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**Grammatical accuracy improvement in virtual learning environments using
screencast feedback**

Diana Mireya Cuéllar Sánchez

**Research Report submitted
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master in English Language Teaching for Self-Directed Learning**

Directed by: Prof. Claudia Acero Rios

**Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures
Universidad de La Sabana
Chía, Colombia
October 2016**

Declaration

I hereby declare that my research report entitled:

Grammatical accuracy improvement in virtual learning environments using screencast
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- has been submitted by or on the required submission date.

Date: 04/10/2016

Full Name: Diana Mireya Cuéllar Sánchez

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diana M. Cuéllar Sánchez". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and 'C'.

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Abstract

This research was carried out with 49 undergraduate students enrolled in a Colombian, virtual, public university. It aimed to analyze the grammatical accuracy improvement of students when writing short descriptive texts after they received feedback through screencasts. This study was a mixed action research since qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data were used; this approach allowed the researcher to use four types of instruments: a pre intervention survey, students' short descriptive texts, a teacher's journal and a post intervention survey. Data was analyzed using Descriptive Statistics and Grounded Theory. Findings revealed that students who were developing their language competencies in a virtual learning environment benefited through the use of image and audio in a single resource, which allowed the teacher to combine oral and written comments, provide observations on specific issues, and suggest how errors should be corrected. In like manner, screencast feedback proved to be a strategy that not only allowed students to have the opportunity to understand and improve their grammatical errors when writing short descriptive texts but also the teacher to make appropriate and punctual suggestions.

Key words: confidence, grammatical accuracy, screencast feedback, virtual language environment

Resumen

Esta investigación se llevó a cabo con 49 estudiantes de pregrado matriculados en una universidad colombiana, pública y virtual. El objetivo era analizar la mejora en la exactitud gramatical en los estudiantes al escribir textos descriptivos cortos después de recibir retroalimentación a través de grabaciones con captura de pantalla. Este estudio fue una investigación acción- mixta donde se usaron métodos cualitativos y cuantitativos para recopilar datos; este enfoque permitió que el investigador usara cuatro tipos de instrumentos: una encuesta previa a la intervención, textos descriptivos cortos de los estudiantes, el diario del docente y una encuesta posterior a la intervención. Los datos fueron analizados utilizando la Estadística Descriptiva y la Teoría Fundamentada. Los resultados revelaron que la retroalimentación a través de captura de pantalla permitió al docente dar explicaciones adecuadas y puntuales sobre errores gramaticales específicos en los textos descriptivos de los estudiantes, así como ejemplos y sugerencias sobre cómo los errores debían ser corregidos mediante el uso simultáneo de voz y la imagen y la combinación de comentarios orales y escritos. Además, los estudiantes que estaban desarrollando sus competencias lingüísticas en un entorno virtual de aprendizaje se beneficiaron a través del uso de grabaciones de pantalla, porque tenían la oportunidad de reproducir la imagen y audio en un único recurso, escuchar la explicación del docente, entender qué y cómo se tenía que mejorar sus errores gramaticales y sentir el apoyo emocional proporcionado por el profesor a través de un seguimiento personalizado.

Palabras claves: Ambientes virtuales de aprendizaje, captura de pantalla, confianza, exactitud gramatical.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Meaning
DTs	Descriptive text
FL	Foreign Language
PCS	Present continuous sentences
PSS	Present simple structure
SLW	Second Language Writing
Sub. Pron.	Subject pronoun
UNAD	Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia
VLE	Virtual learning environment
VLEs	Virtual learning environments
VTB	Verb to be
WF	Written feedback

Introduction

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become significant in the way teachers transform their practice, how students learn and how teaching and learning are mediated differently. As stated by Landazabal (July 31st, 2006) in her presentation *Mediation in Virtual Learning Scenario: Analysis of Metacognitive Strategies and Communication Tools*, “the virtual environments have expanded the possibility of innovative educational practices” as a response to the social needs for educational changes. Such needs emerge from request of potentiating new approaches to learning, using virtual platforms where students and teachers can experience new tools for meeting and communicating, as well as a different way of organizing, attending and guiding lectures, discussions, or exams based on technological configurations. Therefore, ICT in education is an innovative alternative in universities, which enables educators to think of new scenarios and opportunities for teaching.

Nowadays, it is imperative to take advantage of modern technological facilities to benefit education especially the task of English language instruction. Mainly, the development of writing skills, since students at university level are required to produce accurate and clear written material (e.g. stories, worksheets, or descriptions) to demonstrate learning; to help in the communication process between teachers and students in as much as writing is commonly used in electronic mails, bulletin boards, forums and chatrooms in virtual language environments (VLEs). Hence, teachers face a real challenge; they need to explore different patterns as well as new teaching strategies to perform a relevant role in the learning process through a permanent monitoring that guides and motivates students to improve their English, specifically their writing skill.

It is a fact that if a teacher wants students to have a well-organized text, writing in VLEs, requires according to Cardona and Novoa (2013), “multiple thinking processes such as brainstorming, selection and organization of ideas, facts, thoughts or opinions” (p. 8). Therefore, teachers have to boost and facilitate content apprehension processes with meaningful virtual activities where students can practice grammar structures and vocabulary to use in a text; as well as to consider different techniques to provide feedback and support the development of writing skill through the implementation of technological tools offered by Web 2.0. In effect, ICT not only helps students in the improvement of writing, it also help teachers to face the challenge of aiding learners to write a text. Moreover, it provides varied useful tools to the teacher to monitor students’ writing process by implementing permanent, clear, to the point and personalized feedback, so that writers improve their writing accuracy and their confidence as writers.

Feedback is an essential and powerful strategy that allows guidance to help students achieve learning, as Brookhart has stated, “giving feedback based on the particular qualities of a student’s work, means the information itself will be of maximum usefulness in the process of writing drafts” (2008, p. 48). In that sense, feedback motivates students who usually expect comments about their work, allowing meaningful application of what they have learned from the feedback to the construction of a final product, since students receive guidance about how to improve their texts. As feedback could be provided by means of written or oral comments, different techniques such as direct annotations on the drafts or the forums; therefore, in this study teacher-researcher administered personalized feedback through videos to students who were enrolled in a virtual English course at Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD).

This university has been characterized by the permanent use of ICT as mediators of learning activities and acknowledges the importance of learning a foreign language particularly English. It has been established in the UNAD's National English Program that "ICT strengthen reading, listening, speaking and especially writing skill development" and "enhance learners' awareness and abilities to become better writers" (author's translation. National English Program, 2012, p. 3) through the performing of different activities in its virtual platform named *UNAD virtual*.

Writing at UNAD is a major component in most of the activities and the main way teachers and students interact. Furthermore, as students require permanent support and monitoring, teachers should devote significant time and effort revising writings in the forums to have students' mistakes corrected in a timely, motivational and sensitive way, so that learners can understand the explanations. Consequently, this study illustrates a mixed action research focused on the use of ICT - mainly screencasts - as a strategy to provide feedback in VLEs focused on the teaching and learning process of learners' writing skills – evidenced in descriptive texts-, through the use of a computer service called Jing®; a free screenshot and screencast software that enabled the teacher-researcher turn screen output into a video to provide the necessary support to students through personalized feedback.

Statement of the Problem

This study was developed in an English online course, in the free and open-source software learning management system, Moodle 2.5. This course had 3 units with different reading and grammar exercises to practice the course content, as well as nine (9) activities to be developed and assessed along the learning process. Regarding this study, learners had a written activity located in the virtual forum, where individually they had to write a short descriptive text. Initially, they had their first drawback since students who were in English

A1 at UNAD did not have samples for a clear idea of what descriptive writing was, so, they had to create their own texts with no samples. This is in contrast to what some researchers such as Rodriguez have pointed out about providing models during the writing process. For him, “students need models to practice” (as cited in Nunan, 1999, p. 273), they need to be exposed to similar samples of the type of text they are required to produce, they need to know the structure, think about ideas and get them onto paper to have a final product.

Then, the teacher-researcher’s daily and empirical observation to the students’ writings, allowed her to identify the difficulties students experienced when they wrote descriptive texts (DTs): First, learners wrote short sentences as they translated from Internet tools or using a dictionary, disregarding whether they were following the correct grammar structure or words. Second, most of the errors shown referred to their limited control of the studied simple grammatical structures and sentences patterns, competence that according to the Common European Framework (CEFR, 2002, p. 24) students should develop in A1 level, which evidently represents a serious problem regarding their grammatical accuracy.

In fact, students used to receive written feedback by their teacher about the errors in their texts. This feedback was mainly provided through direct and indirect comments about the performance of the first draft. Indeed, teacher – researcher implemented direct feedback to locate and provide in a written way, the correct linguistic forms of the students’ errors; this type of feedback was administered in Spanish as soon as the first draft was uploaded in the virtual forums. The other technique to correct errors was through indirect feedback, it was given to students by indicating where the errors were without correcting them. For this purpose, a set of conventions was established and communicated to students:

- highlighted **red** when students had to change the word into the correct one;

- crossed out ~~black~~ when a student had to delete an unnecessary word;
- highlighted **blue** when the word formed used was incorrect;
- an aquamarine symbol (⊕) when there was a missing word

Color-coded conventions were used as a strategy to let students know their errors, so that they could correct them. However, despite of the fact that the teacher-researcher constantly provided students with written feedback, the errors still persisted. It was evident in the students' first drafts that they had some errors such as the use of simple grammatical structures and sentences patterns (see Figure 1).

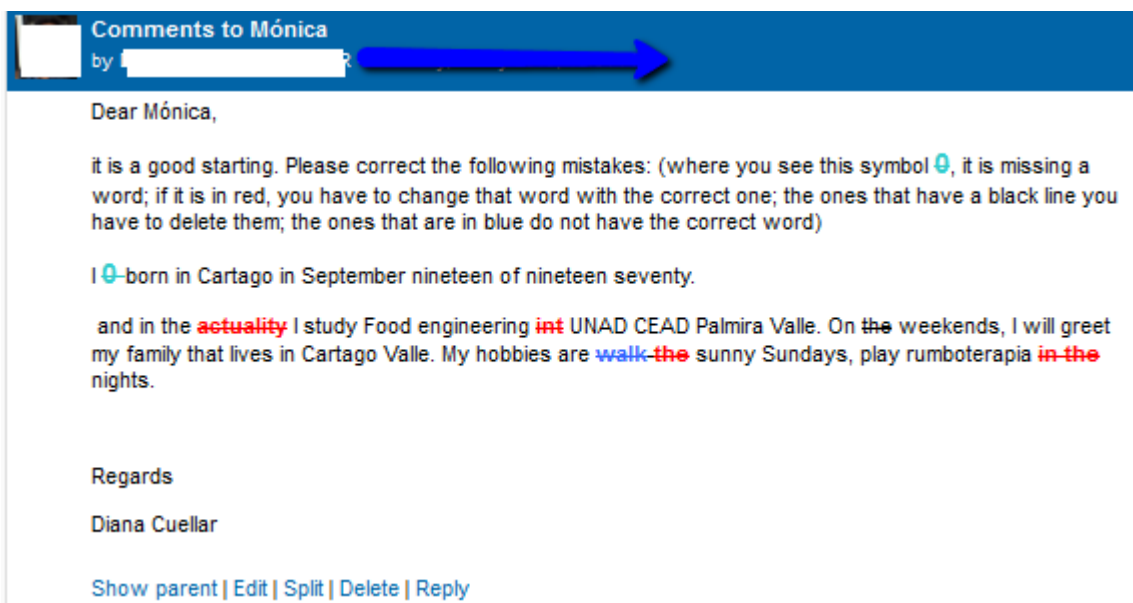


Figure 1. Written feedback to a student using different colors in the virtual forums.

The teacher-researcher then analyzed the mistakes students usually committed and after a revision of literature concerning the main interest of this study, some of the problems identified corresponded to the categories Lunsford and Lunsford (2008, p. 795) found in their study with writing samples from first-year composition students. In this current study, mainly two types of errors were detected: First, *sentence fragment* which

refers to an incomplete sentence, generally happens when students' texts usually lacked a subject or a verb; second, *unnecessary shift in verb tense* that according to Lunsford and Lunsford (2008), learners frequently shift verbs from one tense to another with no clear reason. Consequently, participants usually used a wrong tense or verb form.

As it can be seen in Table 1, fragmentation of sentences was evident because students usually forgot to write the subject pronoun, which in most of the cases was the first person, *I*, as it can be seen in students 1, 3 and 4. Also the complete verb form was ignored, in this case students 2 and 4 did not write the Verb *to be* (VTB) in present continuous sentences (PCS). Moreover, students 2, 3 and 4 made an unnecessary shift in verb tense, frequently they used a wrong verb to express age, they wrote the Verb *to have* instead of *to be*; additionally, learners regularly wrote the wrong tense to talk about activities with present simple structures (PSS) because they added the VTB, as students 1 and 3 did. Table 1 shows some examples of the most common grammatical errors found in students' descriptive texts.

Table 1

Examples from Students' Most Common Errors

	<i>Sentence fragment grammatical errors</i>	<i>Unnecessary shift in verb tense</i>
Student 1	- No subject. Am twenty years old	Wrong tense I'm study ...
Student 2	- No complete verb. Neighborhood STA TERESITA I doing	Wrong verb form I have twenty six years
Student 3	- No subject. live in Chia Listen to music	Wrong tense or verb form I have 36 years I am study Psychology

	- No subject. Study Psychology	Wrong verb form
Student 4	Do the household work	I have 25 years
	- No complete verb. and watching TV	

Based on this first observation done by the teacher-researcher, these errors might have come from the following three main causes. First of all, although the three units that comprise the course included grammar exercises, these were decontextualized and repetitive, focused only on explaining English grammar structures in Spanish. Students did not have opportunities to practice writing through those exercises because most of the time they had to complete multiple choice, matching or true or false tasks (see Appendix A).

The second cause was identified in the preliminary needs analysis through a questionnaire. Students argued feeling insecure when asked to write a text because they did not know enough vocabulary, connectors or grammar structures that should be used for a simple and accurate text. They also reported not knowing how to correct their own writing and not recognizing the correct answer from their errors. The third cause was the feedback type provided by the teacher and the gap of time that is so prevalent in VLEs. Besides, feedback was usually given in written form specifying what students had to correct as seen in Figure 2.

Feedback was usually written in Spanish, because it was difficult for the teacher-researcher to explain effectively in written form the correct use of a word or a grammatical rule in a VLE, and also because students' language level was not advanced enough to understand teacher's written explanations. Constantly, the teacher resorted to using different colors to correct or indicate errors (Figure 2). Nevertheless, this kind of feedback was not enough for students, it was not assimilated as a whole and sometimes texts were

partially corrected, it happened because most of the participants in this study were not used to have asynchronous tools¹ to communicate with teacher and classmates. As a result, these asynchronous tools, with which written feedback was given, were limited in their scope for effective guidance to students in the right way to develop their writing skills. The aforementioned situation serves as the basis for the following research question and objectives guiding this research project.

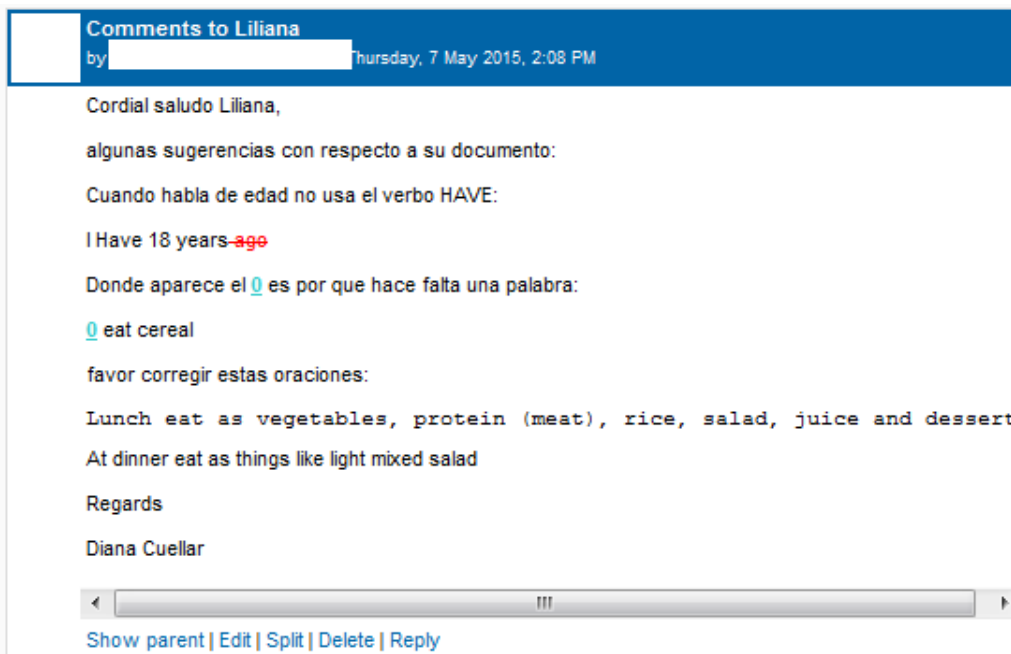


Figure 2. Colored-written feedback

Research Question

To what extent do AI undergraduate students improve their grammatical accuracy when writing short descriptive texts after they receive screencast feedback in a VLE?

Objectives

The objectives to achieve in this research were:

¹ Asynchronous learning on the other hand can be carried out even when the student or teacher is offline. Coursework and communications delivered via web, email and messages posted on community forums

- To analyze the improvement of A1 undergraduate students' grammatical accuracy when writing short DTs in VLE after they receive screencast feedback.
- To identify students' perception towards the strategy and progress in their grammatical accuracy when writing short DTs.

Rationale

This study was carried out at a Colombian public university named Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD), which follows the guidelines established in its Solidary Academic Teaching Program (PAPS in Spanish) where the “ideal of national, public and autonomous university are in the open and distance modality for the 21st century, ICT allows students and teachers to participate in new scenarios of knowledge transformation” (author’s translation. PAPS, 2008, p. 6), where meaningful and independent learning environments are relevant to change relations and pedagogical practices; besides, its programs enhance the “mastery of a foreign language in order to facilitate technology training, professional or post gradual enrichment” (author’s translation. PAPS, 2008, p. 105). This university works with a fully virtual methodology, where students can use the different visual or multimedia resources available on the platform.

In this sense, UNAD must ensure that students who learn English in VLEs are gaining the necessary skills to compete as citizens and workers in the 21st century. One of these skills is writing, indeed it is one of the most important communication channels to interact in online education. However, beginner learners see writing as a *tough*, complex and demanding task. This is in accordance with White and Arndt who said that “writing is a complex, cognitive process that requires sustained intellectual effort” (as cited in Nunan, 1999, p. 273). Also, Cleary (2012), has stated that students usually perceive writing as a

“native skill, that cannot be learned” (p. 774) and only native people can master it correctly.

It is a fact that students’ English language difficulties, their lack or low proficiency of grammar or punctuation affects the quality of writing, limits their ability to express ideas and “their confidence levels decrease” (Cleary, 2012, p. 774); in other words, students become less confident in themselves, because they consider they are not *good writers*.

However, Clearly (2012) stated that “efficacy at writing tasks increases at students practice” (p. 774). Also, Turbill and Bean (2006) speak on this point that if students want to achieve better writing communicative goals, “teachers must give time to providing opportunities to use and practice what students are learning” (p, 36); that is, to give learners the chance to write about topics they know, such as themselves or their world; so that they could feel confident and with opportunities to experience a sense of achievement and success.

In the same way, educators at UNAD need to prioritize new teaching practices that encourage writing and improve the way feedback is provided, building a better understanding of students’ writing skills, the connections and feelings among their learning needs as individuals, as well as the establishment of an open and clear communication to develop a good learning atmosphere in the virtual class. This development can be gained through the online tools offered on the web, in words of Lee “writing instruction supported by electronic tools and resources can enable students to improve their writing practice, and can empower students as authors” (as cited in Cleary, 2012, p. 775). For that reason, this study focused on the implementation of screencast feedback as an appealing, motivating and successful learning strategy that allowed the teacher-researcher the combination of oral and written comments to help students potentiate their understanding of the explained

grammar issues, and contributed to the support and monitoring that the teacher performs in the forums and students' interest in improving their writing in online English courses.

