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Blogging as L2 Writing: A Case Study

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Weblogs—personal online, web-based publications—have exploded on the internet scene in recent years. They are among the technologies indicating changes in the way information is created, managed, and exchanged. This study examined the use of a blog in an intermediate level Spanish class and its effect upon students. Could blogging provide an opportunity to help students become more actively immersed in a foreign language over the course of a semester? Would students write more using a blog than in traditional course? Would students feel more confident writing in a foreign language because they were writing weekly?

By the end of the semester, students had written 375 postings; 81.25% of the class reported posting to the community blog at least twice a week; 100% responded that they felt more comfortable writing in Spanish; and 100% indicated that they felt more confident in their ability to manipulate verbs forms in Spanish.

While students were, at first, surprised to learn that they were expected to “hyperwrite,” the overall experience proved to be a positive one for students leading the authors to conclude that this generation of computer literate students found blogging an appealing way to communicate in a foreign language.

Technology and foreign language learning have been closely linked for more than 50 years. In attempts to bring the target language and culture to students, instructors have introduced audio recordings, television, films, video, and computers into their classes; new technologies in their time that enhanced the authenticity of instruction. More recently the advent of the Internet has made accessing culturally rich and relevant resources extremely easy.

The “weblog” represents one of the latest innovations in web technology. The term refers to a web page that contains a running log of commentaries, multimedia, and hyperlinks. With its ease of use, conversational, informal format, and collaborative nature, it is not surprising that instructors from a wide variety of disciplines are finding that blogging may be another means of engaging students in subject matter. Lohnes (2003, ¶5) quoting Wheeler wrote, “weblogs can support many of the critical touch-points in the college experience, as a living, reflective journal informing a student’s portfolio; a bridge to connect class content and writing assignments...” In this article, we focus on how we collaborated, created, and coaxed along a nascent blog in a fourth semester college Spanish course, and its effect on students.

Much like news groups and chat rooms, weblogs were born of the Internet and began rather quietly during the late 1990s. The term *weblog* was coined in 1997, but a few months later, in the spring of 1998, Peter Merholz used the shorter version, “blog,” by breaking the word weblog into the phrase “we blog.”

The power and appeal of the Web is obvious, yet writing a webpage in HTML and uploading it to a web server was and is beyond the range of many potential web authors. However, the desire to speak one’s mind—electronically on the Web—was soon recognized by computer programmers and web tool designers. Blogging software began to appear designed to enable individuals to publish their own weblogs quickly and easily and without the previous HTML coding requirements.¹ As Blood (2002) explained, with the advent of these applications, the weblog, unlike a webpage, required little technological sophistication and was therefore accessible to many different types of audiences. For personal use and in business, politics, and education, weblogs have exploded on the Internet. The blogosphere—a collective term encompassing all weblogs—is big. In June 2008, Technorati was tracking 112.8 million blogs (<http://technorati.com/about/>)². That is more than seven times the number of

weblogs tracked in April 2005. In fact, the blogosphere is doubling in size about every 5.5 months with a new weblog appearing about every second. (Sifry, 2006, ¶2) In a recent survey, the Pew Internet and American Life Project estimated that some 12 million Americans published their own blogs and 57 million read blogs (Lenhart & Fox, 2006, p. 2). This computer-mediated communications tool has captured the attention of the nation with articles about blogging appearing in *The New York Times* (Selingo, 2004), *The Washington Post* (Kinzie, 2005; Walker, 2004) and, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Carlson, 2003; Glenn, 2003; Turkle, 2004) as well as in journals devoted to technology such *T.H.E. Journal* (Ferdig & Trammell, 2004) and *Syllabus/Campus Technology* (Long, 2002; Roberts, 2003).

Educators are using weblogs in a variety of disciplines and in many different ways ranging from distributing syllabi, digital portfolios, group assignments, collaborative writing, digital newspapers, (e.g., distributing syllabi, digital portfolios, groups assignments, collaborative writing and digital newspapers). Institutions, too, are supporting the use of weblogs as a mechanism for sharing information about the instructional uses of the technology³. In the pages that follow, we will describe how a weblog affected writing instruction in an Intermediate Spanish II course.

