important part in an essay, the strongest point of the writing task.
Actually, I have a difficulty in vocabulary. I must learn more vocabulary. **Goal setting**

What I do before my writing is a lesson plan and I do research of course about the topic. I think that it is an easy way to write your essay so, I don’t think that I have any difficulties. **Reflection on the pedagogy**
The best part of my essay is the main body because I have good and strong arguments and I support them with examples, statistics and research. **Self evaluation**

The worst past of my essay I think it’s the conclusion because I don’t like it much. Maybe other people find it all right but I don’t like it. I think it’s very general. **Self evaluation**

**Student 1-Video 2**
According to me I have learned how to write a plan before writing my essay. The easiest part for me is to plan my essay first.

Also an important think is to do research so as to find ideas to write your essay easily and I had a difficulty because I didn’t write much information and ideas in my essay, which is bad because my essay is short. I hope in my next essay to write more and better. **Self evaluation-identification of problem area-low emotional temperature-self knowledge.**
Also I have learned how to use grammar constructions. This is very important for the essay to be in grammatical sequence, to be logical and easy for the readers to read it. **Audience awareness. Willingness to communicate with others.**
Also, I used some linking words. The Internet helped me a lot to find some linking words. Also, I think I have in general good vocabulary which is also the Internet helped a lot. **Self-evaluation-engagement**

Also I was I little bit more specific and wrote some examples to support my opinions and of course my ideas.
The most interesting thing is to improve my writing skills but also it is important the research because you can adopt some ideas and of course you learn new things. **Self efficacy- personal goal setting**

**Student 1-video 3**
This is my video about reflection rubric after each writing lesson. I have learned how to write a plan and a problem solution essay. I have learned how to organize and group the causes and solutions. I can write a conclusion because it’s the easiest part of the essay. Of course I can write the conclusion because it’s the easiest part of the essay. Of course I can write the introduction because the easiest thing that you can do is to paraphrase the topic. Evaluation or self-efficacy?

The think that I don’t have managed yet is how to write a sentence that has the right grammar reduction but with practice I can manage it. Self evaluation –identification of problem areas-solution/ action plan

Of course I have to practice vocabulary because I have to learn words to write very good sentences. Self evaluation –identification of problem areas-solution/ action plan

The most interesting thing in essay is the research you have to do for the topic that you have to write. You learn new things and this helps you to write an essay. Reflection on the pedagogy

**Student 2-video 1**

1. Hello, I would like to talk about my essay. First of all when I started writing my essay I did a plan first which I wrote my ideas in bullets. Second I think that I wrote an appropriate introduction but I find a difficulty in writing solutions because I couldn’t find solutions about the gap year, any disadvantages I mean. Self- evaluation and Identification of the problem

Also I did a research on the internet about other essays which had the same topic with me. Action and problem solving /Awareness of their writing strategies

I believe my best part is the introduction because it starts with a general statement and it was more specific in the end. Self evaluation

When I finished my essay I felt very happy and very good because I felt that I wrote a good essay and I sent my essay to my classmates. Self-efficacy

I got feedback, which helped me effectively, and I believe that I will try to correct my mistakes probably to the next essay. Motivation –goal setting

**Student 2-video 2**

Before writing my essay I did a plan first in which I wrote the introduction the main body and the conclusion. Action plan
At the planning stage I had a difficulty with the sources because I couldn’t find any source and it was easy for me to write the main body the causes but it was difficult to write the solutions. I believe that I couldn’t find any solutions. Identification of the problem
Moreover, I think the best part in my writing is the causes because I found a lot. Self evaluation
When I finished my essay I felt relieved because I finally did it. Lower emotional temperature
I edited my text, I sent it to my classmates for checking the essay and sending comments and I think…Action plan
I hope to study more vocabulary to improve my writing and maybe more linking words. Action plan and Goal setting

Student 2-video 3
Hello this is my reflection video about my argumentative essay. Before writing my essay I did a plan first in which I wrote the introduction and the main body, which I like the most in my argumentative essay. Action plan-evaluation