Exploring and implementing screencast feedback strategy under the conditions of a Colombian, virtual, public, university such as UNAD, in which English language learning has been framed according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Language, and where teachers must include and support students with different strategies, techniques and tactics that ensure high levels of accompaniment, academic assistance, interaction in the target language and relevant feedback, allowed the teacher-researcher to put into practice an appropriate teaching and learning strategy that could be seen as a relevant tool to be used in VLEs provided by the UNAD to their community, since virtual education clearly emphasizes important aspects such as the permanent teacher's asynchronous accompaniment² as well as an assertive and mediated communication with the student through online tools. This also concurs with Edwards, Dujardin, and Williams (2012) who have established that “integrated viewing and hearing removes the need for cross-referencing between the written feedback and the point in the essay to which it relates which may help students to better understand tutor's feedback” (p. 96),

Additionally, as UNAD welcomes in the different academic programs “diverse type of learners” (Saravia-Shore, 2008, para. 3) due to the varied social, cultural and geographical backgrounds, the screencast feedback is relevant for this study because it facilitates the language learning in several contexts due to the opportunities this type of education entails; its implementation agrees with the current need that teachers and students

² Asynchronous accompaniment: It is the teachers' accompaniment to students in the development of the activities in the course forums, course internal messaging and other resources which are not dependent on the simultaneous participation of teachers and students. It is expected to promote the construction of knowledge, development of critical thinking and significant, collaborative and autonomous learning processes (author's translation. Teachers' accompaniment at UNAD, 2015, p. 5).

should learn to interact and learn through new technologies that are revolutionizing our world. In other words, the screencast feedback strategy contributes first, to a further and permanent support in language and communication to students who are enrolled in virtual education who come from different cities of the country, with diverse cultural, technological and linguistic schemas that can affect their learning process; and second to the support and monitoring teacher does and students' interest in improving their writing in online English courses, since learners consider that a conversational academic comment is more easily understood than formal, written-academic feedback.

Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the main constructs considered for this research, starting from a general review of grammatical accuracy in writing, short descriptive text (DT), virtual learning environments (VLEs), as well as errors and feedback. After that, the teaching strategies of using screencast to provide feedback are described. Finally, related research studies that have applied screencast feedback in international and national contexts are specified in detail.

Grammatical Accuracy in Writing

Writing is one of the most important skills in educational and professional contexts as well as a difficult skill to acquire for English language learners. In fact as Nunan said, writing is “probably the most difficult thing to do in language” (1999, p.271), since it is not a spontaneous skill and it does not allow to exploit some devices that are used in spoken language such as gestures, tone of voice among others. In effect, writing to be effective and to avoid miscommunication has to consider some relevant elements as the context, the end-user, and certain linguistic and pragmatic features of the language. This concurs with Cumming who has argued that “teaching low proficiency EFL students to write whole texts is often fraught with difficulties” (as cited in Firkins, Forey & Sengupta, 2007, p. 341), such difficulties can be considered to what Ellis stated as “understanding and internalizing grammatical features” (2006, p. 88) as learners need to master vocabulary, grammatical patterns and sentence structures to create a feasible meaning; in other words, to write an accurate and comprehensible text.

In this study, it is necessary to know the concept of both grammar and accuracy to recognize the importance that these terms trigger in the writing process. They are important aspects of any good piece of writing to have a readable text, as well as to avoid

misunderstandings, and to help other persons understand a text easily. According to Harmer (2001) the “grammar of a language is the description of the ways in which words can change their forms and can be combined into sentences in that language” (p. 12). Other researchers such as Richards, Platt, and Weber (1985) determined grammar as “a description of the structure of the language and the way in which linguistic units such as words or phrases are combined to produce sentences in the language” (p. 251). For the purpose of this study, it was necessary to recognize that the language is systematically organized by its grammar and its structures which are indissolubly linked to meaning and communication. Students must be aware that any text can make sense without shaping grammatical structures.

In the same way, *accuracy* is relevant insomuch as it is related to a learner's level of writing including the use of grammar; so, if a student makes errors in every other word in a text, there would be a serious loss of meaning and it would be an unclear writing for the reader. Thus, accuracy is defined by the Cambridge Online Dictionary (n.d.) as “the ability to do something without making errors or the fact of being exact or correct”. Also, The British Council (n.d) considers accuracy as “how correct learners’ use of the language system is”; it refers to the use of grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and other elements in context. According to the above definitions, accuracy, for this study, is the ability to write without making any grammatical, vocabulary, punctuation or any other error in a short text. That students could use nouns, adjectives or verbs, to express a message to the reader in an accurate way and thus *feel* the vivid sensory details that the writer wants to transmit.

For some researchers such as Ahangari & Barghi (2012), grammar is an important aspect that makes it possible to talk about language and “aims at uplifting accuracy in learners for better communication” (p. 6). Nowadays grammar is a skill to be practiced and

developed in different academic context, since it enables students to communicate accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately. However, theorists as Harmer has pointed out that one of the greatest writing performance limitations in English for most learners is that “they lack the ability to use appropriate grammar in their English language writing” (2001, p. 99). Also, Lush has stated that “learners have difficulty both in applying the English grammar rules to form grammatically correct sentences, and in knowing when and where to use these sentences and to whom” (as cited in Puengpipattrakul, 2009, p. 90). That is to say that one of the biggest barriers to writing in English for most learners is their lack of ability to use appropriate grammar rules in their writings, even if they have studied English tenses in primary or high school.

As a matter of fact, teachers usually want students to be successful language writers, able to communicate in any situation, with full comprehension, confident and effective language. For that reason, grammatical accuracy must be seen as a continuum development in language instruction, where learners search for the acceptability, quality and precision of the message conveyed. This is in accordance with Celce-Murcia who emphasized the “importance of a reasonable degree of grammatical accuracy in academic writing” (1991, p. 465), to help students communicate effectively and accomplish communication goals in written form according to the contexts and the end-user.

Grammatical accuracy is an essential feature if students are to achieve their educational and professional goals due to the requirements of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2002) for the development of this skill. According to this international standard a person writing with the highest level “maintains consistent grammatical control complex language” (p. 114); so, the grammar of the text should not interfere with the understandability of the text. To do that, English grammar

instruction is an essential feature so that students can advance their English level by producing written work that employs the grammatical structures they have learned.

Also, the CEFR (2002) in the section *productive activities and strategies* named the three general different productions students can create in a written way according to the different mastery levels: “Overall written production, creative writing and reports and essays” (p. 61). The CEFR (2010) determined for the first two productions (overall written production and creative writing) some descriptors to guide teachers and students to have the minimum requirements to write a text for A1 students. It has to be highlighted that “reports and essays” are written products for learners who are between B1 and C2 level according to the CEFR. Regarding overall written production, students “can write simple isolated phrases and sentences” (p. 62); in reference to Creative Writing, students “can write simple phrases and sentences about themselves and imaginary people, where they live and what they do” (p. 62). With these described guidelines, teacher can lead learners who have a very basic English level or who usually write texts with a limited control of a few simple grammar structures and sentence patterns, isolated words and phrases related to specific situations to develop the writing skill and create an acceptable text, writing simple sentences with the correct vocabulary and grammar structures. In other words, to achieve the written proficiency goals they have to start mastering an A1 level according to the CEFR.

As it can be seen, grammar is associated with the accurate use of language for effective written communication, that is to say that learners should always follow grammar rules to maintain clarity and avoid ambiguity in expressions; in that sense, as Ahangari and Barghi (2012) have stated, both “grammar and accuracy contribute to construct validation of language” (p. 7). It means that grammatical accuracy is obtained when each word in a

sentence represents the meaning the writer intends to convey and arrange in the correct order it has to be; so, accuracy in communication is important, and grammar facilitates that.

In summary, students need to develop the lexical and grammar skills required in each writing activity. The grammar rules help the learners develop more logical and clearer sentences, so they can become more accurate in the language and therefore in the message. Moreover, writing enhances language acquisition owing to the fact that learners have to plan what they are going to write, select the topic, use the appropriate words (nouns, adjectives, verbs) and sentences in context to communicate their ideas effectively and apply the grammar they have learned in class.

The Short Descriptive Text

This type of writing was implemented considering that it encouraged students to use new vocabulary to describe a person, a place or a thing in detail. The BBC (2011) has defined descriptive texts as “words that tell you what something is like. The writer tries to help you imagine or ‘see’ a person, place or thing” (Descriptive text section, para. 1); also, a descriptive text is considered by Ellis, Standal and Rummel (1989) as the simplest and easiest writing form compared to narrative, recount, or procedure, particularly for the beginning writers. For this study descriptive writing is according to Baker, Brizee, and Angeli (2013) “a genre that asks the student to describe something (object, person, place, experience, emotion, situation, etc.)” (What is a Descriptive Essay? section, para. 1). Thus, this genre encourages students’ ability to have a written account of a particular experience, illustrating with simple words parts, qualities, or characteristics that the writer has in mind.

Language does not need to be *wordy* for this type of text, Smalley, Ruetten & Kozyrev (2001) have suggested that students are required to “list the characteristics of

something and usually deals with the physical appearance of the described thing” (p 80); in other words, students try to describe exactly how a setting looks or how a character behaves. So, learners picture images of the imagery or real object they are describing in a written way and arrange them in some kind of logical pattern to convey to a reader the sound, taste, and smell of things or objects being depicted. In summary, what the writer intends in a descriptive text is that by reading it, the reader can easily form a mental picture of what is being written about, and be part of the experience being described.

Some researchers as Wardiman, Jahur, and Sukiman (2008) have specified the generic structure of descriptive text (DT) into two parts: (a) “introduction as paragraph that introduces the character, and (b) description as the paragraph that describes the character” (p. 16). Therefore, the writer should provide readers with detailed information about a particular person, place or thing to show the agent to be described, its characteristics with the appropriate words, so that the readers can make sense of what has been described. Consequently, writing a DT implies two important elements: “An element to identify the character” (*identification*) and “other one to portray parts, qualities, or characteristics” (*description*) (p. 16). Additionally, the most common language features to be used in this type of text are: a certain object to talk about, adjectives to clarify the noun, simple present tense for telling the facts of object descriptions, and action verbs to show a specific activity. In this study, the text structure was determined with an opening paragraph introducing the subject to be described, followed by a series of paragraphs each one describing the subject’s features and a final concluding section.

Virtual Learning Environments

English language teaching has dramatically changed with the remarkable entry of technology. It has impacted teachers to change from traditional teaching methods that favor

teacher-centered classrooms to more updated pedagogical models that give students a significant role in the learning process, not only in face -to- face environments, but also in those mediated by technology where learning is carried out through online activities generated by tutors using the opportunities that the virtual platforms provide; so that, greater learning opportunities are given to students to gain confidence in the practice of the language.

Technology has also impacted students who learn English and develop their skills in online contexts, in as much as they need further language support and practice than that required in face -to- face environments to develop their listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills. To do so, teachers can easily find several tools to facilitate the language learning process and make it more effective. Notably technology has contributed to providing new tools to benefit education and virtual learning environments have played a positive role in the new concept of the English class. According to the Oxford University Press Online Resource Center (n.d.) a “VLE is a system for delivering learning materials to students via the web. This system includes assessment, student tracking, collaboration and communication tools” (What is a Virtual learning environment? section, para. 1). Also, Barajas and Owen (2000) have suggested that a “VLE is based on different combinations of telematics and multimedia tools” (p. 39). For the purpose of this study, a VLE is a set of teaching and learning tools designed to contribute to a student's learning experience together with computers and the internet in the learning process.

Currently learners of a foreign language are in constant search of the best methods and techniques to learn a language; usually, they use the combination of traditional resources and multimedia, which provide numerous opportunities and material for language learners to practice with authentic examples of the target language and culture. This is in

accordance with Maltby and Mackie (2008) who have stated that “online education has changed the relationship that a student has with their course of study” (p. 58). First, education mediated through online resources, offers foreign language (FL) learners the possibility to review content, repeat lessons and correct errors without time constraints. It also allows them to review material (guides, videos, readings, etc.) as many times as they need it. In words of Gearhart (2008) “online education is a flexible learning environment” (p. 36) that enables students to learn at their own pace through different learning strategies; this also concurs with Freman and Capper who have affirmed that “the web is acclaimed for the flexibility and variability of the materials it provides and is acknowledged to have the potential to add to even the best classroom practices” (as cited in Zhao, 2003, p. 405).

Second, because the use of this new way of learning allows universities to use a web-based platform, as an opportunity not only to widen access to their courses while improving the quality of education, but also to approach those students who cannot go to an institution of higher education due to geographic or time restrictions; that is, the university becomes an inclusive institution, where people can access the virtual platform from anywhere without traveling to a physical location.

In addition, a significant characteristic of VLEs is that communication, interaction, assessment, and other teaching and learning actions are developed through different activities and strategies that are used in face-to-face environments. In fact, it is necessary that the course content, written and oral exercises, formative and summative assessment as well as feedback for the VLEs should be clear and concise enough. First, to support learners in their foreign language learning processes through teachers’ permanent assistance and monitoring; second, to facilitate their learning with significant activities,

understandable and affordable material as well as guides or instructions, timely interaction and feedback.

As it can be seen, the importance of the different resources that VLEs offers to enhance foreign language learning has increased; based on this, Zhao (2003) has pointed out that “access and exposure through technology to engaging, authentic and comprehensible yet demanding materials in the target language is essential for successful language learning” (p. 23). However, it is not as easy as it seems, that process will also require a prolonged period of study, patience, and time that not only depends on the type of materials or resources provided on the virtual campus but also on each student’s characteristics, self-motivation and feedback provided by the teacher to help them construct their own learning path.

The online resources and campus presence ease not only learning but also guidance by the teacher; truly, both students and teachers benefit from the adoption of a wide variety of online tools that support the teaching-learning process in VLEs. According to Motteram (2013) a “VLE makes it possible for teachers to more easily provide the necessary engagement with language that allows learners to improve linguistic skills such as writing, listening or pronunciation, in ways that have proved very difficult in the past in traditional environments” (p. 132). Thereby, teachers are indispensable as guides in VLEs to provide support and in the same way, to foster growth and understanding of the language being taught.

It is important to recognize that in VLEs language is used in spoken and most of the time in written form. According to Lanham, technological revolution has integrated “computers into the humanities and particularly into the writing curriculum” (as cited in Schultz, 2000, p. 121). For him, “students we teach are going to do most of their writing

and much of their reading on an electronic screen. Now they live in a world of electronic text” (Lanham as cited in Schultz, 2000). For that reason, teaching writing has significantly changed “from an end-product approach” (Lanham as cited in Schultz, 2000, p. 121) where the teacher reads and grades the paper students had written without the possibility of different feedback strategies of a rough draft, “to a process approach” (Lanham as cited in Schultz, 2000, p. 121) where through online resources, the written process and feedback have improved for both teachers and students. Now, it is a practice where students can have various drafts and comments done by the teacher and partners before the final version and evaluation.

In the same way, Komalasari (2013) has pointed out that “writing skill is needed to demonstrate the learners' understanding of the experiences or the courses” (p. 26), but Warschauer (2007) stated that in VLEs writing “is used for both communication between teacher and students as well as long distance exchanges between students in different locations” (p. 910). It implies that writing is very common in virtual educational context since it is not only a necessary means to interact with their academic peers or teachers through the virtual forums and chats, but also because most of the homework to be done is in written form. This also concurs with Dillenbourg (2000) who pointed out that “the writing activity is per se the educational goal, but in many cases, it is just the end point which drives a variety of earlier activities such as site visits, observations, experiments, integrated in the VLEs” (p. 7). In other words, a learning activity in VLEs refers to something richer than in an individual courseware. It transforms students into information producers. Now, students are not only active, but also actors in their own learning process.

Errors and Feedback

Errors. In the process of acquiring a language or mastering a skill, errors are inevitably and they are a necessary part of language acquisition. Several studies, including those from Thailand done by Pongsiriwet (as cited in Puengpipattrakul, 2009), have specified that a person cannot learn a language without making errors. But, what is an error? According to Corder (1967), “an error takes place when the deviation arises as a result of lack of knowledge. It represents a lack of competence” (p. 961); in other words, it happens when learners do not know the correct rule of the language and try to use what they assume is the correct form, but unfortunately in that context or situation, it is the wrong form.

In the same way, teachers should not expect students to learn without making errors. It would be unrealistic to consider errors as undesirable when basic writers are trying to learn a skill, this is in accordance with Corder (1967) who said that learners’ error can “provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in the discovery of the language” (p.167). Hence, errors should be seen as a sign of the learner's progress in language learning; as Ringbom (1987) stated, errors are “insight into how far a learner has progressed in acquiring a language and showing how much more the learner needs to learn” (p. 69). In that sense, errors should be seen by the teacher as an important part of the learning process, since teachers can follow students’ progress at every point of the course, analyze and decide what remains for them to learn.

Now, considering the development of writing skill, Pongsiriwet’s research (2001) has confirmed that “in their attempt to master the writing skill, learners inevitably make errors. One of the major difficulties at writing in English lies with the grammar of the

language, which has been found to be a major source of writing errors” (p.3); therefore, a linguistic error in writing is usually a concern for teachers and researchers, since most of the time learners have different types of grammar errors when composing a text. Richards and Renandya have stated that “learners must be able to communicate their thoughts towards appropriate language use and communicative strategies” (as cited in Hinnon, 2010, p. 167). It can be seen that errors are very common and they are part of the language learning process; for that reason, students and teachers can use these errors to recognize the inaccuracies and improve the language performance, writing well-structured sentences to be used in short DTs.

In the same way, teachers should analyze the type of error students have in their texts to know which the most common errors are, and to define the strategies to help learners reduce them in their writings. In the year 2008 Lunsford and Lunsford, after two years of data gathering and analysis, designed a list of the most common formal errors, as shown in table 2:

Table 2

Lunsford and Lunsford's most common formal errors

Error or Error pattern
1. Wrong word
2. Missing comma after an introductory element
3. Incomplete or missing documentation
4. Vague pronoun reference
5. Spelling error (including homonyms)
6. Mechanical error with a quotation
7. Unnecessary comma
8. Unnecessary or missing capitalization
9. Missing word
10. Faulty sentence structure
11. Missing comma with a nonrestrictive element
12. Unnecessary shift in verb tense
13. Missing comma in a compound sentence

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14. Unnecessary or missing apostrophe (including *its/it's*)

 15. Fused (run-on) sentence

 16. Comma splice

 17. Lack of pronoun-antecedent agreement

 18. Poorly integrated quotation

 19. Unnecessary or missing hyphen

 20. Sentence fragment

These errors are relevant due to the fact that it helps teachers know the current state of the learners' knowledge concerning the 20 categories for written texts; as well as to evaluate themselves and the processes they carry out in the classroom and in the virtual learning environments to teach the different pragmatic and grammatical features of the language. If teachers know which errors are the most common, they can help students improve their weaknesses regarding a specific error pattern. Additionally, learners should understand that the type of writing errors mentioned above are not a problem but rather a significant opportunity to identify areas of improvement and become self-involved in their improvement process.

Usually in the writing learning process, learners wish to write well; however, students find it difficult to imagine themselves as writers because they realize that their lack of linguistic knowledge restricts their composition. For this reason, they need help in understanding and avoiding errors in their writings. Unfortunately, students cannot usually correct their errors by themselves. They need some additional information in view of the fact that there is a lack of understanding by the language learner. As Buley-Meissner (1981) stated, "students will make mistakes but they also will make progress - if their teachers guide and encourage them in the right ways" (p. 4). In that sense, errors are directly related to the teacher's role in guiding the improvement of students' writing, since teachers play an

important part in the learning process as they help students correct and make fewer errors through the use of different corrective feedback strategies.

Feedback. In Second Language Writing (SLW), feedback can be defined according to Keh (1990) as “input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision” (p. 294). Then, feedback is usually given to boost students’ acquisition of accurate language. For this purpose, learners (in general) need a clear path to know if they are accomplishing academic goals. Activities such as repetitive text or rewriting need to be avoided, because they do not contribute to improvement and demotivate students when they do not see results despite their efforts. Feedback must be concrete, specific, and useful so that students could accept, understand and remember the correct information about their errors for future assignments.

Researchers such as Hyland and Hyland (2006b) have described how “feedback is widely seen as crucial for encouraging and consolidating learning [...] In classrooms feedback is a key element of the scaffolding provided by the teacher to build learner’s confidence and the literacy resources to participate in target communities” (p. 83). In the context of VLEs specifically for higher education, where students are the main characters in the learning process, feedback provided by the teacher is an important aspect in the development of language skills, due to the fact that it allows students to understand and progress in their confidence as writers and their learning experience.

Other researchers such as Ndon (2010) has also stressed the importance of using feedback as a tool to provide guidance through formative commentary, stating that “feedback should focus on improving the skills needed for the *construction* of end products more than on the end products themselves” (p. 236). In words of Debusse et al. “feedback is decisive for students to understand and receive support for their own learning process and

develop the level of insight needed to understand their own strengths and weaknesses” (as cited in Mathisen, 2012, p. 98). Thereby, feedback is considered in language learning as a powerful tool that helps students not only learn more efficiently through information provided on their performance but also be motivated about their learning process in as much as teachers praise learners for effective language use.

