

Facebook as Virtual Learning Environment to Promote Critical Writing in Pre-service
Teachers

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25 de mayo de 2021

Abstract

This case study research aimed to describe how Facebook as a Virtual Learning Environment could promote critical writing in pre-service teachers of a private university in Medellín, Colombia. 7 English Teaching students participated in this research by answering a questionnaire about their use of Facebook and besides, they commented on posts about bilingualism in a Facebook group created by the researchers. The results led us to conclude that it is possible to promote critical writing through Facebook as the participants used previous knowledge and theories to support their arguments about what was proposed on the questionnaire and the Facebook group, moreover it was concluded that it is necessary to develop instruments that measure critical writing in order to establish levels of criticality.

Keywords: critical writing, Facebook, pre-service teachers, virtual learning environment.

Degree Requirement

This case study is submitted as a requirement to graduate from the Bachelor's Degree in English Teaching (Licenciatura en Inglés) at the School of Humanities and Education, Universidad Católica Luis Amigó, in Medellín, Colombia.

Acknowledgments

First, we want to thank our families for giving us the opportunity to study a degree and providing us the experience of higher education; second we want to thank Laura Clavijo, which is someone who helped us with her knowledge and provided us with support; third, we want to thank our advisor Edison Castrillón for guiding us through the path of this research field.

Table of Content

Introduction	6
Stamete of the Problem.....	6
Literature Review	9
Research Question	13
General Objective.....	13
Specific objectives.....	13
Methodology.....	14
Data Collection	16
Instrument	16
Population	18
Data analysis	19
Questionnaire	19
Facebook group.....	20
Results and Discussion	21
Conclusions.....	22
References	23

Introduction

Stamete of the Problem

The topic of this research was considered as we as English pre-service teachers have noticed that along with our career, the students from higher semesters present difficulties when writing critically and in these last semesters, it is required the ability to discern information in order to produce critical writing. As it is stated by Freire quoted in Castellví, Díez-Bedmar and Santisteban (2020) “the ability to use the written word is essential to transforming the world, and it makes sense when its learning lead[s] us to praxis” (p.1) In the present, we have also noticed that due to the pandemic, students have been spending more time using social networks and Facebook is one of those. According to the Colombian magazine Portafolio, (2020) the majority of the traffic (about 60%) in the peak time is between 6:00 pm and 10:00 pm. and is distributed towards Content Delivery Networks such as Facebook, Google, and Netflix. Following this data, we contemplated that Facebook could be used as a virtual learning environment to promote critical writing as according to We Are Social quoted in Medina (2020), it is the most used social network in the world and the second in Colombia. In order to carry out this research, we started by analyzing the importance of the English language in the world and in Colombia; the importance of critical writing and then we proceeded to expose how Facebook works as a virtual learning environment.

As we are preservice English teachers, it is important to start by explaining the relevance of English language in the world and mostly in this twenty-first century. According to the web site Ethnologue, (2020) the number of people who use English as a first language (L1) is 369,704,070 and the number of users of English as a second language (L2) is 898,396,120, which results in a total of 1,268,100,190 users of the language in the world. There are some other characteristics that show that English is one of the most important languages, for example, the fact that it is considered a global language because it is used as lingua franca in many countries where English is spoken by native and non-native speakers to communicate, in terms of business matters or business organizations (Srinivas, 2019).

The relevance of this language lies also in how most of the communication in the world is done in English and for this reason, most of the research in fields such as business, science, tourism and education are written in this language too (Srinivas, 2019). In terms of the field of education, it is evidenced that most of the information, articles and books that are meant to be shared, are written in English so that they can be accessible to everyone; this is due to the pertinence and acceptance this language has had in the research fields. According to Srinivas, (2019) it is known that most of the literature in the world is available in English so in countries such as The Netherlands and Sweden in which English is not considered a first language, the syllabi of careers such as Engineering and science is written in English.