The Pilot Study

There were two important principles that guided the implementation of the weblog in the classroom. The first was that the technology could not overwhelm the students; this was not a course in HTML programming or web design, and using the blog software could be no more burdensome than using a word processing application. Secondly, writing activities needed to be pedagogically sound and complement the technology.

The content of blogs “often takes the shape of chronological postings, much like journal entries...” (Lohnes, 2003, ¶2). The Pew Internet American Life survey found that 37% of bloggers primarily write about their lives and experiences (Lenhart & Fox, 2006, p. 3). However, in creating the blog for this class we were cognizant of the fact that blogging as a class assignment was quite different than maintaining personal blogs; it would be an imposed communication environment. We weighed the merits of using a class blog in its most familiar manifestation: as an online class journal. Journal writing

is a familiar tool in the classroom and can be very effective. However, we rejected this format because journal entries can simply be laundry lists that lack any type of reflection on the part of the students. In addition, students might be hesitant to provide reflective and revealing commentaries so early in the semester before getting to know (and trust) their peers and instructor.

Ultimately, we decided that it would be most beneficial to have students participate in two different blogs: a community blog and a personal blog, with each serving very different functions. Students posted their more formal writing assignments in their personal blogs. This would serve as an e-portfolio during the semester, and students could look back on earlier postings/essays. The community blog would be a discussion board at the start of the semester and the students would post commentaries about a variety of topics and to which the other students would respond. It would be an environment where students could write without the pressure of grades (Elbow, 2000). We determined that we would require students to post to the community board twice a week. At the end of the semester, the community blog became the venue for collaborative storytelling, which we describe later. We did not grade any of their community postings, but students received credit for participating. The personal blogs, which were graded, were worth 20% of the final grade. (The normal weighting of the writing component in the class.) Participation in the community blog was factored into the students' overall participation grade for the class. Attendance, preparedness for class, contributing to class discussions, and participating in the community blog would be worth 20% of the final grade. If students wrote, however minimally, twice each week in the blog, then this would help their participation grade. Conversely, if they chose not to participate regularly, then it would lower their participation grade⁴.

The assignments for the personal blogs were more structured in that we asked students to write on particular topics, and these were graded. However, we emphasized to students that in both blogs we wanted them to experiment with the language. We wanted them to see the blogs as arenas where they could explore expressing different ideas, new vocabulary, and grammatical structures. We stated explicitly that we were focusing on content and on their willingness to challenge themselves linguistically as opposed to rewarding an essay that was strong on form, but that demonstrated little imagination, experimentation, or organization. We gave no minimum word length for any of the writing assignments.

Having determined how the blogs would be used in class, we posed several questions that would help us assess its usefulness during the semester. How would students react to writing online? Would writing more frequently affect students' attitudes towards their L2 writing? How much writing would students do online compared with a nonblogging course? Would students write more for the graded or ungraded assignments? Would the frequency of writing improve overall language performance?

Technical Aspects

After reviewing some of the "free" blogging services like Blogger.com, we decided to set up our own blog server. Advantages to running our own site included control, flexibility, customization, and branding. The major disadvantages, of course, were hardware/software and support costs. We had been experimenting on our campus with software from Userland (www.userland.com) called *Manila*, which is marketed as an easy-to-use, browser-based weblog publishing system. The annual cost of an educational software license for Manila was under \$500.00, and we redeployed a Macintosh computer as our weblog server. Once we had settled on the hardware and software specifics, we had our own weblog service setup, tested, and running in a matter of a few hours. To be sure, having had some prior experience using the software expedited our implementation. From the blog, students could link to the syllabus, the writing assignments, as well as a link to each other's personal blogs (Figure 1). The students were provided with instructions on how to customize the "theme," or graphic appearance, of their own blogs during the first class training session⁵.