Additionally, feedback has also been considered as an essential component for the development of foreign language writing skills, specifically in VLEs where it is very common to use the written language as a primary means of communication and interaction among the different participants. However, some students usually have difficulties when writing in a foreign language and correspondingly, recognizing and correcting the errors in their texts by themselves. Thereupon, learners expect teachers provide permanent support and monitoring on their assignments so as to have good written texts. This is in accordance with Hyland and Hyland’s studies which have proved that “students are more likely to find teacher feedback useful when it engages the student writer and when it is contextualized—that is, given in consideration of individual student needs” (as cited in Lee, 2008, p. 146). For that reason feedback plays an essential role to improve students’ writing skills since through suggestions, explanations, explicitness and analysis on content and form, learners can have a positive progress regarding the texts’ structure, accuracy and other linguistic elements.

Students who are enrolled in VLEs also expect to receive permanent feedback since they do not have the opportunity to meet the teacher in face to face contexts to review and correct their texts. With this in mind, teacher must be careful with the information presented to students trying not to be overcritical of their writings which could affect the quality of both content and form of future texts. With regard to this, Harmer (2001, p. 110)

has established some techniques to hand back students' written work and help learners write a more successful text:

- Responding: With this device teachers should say how the text appears, how successful it has been and how it can be improved;
- Coding: Codes or symbols that make correction much neater, less threatening and more helpful than marks or comments, they may refer to issues such as word order, spelling, or verb tense.

A most recent study carried out by Lee (2008) has explained the “major error feedback techniques” (p. 154), and its use. Lee (2008) has also suggested three types of feedback: “Direct, indirect with direct location of errors and indirect feedback with indirect location of errors” (see Table 3). All of them can be implemented and useful to give information to students considering variables such as: the type of students, the activities and assignments. Lee stated that if they are beginners it is better to provide direct feedback because learners are not able to self-correct their errors.

Table 3 shows the difference between direct or indirect feedback. This study focused on direct feedback that in Lee's words (2003) “refers to overt correction of student errors, that is, teachers locating and correcting errors for students and indirect feedback refers to teachers indicating errors without correcting them for students” (p. 154). Direct feedback eases beginner students to correct more errors when they are directly located by them; moreover, this allows to strengthen students' self-confidence and at the same time learners feel motivated to continue correcting and learning from their errors.

Table 3

Lee's Major Error Feedback Techniques

Type of error feedback	Explanation
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Direct feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate and correct errors
Indirect feedback (Direct location of errors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate errors • Locate errors and identify error types
Indirect feedback (Indirect location of errors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indirectly locate errors • Indirectly locate errors and identify error types

Feedback must be carefully designed and teachers must know how to organize and present it to students so that they are not so demotivated as to discontinue their writing learning process. With this in mind, it is necessary that teachers recognize the different feedback categories that researchers have acknowledged as appropriate to be applied; a good example is Hyland and Hyland’s “categories for written comments” in 2001. They determined three main categories: Praise, criticism and suggestion (Table 4). The first one refers “to help reinforce appropriate language behaviors and foster students’ self-esteem [...] It [...] suggests a more intense or detailed response than simple agreement” (Hyland & Hyland, 2001, p. 186); also, praising what a student does is important particularly for less able writers to reinforce good writing. Criticism emphasizes on negative aspects present in the text, but researchers as Connor and Lunsford have found that “if learners receive too much criticism through the feedback, motivation and self-confidence as writer may be damaged” (as cited in Hyland & Hyland, 2001, p. 186), and suggestions are “explicit recommendation for remediation” in other words it is a realizable action so that students can correct their errors.

Table 4

Hyland and Hyland’s Categories for Written Comments

Praise	‘An act which attributes credit to another for some characteristic, attribute, skill, etc., which is positively valued by the person giving feedback.’
Criticism	‘An expression of dissatisfaction or negative comment on a text’.
Suggestion	A relatively clear and accomplishable action for improvement, which is sometimes referred to as “constructive criticism”.
Explanation	It is a commentary in which an explanation is made regarding the grammatical issue that has the error and explains how to correct it.

Note: Adapted by the researcher.

They analyzed *praise*, *criticism* and *suggestion*. It has to be highlighted that these categories were adapted to the study context and a category was added: *Explanation*. It refers to a clarification regarding the grammatical issue of the error and explains how to correct it. The original categories were designed only for written feedback in face-to-face environments, and students enrolled in VLEs, need a deeper exposition or illustration of different linguistic aspects to correct their errors, so the new category was born.

Screencasts to provide feedback

Nowadays information and communication technologies (ICT) offer the possibility to take advantage of different tools to support, monitor and facilitate the teaching-learning process both in face-to-face and virtual learning contexts. As Stevenson and Liu (2010) have pointed out, ICT tools “provide students with opportunities for greater learner control, active construction of knowledge, and access to collaborative learning environments” (p. 235). But certainly, in VLEs it is more necessary and valuable the use of a range of tools for tutorials, formative and summative assessment, collaborative work, etc., to provide understandable content and enable an effective communication among teachers and

students. Additionally, effective use of new technology empowers learners to become active in their learning process.

As this study was conducted in a VLE, teacher-researcher wanted to introduce appropriate online resources for the purpose of providing effective feedback. In the literature, one of the most common and proper strategies that many teachers and researchers have applied in online contexts to provide feedback on written texts is screencast. This refers to the provision of feedback on errors and weaknesses in content, organization, and language. Teacher provides correct forms or structures in faulty sentences; as Lumadue and Fish pointed out, the teacher “indicates the location of errors; makes recasts; and gives prompts in the forms of elicitation, clarification requests, and repetition of errors” (as cited in Mathisen 2012, p. 98). In other words, screencast is a relevant tool that enables not only a closer relationship but also the provision of richer information through audio format, with more explanations, examples and strategies in improvement with a great effect on the written texts due to the simultaneous use of voice and image.

In the same way, studies by Middleton and Nortcliffe (2010) have shown that the use of “voice can significantly improve the effectiveness of feedback” (p. 27). This is in accordance with O’Malley (2011) who has suggested that “intonations in the voice can often be much clearer in emphasizing key messages to the student and are also perceived by the student as being more personal and supportive than just written comments” (p. 27). Certainly, when students listen to the teacher’s voice and watch their text on the screen in one single resource, it is easier for them to understand the comments once they hear the explanation and the tone of voice. This also allows teachers to engage students on an interpersonal level that is absent in written comments, since according to Thompson and Lee (2012), “video-feedback offers students an opportunity to get out of their heads and

hear the emotional response that is more clearly conveyed through spoken words than writing” (p. 3), in a more conversational and personal form of feedback

Screencast feedback is important in this study since the teacher-researcher can use a device that helps learners comprehend more easily what the teacher wants to say. This concurs with Ellis (2009) who has stated that “audiovisual feedback is desirable for low-level-of-proficiency students who are unable to self-correct and do not know what the correct form is” (p. 1250). Hence, this type of feedback has become useful because it promotes knowledge acquisition of specific content, linguistic and form features especially for beginners. But also, this strategy is necessary as Edwards et al (2012) said to improve both “clarity and timeliness” (p. 97) in VLEs. Clarity owing to the fact that hearing explanations while viewing the relevant part of an assignment make feedback more concrete for the student and thus support understanding; and timeliness because as gaps of time are very common in VLEs, screencasts are quicker to be created and returned by the teacher.

On the other hand, some studies on written commentary have proved that written feedback can often be unclear and confusing to students. For this reason, students usually do not act on the advice specified in written comments because they are as LaFontana has stated “undecipherable” (as cited in Cavanaugh & Song, 2014, p. 124) to students and they feel frustrated in as much as feedback is not provided in *their language*. In other words, students do not have enough language development to understand the observations or explanations that teachers wants to mean in written form. Therefore, it is important to give students an accurate feedback to their language, which is easy to understand for them and involving the use of various senses to a greater understanding. It means, if students hear

explanations and see the relevant part of their assignment simultaneously, it helps them understand feedback and how to use it to improve their work for future assignments.

Surely, the purpose of using screencasts is to aid students “overcome their lack of familiarity with academic discourse” (Edwards et al., 2012, p. 97) and facilitate feedback comprehension given that through this tool, teachers can use a less formal language. In this sense, conversational academic feedback may be more easily understood than formal, written academic feedback. Besides, screencast expands the value of feedback because it is not limited to merely exchanging texts, as McLaughlin, Kerr and Howie have pointed out, “students prefer receiving feedback in the format of sound or video instead of exclusively in written form” (as cited in Mathisen, 2012, p. 100). In that sense, students can also assimilate the guidance and explanation more easily and communication becomes more efficient when it includes picture, movement, color and sound.

Additionally, there are many advantages when using screencast feedback as it allows users to save both time and money. Time because the videos produced through screencasts with a software like JING® are five-minute recordings. It permits a short, clear and meaningful correction, just to the point and focused on communication. In the same way money, because it is a free tool, that allows 2 GB of storage per month in its server and it grants to share the video through a link or an embedded code. It captures anything on the computer screen, as an image or short video and uploads it to the Web.

In summary, audiovisual feedback has the potential to motivate students and increase their engagement, as Thompson and Lee (2012, p. 155) referred “teacher’s verbal comments are able to mitigate the negativity that a student may interpret from written comments and help students take in feedback as part of an ongoing conversation about their work instead of a personal criticism”.

State of Art

National and international studies have been carried out to explore how oral and direct feedback provided through screencasts has helped to enhance learners' writing skills. In the literature reviewed, a study done by O'Malley (2011) with the purpose of describing how students at Manchester University "use the combination of modern technologies encompassing a Tablet PC and screencasting to provide a personalized feedback to students on submitted coursework and tutorial example classes" (p. 25). Also, the study proved that voice ensures corrections and suggestions for improvement not only for the current activity but for future performance as well. Besides, "screencast provides the student with a unique opportunity to hear the tutor, reflect on his/her work and make suggestions for improvements as many times as they needed it" (p. 30). So, it showed that the power of the voice is quite important in the learning process since written comments can be misinterpreted by students and have negative connotations for them.

In the same way, Edwards et al. (2012) performed an action research at Sheffield Hallam University with students at a master level to explore the potential of audio-visual screencasting for assignment feedback on a distance learning (DL) course. The results suggest that:

Feedback is received more positively in the richer media of audiovisual screencasting and that this may encourage emotions more conducive... and help to socialize students within the learning context by giving them a sense of belonging to the community. (Edwards et al., 2012, p. 95).

Also visual cues and explanations helped with understanding, and it was demonstrated that capturing screencasts was quicker than writing feedback. Besides one

additional advantage for students was that screencasts could be scanned and revisited with no time restrictions.

Similarly, Mathisen an associate professor at University of Agder in Norway accomplished a study in 2012 “to promote the significance of feedback regarding students’ working with written texts in higher education and to point out how technology can develop the quality and form of teachers’ feedback” (p. 97). The findings demonstrated that video feedback simplified and increased the efficiency of responding to students’ work, as it allowed the opportunity to achieve increased levels of precision and quality in the feedback process.

An inquiry directed by Séror (2012) explored “the use of screencasts and their potential to transform how feedback can be offered to language-learners on written assignments” (p. 104). It evidenced advantages for teachers and students. For teachers screencasts represent a low-cost, intuitive, and timesaving multimodal tool; and students found it to be a resource-rich feedback where sound, voice and visual dimensions with images and movement enriched and supplemented more conventional feedback practices.

Later, a study conducted by Ice, Swan, Diaz, and Kupczynski (as cited in Cavanaugh & Song, 2014, p. 123) examined the use of audio feedback in online classes where instructors embedded audio comments into the students' documents using Adobe Acrobat Pro. This inquiry indicated that “students were able to detect nuance more effectively, understand content more thoroughly, and engage with the instructor at a more personal level through audio feedback than through written feedback” (p. 123). It was also demonstrated in a case study at Leicester University that “audio feedback is richer, more personal and can build rapport, save time and open the door to an ongoing dialogue between student and tutor” (Edwards et al., 2012, p. 98) on distance learning programs.

There are a number of dissertations carried out by Colombian teachers which have analyzed the impact of direct or indirect feedback in the learning process through written tools such as wikis, blogs, chats, etc., but oral feedback implemented through ICT tools is limited. In 2013, Alvira, a Colombian language teacher-researcher, conducted a study to establish the impact of direct, coded oral and written feedback on the improvement of paragraph writing in B1 level EFL students at traditional University Level. Basically, the findings of the study permitted the researcher to demonstrate that the use of screencast was widely accepted by the students and yielded positive results in the improvement of the students' skills to write different types of paragraphs with the correctness required by the syllabus.

In 2014, Univio and Pérez carried out an action research study with 24 students enrolled in undergraduate programs, in two Colombian universities with different method of instruction; one of them had face-to face tutoring and the other online training. They implemented Ipsative assessments to study how an alternative type of assessment improved argumentative essay writing. Students also received feedback through the screencast tool Jing, which enabled them to listen to the feedback while looking at the screen in which the teacher emphasized certain aspects of their essays. The comparison of various drafts allowed learners to reflect on their improvements at the same time they raised self-awareness of progress. Findings revealed that by means of Ipsative assessment, students enhanced their argumentative essay writing as they grasped the structural and reflective nature of this skill.

Research Design

This chapter depicts the design used to carry out this mixed method research study. First, the type of study, the context and participants of this inquiry are described. Then, it specifies the teacher's role. Finally, the instruments used to collect data, its validation process and the ethical considerations of the study are specified in detail.

Type of Study

This study followed the principles of Action Research because, as Nunan & Bailey (2009) stated, it allows the teacher-researcher to identify problematic situations and find solutions to improve the particular problem selected, and also the teacher's practice as well. Considering that the study was aimed at improving grammatical accuracy through the way feedback on short descriptive text was given to the participants of the research in a VLE, the action research principles were followed firstly by a conscious teacher's reflection on what happened in the virtual environment; secondly by implementing screencasts as a strategy to give feedback as the teacher's action; thirdly by observing and keeping a constant reflective attitude on the outcomes to analyze the effects of the intervention designed.

In order to take advantages of both qualitative and quantitative data, this study made use of a mixed-method design since this enables the teacher-researcher to collect and analyze the data. The basic premise of this methodology were considering Wisdom and Creswell's (2013) statements who indicated that "such integration permits a more complete and synergistic utilization of data than do separate quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis" (p. 1). Moreover, this design enables the investigator to collect "both forms of data at the same time during the study and then integrates the information in the interpretation of the overall results" (p. 16). Based on this, the mixed method approach

provided some advantages to the study because according to Creswell (2003) qualitative approach is a holistic approach that involves discovery and allows a “detailed understanding of the issue [...] and the context” (p. 40). Thus, qualitative data were collected through the teacher’s journal that allowed having significant information and reflections about the students’ descriptive writing process. As a complement, the initial and final surveys mentioned above had open questions to gather students’ insights about the strategy and their improvement in writing.

Also, the quantitative method was important to “collect, analyze, interpret, and write the results of a study” generalizing them to a population, since quantitative research “employs strategies of inquiry such as experimental and surveys, and collects data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data” (Creswell, 2003, p. 18). In this research, quantitative data was gathered through an initial survey which was applied to learners before the intervention and a final survey administered post-intervention, each one of them designed with nine-closed questions. Moreover, students’ descriptive texts were relevant at the beginning of the research to identify the most common errors, and at the end to compare the first and last text to see if there was any improvement regarding their grammatical accuracy.

Context

This study was carried out at Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD), a virtual, public university in Colombia focused in the development of undergraduate programs through distance education. English plays an important role in the university’s curriculum and, the Virtual Language Institute has the responsibility of leading the process of teaching and learning English as a foreign language since it is an essential and specific component in each undergraduate program due to the importance for students in their

academic and professional development. Hence, students of all programs must fulfill an established requirement by the institutional policies where learners are required to complete four levels. Each English level at UNAD has three academic credits; which means that students have 108 hours of individual work and 36 hours of online tutorial support throughout the four-month academic period.

The method of instructional delivery at the university was developed through a VLE, where students had six virtual environments: Initial Information, Collaborative Learning Environment, Knowledge Environment, Practice Environment, Evaluation and Monitoring Environment and Management Environment, as seen in figure 3. In these virtual spaces learners could find the course content such as the materials to be studied, the forums to interact and learn, quizzes to evaluate learning, etc. It has to be highlighted that most of the instructions on the platform and on the guides were written in students' native language, Spanish.



Figure 3. English course homepage.

Participants

There were 49 participants in this study: forty women and nine men of different ages; they were grouped into four categories according to age as is shown in Table 5. 31% of the population was aged between 16 and 20 years old; the biggest group with an estimated 45% was comprised of people who were between 21 and 30 years of age; the other 20% were between 31 and 40. And the smallest group with just 4% were people between 31 and 40 years old.

Table 5

Sample Discrimination and Percentages of Age and Gender

Gender/Age	16-20	%	21-30	%	31-40	%	41-50	%
Female	13	27%	17	35%	9	18%	1	2%
Men	2	4%	5	10%	1	2%	1	2%
Total	15	31%	22	45%	10	20%	2	4%

Learners did not belong to a specific city in the country, meaning that some of them lived in urban areas and some others in rural regions; these latter faced many technological difficulties as Internet access and the use of computers or Microsoft office was severely limited. Participants were enrolled in A1 level in an English virtual course, in the Psychology academic program, but they did not fulfill the requirements corresponded to the A1 writing level according to the CEFR considering the results of the first drafts, because they did not know enough vocabulary or grammar structures to write a correct sentence in the foreign language. These troubles explained in the *statement of the problem* affected the correct development in their academic activities. Hence, this project was carried out to give to the participants some easy to handle tools, available to be watched and repeated as often

as desired, with understandable examples and language to improve the writing process specifically their grammar accuracy.

Teacher's Role

The researcher took an active role in this study as a “tutor-observer”, as Harmer (2001) stated, the tutor “work[s] with individuals [...] pointing them in directions” (p. 77), in this case the researcher provided learners with guidelines to support their writing process through especially designed feedback material posted in the forums to be accessible at any time, and the general virtual class atmosphere was greatly enhanced as a result. The teacher also acted as an observer because it is possible to see “how well our students are doing [...] so that we can give them useful [...] individual feedback” (Harmer, 2001, p. 77); so, the researcher in this study observed and analyzed the short DTs and the impact of screencasts as a feedback strategy for beginner students in VLEs.

Data Collection Instruments

In this mixed-method inquiry, the teacher-researcher considered that in order to answer the research question, it was relevant to gather both kinds of data: qualitative and quantitative. For that reason, four instruments were chosen as the most suitable to collect the information: an initial survey; students' texts, a teacher's journal, and a final survey (Appendices C, D, E and F). These instruments provided the teacher-researcher with important information from sources that offered reliability and validity for the present study, since they were pilot tested before their implementation.

Surveys. Nunan (1999) has mentioned that surveys are “widely used as a method for collecting data in [...] education [...] to obtain a snapshot of an entire population at a single point in time” (p. 125). Considering the importance of this instrument, the teacher-researcher designed and applied an initial and a final survey to know students' opinion

about the topic of inquiry. The surveys were designed in Google docs based on the Likert scale, since according to Hernandez, Fernandez, and Baptista (2010) “this method allows to collect a set of topics presented as affirmative sentences to measure the participants’ reaction in three, five or seven categories” (authors’ translation, p. 245); the questions were provided in Spanish and they had five categories as multiple choice answer with only one possible response; the categories were: A. Strongly Agree, B. Agree, C. Undecided, D. Disagree and E. Strongly disagree. Additionally, it has to be mentioned that, these instruments were sent to students’ personal emails because as it was said before, it was not possible to have face to face meetings.

Initial survey. The initial survey gathered information about students’ difficulties with early written feedback provided to their first text uploaded in the virtual forums. The initial survey was applied to students one month before the intervention, it inquired about their personal information and their experience learning to write in English. This survey contributed to the knowledge and categorization of the population and to realize learners’ feelings and perceptions when they were asked to write and correct a descriptive text (DT) focused on the written feedback. This survey comprised nine closed-ended items and a final single open-ended question to gather suggestions and comments about the strategy that had been originally implemented (see Appendix E).

Final survey. This survey comprised nine closed-ended items and four open questions to gather both quantitative and qualitative data of students’ insights about their improvement in writing DTs after screencast was applied. The final survey was useful to collect information about students’ perceptions of the quality of feedback they received through the audiovisual tool, as well as their opinion about intervention and improvement related to the study constructs (see Appendix F).