At the planning stage I had a difficulty in writing all the parts because it was my first time to write an argumentative essay and I didn’t know what to do. I don’t think that it was easy for me something at the planning stage, I had difficulties in all parts… So I had to research a lot about the topic because it was very difficult for me. Self reflection/Problem identification-solving the problem

However, what I like the most in my essay is the introduction because I started with a thesis statement and then I became more specific about what is a common believe for people. Self reflection

When I finished my essay I felt very happy and very relieved finally because I did it.
I think that I need to study more about argumentative essays and more vocabulary because I don’t want to repeat my self. Reflecting on the experience/ Problem identification-solution

When I finished my essay I sent it to two of my classmates for feedback, which helped me effectively. Action-plan and problem solving

Student 3-video 1
1.Hi I am Nikos and today I am going to speak about argumentative essay. Before I start writing my essay I did some research about the topic and I found some useful information about that and I know what I write in the essay. Then I did an essay plan. In planning stage I don’t think that I had difficulties. It is easy for me because I know what to write in the introduction, in the main body and the conclusion. Self evaluation
While writing my essay I don’t have difficulties, if I had I did a plan because I know what I will write. When I finish my essay I’m proud of me because I recognize that it was a very long essay and this is difficult. Self-evaluation/ self efficacy

The best part of my essay is the main body because I have found some useful information and this is good. I don’t think that there is a worst part in my essay because I found a lot of information… self evaluation

For improving my essay I need to study more vocabulary and more grammar. Goal setting

Student 3-video 2

2. Hi today I will speak about my essay with topic about young people who choose after school and before starting the university to work or travel. I must tell what are the advantages and disadvantages.

Well before I start writing my essay I did an investigation and tried to find information in the internet and books about the topic. After that I did a plan and this is easy for me because I know what I want to write in the introduction, in the main body and the conclusion and I don’t lose time to think ideas when I am writing my essay. reflection

I don’t have difficulties except I have to think words and definitions in English. Problem identification

Also, when I finish my essay I feel proud because I think my essay was great. In my opinion the best part of my essay is the advantages and disadvantages because I had good ideas. Self evaluation-confidence/ self knowledge

I don’t think that I have a worst part in my essay, that’s way I am proud of my essay! Self evaluation-confidence

Student 3-video 3

3. Hi today I will talk about my essay. Well before I start writing my essay I have a plan about the topic and what I write about introduction, main body and conclusion. This is easy for me because I have thought some ideas to write. planning

While writing my essay I have difficulties because I don’t know what to write in the introduction. Every time I don’t know how to start in introduction but I think in continue I got it, ha ha! Self-evaluation/ Problem identification

The best part of my essay I think is the main body because I have a lot of ideas about the topic and it’s very good. Self evaluation

The worst part of my essay is the conclusion. Never, never, never I don’t know what to write. I don’t know how to close this essay but ok… problem identification well I need to study vocabulary to improve writing because it is important for the essays. Action plan/ Goal setting
Student 4-video 1

1. I am going to answer the question about my essay. I’ve learned how to plan an essay, how to develop my thinking necessary for writing. Reflections on the pedagogy-reporting the importance for reflection

I can write an essay in short amount of time, I ‘m good in introduction because I ‘m trying to summarize. Self-evaluation

I don’t understand how to write the main body if it is an opinion essay. You must write I think two or three main body paragraphs, so I do not understand how to write the first main body and the second different because it is the same idea. So often I have difficulty to understand the main body because some linking words are difficult and I don’t know how to use linking words. Identification of problems

My best part is the conclusion because it’s my opinion and most of time it’s easy to write because you have already written the introduction the main body and the solution to the problem and the conclusion is just your ideas. Self-evaluation

I don’t like the main body, I think it is boring because we focus a lot to external work. I think the main body is difficult to find the idea. Self reflection

Student 4-video 2

1. Hi everybody I am going to talk about the second essay. It was a topic about how to take a gap year between graduation from High School and University. I have learned a lot of things. I have learned how to handle every paragraph because in the last essay it was not that simple to find ideas. I remember that reflecting was boring but in this essay I have learned a lot of things so it was quite easy for me to find some advantages and some disadvantages so it was very good. reflection on learning content and pedagogy