As it is mentioned before, English language is one of the most spoken in the world and in Colombia this language has become important too, since in the Ley General de Educación (1994), the government recognized the importance of this language and they included it in the mandatory areas for elementary and high school. To achieve the goal of implementing English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the government proposed the plan nacional de bilingüismo in 2004 which its purpose was that for 2019 the 100% of the students in eleventh grade will have a B1 English level according to the Common European Framework of Reference. There are also many other plans focused on English learning, as Colombia bilingüe proposed in 2014, which its main purpose was to contribute to the enhancement of students and teachers' communication in English to have more opportunities to aspire to scholarships in different countries.

In the country, the Caribbean islands of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina have the highest presence of English speakers because of the big demand of tourists and for business purposes. Actually, the British Council made a survey in 2015 in which 1,000 Colombians participated answering questions about English learning, and the surveyed people that were from San Andrés y Providencia, a 100% of them answered that they had studied English or were studying at that moment. The surveyed population were about 16-50 years old and the results also showed that the people between 16- 25 years old from different places of the country, do not tend to study English.

In Colombia learning English is important, but the population bilingual plans are focused on are not tending to get engaged with learning the language, for this reason, it is important to take a look at this situation.

Now that it has presented the importance of English language both in Colombia and the world in this paper, it is relevant to continue with the importance of critical writing which according to Bengü, (2015) “Is the result of an ongoing process of reflecting, researching, note-making, reading and writing” (p. 622). To produce critical writing, there must be a previous process that is critical thinking. A person who thinks critically is described by Paul and Elder, (2003) as a person who “Cuestiona la información, las conclusiones y los puntos de vista... Aplica estas destrezas cuando lee, escribe, habla y escucha” (p.2) [Question the information, the conclusions and the points of views... Applies these abilities when reads, writes, speaks and listens]. Taking into account these concepts, it is crucial to state that critical writing provides the ability to interpret information in order to produce sustained arguments and information that can transform the society we live in and that it also will lead us to reasonable conclusions.

Therefore, we are in the digital age and there are a lot of virtual sources which are called websites, those are sites that contain all kinds of existent information, and, besides they offer easy access to the people. Between those websites, there are ones that are more directed for academic purposes, and some of them have the characteristics of virtual learning environments, as Dillenbourg, Schneider, and Synteta establish, (2007) “a virtual learning environment is a social space: [where] educational interactions occur in the environment, turning spaces into places” (p.3), that is why it cannot be said that all the websites that have academic purposes are virtual learning environments as not all of them count with the option of interaction between the people. Then, considering what was mentioned before, Facebook has the main characteristic of a VLE: interaction between people. Besides this tool allows exchanging information such as photos, status, videos and surveys. Additionally, the great advantage of Facebook is its easy access and its popularity that has all around the world, that is why we considered this tool as a means to carry our research out.

According to the research made by Tuñez and García (2012), the social network Facebook can be viewed as a teaching complement and a supplementary space that must be

managed without forgetting that it is a personal network that students value as a good setting for reflection and learning. In the results, the researchers found that the students considered it a new and well-accepted tool to the point that they mostly recommended that it should be included in the teaching methods of other subjects.

According to what was found by Tuñez and Garcia (2012), when using Facebook as a virtual environment there are the following advantages:

“ The active participation in the transmission of knowledge is encouraged; collaboration between student and teacher and also between students is promoted; discussion and argumentation dynamics are established with active virtual and face-to-face participation that encourages the use of negotiation techniques to address issues or issues from the different personal perspective of each participant; students collaborate contributing to learn; diverse and varied sources of information are used; self-evaluation processes are promoted; new evaluation possibilities based on reflection and practical assessment are introduced.” (p?)

Literature Review

For this research, it was reviewed databases such as Google Scholar, Science Direct and Researchgate in which it was made a first review of approximately twenty research after searching with keywords such as Facebook, Virtual Learning Environment, Critical Writing and Writing Skills but there were selected eleven research to present this literature review. We started with the conceptualization of the first category Facebook as a Virtual Learning Environment which has four papers that are useful to clarify and support this variable. Subsequently, seven researches were quoted to base the second variable which corresponds to critical writing skills. Finally, thanks to it, it is established the relation between the two variables and the respective documentation.