Students' texts. It is a fact that students' samples provided the most relevant piece of evidence that could be gathered in this research. As the improvement of the students' accuracy in writing DTs was the main purpose of feedback, it was necessary to collect evidence of the students' progress throughout the process. Besides, these texts (see Appendix C, samples 1 and 2) were collected and compared after students had written the first draft and they submitted their final descriptive writing to the virtual forum. Therefore, the teacher-researcher gathered written samples from students before and after the implementation of the screencast feedback strategy to determine progress.

Teacher's journal. The purpose of this instrument was to register researcher's insights of students' behavior, perceptions, feelings, reflections, and thoughts about the implementation of screencasts as a strategy to provide feedback on their descriptive texts. As stated by Grinnell this instrument allowed the researcher to "[explore] environments, contexts, and life" (as cited in Hernandez, Fernandez, and Baptista 2010, p. 412); for that reason, permanent monitoring to the descriptive writing activity was executed in the virtual forum to identify and classify the most frequent errors in the tasks.

This instrument allowed the researcher to register descriptive data about the students' writing development: If learners improved the use of specific verb tenses as the present simple and present continuous, as well as the correct use of the verb to be (VTB) to talk about age instead of *have* and the accurate use of subject pronouns in descriptive texts (see Appendix D). The notes were taken as soon as the event happened in the virtual forum, so that the collected information was recent and not distorted to reflect about the teaching and learning process. It was a good way to gain a *rich picture* of the context, learners' thoughts and their process in terms of trying to improve grammatical accuracy.

The Data Collection Procedures

This study followed the stages suggested by Hernandez et al., (2010) which went in agreement with the action research approach where initially a diagnosis was carried out, then the implementation of the selected strategy, and finally the data collection and their analysis. As shown in figure 4 specific data collection instruments were used in each stage of the research process: in the diagnosis stage, students were asked to write a text with their personal information to identify their initial writing abilities. This writing task was analyzed by the researcher using a rubric for this specific purpose and then, learners received written feedback in the virtual forums. The rubric evaluated the structure of sentences and paragraphs, grammar, use of vocabulary, as well as clarity in the message for A1 level students (see Appendix H). Then, the initial survey was applied to identifying data to characterize students, to know their difficulties when writing and also their understanding of the first written feedback they received to correct their texts.

Diagnosis	Implementation	Analysis
- Initial survey - Students' descriptive texts (diagnosis)	- Screencast-feedback - Students' descriptive texts (first and Second draft and final paper) - Teacher's journal	- Final survey

Figure 4. Data collection procedure.

During the implementation stage, students wrote a descriptive text about a given topic. The teacher-researcher gathered and analyzed students' writings and with the results, the intervention stage was implemented through screencast to provide feedback and improve grammatical accuracy in VLEs as the main area of this inquiry. Additionally, in this stage, the researcher actively participated, reinforcing and monitoring participants'

writing progress through constant feedback and the collection of relevant data from the observation in the journal of the DTs and students' attitude towards the strategy in the virtual forums.

In the last stage, the final survey was administered to the students to obtain information about the advances in grammar accuracy and to gain information about their insights of screencasts to improve writing in VLEs. Also, there was a parallel among the DTs delivered by the students at the beginning and at the end of the study to identify any grammatical accuracy improvement. Hence, the teacher could gather information about the intervention, analyze data and make conclusions.

Validation of the Instruments

For the purpose of this study, teacher-researcher designed an initial and a final survey. As it was said before, they were designed based on the Likert scale, so the questions had five categories as multiple choice answers with only one possible response. Before administering the two surveys to the students, they were previously pilot tested with two foreign language teachers who also worked at UNAD in the same course and the course director, two weeks before the instruments were applied. This process was carried out to verify the clarity of the instruments and instructions so that students did not have problems with the language and avoiding biased in the questions (see Appendices F and G).

A triangulation process was used to ensure validity and as Denzin has suggested "to balance out the subjective influences of individuals." (as cited in Dörnyei, 2007). Denzin (as cited in Dörnyei, 2007) has also stated that "triangulation can help reduce the inherent weaknesses of individual methods" (p. 43) and "combines data drawn from different sources and at different times, in different places or from different people" (Denzin as cited in Dörnyei, 2007). In the case of this study, the procedure consisted of the use of four data

collection instruments: an initial survey, students' descriptive texts, a teacher's journal and a final survey, along the research process in the VLEs to combine and assess the information offered from both qualitative and quantitative sources.

In the same way, internal validity was important in this study to confirm that the outcome is a "function of the constructs that are measured, controlled and manipulated throughout the process" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 52). In effect, all the instruments provided the researcher with relevant information, attempting to explain to what extent A1 undergraduate students improved their grammatical accuracy when writing short DTs after they received screencast feedback in a VLE.

Ethical Considerations

Some actions based on Dörnyei's (2007) ethical issues in applied linguistics were taken to address this research. The course director and students were informed through a consent letter about the purpose of the research, its procedure, confidentiality of data collected as well as anonymity and the implications for the assessment since feedback was part of the development of normal academic process. They were also notified that results in this study were not going to affect grades for passing or failing the course. Finally, permissions from students and course director were obtained (see Appendix B).

Timeline

The current action research study was conducted for a period of 45 days between September and October of 2014, in which students' short DTs were analyzed before, during and after the application treatment, in order to identify the principal benefits of using screencast feedback to improve grammatical accuracy in VLEs. It is important to mention that during pre-implementation stage, a piloting phase took place with three teachers in order to test the validity of the data collection instruments (see Appendix G).

Pedagogical Intervention

Considering that grammatical accuracy is important in the production of short descriptive texts (DTs) for A1 level students and that students enrolled in VLEs had problems with some grammar structures and the written and coded feedback provided; screencast was seen as an opportunity to provide students with meaningful information about the way they should correct the errors and improve their writing process.

The intervention encompassed a description of the process that was carried out with the activity *writing Assignment* that was available for students for about 45 days between September and October of 2014. During this time, students could participate in the forum with their texts, receive feedback and correct the documents. The *writing Assignment* was located in the virtual platform, specifically in the *collaborative learning environment* (Figure 5). Each descriptive text was observed and monitored based on the proposed changes; those observations were reported in the teacher's journal and then information was interpreted.

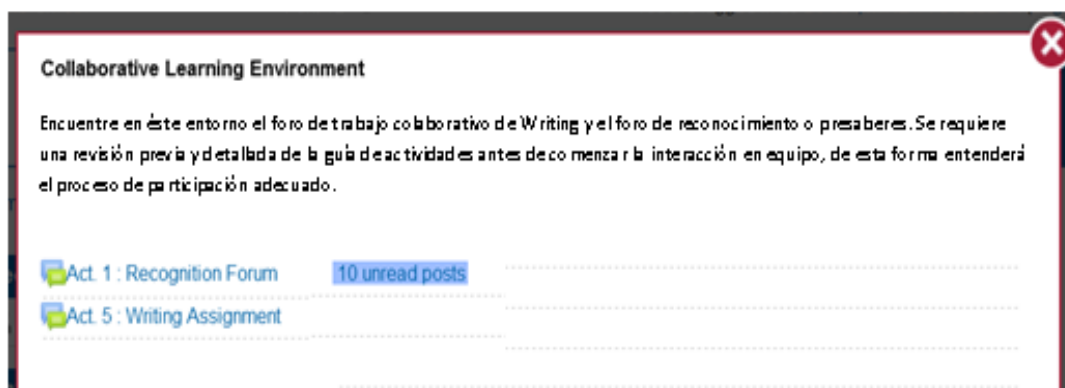


Figure 5. Collaborative learning environment. English A1- 2015-1.

The instructional design consisted of a sequence of three stages: (a) content review, (b) diagnosis, and (c) writing process as illustrated in figure 6.



Figure 6. Pedagogical implementation stages.

Content review

In the content review, students had to study and practice the basic grammar structures necessary to write their texts in accordance with their level. Students had different exercises to practice grammar such as multiple choice, matching and true or false tasks, all of them located in the *Knowledge Environment*. The topics studied required students to write a short descriptive text as described in table 6.

Table 6

Topics to Be Reviewed

GRAMMAR	VERB TO BE, A/AN, DEMONSTRATIVES, PRESENT SIMPLE, FREQUENCY ADVERBS.
VOCABULARY	Professions, nationalities, days of the week.
CONNECTORS	Addition AND- contrast BUT

Diagnosis

After implementing the revision of the content, the second stage of the pedagogical intervention was the diagnosis. At this stage, students wrote a 4-paragraph text with three or four sentences in each paragraph with the purpose to know learners' ability to develop ideas into a short descriptive text. Students had to post this information in the forum so that they could have an idea of what they would write about and the relevant words for this process.

The instruction students had to follow was:

“Write a 4-paragraph text about one of the following topics: (a) description of your own house, (b) a letter describing your best friend's daily routine and the activities he/she likes or dislikes doing, and (c) a short description about your health habits.

Each paragraph should have between three to five sentences and you can use dictionaries or online translators.”

Writing process

A third stage took place after students reviewed some topics and grammar structures to create the text. Students had to develop the assignment following the instructions, topics and rubric that were in a document called *guide* (see Appendix I and Figure 7). This guide was placed at the beginning of the virtual forums for the students, so that they could follow it in detail to accomplish a written text with vocabulary and grammar content in accordance with their English level and the purpose of the activity, which was to write a short text to express ideas and real situations of daily life taking into account grammar, coherence and cohesion rules as well as the vocabulary studied in the course content.

The guide described the general and specific objectives for the activity and steps learners had to follow to write the DTs. As this activity was aimed to stimulate writing as an organized and systematic process, this guide provided students with instructions to select

the appropriate vocabulary and ideas to consolidate the 4-paragraph text with three or five sentences in each paragraph to know learners' ability to write a short descriptive text. The text had to be organized as follows: The first paragraph was an introduction with personal information, the second one was a description about the topic, the third paragraph was the development of the ideas and the final one had a closing paragraph (see Appendix I).

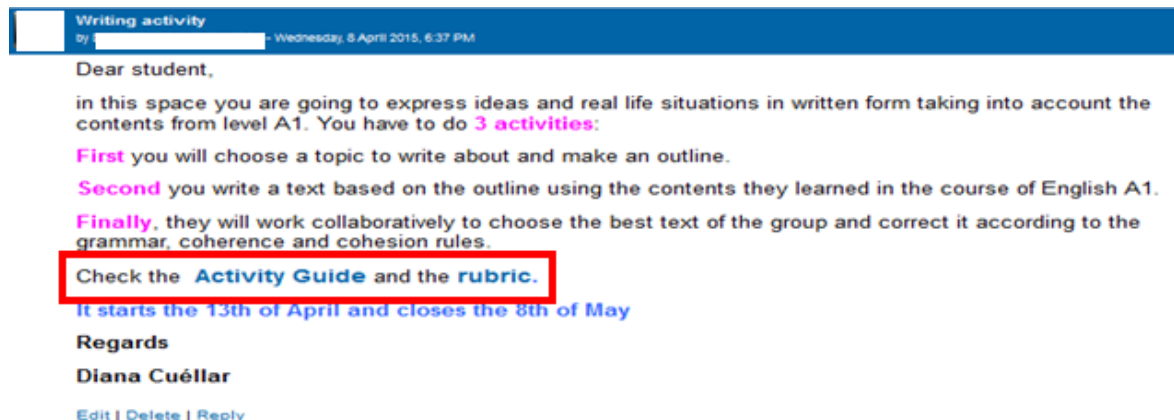


Figure 7. Writing assignment instructions on the forum.

As students had to upload the document to the virtual forums, it allowed the teacher to constantly review the learners' ideas making sure texts were coming out clear, organized and focused on one topic. Moreover, the guide promoted students' revision and practice of the content located in the *Knowledge Environment*, where they could do grammar exercises essential for this assignment. Additionally, the guide recommended the frequent use of the dictionary and online translators during the writing process as useful tools to check which connectors, verbs or other words could be suitable for their text.

The course used in the writing process stage the guide described beforehand complemented with a rubric to evaluate students' writing and lead the teacher's screencast feedback. The following figure presents the steps that the teacher and students followed to have the final text. These steps were adapted from Univio's and Perez's pedagogical implementation.

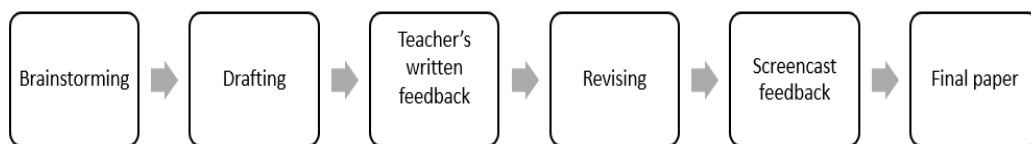


Figure 8. Writing process and Screencast feedback stage

Brainstorming. In this step, students first had to select the topic they were going to write about. The next action required from them was to brainstorm a list of words with the vocabulary, as well as the main and supporting ideas that will help them write about the selected theme in a writing chart as seen in table 7. So, this chart contains plenty of useful information and it would be the practical backing material to organize the text itself.

Table 7

Writing Chart. Taken from English 0 at UNAD

List of words and connectors
Main idea
Supporting ideas

In fact, it was relevant for the correct development of the assignment that students completed the writing chart in detail as it encouraged the use of new vocabulary. It was a guide to create sentences, so that learners had more opportunities to create a coherent descriptive text in content and interesting to the reader.

Drafting. Students uploaded the first draft organized in four paragraphs with the information written in the brainstorming step to the virtual forum.

Teacher’s written feedback. After students uploaded the documents, the teacher-researcher evaluated the draft components with the rubric (see Appendix H) to determine whether the outline fulfilled the criteria proposed for the writing. Then, the researcher implemented two kind of written feedback on the virtual forum: direct and indirect. The

first one located and provided the correct linguistic forms of the errors to students. The second one was given by indicating where the errors were without correcting them through color-coded conventions.

Revising. Students uploaded the second draft in the virtual forum, highlighting the errors corrected according to the written feedback received.

Screencast – feedback. As students partially corrected or did not correct the texts after written feedback was provided because they did not understand the information, teacher- researcher decided to use a different strategy. The purpose to provide feedback through an audiovisual tool was that students could find more simple strategies to understand content and have a more personal relationship with the teacher because it permitted students to listen to the tone of speech, since according to O'Malley (2011) “the use of the voice can significantly improve the effectiveness of feedback” (p. 27); and also, its intonations can be much clearer in emphasizing the main messages to the student. This strategy was planned and applied on the first draft through the screen recording software called JING® that output students’ texts into a video with images and audio. This web 2.0 tool allowed the teacher to create a five-minute recording complemented with voiceover narration to provide individualized feedback and guide students according to their particular needs and results (see Appendix J).

In the same way, the teacher’s feedback followed some specific guidelines designed by the teacher-researcher in order to avoid bias from the examiner and provide the best feedback. First, the researcher read the whole writing to know which type of errors appeared in their texts, according to Lunsford and Lunsford’s (2008) categories. Then, the screencast feedback was provided with the comments about their errors, the reasons why they were wrong and explanation of the correct usage. Also, the teacher wrote and

explained orally how the student could correct the errors with some examples describing its praxis. It has to be noted that the oral comments were provided in Spanish because students argued that when feedback was provided in English they felt disoriented and did not understand it.

After the video was designed, learners received the screencast feedback via a link that was posted in the virtual forums; there, the link was available to be watched and repeated as often as desired. The teacher usually wrote “check the following link to see some feedback about your doc” so that students motivated themselves to correct their texts

since they were provided with a personalized feedback (Figure 9), treating students as individuals and encouraging them to improve their writings.

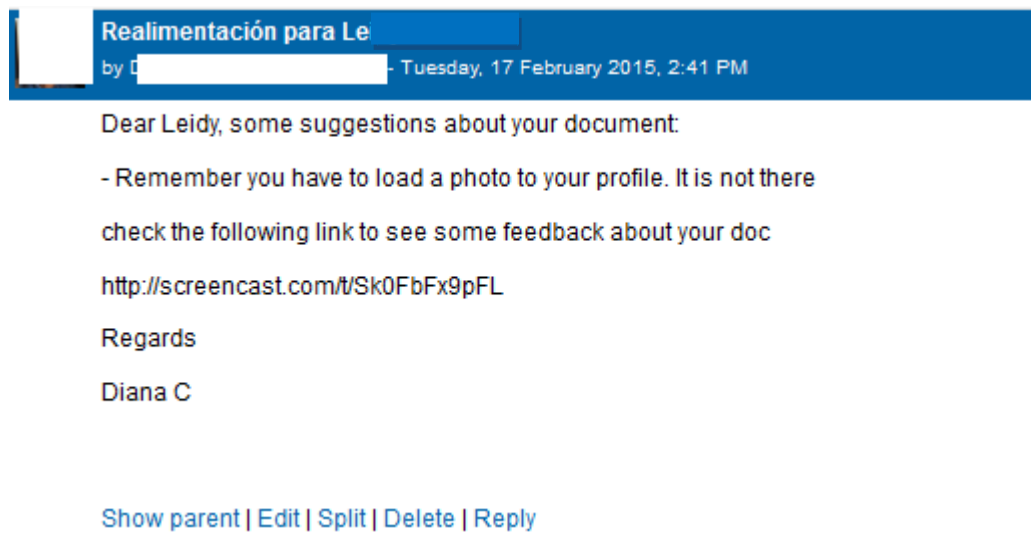


Figure 9. Links posted in the virtual forums.

Final paper. Students presented the final paper of the DTs in which the corrected grammatical inaccuracies were highlighted. Then a final survey was applied to know students' perception comparing written and screencast feedback as well as its impact in the process of writing the text.

Data Analysis and Results

The teacher-researcher collected, organized and analyzed the raw data gathered from the study following the principles of descriptive statistics “to summarize sets of numerical data and to describe the achievement of the group of learners” (Dörnyei, 2007) and Grounded Theory to reduce and analyze written data gathered through the four instruments that allowed the triangulation of data, identification of patterns and framing of core categories to provide an answer to the research question.

Data Management Procedures

In order to facilitate data management, the qualitative and quantitative data were managed separately. All the quantitative results obtained from the closed questions of the pre and post survey and errors that appeared in the students’ descriptive texts were registered, digitalized and stored in MS Excel matrixes. It has to be highlighted that as the pre and post surveys were designed in two different Google forms, it facilitated that students’ answers were collected automatically and then downloaded in MS Excel files. It also allowed the researcher to identify patterns out of the quantitative data through a frequency distribution depicted in pies and bar charts with the numbers or percentages.

Qualitative data gathered from the teacher’s journal and the open questions of both surveys were organized in a MS Word file to have easy access to the information. Besides, each participant was assigned a code (numbers from 1 to 49) to guarantee the confidentiality of the participants.

Data Analysis Procedures

As this study collected data from quantitative and qualitative sources, it was necessary to implement a mixed method “to achieve an elaborate and comprehensive understanding of an issue” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 164), and to produce evidence for the validity

of research outcomes through triangulation. On the one side, quantitative data analysis was framed in the *descriptive statistics* method, which described the basic features of a group in terms of a variable that has been measured (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). For this inquiry, the researcher used *measures of distribution* which involves a summary of the frequency or number of individuals who had a value for each question asked (see Appendix K). On the other side, the analysis of the qualitative data was based on the Grounded Theory approach that according to Strauss and Corbin (1994) allows the researcher to identify patterns and categories in the data collected, in this case, through the following sources: open questions in the initial and final survey as well as the teacher's journal. The data collected led to the emergence of categories that provided an answer for the research question: To what extent do A1 undergraduate students improve their grammatical accuracy when writing short descriptive texts after they receive screencast feedback in a virtual learning environment?

Quantitative data analysis

The analysis of the quantitative data collected through Likert scale initial and final survey questions and the students' descriptive texts, was targeted at measuring in terms of percentages and frequency, learners' perceptions about the use of written feedback and the screencast strategy to improve grammatical accuracy in DTs (see Appendix K). As a result of this statistical procedure, it was possible to find different tendencies that clearly demonstrated how two main categories emerged:

Grammatical accuracy. It should be remembered that the difficulties students had in their texts were categorized in two main aspects according to Lunsford and Lunsford (2008): *Sentence fragment* and *Unnecessary shift in verb tense*. The first category was subdivided in two errors that were very common in learners' writing: Omission of the verb to be (VTB) in present continuous sentences (PCS) and omission of subject pronoun. The

second category focused on addition of verb to be (VTB) in present simple structure (PSS) and verb *to have* instead of *to be* to talk about age (see Appendix L). 49 students' DTs were analyzed and measured in terms of participants to know how many of them committed each one of the errors over the total amount of the learners in this study.