In my introduction I begin from general opinion and I think it is a little bit difficult to find my introduction but in general it was a good introduction. Self-evaluation

In the main body I begin from the advantages of gap year because in my opinion it is good to take a gap year to travel in another country, to learn more about culture, language and to get experience. I think that to take a gap year between university and high school is good it can be very good because when you go to university you get some experience you meet new people you learn another language. There are also some disadvantages but I think a little bit just for money. Another thing is that they want to travel because they don’t want to go back to school.

Comments on the essay content-simple description
Student 4-video 3

1. I am going to speak about argumentative essay. My topic is hunger and food centers. First of all I have learned a lot of things and I chose this topic because I have already known a lot about hunger. I saw some pictures from countries around the world that suffer and I think that it was the most important topic. I have explained the effect of hunger, the effect for our health and I think that everybody needs to eat and that is why I chose this topic. I explain why it is not a good thing in this century that there are a lot of people that suffer and they do not have food to eat. I think that in the other hand there are a lot of countries that waste food or don't eat food. I think this is bad because the very first question comes if there is enough food for everybody. I think yes, if you get the food you waste in West and we can send this food in another country that they need to eat. I explained all these things in my essay and I think it was good to speak about hunger and food centers. Reflection on the essay topic

Student 5-video 1

1. In my opinion an argumentative essay is really difficult to write due to the fact that I’ve written this type of essay recently. My topic was terrorism, a major issue in the world and how terrorism affects innocent people.

I also noticed that terrorism is at some point very popular in the internet and due to that fact I could find a lot of information about the topic and I could better express and support my ideas by using statistics and facts. Reflection on the essay topic/ self reflection

Besides, I didn’t have difficulties to express my ideas and I know how to use linking words and synonyms. Self-evaluation

But, the biggest challenge for me was to find some counterarguments about the topic because many articles present terrorism as an especially negative form of aggression. That was the reason that I couldn't find a lot of interesting counter arguments to present in my essay. Identification of a problem

Student 5-video 2

1. Hi I would like to tell you about the writing class. First I would like to tell you that I would like to take part in the writing class because I can improve synonyms, grammar and of course words. Motivation

In my opinion the most important thing is to improve adequate writing skills because without skills I am not able to write a strong essay. Personal goal setting

What about the easiest part of writing. In my opinion this part of writing is definitely the introduction. Self-evaluation
What about main body, main body can be a little difficult for me especially if I want to express my ideas and of course support my ideas by adding a strong thesis. Of course this depends on the topic. Self evaluation

Conclusion according to me is the most boring part of writing I usually don’t have a good conception how to write and summarize in an interesting way the end of the essay. Problem identification-self evaluation

**Student 6-video 1**

1. Before I start writing my essay I make a plan to give ideas about what I am going to write. Action plan-Awareness of their writing strategies. Also I don’t really study anything about my essay I am just trying to find as much information as I can for the topic. Action plan-Awareness of their writing strategies

The best part of my essay is the conclusion because I have already said the main idea so I just have to sum them up and the worst part is the beginning because I never have any idea on how to start my essay. Self evaluation

The best part while writing is the essay is the main body because I have already have ideas from the plan so I just have to write them down.

Finally when I finish my essay I feel good about my work. Sometimes, when my ideas are not well written I feel stressed. Self-reflection on feelings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact of video spoken reflection on students autonomy</th>
<th>Data from interviews on perceptions for the effectiveness of vlog on writing</th>
<th>Data from guided video reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self knowledge</td>
<td>In essence it was a discussion with your self in order to learn how you can learn better and improve for the next writing Video was useful because you can listen to yourself and to your</td>
<td>I have learned how to write a plan and a problem solution essay. I have learned how to organize and group the causes and solutions. I can write a conclusion because it’s the easiest part of the essay. Of course I can write the conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
beliefs … especially if the video is spontaneous is more effective that thinking in advance and writing your thoughts in a paper

Video reflection was very useful because you can watch yourself reporting your errors and sharing them with your peers so as to have a second opinion and not to depend only on your own opinion

because it’s the easiest part of the essay. Of course I can write the introduction because the most easy thing that you can do is to paraphrase the topic.

| Goal setting | Using video reflection was useful because I could say loudly what I was thinking about writing and what I would like to correct in my next writing task. | I hope to study more vocabulary to improve my writing and maybe more linking words

For improving my essay I need to study more vocabulary and more grammar.