People, in general, know Facebook, as it is one of the most recognized social networking sites (SNS) and as everybody knows, these SNS have changed the way of communication. As Facebook is widely used in the world, it allows people to communicate with other people; they can interact with posts from pages, through the comments and they can interact with people from different places. For these reasons, Facebook has been

implemented for pedagogical purposes (Barrot, 2018). The Facebook company created a space for supporting teachers, parents, and students due to the changes in the educational field during the pandemic situation (Facebook, 2020).

Although Facebook's main purpose is not to work as a virtual learning environment (VLE), this application meets the characteristics, since a virtual learning environment is a social space where people have meaningful and educational interactions (Dillenbourg et al, 2002). Actually, Facebook allows social interaction which is the main purpose of a VLE. Additionally, it provides other tools that allow knowledge to take place in the students such as sharing posts, photos, videos, and surveys. Besides it seems to be more attractive for the students to learn through a social network, and there are some studies that were focused on how this SNS works as a virtual learning environment such as in Barrot J. (2018) in which the main purpose of the research was to explore different papers from 2010 to 2017 and collect data about previous studies that were focused on Facebook as a pedagogical tool. The majority of the studies used self-report data and pre-experimental research as a methodology. The exploration of those research ended up with the conclusion that "Facebook is a dynamic and flexible tool that permits productive language activities and is readily adaptable to changing contexts". It also shows that students believe that Facebook as an online learning environment facilitates, supports, and encourages their English language learning. In addition, the findings indicate that students' motivation and confidence in English language learning improved via Facebook. Besides, it is also mentioned that there are some Facebook features that have not been explored for those purposes.

Other studies in the exploring of Facebook as an online learning tool, have focused on students' attitudes towards this strategy, as an example, there is a study made at the University of Gaziantep University from Turkey by Eren (2012) which used a 5-point likert-type questionnaire and semi-structured interviews as methodology. The population chosen were pre-intermediate level students between 18-22 years old who were taking one-year compulsory English preparation from different majors like medicine, engineering, and tourism. The researchers took 48 people and used Facebook as a medium to learn the subjects. The study results showed that Facebook is a good tool for teaching-learning

purposes since the students that were involved in the study expressed their positive attitude to learn using Facebook as a digital environment as a complement to the curriculum. To this is added the fact that the students enjoy interacting in this social network, doing exercises, watching videos, and sharing in group valuable material for improving their language skills.

On the other hand, in the second category, critical writing it has been found that is a demanded skill in this XXI century as it is required from students, as mentioned by Wale and Bishaw, (2020) “... analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation skills which are the core critical thinking skills” (p.1) The development of these features has a major degree of importance in terms of providing students with tools for problem-solving, decision making, and communication skills which can be achieved through exposure to higher levels of thinking. This exposure to critical thinking leads up to the development of critical writing, as it is defined by the University of Leicester “a clear presentation of your own evidence and argument, leading to your conclusion; and a recognition of the limitations in your own evidence, argument, and conclusion”. This skill was chosen as it is a lack of literacy on critical writing evidenced in Sajid and Siddiqui, (2015). Where they evidenced through a research study that the biggest problem of students in the development of writing skills is that students do not have early exposure to the language, and the production of a text requires a high linguistic comprehension and ability to communicate.

Moreover, some perceptions of pre-service teachers about writing claim in Street (2003) showed that their attitude towards writing is “poor” and “improving but anxious”. Which is a big impact reason why pre-service teachers are not motivated to improve their skills in writing. Nevertheless, In the literature, were also found some valuable strategies for the improvement of critical writing skills where the enhancing of writing is mediated by media, in this case, by Facebook as a virtual learning environment, according to Suanchoo, J. & MeharSingha, M. (2011) “The findings suggest that the use of media and employment of explicit approaches in instructions had invariably enhanced students writing performance to a great extent.” (p.1415), based on this statement it is also important to recall the motivation that is a factor that increases the involvement of learners, in this case,

pre-service teachers into the literacy on critical writing, as suggested by Bangü (2015) the use of advanced reading and writing instruction to encourage critical thinking. In summary, critical writing skills can be promoted through motivation and social media as a tool, for example, Facebook as a virtual environment to improve critical writing.