Findings in the first draft revealed that 38 of 49 learners did not write the full verb form or they omitted the verbs (*sentence fragment*), learners used to write PCS without writing the VTB and only 11 students wrote it correctly. Now, regarding the second problem *omission of subject pronoun*, 33 students did not write the subject pronoun when they started a sentence, they wrote the verb about the action or the activity they were describing and completely ignored the use of a noun, only 16 did it appropriately. In the *final text* students made the necessary changes to their DTs according to the comments provided by the teacher and a significant improvement in the grammatical accuracy was evident after learners corrected their texts. That is, only 15 students did not write the VTB in PCS so, 34 of 49 participants wrote it appropriately. Only 12 learners omitted the subject pronoun; in other words, 37 students did it correctly as seen in Figure 10.

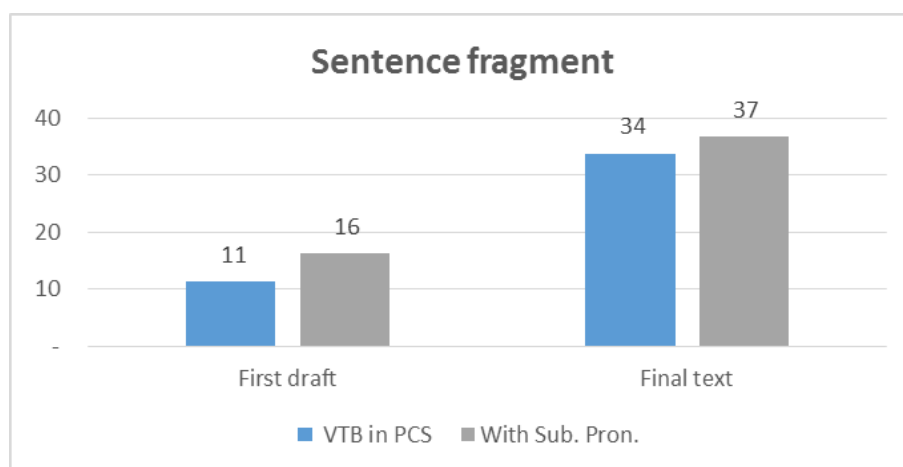


Figure 10. Results from initial and final text for sentence fragment.

In addition, students had two more errors; in their texts it was evident they *unnecessarily shifted in verb tense*. In the first draft, 29 students wrote *am* with action verbs in present simple sentences (PSS), so only 20 of the participants wrote it correctly. And 30 students wrote the verb *to have* instead of *to be* for age; it means, just 19 learners wrote the verb to be to talk about age. The final texts revealed that 39 participants wrote in the correct way PSS and only 10 of them still have some inaccuracies with this tense. In the same way, in figure 11 it can be seen that 36 of students wrote the correct form of *to be* to talk about age (see figure 11).

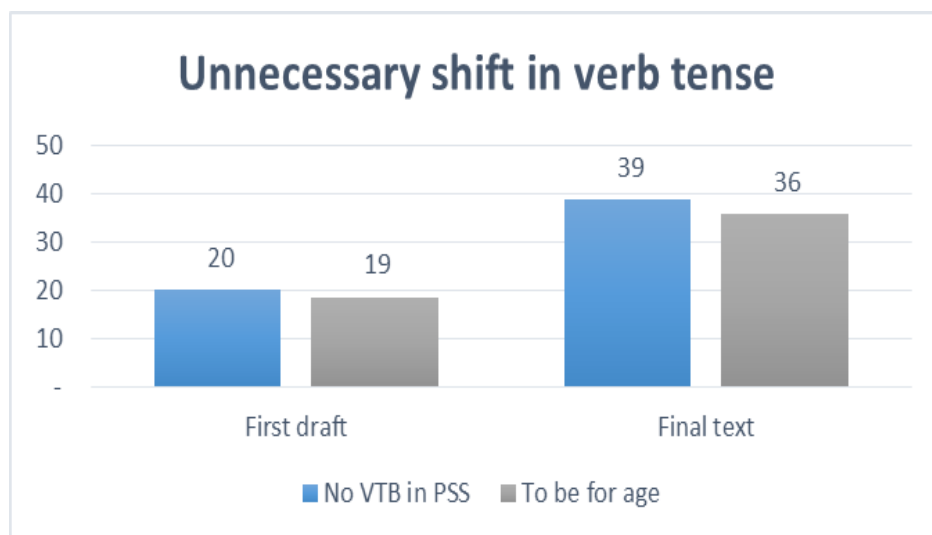


Figure 11. Results from initial and final text for unnecessary shift in verb tense.

For the teacher-researcher it was also important to know students' perception about their understanding of grammatical accuracy after the teacher explained their mistakes using different strategies. The teacher compared data of the two surveys mentioned above, which allowed to see in the initial survey that students were not sure about understanding English through teacher's written comments, since only 22% of the participants answered they agreed that written feedback was an opportunity to understand English grammatical

structures and improve their written texts in this language. On the other side, in the final survey, 94% of the students indicated that they could clarify doubts about specific grammar structures through the screencasts feedback provided by the teacher as shown in figure 12.

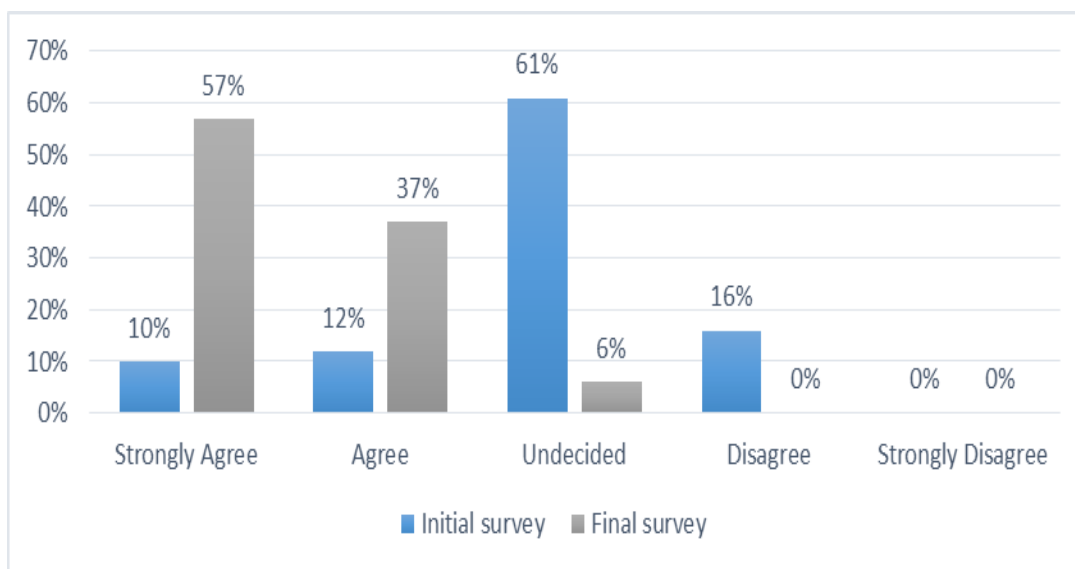


Figure 12. Quantitative analysis question # 4 initial and final survey

Feedback strategy. In order to improve students’ grammatical accuracy in short descriptive texts, teacher-researcher implemented first written feedback, and then feedback given by means of screencasts.

Written feedback. Researcher compared how students progressed after the written strategy was implemented and results evidenced that students had a minimum improvement in their texts. That is, comparing the number of students who omitted the VTB in PCS and after the written feedback was applied, only three of them improved this error, so 35 students continued writing this type of tense incorrectly. Moreover, before the written feedback (WF), 33 students usually started a sentence without writing the subject pronoun but, after the strategy implementation, just four students reviewed the error and changed the sentences, it means 25 students out of 49 still have the same error. 29 students frequently

used to write the VTB in PSS; then, the written feedback helped four more students to correct this grammatical inaccuracy as seen in figure 13.

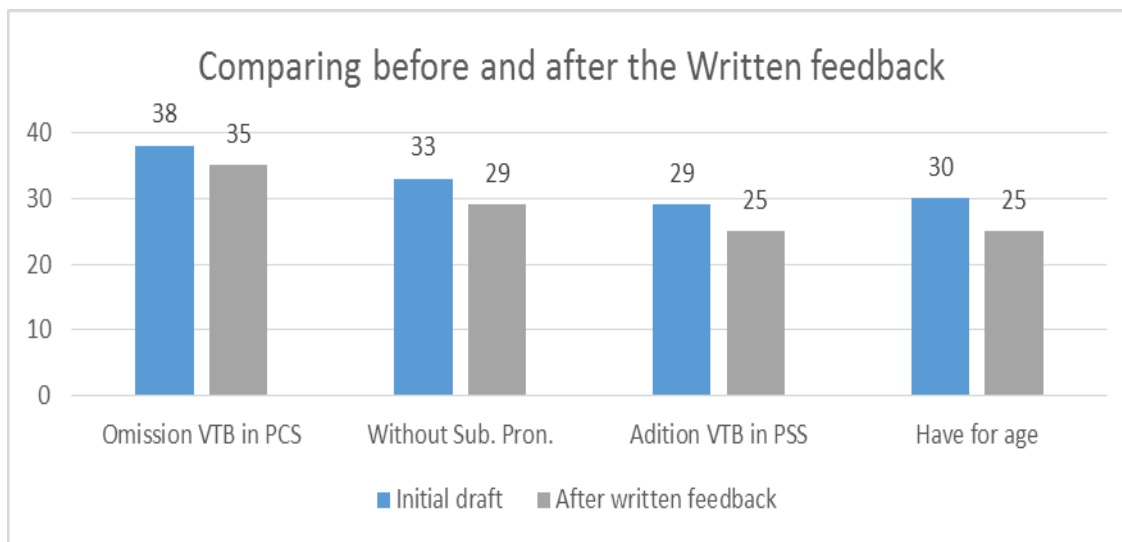


Figure 13. Results from written feedback.

As a matter of fact, written feedback had a minimum of effectiveness in this virtual learning context since students did not improve their grammatical inaccuracies in a significant way. For that reason, researcher decided to provide feedback through a different strategy and, after some literature review, selected the screencast software called JING.

Screencasts feedback. This latter strategy had the greatest impact on improving grammatical accuracy of descriptive texts. Regarding *sentence fragment* teacher-researcher compared the texts after written and screencast feedback were provided and 23 of the participants wrote present continuous sentences correctly, that is with the correct form of the VTB and the present participle (-ing form) of a verb. In the same way, 21 students did not omit the subject pronoun, so they organized an English sentence with the subject first and the verb second. In addition, concerning the *unnecessary shift in verb tense* and after screencast feedback 19 of the learners did not write the VTB in PSS. By the same token, 17

more students wrote the correct verb to talk about age, so they wrote the verb “to be” instead of “have” (see figure 14).

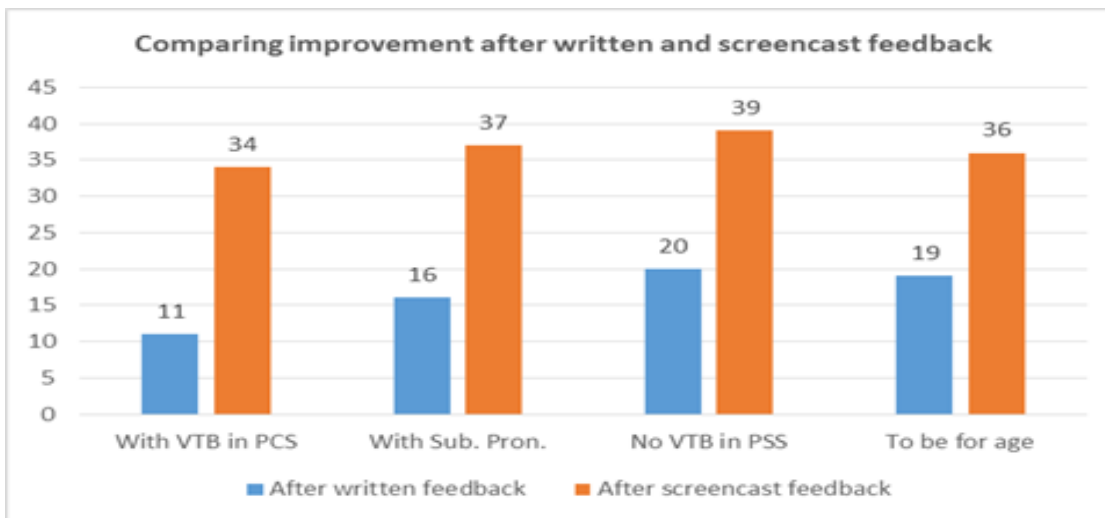


Figure 14. Data after written and screencast feedback.

Clarity and students' expectation of the feedback strategy. Regarding undergraduates' perception about the clarity of the strategy to improve text production, it was observed that 61% of learners were *undecided* whether the written comments were clear in the description of the errors and how they had to correct them (see Appendix K. Initial survey, question 3); in contrast, 92% of the participants responded that screencast feedback was clear enough to take the explanation and edit the writing (see Appendix K. Final survey, question 2). It means the strategy ensured greater appropriation of knowledge and remembrance on specific grammar issues when writing DTs in English, and provide learners with more opportunities to correct their errors.

Regarding students' expectations to improve their learning process of writing DTs in English, the final survey data showed that 92% of participants agreed that screencast feedback met their expectations. Different from results in the initial survey where 55% agreed that written feedback fulfilled their expectations as a strategy to improve the

language (Figure 15). Thereby, there was a significant acceptance of the students to continue working on descriptive text and receiving feedback through audiovisual web 2.0 tools.

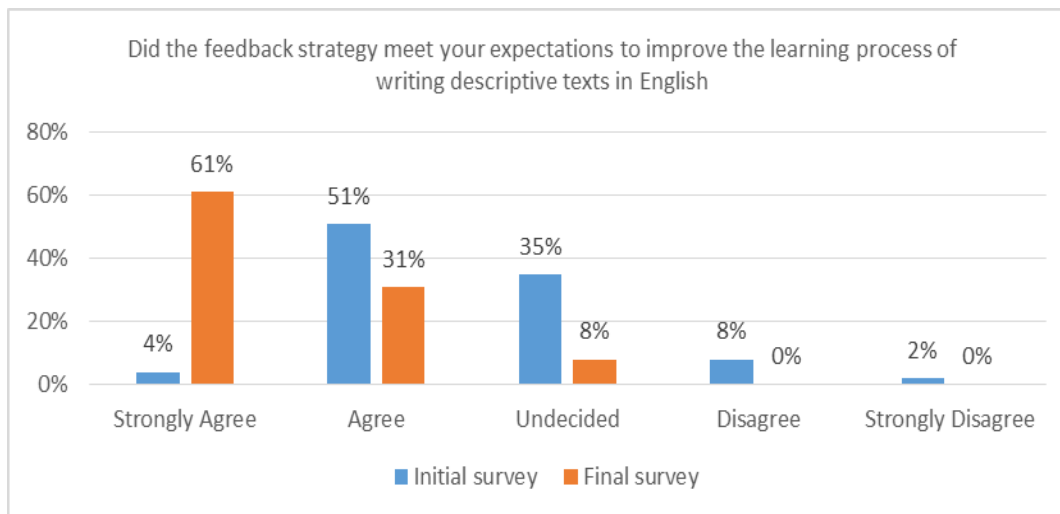


Figure 15. Results from initial and final survey. Question # 7 and 9, respectively.

Qualitative data analysis.

After interpreting the quantitative data, the second strand considered in the data analysis was the qualitative analysis and interpretation based on the Grounded Theory approach to identify patterns or trends, re-occurring themes and categories in the data collected from the open-ended questions in the initial and final surveys, students' DTs and teacher's journal by the implementation of three important data analyses: open, axial and selective coding.

Open coding. According to Dörnyei (2007) open coding “constitutes the first level of conceptual analysis of the data” (p. 260); it concerns with identifying, naming, categorizing and describing phenomena found in the text. In addition, he has stated that this process regards to “take the textual data and break it up into chunks” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 260) to assign conceptual categories to the data segments. For that reason, data gathered

from the surveys, DTs and teacher's journal were analyzed, as Dörnyei (2007) has suggested, word -by-word and line-by-line, so that information could be coded to identify frequencies in which the data appeared. At the end of the open coding process, some categories and subcategories emerged as seen in table 8; they were identified considering the objectives that guided the research.

Table 8

Indicators from the open coding phase

CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES
FEEDBACK	Quality of feedback
	Clarity of information
	Quantity of feedback
	Personalized
PROMOTING SUPPORT	Teacher's monitoring
	Permanent help in VLE
	Orientation
	Longer remembrance
USEFULNESS OF SCREENCAST	Helpfulness of image and audio simultaneity
	Impact of sound, volume and accent
INFLUENCE IN RELATIONSHIPS	Motivation through praise
	Closer relationship teacher-student
INFLUENCE ON WRITING	Easier to be understood
	Feedback from draft
	Correct mistakes
	Improvement in paragraph structure
	Better results
INFLUENCE ON GRAMMAR	Identification of mistakes
	Correct and improve grammar structures
	Accurate writings

Axial coding. This level of analysis was performed with the objective of reducing data in order to make it more meaningful and manageable. In that way, as suggested by Dörnyei (2007) the researcher made comparisons, relations and connections between the categories and subcategories shown in table 8, integrated and grouped them into higher level categories of more encompassing concepts that subsumed several subcategories. Table 9 presents the categories and sub- categories obtained after identifying and

organizing common features among the instruments about students' point of view and feelings of the impact of the feedback received from the teacher on the improvement of their grammatical accuracy in DTs. The difference between open and axial coding is evident at a first glance due to the noticeably different amount of information between the two. This happens because data was grouped in a more logical way that allowed the teacher-researcher reduce data and thus make it more manageable (see table 9).

Table 9

Categories and Sub- Categories Emerged From Axial Coding

Research questions	Categories	Sub- categories
To what extent do A1 undergraduate students improve their grammatical accuracy when writing short DT after they receive screencast feedback in a VLE?	Enhancement of grammatical accuracy in short DT	Correction and improvement of grammar structures
		Simultaneity of audio and image
	Screenecast feedback as a useful tool in VLE	Impact in the teacher's support and students' understanding

Selective coding. Finally, to complete the interpretation of qualitative analysis, the researcher selected a core category “to concentrate on in the rest of the analysis and the writing tip of the study” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 261). Based on the data gathered in the two categories and the subcategories presented above, the core category emerged as the “centerpiece of the proposed new theory” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 261). The process that led to this core category started from a classroom situation related to a grammatical accuracy problem and the way feedback on writing was given, due to the fact that participants showed difficulty to improve their level of writing despite the efforts of their English

teacher to provide them with written detailed and time-consuming feedback. The teacher-researcher proposed screencast as a strategy to provide feedback and improve the writing accuracy of short descriptive texts in VLEs. Hence, the core category that arose after this process was “Improvement of grammatical accuracy in short DTs through screencast feedback” its corresponding subcategories that answer the research question as shown in table 10:

Table 10

Core Category and Subcategories

Core category	
Improvement of grammatical accuracy in short descriptive texts through screencast - feedback	
Subcategories.	
Developing and enhancing grammatical accuracy in short descriptive texts	Feedback provided through screencast as a useful strategy for Virtual Language Environments

They are explained as follows:

Core category: Improvement of grammatical accuracy in short DTs through Screencast feedback. This core category was developed from the fact that students at level A1 found it difficult to improve their descriptive writing skills despite the efforts of their English teacher to provide them with written feedback through a set of conventions. For that reason the teacher-researcher decided to implement screencast feedback in the forums of the virtual course, so that students could have a clearer explanation of their errors through blending image and sound of the comments provided by the teacher to the learners’ DTs.

The core category also emerged from the participants’ opinions and evidence towards the benefits of screencast feedback implementation. These opinions were exposed in the analysis of the data of the final survey, the students’ short DTs and the teacher’s

journal. The results were evident in the survey where students provided meaningful information and a confident attitude towards the helpfulness of screencast as a feedback strategy in VLEs since they could get more significant knowledge with the simultaneity of audio and video about their own text to correct grammar. It can be demonstrated in Appendix C, which has samples of students' writings comparing first draft and final text, that is to say, after the screencast feedback implementation. Moreover, Appendix D illustrates the notes that the teacher did when it could be proved through the target population' writings, the enhancement of short DTs' grammatical accuracy.

Subcategory 1: Developing and enhancing grammatical accuracy in a short descriptive text (DT). Regarding the grammatical accuracy in short DTs, it was noticeable that comparing the results gathered in the diagnostic stage and the final writing presented by students at the end of the writing process, learners progressed and results evidenced improvement in the acknowledgement and implementation of the grammar structures for DTs.