Well, I need to study vocabulary to improve writing because it is important for the essays |

| Practicing-engaging-agency | I used to write down the questions and what I was planning to say in the video before recording the video. I was actually reading my answers

It is better to record a video than writing because technology is in advance and video is a tool that will help as to overcome taboos and public speaking anxiety |

| Task awareness | The questions on video reflection helped as to | Also I have learned how to use grammar constructions. This is |
| think what we have learned | very important for the essay to be in grammatical sequence, to be logical and easy for the readers to read it. |
| So during reflection I can definitely improve my writing skills and the process of thinking | |
| By recording the video I can understand how to improve my mistakes and how to avoid them and this is very important | |
| Questions on video reflection helped me to create the video and to get an idea on how I should do the task, without these questions I was going to speak generally about writing | |
| Reflection questions were more useful than feedback questions because video was a new tool, we didn't have any experience in learning via video so questions were a good guidance for us | |
| Usually I was re-watching my videos and I was comparing them to my essay but I have never made changes because I wanted to see first instructor’s feedback on my writing task | |

| Self evaluation | Questions for video were helpful for my writing because they guided my to pay attention to my | I think that I can write an argumentative essay I don’t think that I have any difficulty actually. |
| | | The best part of my essay is the |
mistakes, identify my strong and weak point and improve

I have re-watched my videos and my essays and I believe that I have improved my speaking and my vocabulary. Video reflection was useful because I had the chance to reflect on my mistakes and make a self-evaluation.

The questions on video reflection helped us to think what was our weakest points or our strongest points valuation. In my videos I speak a lot about the introduction. Introduction is my strongest point because you can write it using the topic.

Conclusion is my weakest point because I cannot summarize something well. Reflection is very important for me because with this I can see the mistakes (self-evaluation) that I have done recently and I can improve and re-write some sentences.

Video reflection was useful because from the moment that you record the video you have the chance to watch it again and evaluate

---

main body because I have good and strong arguments and I support them with examples, statistics and research. The worst part of my essay I think it’s the conclusion because I don’t like it much. Maybe other people find it all right but I don’t like it. I think it’s very general.

Also an important think is to do research so as to find ideas to write your essay easily and I had a difficulty because I didn’t write much information and ideas in my essay, which is bad because my essay is short.

The think that I don’t have managed yet is how to write a sentence that has the right grammar reduction but with practice I can manage it. Of course I have to practice vocabulary because I have to learn words to write very good sentences.

Second I think that I wrote an appropriate introduction but I find a difficulty in writing solutions because I couldn’t find solutions about the gap year, any disadvantages I mean. I believe my best part is the introduction because it starts with a general statement and it was more specific in the end.

At the planning stage I had a difficulty in writing all the parts because it was my first time to write an argumentative essay and I didn’t know what to do. I don’t think that it was easy for me something at the planning stage, I had
weather you have said something wrong you can evaluate yourself and become critical on the quality of the video

Watching again my videos made me to recall my first year as a student when my level of English was very low and I believe that I did a great progress this year and this project helped me a lot...being in the class, talking, answering questions difficulties in all parts... So I had to research a lot about the topic because it was very difficult for me. Problem identification-solving the problem

However, what I like the most in my essay is the introduction because I started with a thesis statement and then I became more specific about what is a common believe for people. I think that I need to study more about argumentative essays and more vocabulary because I don’t want to repeat my self

Before I start writing my essay I did some research about the topic and I found some useful information about that and I know what I write in the essay. Then I did an essay plan. In planning stage I don’t think that I had difficulties. It is easy for me because I know what to write in the introduction, in the main body and the conclusion. Self evaluation

While writing my essay I don't have difficulties, If I had I did a plan because I know what I will write. The best part of my essay is the main body because I have found some useful information and this is good. I don't think that there is a worst part in my essay because I found a lot of information... Hi today I will speak about my essay with topic about young people who choose after school and before starting the university
to work or travel. I must tell what are the advantages and disadvantages.