To follow the development of this text, the following paragraph exposes what was found about the relationship between Facebook as a virtual learning environment to promote critical writing skills in pre-service teachers. As mentioned before, social media is a tool that helps the improvement of critical writing for which learners are able to interact with others in order to construct and receive feedback from peers, as examined in Castellavi, J., Díez, M. C. & Santisteban, A. (2020) “they [pre-service teachers] can analyze and discuss information from digital media on social problems” (p.1), Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that there were not enough studies to support the two main categories with a direct relationship but individually, however, the first argument presented in this paragraph is an approximation to it.

To conclude, this literature review showed that on one hand, social media can be implemented as an alternative for educational practices, and it can be noticed that there are good amounts of research that investigate Facebook as an online educational resource and demonstrate its effectiveness and its capacity to motivate the students to learn. Besides, this paper shows the insufficient literacy on the variable critical writing but it shows research of writing skills, for that, this paper has the purpose to evidence how Facebook as a virtual learning environment can work as a tool to help in the improvement of critical writing, since it is of great importance that teachers think, read and write critically. Facebook provides a wide amount of strategies for teachers to start implementing and enhancing writing. One of those facilities is that they can approach and interact with peers, in order to construct, reflect and feedback interchange. To finish, it is evident that there was not enough evidence that supports the direct relation between the two main categories but that there was enough support to base the variables.

Research Question

How does Facebook as a virtual learning environment (VLE) could promote critical writing in pre-service English teachers of a private university in Medellín, Colombia?

General Objective

Describe how Facebook as a virtual learning environment (VLE) could promote critical writing in pre-service English teachers of a private university in Medellín, Colombia.

Specific objectives

1. Identify Facebook tools that can be used to implement Critical Writing in pre-service English teachers
2. Determine if the use of Facebook groups influence in Critical Writing in pre-service English teacher
3. Analyze the outcome of the pre-service teachers when commenting a post in Facebook groups.

Methodology

For this research, Facebook was used as a VLE to know if critical writing could be promoted through this social media, as we noticed some lack in the production of critical writing of students from the last semesters of English teaching. Having this in mind, we wanted to research if Facebook could promote this skill. We consider that this investigation is qualitative research as we want to describe and understand a phenomenon that has a specific context and that it occurs and comes from the real world. We do not intend to manipulate it. (Patton, 2001, p.39). Besides, qualitative research allows the researcher to give emphasis to find the answers to those questions that are produced from social experiences (Reichardt and Cook, 1986). This type of research, according to Sampieri (2006) is characterized by the extraction of meaning from data, the analysis of a subjective reality and its great interpretative richness. These characteristics allow us to be aware of the way we can carry out this research in a sequenced and detailed way.

Critical thinking has allowed data quality problems and the information obtained from them to be a source of knowledge. Research in the last decades has generated more knowledge and has expanded the way to solve quality and information problems. Currently there are several conceptions of qualitative research, in this case referring to a good quality work since it allows researchers to learn valuable aspects and to know methodologies that can be seen from the positivist, naturalistic, constructivist, or postmodern perspective. In a broad sense, according to Taylor & Bodgan (1987) a qualitative research is the one that produces descriptive data: people's own words, spoken or written, and observable behavior. This research can also extract descriptions from observations that take the form of interviews, narratives, field information, recordings, audio and video transcripts, written records of all kinds, photographs or films, and artifacts; these studies are concerned with the environment of the events, and focus their investigation on those natural contexts, or also taken as they are (LeCompte, 1995).