The earliest stage of the pedagogical intervention required students to write a short descriptive text about a given topic. The evidence showed that, in spite of the different grammar exercises done in the platform, students could not produce an accurate text. Appendix C has some samples that illustrates the way students used to write the first draft; it shows that most sentences did not have personal pronoun and some others added the verb "to be" in present simple sentences when it referred to other action verbs.

The following are some samples of students' short DTs that revealed that learners had some improvements in their grammar accuracy after receiving feedback. The first one is taken from the first draft students wrote about a given topic; and the second writing is an extract from the final text. As it is noticed, in the second excerpt there is evidence that the

student corrected the errors found in their first draft and used the proper words, pronouns or verb structure, after the teacher explained through the screencast which the correct form of the error was.

As stated earlier, the grammar aspects that students received feedback on were: Verb tenses particularly present simple and present continuous, the use of the correct verb to talk about age, it is VTB instead of *to have* and the use of personal pronouns. The sample below shows some grammar improvements corrected by the student after receiving screencast feedback; they were circled in yellow. In the first writing there is a list of facts with some grammar errors and the most frequent was the omission of pronouns. In the final writing students wrote the correct pronoun to each sentence and added some more information about the topic to complement the description with more details and facilitating comprehension for the reader.

Furthermore, the student framed the text following the generic structure of a descriptive text stated by Wardiman (2008): An introductory paragraph that presents the character and descriptive paragraphs that portrays the character's parts, qualities, or characteristics, it can be seen in the following sample:

OUTLINE –FIRST DRAFT		
Paragraph 1	Type of place M	my family an I live Ibague-Tolima
	Size and Location	neighborhood san diego
Paragraph 2	Inside the place	consisting of two floors, has two entrances one for the first and second floors, has three bedrooms, living room, bathroom, kitchen, oom robes, and on the second floor there is a balcony
Paragraph 3	Outside the place	has an old design has two doors and four windows, each has a metal grid with flowers design is dark brown, is great, is pink with brown edges, has wide walk
Paragraph 4	Feelings	I love my house because s big, very comfortable to live as we are a large family, the neighborhood is very safe and the neighbors are very understandable and friendly.

Extract from student # 7, first draft. September 28th, 2014

In the next extract, the improvement was in one of the four aspects that concerned in this study *omission of subject pronouns* in present simple tense; after the screencast feedback, the student started a sentence with the noun and the verb about the action or the activity this participant was describing.

OUTLINE –FINAL TEXT		
Paragraph 1	Type of place M	My family and I live in Ibague-Tolima
	Size and Location	in the neighborhood San Diego, in the southeast of the city.
Paragraph 2	Inside the place	the house has two floors, it has two entrances one for the first and second floors, each floor has three bedrooms, a living room, a bathroom, a kitchen, and on the second floor there is a balcony.
		my grandmother lives on the second floor and I am with her at night, my parents and brothers live on the first floor.
Paragraph 3	Outside the place	The house has an old design, it has two doors and four windows, the doors have a metal grid with flowers, the design is dark brown, it's always great, the house is pink with brown edges, it has a wide hall.
Paragraph 4	Feelings	I love my house because it's big, it's very comfortable to live as we are a large family, the neighborhood is very safe and the neighbors are very kind and friendly.

Extract from student # 7, final text. October 10th, 2014

The next samples are some excerpts from two student who had some grammatical errors regarding the four grammar structures to be improved in this study. These person used to write the verb *to have* instead of *to be* to talk about age; moreover, one of the learner made an unnecessary shift in verb tense, since he wrote *am* to refer to a permanent situation in life in a present simple sentence; besides, learner had PCS without writing the VTB. However, student improved these errors in the final text.

FIRST DRAFT

My name is XXX XXX XXX
 I have twentysix years
 I am live in ricaurte city islas del sol neighborhood
 I studying Psychology
 I my free time I doing exercise in the gym
 I am live with my parents

(First draft. Student # 17. September 23rd, 2014)

FINAL TEXT

My name is XXX XXX XXX
 I am twenty six years old
 I live in Ricaurte city. Islas del sol neighborhood
 I am studying Psychology at XXX
 I my free time I do exercise in the gym
 I live with my parents in a big house

(Final text. Student # 17. October 2nd, 2014)

First Draft	After written feedback	After Screencast-feedback
a) What's your name? Student 2 b) How old are you? I have twenty years old c) Where do you live? In Bogota neighborhood ALMENDROS d) What are you studying? Spicologia e) What do you do in your free time? Reading and listening to music f) Who do you live with? my mother and my brothers	a) What is your name? Student 2 b) How old are you? I have twenty years old c) Where do you live? Live in Bogota neighborhood Almendros d) What are you studying? Study sicologia e) What do you do in your free time? Read and listen to music f) Who do you live with? Live my mother and my brother	a) What's your name? My name is Student 2 b) How old are you? I am twenty years old c) Where do you live? I live in Bogota, in the neighborhood Los Almendros d) What are you studying? I study psychology e) What do you do in your free time? I read and listen to music f) Who do you live with? I live with my mother and my brothers

Student # 2. Written process

The following excerpts were taken from the open-ended questions in the final survey as well as the teacher's journal where students and researcher referred to the importance that feedback had on their writing process and how learners benefited from it. The excerpts below highlight how learners and the teacher reflected positively on the teachers' guidance and support through the screencast feedback to improve writing in VLEs. In fact, participants mentioned that screencast feedback was valuable to learn from it and enhance not only their writing process but also their grammar accuracy in particular. Comments given by students were in their native language, so teacher-researcher translated them into English to facilitate comprehension:

“Estudiar de manera virtual es diferente que en las clases presenciales, la estrategia a través del video fue creativa para poder corregir los errores en gramática del texto a través de una explicación más fácil de entender porque podíamos ver nuestro propio texto, nuestros errores, ejemplos para corregir e incluso a forma correcta en que debían ir las oraciones” (Student # 13. Answer to question 11, final survey. October, 2014.)

“Studying in virtual language environments is different than in face two face classes. The strategy through the video was creative in order to correct errors in grammar text through an easier explanation to be understood, because we could see our own text, our mistakes, examples and even the correct way we had to write sentences”. (Teacher's translation)

Additionally, undergraduates' insights about the feedback as a teaching strategy were positive as it can be seen in the next excerpts. Learners pointed out that screencast

feedback gave them the possibility to better understand basic grammar structures from the researcher's voice, since it is difficult to comprehend written information or feedback in VLEs. In the same way, as students could listen to the teacher and see what she was explaining, they felt more confident to continue improving their grammatical accuracy in DTs. Furthermore, they could recognize what their errors were and corrected them with the comments and extra examples provided through screencasts based on their own texts as it can be seen in the following examples.

Learners have written in the forums that screencast has been a good strategy to monitor them in a personalized way. In this sense, I think I have to provide them with more examples so that they can better understand the correct form of their mistakes. Also, I have to continue praising their efforts to write an accurate text in order they feel motivated to implement in their text the given explanation. (Taken from researcher's journal)

"la explicación dada por la profesora fue clara, precisa y concisa en los errores gramaticales que debía corregir, fue muy pertinente, eficaz y sobre todo oportuna para poder saber en que estoy fallando porque tenía muchos errores en el primer texto pero luego corregí lo que ella me dijo y agregé más información para completar la estructura del párrafo que pedía la guía. Además, la respuesta de la tutora no es demorada al momento de consultarla". (Student # 15. Answer to question 13. October, 2014.)

"The explanation given by the teacher was clear, accurate and concise on the grammatical errors that must be corrected, it was very relevant, effective and especially timely to know what I have to improve because I had many mistakes in the first text but then I corrected what she told me and I add more information to complete the structure of paragraph that was specified in the guide. In addition, the tutor's response is not delayed when I asked her". (Teacher's translation)

In fact, feedback is a vital component to improving writing skills, to clarify doubts and to provide different strategies to correct learners' writing, since studying English in VLEs is difficult, in as much as students do not have advanced English skills and they expect to receive different and permanent type of support from the teacher. Also, this strategy enhanced students grammatical accuracy and prompted them to continue learning and improving the quality of their descriptive writing through the understanding and consolidation of basic grammar concepts. In Appendix C, complete samples from students'

DTs can be found. Appendix D has a sample from teacher's journal, and in Appendix L there is a complete quantitative analysis of the impact of feedback on students' writings throughout the course.

Subcategory 2: Feedback provided through screencast as a useful strategy for VLE.

"Teachers provide feedback on student texts to support students' writing development and nurture their confidence as writers" (Peterson, 2010), according to this, feedback is an essential component of any English language writing course and teaching philosophy since it provides positive effects in students' attitude towards their writing process and improvement in their texts. The theoretical foundations and findings of this inquiry taken from the final survey, students' DTs and teacher's journal were focused on the use of screencasts, which was surprisingly identified by most of the students as a favorable strategy to provide feedback from the teacher – researcher. In the final survey some participants mentioned that they usually expected to have permanent, timely, and relevant monitoring and advice on errors and weaknesses in content, organization, and language from the teacher that helped them maximize not only learning but also confidence in their educational process, due to the fact that they did not have the opportunity to attend face to face sessions with the teacher that allowed them to interact with the tutor to solve any doubts arising during the writing process. Screencast feedback helped students to overcome their lack of familiarity with academic discourse that was provided through the written feedback. The following answers in the final survey portray screencast feedback as a useful strategy to provide feedback in VLEs.

"En términos generales los comentarios de los errores en gramática fueron claros y me permite recordarlos mas que otras explicaciones" (student # 17. Answer to question 10, final survey. October, 2014.)

“Overall, comments about grammar errors were clear and allowed me to remember more than other explanations”. (Teacher’s translation)

“Me gustó mucho porque casi no entiendo el inglés pero la forma en que me explico los errores y como debía corregir la gramática en mi texto para que fuera más claro fue muy buena, lo entendí. Además el video fue solo de mi escrito y no en general, buena estrategia para que se corrija el texto”. (Student # 19. Answer to question 10, final survey. October, 2014.)

“I liked it a lot because I hardly understand English but the way teacher explained the mistakes and how I had to correct grammar in my text to make it clearer, was very good, I got it. In addition, the video was only about my writing and not a video in general, it was a good strategy to correct the text”. (Teacher’s translation)

As noted in the excerpts above, these participants pointed out that screencast feedback was relevant to enhance not only their writing process but also their grammatical accuracy in texts. Additionally, students indicated that this feedback gave them the opportunity to understand their grammar errors and correct them through the suggestions and examples given by the teacher-researcher. This is in accordance with Lumade and Fish who have stated that “teachers should provide correct forms or structures in faulty sentences, indicating the location of errors, making recasts and giving prompts in the forms of elicitation, clarification requests, and repetition of the correct form of the error” (as cited in Mathisen, 2012, p. 98).

Nowadays, as screencast has become in a more didactic and personalized learning tool that help to boost and potentiate personalized language learning in virtual scenarios, teaching-learning process at UNAD has been benefited from the use of this tool since it helped the teacher to act as a guide that provided students with the appropriate and punctual feedback to enhance their learning, despite the lack of face to face contact. This can be seen in the following excerpt:

“La efectividad de la herramienta me permitió ir corrigiendo a medida que escuchaba la voz de la profesora y observaba lo que ella me iba explicando, para luego corregirlo yo mismo en mi texto” (Student # 20. Answer to question 12, final survey. October, 2014.)

“Effectiveness of the tool allows me to correct while I was listening to the teacher’s voice and watching what she was telling me, then I had to fix it by myself in my text”. (Teacher’s translation)

As the teacher in a VLE does not have the opportunity to present a *friendly face* in class to reduce emotional impact on students’ feelings, the only way to establish a closer relation is through the comments provided on learners’ work. It means that this tool which eventually replaces the feedback that is provided in face to face classes was based on the options offered by technology to integrate image and audio in a single resource. In this study, the teacher's tone of voice and volume were quite favorable for students when receiving image and audio comments on one single device. They provided more positive factors, such as sound, accent or emphasis, reassuring, recommendations, etc., through a concrete and easy *path* to comprehend feedback. The extracts below show evidence of this effect:

“Students have mentioned in the forums and through the emails that they like the way teacher has given them feedback, since they can listen to her and see what they have to correct at the same time. Besides, as we cannot have face to face classes, with the screencast, they feel I am talking to them and also when they listen to my voice, some have said that they have made an image of myself”. (Extract from teacher’s journal)

“Creo que al escuchar la voz de la profe entiendo más cómo debo de corregir los errores, la mezcla entre la voz de la profesora y lo que ella nos está señalando y explicando, hace que al escuchar sepa que errores cometí y como debo hacer las correcciones” (Student # 25. Answer to question 12, final survey. October, 2014.)

“I think that when I listen to the teacher’s voice I understand more how I have to correct my errors, the mix of the teacher’s voice and what she is showing and explaining to us helps me to know which errors I had and how I have to correct them”. (Teacher’s translation)

The combination of oral, visual and written comments allowed the teacher to provide remarks on specific strengths, positive observations and suggest how errors should be changed. It was clear and adapted to this virtual context where permanent teacher monitoring was important to engage students with language and improve linguistic skills. In other words, the audiovisual strategies enabled the teacher to use the tone of voice and volume to emphasize or suggest, use colors or symbols to highlight or cross out errors

while explaining what was not correct and, at the same way sharing emotional responses that were more evident in spoken words than writing so that students could understand the right message; intonations in the voice made feedback much clearer in emphasizing key messages to students and are also perceived by them as being more personal and supportive than just written comments. Additionally, a friendlier atmosphere was created, where the teacher could communicate a range of social and emotional information and the student could have confidence and a closer monitoring necessary in VLEs.

In the same way, learners recognized that this strategy helped them to have a more confident attitude towards learning English in VLEs and a better attitude towards the teacher, since now it is no longer *a* teacher across the screen that will poorly evaluate the text but a person that will help them to improve writing, explaining in a friendly and confident way how to have a better text. In addition, as this was a virtual course and students never had face to face meetings with the teacher, sometimes they felt *lost* and some kind of *technological loneliness* with the information provided on the platform in a written way or because they did not see or listen to the tutor. The evidence suggested that screencast feedback reinforced the course's methodology, since the teacher could have a *closer presence* in the virtual environment and adapted the explanation or comments to different people with different technological and cultural backgrounds; it means the teacher could create her *own* strategies for her virtual classroom with a *personal touch* to lead students to improve their grammatical accuracy. In this sense, it was not the tool itself but the effects or impact that this tool had over the students through the provided feedback.

Additional Findings

Paralinguistic elements. Through screencast feedback some paralinguistic elements as the tone of voice and volume played a relevant role since the way teacher

commented enhanced motivation, trust and confidence in students, elements that certainly guided and supported accompaniment and teaching -learning process in a didactic way. In this sense, as showed in the excerpt below, through this integration, students could understand a personalized clarification provided through screencasts without attending a face to face classroom and comprehend what the teacher tried to convey.

"Fue mas fácil para mi escuchar que ir leyendo a parir de unos colores que no comprendía, me gustó mucho escuchar la voz de la profesora, porque nunca la he visto y así me hice una imagen de ella. La forma en que nos corrigió fue clara porque en la educación virtual es necesario que nos orienten de una manera más permanente" (student # 16. Answer to question 10, final survey. October, 2014.)

"It was easier for me to hear that reading the colors in the written feedback because I did not understand them, I enjoyed listening to the teacher's voice, because I have never seen her, so I created a picture of her. The way the teacher corrected the text was clear because in virtual education it is necessary for us to have a permanent monitoring" (Teacher's translation)

Permanent teacher's help and monitoring. Also, students said that through screencasts they could listen to their teacher and watch the explanation with examples, so they knew they were not alone or without a teacher that guided them in the virtual campus; but in fact, there was somebody advising their writing process. Through screencast feedback, teacher could add a more *personal touch* to the virtual environment through the provided feedback and offered a permanent help and monitoring to learners generating confidence in their learning process, because the teacher not only focuses on the error but also in explaining and motivating students to produce better writings regarding overall organization, structure, vocabulary, etc. the next excerpt is a sample of what students think about screencast feedback and how they felt with the comments provided by the researcher.

"Nunca antes había escuchado la voz de la profesora, me gustó conocerla al menos por la voz. Así uno siente que hay alguien detrás del computador que lo ayuda a uno y lo asesora, que no está solo en este proceso que es muy duro. A veces no entiendo nada y he querido retirarme de la materia, pero con las explicaciones que me ha dado la profe me motiva a seguir y mejorar la forma en que escribo". (Student # 29. Answer to question 10, final survey. October, 2014)

"Never before had I heard the voice of the teacher, I liked knowing her at least through her voice. In that way you feel that there is someone behind the computer that helps and advises you. You feel that you are not alone in this process that is very hard. Sometimes I do not understand anything and I have wanted not to continue with the subject, but with the teacher's explanations she motivates me to continue and improve the way I write".

(Teacher's translation)

Motivation. Students answered in the final survey that screencast feedback provided relevant information to improve grammatical structures as well as it increased motivation and commitment in their learning process, it can be proved in the final survey where 96 % of participants agreed that screencast feedback met their expectations to improve their learning process of writing DTs in English (see Appendix K. Final survey, question 9). Also 88% of the participants agreed that this strategy enhanced learning about the English grammatical structures in VLEs. Different from the initial survey in so much as only 4% strongly agreed and 41% agreed that written feedback was useful for grammar improvement and motivated them (see Appendix K. Final survey, question 5).

Different needs and learning styles addressed. Finally, it has to be remembered that students at UNAD were located in different geographical areas and had different cultural and technological backgrounds that influenced their learning. Screencast feedback allowed to reach different types of students with different needs and types of learning; for example, learners could reproduce the video as many times, as they wanted and everywhere with a detailed explanation of their errors in their native language.

Me gusta que puedo descargar el video y llevármelo en una memoria y verlo en mi computador en la casa yo vivo en una finca en Cabrera y allá no tengo internet. Como el video explica en español mis errores, lo puedo entender mejor y corregir más fácilmente el texto. (Student # 37. Answer to question 10, final survey. October, 2014)

I like that I can download the video and take it in a memory and watch it on my computer at home. I live in a farm in Cabrera and there I do not have internet. As the video explains in Spanish my errors, I can better understand and more easily correct the text. (Teacher's translation)

Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications, Limitations and Further Research

This chapter aims to present the outcomes that arose at the end of this research that documented the use of screencast feedback with short DTs of a group of undergraduate students in a VLE. The results showed that this strategy influenced students' writings, the way feedback was understood by learners and how they were monitored by the teacher. Besides, it describes the limitations of this study to have better future research performance in this field. Additionally, research presents some recommendations for further studies regarding the use of screencast to improve English language and writing skills in VLE.

Conclusions

Taking into account that this research intended to demonstrate the effectiveness of screencast as a feedback strategy to improve A1 undergraduate students' grammatical accuracy when writing short DTs in VLEs and to identify students' perception towards the self-awareness of progress in their grammatical accuracy when writing short DTs, the data collected, revised and analyzed allowed the researcher to discover a core category to respond the research question. *Improvement of grammatical accuracy in short descriptive text through Screencast - feedback.*

Grammatical accuracy. As for the improvement of grammatical accuracy, the study revealed that participants took advantage of the applied strategy and improved grammar inaccuracies from the first draft such as: Use of verb *to have* to talk about age, omission of subject pronoun, addition of VTB in PSS and omission of VTB in PCS, taking into account each one of the comments provided by the teacher-researcher. Thereby, this type of feedback was a useful tool for learners in their writing process to enhance their performance in their texts. The improvement was evidenced in the final versions of their texts; the results revealed that participants wrote accurate in grammar sentences and more

organized paragraphs which mean that after students received feedback they were able to modify inaccuracies from the first draft and improve their texts considering the feedback. Also, data analysis revealed higher scores, both in the aspects assessed with the descriptive text rubric and in the final compositions.

As a matter of fact, video feedback on students' academic work also had a significant impact in the improvement of grammatical accuracy when writing DTs. This study found that students realized that the way feedback was provided, positively contributed in their writing and promoted grammatical accuracy, owing to the fact that audio and image combination in a single source allowed students to see and reflect on their errors, since voice and visual aids enrich and supplement more traditional feedback practices such as written conventions or codes, and avoid vague, unclear and confusing information. That is to say that after students received screencast feedback, improvement was evident in their new texts placed in the forum since they were able to write with minimal grammar errors in their documents.

Feedback. Feedback provided by the teacher through screencast had a combination of sound and picture that produced an effect that is more than “the sum of its parts” as Jessop, El Hakim, and Gibbs (2014) have stated. It means that with other type of feedback as written or through convention, students had an isolated way of receiving information; but, through screencast students had the possibility to reproduce audio and image in the same resource as a whole, where they could see how to correct their errors, listen to the teacher explaining, understand how they have to improve the text, and feel emotional support provided by the teacher through personalized monitoring. In this sense, learning was the product of interaction among various stimuli.