Well before I start writing my essay I did an investigation and tried to find information in the internet and books about the topic. After that I did a plan and this is easy for me because I know what I want to write in the introduction, in the main body and the conclusion and I don’t lose time to think ideas when I am writing my essay. I don’t have difficulties except I have to think words and definitions in English. In my opinion the best part of my essay is the advantages and disadvantages because I had good ideas.

While writing my essay I have difficulties because I don’t know what to write in the introduction. Every time I don’t know how to start in the introduction but I think in continue I got it, ha ha! The best part of my essay I think is the main body because I have a lot of ideas about the topic and it’s very good. The worst part of my essay is the conclusion. Never, never, never I don’t know what to write. I don’t know how to close this essay but ok...

I’ve learned how to plan an essay, how to develop my thinking necessary for writing. I can write an essay in short amount of time, I’m good in introduction because I’m trying to summarize. I don’t understand how to write the
main body if it is an opinion essay. You must write I think two or three main body paragraphs, so I do not understand how to write the first main body and the second different because it is the same idea. So often I have difficulty to understand the main body because some linking words are difficult and I don't know how to use linking words. My best part is the conclusion because it's my opinion and most of time it's easy to write because you have already written the introduction the main body and the solution to the problem and the conclusion is just your ideas. I don't like the main body, I think it is boring because we focus a lot to external work. I think the main body is difficult to find the idea.

I can write an essay in short amount of time, I 'm good in introduction because I 'm trying to summarize.
I don't understand how to write the main body if it is an opinion essay. You must write I think two or three main body paragraphs, so I do not understand how to write the first main body and the second different because it is the same idea. So often I have difficulty to understand the main body because some linking words are difficult and I don't know how to use linking words.

My best part is the conclusion because it's my opinion and most of time it's easy to write because you have already written the introduction the main body and the solution to the problem and
the conclusion is just your ideas. I don’t like the main body, I think it is boring because we focus a lot to external work. I think the main body is difficult to find the idea.

Besides, I didn't have difficulties to express my ideas and I know how to use linking words and synonyms. But, the biggest challenge for me was to find some counterarguments about the topic because many articles present terrorism as an especially negative form of aggression. That was the reason that I couldn't find a lot of interesting counter arguments to present in my essay

In my opinion the most important thing is to improve adequate writing skills because without skills I am not able to write a strong essay. What about the easiest part of writing. In my opinion this part of writing is definitely the introduction.

What about main body, main body can be a little difficult for me especially if I want to express my ideas and of course support my ideas by adding a strong thesis. Of course this depends on the topic. Conclusion according to me is the most boring part of writing I usually don’t have a good conception how to write and summarize in an interesting way the end of the essay

Also I don’t really study anything about my essay I
am just trying to find as much information as I can for the topic.

The best part of my essay is the conclusion because I have already said the main idea so I just have to sum them up and the worst part is the beginning because I never have any idea on how to start my essay.

The best part while writing is the essay is the main body because I have already have ideas from the pan so I just have to write them down.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>In the video you are able to do what you want you can speak, I am more open, I can express my ideas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First I would like to tell you that I would like to take part in the writing class because I can improve synonyms, grammar and of course words. In my opinion the most important thing is to improve adequate writing skills because without skills I am not able to write a strong essay.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monitoring</th>
<th>After recoding the video I went back to have a look at my essay and I saw that I could have corrected some errors...but I didn't have the time to write the essay again...but I can say that video was successful in achieving this goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I did not like the fact that I had to speak in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English and I had to think in advance how I could express myself in good English</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Video reflection is similar to writing in a paper plus the visual characteristics and the fact that you can see yourself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my opinion the best video was one about the gap year because I speak more fluently and I used a lot of synonyms and words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the video you are able to do what you want you can speak, I am more open, I can express my ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What I do before my writing is a lesson plan and I do research of course about the topic. I think that it is an easy way to write your essay so, I don’t think that I have any difficulties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Also, I used some linking words. The Internet helped me a lot to find some linking words. Also, I think I have in general good vocabulary which is also the Internet helped a lot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I got feedback, which helped me effectively, and I believe that I will try to correct my mistakes probably to the next essay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I finished my essay I felt very happy and very good because I felt that I wrote a good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
essay and I sent my essay to my classmates. When I finished my essay I felt relieved because I finally did it. I edited my text, I sent it to my classmates for checking the essay and sending comments and I think