The method that was used in this investigation was case study, because we consider that the characteristics it offers are appropriate for the research as we want to get a spontaneous and detailed outcome from the phenomenon (Fidel, 1983). We wanted the participants to give answers that are close to their reality because we intend to know the essence of the phenomenon; additionally, as the method of this research is situated in the qualitative approach, it is not rigorously planned, but on the contrary, it is flexible (Fidel, 1983) which means that is useful at the moment of making modifications in two important moments: when we are advancing in the research and after getting the results from the pre-service teachers when participating in the forums using Facebook groups.

Becker, quoted in Fidel (1983) proposes that in a case study we can get knowledge about the phenomenon through an intensive analysis of a single case, as this type of method is very detailed. We intend to take a single case that consists in the participation of pre-service foreign languages teachers from the sixth to the tenth semester of their Bachelor's degree, through forums in Facebook groups. On the other hand, a characteristic that we consider essential is that case study measures and registers the conduct of the involved participants in the studied phenomenon. From all the mentioned characteristics, we consider that this in specific, gives support to the research we want to carry out as, our interest is focused on the actions of behaviors of pre-service teachers when participating in forums in Facebook groups.

According to Castro (2010) case study method consists in collecting data in word form, which later will be analyzed through different methods include neither statistics nor the quantification of any type. The analysis of the collected data was done through the interpretation of the same information and the detailed description of the phenomenon, integrated with theory. However, we consider that it is crucial to understand that case studies do not represent a sample from a specific population, therefore they cannot be statistically generalizable. Having this in mind, we do not intend the extrapolation of the collected data, but on the contrary, the deep description of the established phenomenon.

Another characteristic to highlight and to take into account in the analysis of the results, is the principle of multiple interpretations, which propose that it is required the sensibility to the possible differences of interpretations among the participants, when they are expressing themselves through narratives or stories. It was a situation that could occur

due to the instruments we intended to use and that we had to take into account at the moment of establishing results.

Data Collection

Case study has different tools to collect data; tools such as direct observation, interviews or any available document such as questionnaires, surveys and checklist, but our intention was to collect data through a questionnaire and a Facebook group which are described in the next paragraphs.

Instrument

Facebook was used as an internet forum, which is also called a “message board” and is defined as “an online discussion site” where all kinds of topics are discussed throughout comments about postings on the web (Holtz et al, 2012). Since this research was focused on the use of Facebook, we used that space taking advantage of the groups. The advantage of Facebook groups is that it facilitates not only group communication, but also a forum for sharing ideas and exchange points of view (Kent & Leaver, 2014). Furthermore, the people have a higher engagement in the use of this Facebook tool as a discussion site than in participating in other traditional forum spaces (Junco, 2013; Smith & Caruso, 2010 in Kent & Leaver, 2014). Additionally, Facebook groups facilitate us to be the moderators and in that way, we can control the group members, the posts content and the intention of the discussions in order to put our objectives in practice. Therefore, to carry out the forum discussion, the posts comments were utilized as this tool is used to publish different kinds of information and comment on them, allowing the people to give opinions about the information and discuss points of view in an interactive way. That is the reason why we considered pertinent to apply this instrument as it facilitated us to evidence the development of the critical writing of the pre-service teachers through the group interaction and discussion, and as it is established by Bateman and Willems (2012) “This combination of communications, co-presence and discussion forum enables a more authentic community of learning”.

Our purpose with this tool was to see the participation of the pre-service teachers in posts that were programmed by us as moderators, we posted information or ideas that had to do with controversial topics in order to make them give their opinions about those thoughts and analyze how the pre-service teachers developed their comments. We wanted to identify how critical are they at the time to interact in this space and if this exercise could promote the interest of writing critically in spaces like Facebook or in any other space.

To carry out the objective of this instrument, we created a Facebook Group, which was conformed by the researchers and the participants. The participation was done by means of posts. There were three main posts in which they participated through Facebook comments: the first post had the instructions about how to participate in the posts in order to interact and carry out the activity in a successful way. The second post was an image that contained the sentence “Sadly I do my best proofreading after I hit send”, which we got from the Facebook page ‘The Language Nerds’. With this image, we wanted them to discuss their interpretations and insights about it in a spontaneous way.