Communication and confidence. Students' writing communication skills in English were more precise. As it has been said before, virtual education involves physical distance between students and teachers and a gap in the interaction process, but combining verbal and visual feedback through screencast enabled the researcher to improve and increase the efficiency of asynchronous communication with students. The accompanying voice was used to ensure that corrections and suggestions for improvement were constructive in writing and enhance future performance. Besides, students' insights revealed a significant improvement in their own learning process. Participants stated that they felt more confident with the type of feedback provided and their performance since they were able to create better texts. Students recognized that the feedback they received was a useful tool to correct their errors, to understand their own weaknesses, to take their strengths as opportunities to improve in their learning process and to feel motivated about their own learning (Debusse et al., as cited in Mathisen, 2012), because they could clarify doubts about some grammar rules, analyze, comprehend and correct their errors with teacher's guidance. With regard to this, the analysis of the initial and final surveys results (see Appendix K and Figures 10 to 15) showed students' opinion about the significant change they had in the category studied. They recognized that the models and cues received from the teacher based on their own texts helped them to reconceive the structure of their writing and change it to have a better text. In this sense, academic development and progress was influenced by the type of technological resource that the teacher applied to contact and support students as well as the experience of availability to encourage, guide and make effective learning in a VLE.

Students' perceptions about the teacher. Students pointed out in the final survey that through this strategy, the perception that students had about the teacher's image also

changed. Screencast feedback gave them the opportunity to have a closer relationship with their teacher and develop a continuous effective influence on their own effort, engagement and motivation to revise their learning process and improve their own writing skills. Hence, the teacher was seen as a *real guide* and not as a *machine*, since through this strategy it was possible for her to provide timely answers as well as comprehensive, comprehensible, and meaningful academic support.

It can be concluded that the strategy implemented in this study positively influenced participants' short DTs in the following senses: first, data revealed significant changes in students' writings; second, through screencast teacher - researcher improved the relationship with learners and increased the efficiency of asynchronous communication among teacher – students. Third, learners' reflection provided evidence of participants' confidence to review and change their writing to have better texts.

Pedagogical Implications

This study provides evidence to teachers, who guide foreign language acquisition in VLEs, to give more importance to writing performance in English, since this skill is the most widely used in most of the different activities in online contexts, where written communication is required in online discussions, emails, chats, among others. Besides, writing skills have become relevant to be developed in so much as it can help students to project a more credible image, than those who frequently have grammatical errors in both academic and professional contexts.

In the same way, as teachers should help students develop and improve writing skills, feedback provided in VLEs through screencasts positively impacts the production of short DTs as well as students' writing learning process. In effect, the use of feedback helps learners reinforce their writing skill in terms of grammatical accuracy and motivate

challenges, in as much as students are explained which their errors are, so that they can improve them and increase their writing skills as well as built confidence in their learning processes.

However, feedback process in VLEs should have variations depending on the written activities students have to do, the online content to be studied and learners' English level. For that reason, teachers have to adapt the feedback to provide learners specific, detailed and personalized feedback addressing the particular needs of each student. In addition, the valuable experience gathered by the teacher-researcher throughout this study suggests that students should receive prompt and timely feedback in as much as it is not possible to bring about change in the short and medium term when review of activities is after a long time of the delivery date. This study also concurs with Edwards et al. (2012) who have stated about timeliness of feedback, as this important aspect aids learners to correct errors and deficiencies for future performance in a useful way. Furthermore, meaningful and comprehensive feedback provides information that allows reinforcing elements of the learning process to become motivated to correct errors (Mathisen, 2012).

As a matter of fact, teachers should also consider using technological tools available on the web to the virtual classroom, since "technological tools represent a paradigm shift for the purpose of giving students high-quality feedback on their academic work" (Lumadue & Fish, as cited in Mathisen, 2010, p.171). Nowadays, multiple online resources such as screencast feedback help to support and monitor the teaching-learning process through the provision of feedback on weaknesses in content, organization, and language indicating the correct forms or structures in faulty sentences. Then, blending of picture, sound and text through screencasts engages learners in the analysis of their written assignments after the teacher provides the specific suggestions, so their texts would be

more grammatically accurate. Additionally, it is possible to positively influence learners' writing skills, increase levels of precision and quality of their texts, since students can become aware of the information arranged through examples about their writings rather than abstract explanations with "multimodal interaction as picture, sound and text" (Brick & Holmes, as cited in Mathisen, 2012, p. 105).

Finally, students who are enrolled in VLEs can access different resources available on the web, such as dictionaries, grammar practice exercises with explanation, etc., to reinforce their learning most of their time; screencast feedback provides to students a greater amount of inspiration and motivation for future academic work and could be used autonomously. In that sense, it is a fact that students and teachers enrolled in English virtual courses must take advantage of the resources that web offers and learn how to use them for their personal gain and professional development.

Limitations

The relevant limitations faced when carrying out this research project were related to students' writing skills, English level and time constraints. First, the teacher could see students were used to writing neither in Spanish nor in English. It was difficult for them to start a writing process and write four paragraphs about any topic. It was evident in the first drafts that learners did not know what to write, so they had problems generating ideas as well as organizing texts; thus, their samples were shorter than the required in the guide and teacher had to motivate them to add more information in each paragraph so, they could have a 4-paragraph writing.

Secondly, students' English level was very low since they did not know enough vocabulary related to the topic or the proper grammar structures to use in the texts. For that reason, learners did not feel confident writing in this language; hence, most of the times

they wrote their texts in Spanish, translated them on web translators or they just wrote one single paragraph with all the information mixed with no coherence.

As a final point, time constraint was a noticeable limitation. Students had limited time to complete the writing process that was required on the guide. They only had 45 days to do this assignment and most of the time, students did not start at the beginning of opening activities, and they just waited until the last days to upload their documents. It means that as the texts were presented near at the end of the activity, it was difficult for the teacher to give more than one feedback to each one of the students' texts.

Further Research

In the current study, the evidence showed positive effects of screencast feedback in improving writing; however, there is a need to examine learning benefits in other language skills such as reading, speaking or listening. So that, other inquiries could verify if this strategy is the appropriate one to provide feedback and improve any language skill in VLEs according to the students' needs and their learning style.

Furthermore, future research is needed first to apply a delayed post-test after a period of time to prove the long-term retention of students' improvement in accuracy. This means checking if the provided feedback was good enough in terms of students' remembrance of the correct grammar structures and their use. As feedback was provided on four specific grammar structures, coming studies can be conducted to analyze whether the use of screencast feedback improves some other grammatical aspects in written text or other linguistic skill considering the scale of descriptors for A1 level in the CEFR. Also, Lunsford and Lunsford (2008) have defined 20 categories of common formal errors in written composition for face to face classes; with this in mind, it is suggested to verify

whether these categories are the same for online contexts, where written composition is the main focus.

As is widely known, feedback can either be oral, written, with codes, conventions, etc., as it enables students to take learning forward and improve their performance specifically in VLEs, where feedback to learners and communication needs to be clear and meaningful enough to avoid misunderstanding; in that sense, teacher - researcher should inquiry whether it is necessary a protocol to provide an effective feedback to improve writing skills and close the “gap between existing and desired comprehension” (Mathisen, 2012, p. 109).

As every student is different, the tasks and their learning styles too, intervention that requires a combination of feedback is necessary. In other words, another research possibility regarding unfocused and indirect feedback through written or screencast comments to enhance not only grammar but also paragraph structure, coherence and cohesion as well as other aspects such as students’ autonomy and self-assessment to analyze the impact on students who are enrolled in English courses in VLEs.

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Appendix A

Unit Content Sample

Unit 1 Multiple Choice Sample

Practice 2

Seleccione 'a' o 'an' en la siguiente lista de profesiones:

1. <input type="text"/> doctor	5. <input type="text"/> cook
2. <input type="text" value="a"/> pilot	6. <input type="text"/> astronaut
3. <input type="text" value="an"/> artist	7. <input type="text"/> tennis player
4. <input type="text"/> mechanic	8. <input type="text"/> acrobat

Check

Unit 2 True-False Sample

Practice 2

Indica si las siguientes frases son verdaderas (true) "T" o falsas (false) "F".

1. Gina does not like video games	<input type="text"/>
2. Jaime always likes video games	<input type="text" value="T"/>
3. The park is on 5th Street	<input type="text"/>
4. Gina invites Jaime to play outside	<input type="text"/>
5. Jaime doesn't like to play hide-and-seek	<input type="text"/>
6. Hide-and-seek is a house game	<input type="text"/>





Check

Unit 3 Matching Sample

Practice 1a

Adjectives to describe animals
Las siguientes fotos representan características de los animales descritos en la lectura. Abre el libro rojo (red book), lee las frases donde aparecen los adjetivos subrayados y arrastra cada adjetivo a la foto que le corresponde.

Move the items to the correct position.

Clumsy		
Big		
Beautiful		
Cruel		

Check Answer Reset Press on an object to drag it.

Appendix B

Participants' Consent Letter

Fusagasugá, Agosto 6 de 2014

Señores:

Estudiantes Inglés A1

Programa de psicología

Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia

Cordial saludo apreciados estudiantes,

teniendo en cuenta que la habilidad de escritura es una de las habilidades más importantes a desarrollar en el curso inglés A1, y con el fin de contribuir a su mejoramiento, pretendo desarrollar el proyecto "Video feedback: a strategy to improve A1 university students' grammatical accuracy in descriptive texts in virtual learning environments" tratando de contribuir y enriquecer los procesos de escritura de la lengua extranjera y al mismo tiempo reorientar las prácticas docentes de realimentación.

Por lo anterior, solicito a su consentimiento y colaboración como participantes en este estudio para intervenir en el desarrollo de la actividad de escritura con esta estrategia durante el segundo semestre académico del presente año. Esto implica recolección y análisis de los datos recogidos en los textos escritos por los ustedes en los foros del curso virtual. Su participación es de manera voluntaria y siempre acompañados por el docente.

Igualmente, si aceptan participar, se les garantizará confidencialidad en la información que se obtenga como resultado del presente estudio a través del uso de nombres ficticios para mantener su identidad en el anonimato.

Agradezco su colaboración.

Si está de acuerdo con participar en el mencionado estudio, por favor firme esta carta y devuélvala a su docente a través del foro general que encuentra en el entorno de información inicial.

Appendix C

Students' Descriptive Text

1 out of 2

Sample 1: Before the implementation stage

What is your house like?

OUTLINE		
Paragraph 1	Type of place	My family and I live in the town of frontino in a big house and beautiful
	Size and Location	is a large town and is located in northwestern Antioquia
Paragraph 2	Inside the place	Inside the place, is a warm and welcoming place we live in peace and quiet
Paragraph 3	Outside the place	It is a place that is not revoked or painted and that is why having an unsightly.
Paragraph 4	Feelings	I love my house because that was cast with great effort and also because it is home to what I love is my family

Sample 1: After the implementation stage

What is your house like?

OUTLINE		
Paragraph 1	Type of place	My family and I live in the town named Frontino. We live in a big and beautiful house
	Size and Location	It is a large town and is located in the northwestern Antioquia
Paragraph 2	Inside the place	Inside the place, it is a warm, quiet and welcoming place we live in peace
Paragraph 3	Outside the place	It is a place that is not revoked or painted and that is why we have an insight.
Paragraph 4	Feelings	I love my house because it was built with great effort and also because it is our home and what I love is my family

Appendix C
Students' Descriptive Text

2 out of 2

Sample 2: Before the implementation stage

HEALTH HABITS TO BE IN SHAPE

OUTLINE		
Paragraph 1.	Name and age and occupation.	Myname isMabelAstridPedraza,I have33 years andonlyused ina bank
	Place of living.	Live Fusagasugá
	Write a short idea about why it is important to do exercises.	It isimportant to exercise, because we canalsoprevent diseases thatmay appear.
Paragraph 2	Write how often you exercise, where you work out and who you work out with.	I exercise every three days, jog and stretch for fifteen minutes
Paragraph 3	Write what you eat to be healthy at breakfast, lunch and dinner.	I like the egg, fruit for breakfast fruit and a dairy, in the lunch as protein, rice and a vegetable salad ,in the seine took a oats.
Paragraph 4	Write a short conclusion about why it is important to be in shape	It is very important to be in the form to pay more time in their daily duties and be able to enjoy more time with your loved ones.

Sample 2: After the implementation stage

HEALTH HABITS TO BE IN SHAPE

OUTLINE		
Paragraph 1.	Name and age and occupation.	Myname isMabelAstridPedraza,I am33 years andIwork ina bank
	Place of living.	I live in Fusagasugá with my husband and my boy
	Write a short idea about why it is important to do exercises.	It isimportant to exercise, because we canalsoprevent diseases thatmay appear.
Paragraph 2	Write how often you exercise, where you work out and who you work out with.	I exercise every three days, I jog and stretch for fifteen minutes
Paragraph 3	Write what you eat to be healthy at breakfast, lunch and dinner.	I like eggs, fruit for breakfast I have it dairy, in the lunch I have protein, rice and a vegetable salad, for dinner I take toasts.
Paragraph 4	Write a short conclusion about why it is important to be in shape	It is very important to be in form, to be active for daily duties and be able to enjoy more time with your loved ones.

Appendix D

Teacher's Journal Sample

Title: Video feedback: a strategy to improve A1 university students' grammatical accuracy in descriptive texts in virtual learning environments

Objective: To analyze students' and DTs' behavior after video feedback is provided

Date: September 10th 2014

Participants: Group Number 32

Place: UNAD Virtual

Aim Topic: Students have corrected in their new texts the use of subject pronouns

Explanation of the event: In this group only 4 of the 5 students have taken part in this exercise. Yesterday 9th of September student 24 loaded the text. All his partners have commented about it but any of them have remarked a grammar mistake. All of them have said words like this in their mother language:

- "I agree about your text because I like to do exercise and be with my family"
- "I like the way you wrote about your house, it is beautiful, congratulations"
- "dear partner I consider your text is nice and the description is great, I do not know English so I do not know what to say about grammar"

This comments validate their answers in the pre-questionnaire when they say they do not know grammar structures and they do not have the knowledge to correct their mistakes or others'.

Today also student number 26 loaded the second draft. He said he corrected the previous text taking into account all the comments given by the teacher. He also said he **liked** it and he **wanted** the teacher to see the text again and if there was any other mistake he would like to have the **feedback in the same way** it was provided before. Now that I have seen the text it is nice to see there was some noticeable changes. He had 8 verbs without the subject pronoun and now he had only 3 sentences where he did not write it, it means mistakes concerning to the omission of SP were considerably reduced.

Comparing with the group before (25), texts had had similar behaviors

Conclusions: Today I can say I have had good results with this group of students, if some of grammar mistakes were reduced, I can continue working on this to improve their writings. Also I felt according to the way student wrote he liked this way of feedback and he was motivated to continue improving his text, it means it has had a good effect to help them engage with their learning process.

Tomorrow I will check again because 2 of the students who were provided with feedback have not loaded their text with the corrections.

Appendix E

Initial Survey

1 out of 2

Link: <http://goo.gl/forms/Xoku3gSqNv>

Encuesta realimentación textos escritos

Apreciados estudiante, lo invitamos a diligenciar el siguiente formulario con el fin de conocer su opinión frente a la efectividad de la estrategia de realimentación usada en los trabajos de escritura de los cursos Inglés 0 y 1 que usted entregó y corrigió en plataforma. Su opinión es muy importante para ayudarlo a seguir mejorando en este proceso.

*Obligatorio

Género: *

- Femenino
 Masculino

Edad: *

- 16-20 años
 21-30 años
 31-40 años
 41-50 años
 Más de 50 años

CEAD o CERES al que pertenece *

1. ¿Cuántos años lleva estudiando inglés? *

- Entre 1 y 5 años
 Entre 5 y 10 años
 Entre 10 y 15 años
 Entre 15 y 20 años
 Más de 20 años

2. ¿Usted usualmente escribe y le gusta escribir diferentes textos en inglés? *

- Si
 No

3. Si usted recibió realimentación en el foro mediante comentarios escritos sobre los errores presentados en el documento. ¿fue clara la descripción del error y la manera como debía corregirlo? *

- a. Totalmente de acuerdo
 b. De acuerdo
 c. Indeciso
 d. En desacuerdo
 e. Totalmente en desacuerdo

4. ¿Considera que la realimentación sobre el texto escrito le permitió darse cuenta de sus errores gramaticales, corregirlos y mejorarlos? *

- a. Totalmente de acuerdo
 b. De acuerdo
 c. Indeciso
 d. En desacuerdo
 e. Totalmente en desacuerdo

Appendix E Initial survey

2 out of 2

5. ¿La realimentación dada a través de colores y comentarios escritos fue clara y explícita tanto en las fallas gramaticales que cometió al escribir y la manera como debía corregirla(s) en el texto? *

- a. Totalmente de acuerdo
- b. De acuerdo
- c. Indeciso
- d. En desacuerdo
- e. Totalmente en desacuerdo

6. ¿Los comentarios escritos que realimentaron su texto, le han brindado la oportunidad de comprender más la estructura gramatical del inglés y mejorar sus textos en este idioma? *

- a. Totalmente de acuerdo
- b. De acuerdo
- c. Indeciso
- d. En desacuerdo
- e. Totalmente en desacuerdo

7. ¿Considera que la realimentación escrita aportó información que permitió reforzar su aprendizaje con respecto a las estructuras gramaticales en inglés y al mismo tiempo lo motivó a corregir las fallas que tuvo en el texto entregado? *

- a. Totalmente de acuerdo
- b. De acuerdo
- c. Indeciso
- d. En desacuerdo
- e. Totalmente en desacuerdo

8. La manera en que el tutor realimentó su documento escrito (explicación escrita en el foro, uso de colores, envío de links, etc.), ¿este (video) le permitió una mayor cercanía y comunicación con su tutor? *

- a. Totalmente de acuerdo
- b. De acuerdo
- c. Indeciso
- d. Desacuerdo
- e. Totalmente en desacuerdo

9. La manera en que se realimentó su documento, ¿cumplió con sus expectativas para mejorar en su proceso de aprendizaje de escritura de textos descriptivos en inglés? *

- a. Totalmente de acuerdo
- b. De acuerdo
- c. indeciso
- d. Desacuerdo
- e. Totalmente en desacuerdo

10. Escriba por favor en este espacio cuál es su mayor temor o dificultad para escribir textos en inglés y corregirlos por su propia cuenta o a través de la realimentación dada por su tutor a través de comentarios en el foro. *

Appendix F

Final Survey

1 out of 2

Link: <http://goo.gl/forms/ImgpVPX8Be>

Encuesta realimentación textos escritos

Cordial saludo apreciado estudiante, esta encuesta se ha diseñado para conocer su opinión sobre el video que corrigió el documento que realizó en la actividad de escritura en el curso de Inglés. Agradecemos el tiempo que dedique a responder con la mayor sinceridad.