When I finished my essay I felt very happy and very relieved finally because I did it. I sent it to two of my classmates for feedback, which helped me effectively.

When I finish my essay I’m proud of me because I recognize that it was a very long essay and this is difficult.

Also, when I finish my essay I feel proud because I think my essay was great. I don’t think that I have a worst part in my essay, that’s way I am proud of my essay.

1. I am going to speak about argumentative essay. My topic is hunger and food centers. First of all I have learned a lot of things and I chose this topic because I have already known a lot about hunger. I saw some pictures from countries around the world that suffer and I think that it was the most important topic. I have explained the effect of hunger, the effect for our health and I think that everybody needs to eat and that is why I
chose this topic. I explain why it is not a good thing in this century that there are a lot of people that suffer and they do not have food to eat. I think that in the other hand there are a lot of countries that waste food or don’t eat food. I think this is bad because the very first question comes if there is enough food for everybody. I think yes, if you get the food you waste in West and we can send this food in another country that they need to eat. I explained all these things in my essay and I think it was good to speak about hunger and food centers.

Hi everybody I am going to talk about the second essay. It was a topic about how to take a gap year between graduation from High School and University. I have learned a lot of things. I have learned how to handle every paragraph because in the last essay it was not that simple to find ideas. I remember that reflecting was boring but in this essay I have learned a lot of things so it was quite easy for me to find some advantages and some disadvantages so it was very good.

My topic was terrorism, a major issue in the world and how terrorism affects innocent people.

I also noticed that terrorism is at some point very popular in the internet and due to that fact I could find a lot of
Abstract

Rethinking autonomy in an online environment: An action research study

The aim of this presentation is twofold: to discuss the challenges and benefits of cultivating autonomy to digital natives students and to present an evidence-based example of action research that was applied in the English Department in the College based on the principles of multiliteracies pedagogy.

A qualitative action research study was conducted in the ESL writing class for fifteen weeks. The purpose of the study was to cultivate students’ autonomy in second language writing with the use of cutting edge technology tools such as blogs and wikis. Previous years reflections and experience from the implementation of wikis have been taken into consideration and an action plan was designed by the instructor-researcher. Triangulated data indicates that the combination of on-line peer feedback technique and journal writing encourages the majority of students to engage in the writing process, start reflecting on their progress and make a step from interdependence to independence. Although, readiness for autonomy is a crucial factor that
should be taken into consideration in a follow-up study. Overall, the majority of the students had positive reactions and experiences throughout the semester and reported that they benefited from this project.

Action research is believed to be the most applied methodology and because of this characteristic it is argued that it can meet the pressures of the ever-changing Higher Education. Another benefit of this methodology is that it encourages professional development, enriches students' learning experience and provides solutions to micro and macro level of practice. Becoming a reflective practitioner is more than a need in academia is the key to innovation.

Appendix XXII: Accepted abstract for: *Rethinking Language, Diversity and Education, International Conference, Aegean University Rodos, May 2015*
Appendix XXIII: Sample of students’ vlogs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vlog 1</th>
<th>Vlog 2</th>
<th>Vlog 3</th>
<th>Vlog 4</th>
<th>Vlog 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vlog 6</td>
<td>Vlog 7</td>
<td>Vlog 8</td>
<td>Vlog 9</td>
<td>Vlog 10</td>
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</tbody>
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