The third post was a question about the topic bilingualism in which they had to answer: Do you think that Colombian born people that speak English as a Foreign Language and that never traveled or studied the language in another country, are bilingual people? The question was asked in order to know if they are critical when commenting or posting on Facebook.

The second instrument we intended to use was a questionnaire. This type of instrument allowed us to collect all the variables that we had interest in at the moment of filtering the information. Questionnaires are a way of collecting data following a series of questions and these questions must collect information about the variables of the research (García et al, 2006). We decided to use this instrument because currently, the Covid-19 pandemic does not allow agglomerations due to health issues and one of its advantages is that it allows the participants to answer from any place they are in and when they have the moment to do it.

The type of questionnaire we used was a mixture between an open-ended and close-ended questionnaire and we pretended to send it through Email. The main advantages of the open-ended are the obtainment of spontaneous responses and “avoiding the bias that may result from suggesting responses to the individuals” (Reja et al, 2003). Another

advantage is that provides answers based on the participant's beliefs, perspectives and opinions, he or she will be free to respond as they interpret the questions. On the other hand, we mixed the open-ended questionnaire with the close-ended one, as in some questions we needed the participants to limit their responses and to focus their attention to the offered options chosen by us.

In the questionnaire the participants answered close and open questions related to the practice of Critical Writing in Facebook's posts, pages, groups and people they followed or they had a friendship with; questions about the frequency of the use of Facebook and if they reflect or have any purpose when commenting or posting on Facebook.

Population

This research was carried out at a private University in Medellín, Colombia which is the Universidad Católica Luis Amigó; this university has a humanistic approach and also has a Catholic foundation. The population required for this research were students from the foreign language teaching program as it is important for them to know English because according to the PEP (Proyecto Educativo del Programa) of Universidad Católica Luis Amigó, its vision is to form pedagogical professionals with high linguistic development in English. Additionally, it was necessary to select people that were studying between the sixth and tenth semester of their bachelor degree because in these semesters it is crucial to have the ability of writing critically since the bachelor degree and the university require courses with a lot of writing production; furthermore, the university states in the PEP, (2018. pp.6) that students from the program must be critical teachers with the ability to adapt and design programs, methodologies, strategies that leads to an integral formation. Besides, as our research was focused on describing how Facebook as a virtual learning environment could promote critical writing, our population had to have a Facebook account and that they use it often so that we could evidence if they used Facebook for learning purposes. Finally, the number of students needed to execute this methodology are seven people, which 4 of them are men and 3 of them are women.

Data analysis

Questionnaire

After applying the questionnaire and the Facebook group, we could identify that in the first one, there was a similarity among the participants' interests when using Facebook. Those interests converged in the purposes at the moment of using it, the first one was to be informed about news, and the main sources they used were pages such as El Espectador, El Colombiano and The BBC News; the second purpose was entertainment, for example, when they expressed they followed pages that have to do with sports, memes and friends' posts; in the third place, we could identify that they also used Facebook for educational purposes, they followed language groups and pages that contained teaching and learning materials. We analyzed that there is a relationship between following educational content and the fact of belonging to an English Teaching bachelor degree as through the questionnaire, the participants expressed their interest by following pages and groups related to this type of content.

We organized the results about their participation in groups and pages, by classifying them in three groups according to their answers, in the first group are the participants who comment and reflect on groups and pages' posts, which are 3 out of 7; the second group are the ones who neither comment nor reflect at all, which are 3 out of 7, and the third group, there is only 1 participant out of 7 who do not comment but reflects on what he read on those spaces.

Hereunder, we will proceed to analyze the first group and the third group as they were the ones who provided enough information. In the first group, we observed that those who commented had specific purposes when they did it, those purposes were explaining something and providing information. In terms of explaining information, P1 expresses that when she commented or published something, her purpose was to "clarify a confusion point that I am sure is not clear for some people" and in the case of P4, she affirmed that she shared information on her profile so that people could learn. On the other hand, in the third group there was only 1 participant that although he did not comment on those spaces, he affirmed that he reflected on the things he read on the pages and groups.