*Obligatorio

1- El video que realimentó su texto escrito, ¿le permitió darse cuenta de las fallas gramaticales que tenía al escribir en inglés y reflexionar sobre cómo debía corregirlos?*

- a. Totalmente de acuerdo
- b. De acuerdo
- c. Indeciso
- d. Desacuerdo
- e. Totalmente en desacuerdo

2- El video que realimentó su texto, ¿cumplió con sus expectativas para mejorar su gramática al escribir textos descriptivos en inglés?*

- a. Totalmente de acuerdo
- b. De acuerdo
- c. Indeciso
- d. Desacuerdo
- e. Totalmente en desacuerdo

3- ¿El video fue claro y explícito tanto en las fallas gramaticales que cometió al escribir y la manera como debía corregirla(s) en el texto?*

- a. Totalmente de acuerdo
- b. De acuerdo
- c. Indeciso
- d. Desacuerdo
- e. Totalmente en desacuerdo

4- ¿El video que realimentó su texto, le ha brindado la oportunidad de comprender más la estructura gramatical del inglés y mejorar sus escritos en este idioma?*

- a. Totalmente de acuerdo
- b. De acuerdo
- c. Indeciso
- d. Desacuerdo
- e. Totalmente en desacuerdo

5- ¿Considera que el video aportó información que permitió reforzar su aprendizaje con respecto a las estructuras gramaticales en inglés y al mismo tiempo lo motivó a corregir las fallas que tuvo en el texto entregado?*

- a. Totalmente de acuerdo
- b. De acuerdo
- c. Indeciso
- d. Desacuerdo
- e. Totalmente en desacuerdo

6- Comparando el video que realimentó su documento escrito con otro tipo de realimentación (explicación escrita en el foro, uso de colores, envío de links, etc.), ¿este (video) le permite una cercanía y mayor comunicación con su tutor?*

- a. Totalmente de acuerdo
- b. De acuerdo
- c. Indeciso
- d. Desacuerdo
- e. Totalmente en desacuerdo

Appendix F

Final Survey

2 out of 2

7- Comparando el video que realimentó su documento escrito con otro tipo de realimentación (explicación escrita en el foro, uso de colores, envío de links, etc.), ¿considera que este le permite una mayor apropiación del conocimiento y recordación sobre la gramática que debe usar al escribir textos descriptivos en inglés? *

- a. Totalmente de acuerdo
- b. De acuerdo
- c. Indeciso
- d. Desacuerdo
- e. Totalmente en desacuerdo

8- Considera que el video le ayudó a mejorar sus conocimientos en la gramática del inglés y a mejorar sus documentos escritos? *

- a. Totalmente de acuerdo
- b. De acuerdo
- c. Indeciso
- d. Desacuerdo
- e. Totalmente en desacuerdo

9- ¿Considera que la realimentación a través del video le permitió incrementar su motivación y compromiso frente a su proceso de aprendizaje del inglés en ambientes virtuales de aprendizaje? *

- a. Totalmente de acuerdo
- b. De acuerdo
- c. Indeciso
- d. Desacuerdo
- e. Totalmente en desacuerdo

10- ¿Qué aspectos hacen la diferencia entre el proceso de realimentación escrita y los procesos de realimentación audiovisual (video)? *

11- Por qué considera que el uso de herramientas audiovisuales como el video son importantes en el proceso de realimentación en ambientes virtuales de aprendizaje? *

12- Por qué considera que el uso de herramientas audiovisuales como el video son importantes en el proceso de realimentación en ambientes virtuales de aprendizaje? *

13- Escriba por favor en este espacio una sugerencia o comentario relacionado con el video que se usó para la retroalimentación de su trabajo escrito en el curso de Inglés. *

Appendix G

Research Project Timeline

	Diagnostic	Strategy Implementation	Data Collection and analysis
Week 1 10-16 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empirical observation to the virtual class. • Writing and sending the letter of consent to the course's director and students. 		
Week 2 17- 23 August	<p>Procedure: Written feedback through the use conventions</p> <p>Piloting of the initial data collection instrument.</p>		
Week 3 24 Aug. – 4 Sept.	<p>Procedure: Initial survey application</p> <p>Instrument: 9 closed and one open questionnaire</p>		
Week 4 5 – 18 Sept.	<p>Procedure: Analysis of data from the diagnostic survey</p> <p>Initial baseline design</p>		
Week 5-6 19 – 30 Sept.		<p>Video-Feedback implementation</p> <p>Piloting of the second data collection instrument.</p>	
Week 7 1- 7 October			<p>Procedure: Observation to the virtual class.</p> <p>Instrument: Observation format</p>
Week 8-9 8 - 21 Oct.			<p>Procedure: Post-survey application</p> <p>Instrument: 9 closed and four open questionnaire</p>
Week 9-10 22 Oct. – 12 Nov.			<p>Procedure: Analysis of quantitative data from the post-survey</p> <p>Second baseline design</p>
Week 11-13 13 Nov. – 4 Dec.			<p>Procedure: Analysis of qualitative data from the post - survey.</p> <p>A matrix with colors to highlight grammatical accuracy aspects and students' viewpoints towards the feedback strategy</p>

Appendix H

Descriptive Text Rubric

	ITEM A EVALUAR	VALORACIÓN BAJA	VALORACIÓN MEDIA	VALORACIÓN ALTA	PUNTAJE MÁXIMO
Trabajo individual	1. Outline	No realizó el esbozo ò outline del tema escogido. 0 puntos	Realizó el esquema pero no en su totalidad ò lo completo pero hay palabras que no corresponden al idioma inglés. 7 puntos	Realizó el esquema de acuerdo a lo solicitado. 15 puntos	15
	2. Grammar	La producción escrita no evidencia manejo de las estructuras gramaticales del nivel. 0 puntos	La producción escrita presenta inconsistencias gramaticales. Se presenta y describe los temas usando frases simples evidenciando dificultades de estructuras. 5 puntos	La gramática usada en la producción escrita muestra buen dominio de las estructuras. Expresa información personal. Describe sus rutinas efectivamente. Expresa actividades de tiempo libre usando correctamente los adverbios de frecuencia. 10 puntos	10
	3. Cohesion and coherence	Las ideas y la construcción de frases plasmadas en el escrito no tienen relación, son desordenadas y no se comprende el mensaje. 0 puntos	El documento presenta algunas inconsistencias en la organización y construcción de ideas; sin embargo el objetivo del escrito es comprensible. 5 puntos	La producción escrita presenta una buena construcción de frases, párrafos y las ideas corresponden a los lineamientos dados en las guías. El mensaje es claro y comprensible. Hace uso correcto de conectores lógicos (and/but) 10 puntos	10
	4. Vocabulary and spelling	El vocabulario utilizado no corresponde a lo propuesto en la guía y no responde a las necesidades del escrito. 0 puntos	El vocabulario utilizado corresponde a las unidades didácticas del curso, sin embargo, es limitado y tiene dificultad en la escritura de las palabras 5 puntos	Se evidencia buen uso del vocabulario según las unidades didácticas y corresponde a lo requerido en la guía de actividades. 10 puntos	10
Trabajo grupal	5. Forum Participation	No participó en el foro ni registra evidencias de su trabajo individual 0 puntos	Ingresó al foro pero sus aportes no son significativos y a tiempo. 10 puntos	Ingresó al foro y presentó aportes oportunos y significativos. 20 puntos	20
	6. Final product development	No participó en la construcción del producto final. 0 puntos	Participó parcialmente en la construcción del producto final, o su participación no fue oportuna. 5 puntos	Participó de manera oportuna y significativa en la construcción y revisión del producto final 10 Puntos	10
Total					75


Appendix I
Writing Guide Sample

1 out of 5

From: Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia. (2013). Curso Inglés 1 (A1).
Unpublished raw data

*Escuela de Ciencias de la Educación
Programa: Programa Nacional de inglés
Curso: Inglés I (A1)
Campo de formación: Componente Básico Común.
Tipo de curso: teórico.
Créditos: Três (3).*

WRITING ASSIGNMENT



General Objective

- ✚ Express ideas and real life situations in written form taking into account the contents from level A1.

Specific objectives:

- ✚ Make a sketch or outline chart to present the key words and ideas visually and stimulate the writing process as organized and systematic process.
- ✚ Write a short text to express ideas and real situations of daily life taking into account grammar, coherence and cohesion rules as well as the vocabulary studies in the course content.

Appendix I

Writing Guide Sample

2 out of 5

*Escuela de Ciencias de la Educación
Programa: Programa Nacional de inglés
Curso: Inglés I (A1)
Campo de formación: Componente Básico Común.
Tipo de curso: teórico.
Créditos: Três (3).*

Learning Strategy Proposal: The strategy to be used will be Project Based learning Activity. Students will work around three main activities. First they will choose a topic to write about and make an outline. Then, they will write a text based on the outline using the contents they learned in the course of English A1. Finally, they will work collaboratively to choose the best text of the group and correct it according to the grammar, coherence and cohesion rules.

Topics:
Units 1 to 15

Grammar	Verb to be, affirmative and negative form, demonstrative pronouns, frequency adverbs, Simple present, there is/ there are, comparative adjectives, pronouns, modal verbs " can and must"
Vocabulary	Daily activities, nationalities, Professions, days of the week, time expressions.
Connectors	Addition AND – Contrast BUT

PESO EVALUATIVO: 75 PUNTOS

Appendix I

Writing Guide Sample

3 out of 5

*Escuela de Ciencias de la Educación
Programa: Programa Nacional de inglés
Curso: Inglés I (A1)
Campo de formación: Componente Básico Común.
Tipo de curso: teórico.
Créditos: Três (3).*

ACTIVIDADES A REALIZAR

De acuerdo a lo aprendido en los contenidos del curso, usted debe construir un texto sobre las temáticas propuestas.

ACTIVIDAD 1:

- A través del foro cada participante realizará un aporte de manera individual en donde hará una breve presentación personal en inglés (*place of living, group number, program, CCAV or CEAD where you study, personal e-mail, Skype and telephone number*)
Luego, cada estudiante deberá seleccionar según su preferencia uno (1) de los siguientes temas:
 1. Compose a short description of your own house.
 2. Write a letter describing your best friend's daily routine and the activities he/she likes or dislikes doing.
 3. Compose a short description about your Health habits.

ACTIVIDAD 2:

- Cada participante deberá completar el "Outline – Cuadro esquema" del tema que seleccionó usando lista de palabras. Una vez finalizado el outline el estudiante procederá a realizar su texto. Cada estudiante deberá enviar el outline acompañado de su respectivo texto en formato Word. Recuerde que no se debe enviar más de un outline por persona.
- A continuación encontrará tres (3) tipos de outline de acuerdo al tema de su preferencia:

Appendix I

Writing Guide Sample

4 out of 5



UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA – UNAD
Escuela de Ciencias de la Educación
Programa: Programa Nacional de inglés
Curso: Inglés I (A1)
Campo de formación: Componente Básico Común.
Tipo de curso: teórico.
Créditos: Trés (3).

WHAT IS YOUR HOUSE LIKE?

PASO1. REALIZACIÓN DEL ESQUEMA

OUTLINE		
Paragraph 1	Type of place	My family and I live in.....
	Size and Location	
Paragraph 2	Inside the place	
Paragraph 3	Outside the place	
Paragraph 4	Feelings	I love my house because.....

PASO2. CONSTRUCCIÓN DEL TEXTO

El siguiente paso será la construcción del texto de acuerdo al vocabulario, las ideas principales y secundarias propuestas en el "Outline". **(En Inglés)**

1. **First paragraph** (3 sentences)
2. **Second paragraph** (5 sentences)
3. **Third paragraph** (5 sentences)
4. **Fourth paragraph:** (From 2 to 3 sentences)

Appendix I

Writing Guide Sample

5 out of 5

*Escuela de Ciencias de la Educación
Programa: Programa Nacional de inglés
Curso: Inglés I (A1)
Campo de formación: Componente Básico Común.
Tipo de curso: teórico.
Créditos: Três (3).*

ACTIVIDAD 3: PRODUCTO FINAL

- A través del foro, cada integrante del grupo colaborativo deberá revisar los escritos de sus compañeros, realizar **mínimo 2 comentarios críticos** y **seleccionar uno de los escritos que represente al grupo. (En Inglés o español)**
- El grupo de trabajo realizara correcciones pertinentes teniendo en cuenta lo aprendido en las **(unidades 1 a 15)** y seleccionará un líder encargado de enviar el producto final "**el escrito que representará al grupo**". **(En Inglés)**
- El líder del grupo enviará dos archivos en formato winzip al link de Entrega de producto final. El primero lo denominará **Producto Final_Grupo colaborativo_#**, éste archivo contendrá el texto que representará al grupo. El segundo lo denominará **Portafolio_Grupo colaborativo_#**; éste archivo contendrá los esquemas y textos hechos por cada uno de los integrantes.

These web sites can help you during your writing process.

[How to use of the present simple](#)

Check your vocabulary and grammar

<http://www.grammarly.com/?a=proofreading&CID=2617611&PID=5146016>

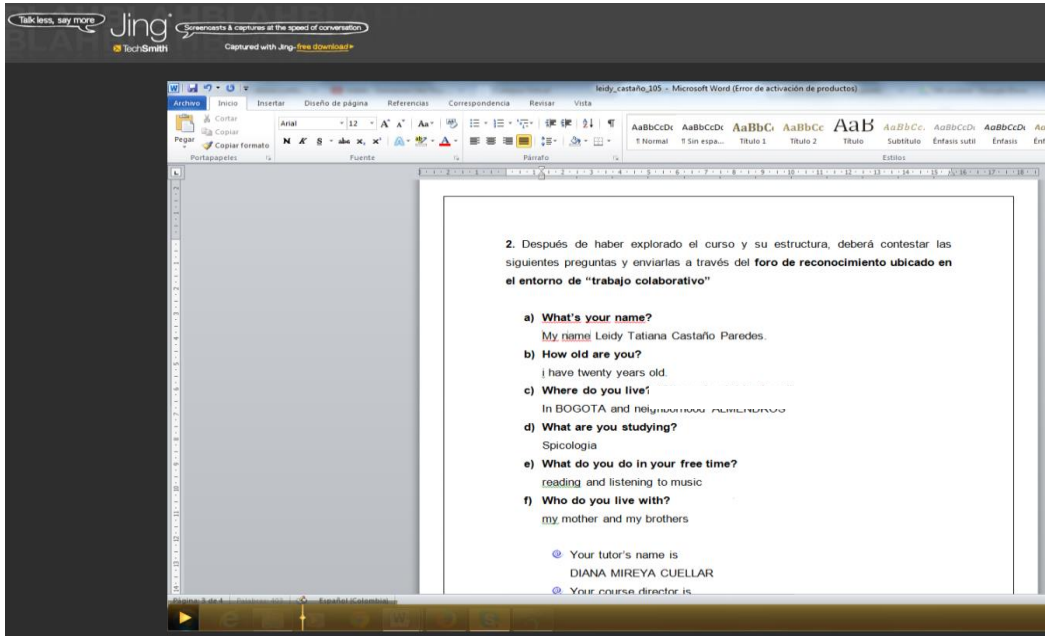
On line dictionary

<http://www.wordreference.com/>

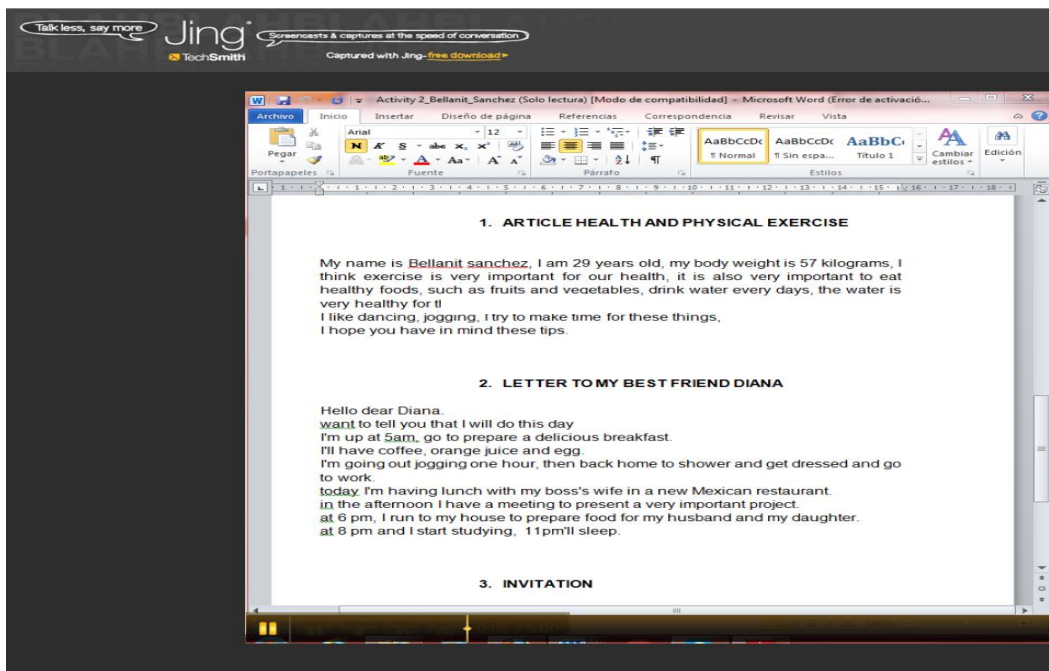
Appendix J

Students' Screencast Feedback Samples

Link 1: <http://screencast.com/t/Sk0FbFx9pFL>



Link 2: <http://screencast.com/t/3GWU6WyNczwk>



Appendix K

Quantitative Results from the Initial and Final Surveys

1 out of 2

Initial Survey Results

INITIAL SURVEY. N= 49											
	Descriptive statistics	Option # 1 Strongly Agree		Option # 2 Agree		Option # 3 Undecided		Option # 4 Disagree		Option #5 Strongly Disagree	
		Partici- pants	%	Partici- pants	%	Partici- pants	%	Partici- pants	%	Partici- pants	%
Q. 1	Were written comments clear in the description of the error and how you should correct them?	0	0%	13	27%	33	67%	3	6%	0	0%
Q. 2	Do you consider that feedback on the written text allowed you to realize your grammatical mistakes, correct and improve them?	5	10%	18	37%	25	51%	1	2%	0	0%
Q. 3	Was the feedback given through colors and written comments clear and explicit in both, grammatical mistakes committed in writing and the way you had to correct them in the text?	1	2%	6	12%	30	61%	12	24%	0	0%
Q. 4	Did the written comments to your text, give you the opportunity to understand more English grammatical structures and improve your DT in this language?	5	10%	6	12%	30	61%	8	16%	0	0%
Q. 5	Do you consider that written feedback provided information to fortify learning about grammatical structures in English and at the same time motivate you to correct the mistakes in the text?	2	4%	20	41%	20	41%	7	14%	0	0%
Q. 6	Did written feedback allow greater closeness and communication with your tutor?	0	0%	3	6%	25	51%	21	43%	0	0%
Q. 7	Did written feedback meet your expectations to improve the learning process of writing DT in English?	2	4%	25	51%	17	35%	4	8%	1	2%

Appendix K

Quantitative Results from the Initial and Final Surveys

2 out of 2

Final Survey Results

FINAL SURVEY. N= 49											
	Descriptive statistics	Option # 1 Strongly Agree		Option # 2 Agree		Option # 3 Undecided		Option # 4 Disagree		Option #5 Strongly Disagree	
		Partici- pants	%	Partici- pants	%	Partici- pants	%	Partici- pants	%	Partici- pants	%
Q. 1	Did the video, about your written text, allow you to realize the grammatical mistakes that you had in English and to reflect on how to correct them?	43	88%	5	10%	1	2%	0	0%	0	0%
Q. 2	Was the video clear and explicit enough in both the grammatical mistakes you had and the way to correct the texts?	32	65%	13	27%	3	6%	1	2%	0	0%
Q. 3	Comparing the video with other feedback strategy such as written explanation in the forum, use of colors, etc. Do you think the video allowed a greater knowledge acquisition and remembrance on grammar you should use when writing DTs in English?	28	57%	13	27%	6	12%	2	4%	0	0%
Q. 4	Did the video-feedback give you the opportunity to better understand English grammatical structures and improve your written texts in this language?	28	57%	18	37%	3	6%	0	0%	0	0%
Q. 5	Do you consider that the video feedback allowed to increase your motivation and commitment to the process of learning English in VLEs?	32	65%	15	31%	2	4%	0	0%	0	0%
Q. 6	Do you consider that the video-feedback provided relevant information to enhance learning about the grammatical structures in English and at the same time motivated you to correct the mistakes in the text?	20	59%	14	29%	6	12%	0	0%	0	0%
Q.7	Comparing the video feedback about your text with other feedback strategies such as written explanation in the forum, use of colors, etc., do you think this allows greater appropriation of knowledge and remembrance on grammar to use when writing DT in English?	23	47%	22	45%	3	6%	1	2%	0	0%
Q.8.	Do you think that the video helped to improve your knowledge of English grammar and progress in writing texts?	25	51%	20	41%	4	8%	0	0%	0	0%
Q.9	Did screencast feedback meet your expectations to improve the learning process of writing DT in English?	30	61%	15	31%	4	8%	0	0%	0	0%

Appendix L

Students' Writing Errors

Time	Sentence fragment											
	Omission Verb "to be" (VTB) in PCS						Omission of subject pronoun					
	Omission		VTB		Total		Without Sub. Pr.		With Sub. Pr.		Total	
	Partici-pants	%	Partici-pants	%	Par	%	Partici-pants	%	Partici-pants	%	Par	%
First draft	38	77%	11	23%	49	100	33	67%	16	33%	49	100
Final text	15	31%	34	69%	49	100	12	25%	37	75%	49	100

Time	Unnecessary shift in verb tense											
	Addition of Verb "to be" in PSS						Verb "have" instead of "to be" for age					
	Adition VTB		No VTB		Total		Have		To be		Total	
	Partici-pants	%	Partici-pants	%	Par	%	Partici-pants	%	Partici-pants	%	Par	%
First draft	29	59%	20	41%	49	100	30	62%	19	38%	49	100
Final text	10	21%	39	79%	49	100	13	27%	36	73%	49	100