When it comes to people who commented pages and groups the first group argued that when they gave an opinion, they based it on real facts, P1 explained that she researched about a topic when she wanted to discuss something in specific in order to support her ideas and P4 affirmed the that when she gave an opinion, she did it because she knew about the topic.

Facebook group

For the second instrument, we made 3 posts, the first one contained the instructions to participate in the following 2 posts; in the second one, we shared a meme and, in the comments, provided by the participants, it could be evidenced that 6 of them agreed with the meme. P2 affirmed that it was a situation that happened a lot when you were going to write something; he wrote that you do not realize you make mistakes, instead, you do it after you send the message. Only one participant disagreed with the meme which was P1, she affirmed that by contrast, she always checked the content she wanted to share before sending a message.

In the third post, there was a question about bilingualism in Colombia; we asked that question with the intention to recall previous knowledge they studied along the degree. 6 out of 7 answered no to the situation proposed in the post, only 1 of the participants (P2) answered that the situation could be possible. The participants who said no used theories taught in the university to support their answers, they even mentioned professors who talked about the topic of bilingualism; a clear example is P1 who argued that “the question leads me to remember a teacher that said that: no person, is bilingual. If, they are not native or have lived in that context for at least 20 years”. On the other hand, P2 who answered that could be possible, he argued that “it is possible to be bilingual because people learn cultural features through the language”.

Results and Discussion

We consider that the use of Facebook as a VLE can promote critical writing, as we evidenced critical writing when the participants commented the posts, they showed foundation in their arguments by quoting professors and mentioning theories studied along the degree. We can affirm that Facebook accomplishes its function as a VLE if people use it with a pedagogical focus; this was demonstrated in the research when we created post number 3 with a pedagogical purpose and the participants used the comments as a tool to answer it making them recall knowledge about the topic of bilingualism.

We can tell that Facebook can be used to promote critical writing due to the participants following educational pages and groups that contain teaching and learning material, in particular, material about English, like memes about English grammar, pages such as Crown Academy of English and Learning-English club; in terms of being informed, they follow the previous mentioned pages and groups. The participants' interest for these pages show that they receive meaningful content that can help them to broaden knowledge and support their critical thinking. This was evidenced in post number 3, where they reflected on the question and used previous knowledge to answer it, this can be connected to what is proposed by Paul and Elder, (2003) about critical thinking in which they mention that this skill, is about questioning information and generating conclusions; they accomplished the objective of recalling previous knowledge which was something that we were looking for in that question although these comments did not mention authors or name of theories. Freire quoted in Castellví, Díez-Bedmar, and Santisteban (2020) affirmed that critical writing made sense when learning led us to praxis which is just what happened in this post.

In post number 2, the meme we posted generated reflection in the participants because besides they agreed with it, they exposed their stance by describing situations in which this occurs, for example P3 exposed an specific situation related to the meme “ This happens a lot when you are in a hurry talking to somebody and you get stressed because what was written is misspelled”; In the case of P5 he suggested that “ it is essential to check what you write, so that the idea is clear and there is no confusion”. This leads us to affirm

that they reflected because they thought about it and they even generated comments about the topic.

Conclusions

Due to the methodology used, it was possible to conclude that Facebook as a Virtual Learning Environment promotes critical writing when it has a pedagogical focus. The case study is a method that allowed us to investigate these specific cases of interaction in this social media in a deeper way; we identified that the participants reflected and used previous knowledge when commenting, which according to the theory corresponds to critical writing. With the instruments that were used, it was possible to collect information about the participants like their interests, if they had any purpose when using it and if they commented on any pages or groups; on the other hand, it was also possible to study interactions that revealed signs of critical writing as when they participated in the posts, they used previous knowledge to argument their stance. Nevertheless, we consider that it is necessary to analyze the possibility of developing instruments that measure critical writing in order to establish levels that expose how it is presented in Facebook and other fields.

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