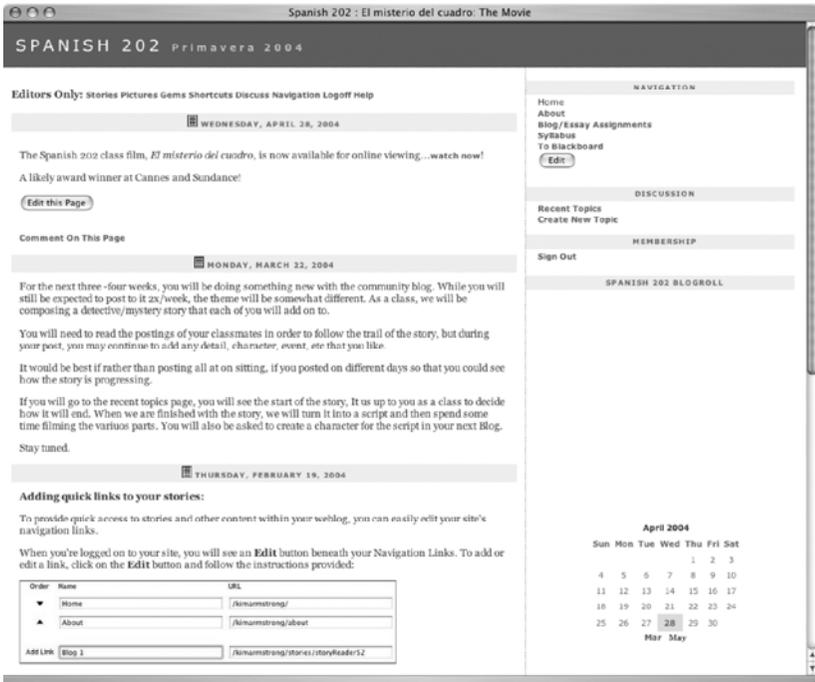


Figure 1. Instructions for personal blogs

Class Profile

There were 16 students⁶ enrolled in this fourth semester intermediate college-level Spanish course that met four times a week for 50 minutes per session. The students enrolled in the course had either successfully completed Intermediate Spanish I or had placed into the course by a written placement exam. Students still used a traditional textbook and workbook, engaged in communicative activities, took part in class discussions, had written and oral exams, and read level appropriate materials. The only difference between this class and that of past semesters was that students were writing online by way of the blogs.⁷

The class consisted of seniors (2), sophomores (2), and first year students (12). In a preassessment survey, two students expressed a high comfort

level with computers while one expressed a contrary attitude towards the students, but used them frequently for typing papers. All were frequent users of the Internet and word processing applications. Students were informed that this particular class was experimental in nature and they were permitted to opt out of the study. All students agreed to participate and all signed waivers indicating that they understood their rights and allowed us to discuss and disseminate the results of the study.

Training

We assured them that we did not expect them to learn HTML programming and that an instructional technology specialist would aid them with any software/hardware problems that might arise. We provided students with a preliminary 50 minute training session so that we could show them how to logon to their own personal blogs. During this “training class” we demonstrated the software and asked them to make a preliminary posting, so that they could familiarize themselves with the process. We also explained that they were not limited to merely adding text; they could post pictures, sound, and video. Finally, we demonstrated how they could access other students’ personal blogs and comment upon them.

We anticipated that there would be several students who would encounter some type of technical glitch with the software. These were mostly limited to placing their writing assignments in a nonintuitive location on their blog, which was solved by several emails reminding students of the most efficacious way of organizing materials. There was one additional 20-minute follow-up session three weeks after the preliminary training, and this answered any lingering technical questions. Our technical specialist also received several emails from students about idiosyncratic problems (e.g., forgotten passwords) that they were having, and these problems were solved quickly. While we devoted some class time to the technical side of blogging (70 minutes), it was kept to a minimum, and no student indicated that learning the software interfered with the class in any way. We will reiterate that this was an important goal for us—if students found the technology too cumbersome, we knew that they would seek other ways of completing the assignments.

Blogging

We decided that the instructor would “lead” the community blog for the first three weeks until students became familiar with the format and adept at posting. Each week several prompts awaited student comment. By the fourth week, we were assigning two students to start the discussion strands. The class continued in this manner until just after the mid-semester point with different students starting the postings every week. As might be expected, the topics differed greatly with strands about favorite books and authors, political candidates, controversial movies, embarrassing moments, etc. Over the first 8-9 weeks of class students wrote on 36 different topics.

At the start of the project it was important to find a way to bring what students were doing in the blog back into the classroom, so we decided to have them spend three weeks creating a story that we would eventually turn into a screenplay they would film. Again, the instructor started a story and told the students to add to the story two times a week with the caveat that they could not contribute their two postings on the same day; they would need to see what complication their peers were adding to the story.

The creation of this multi-authored story had some interesting benefits since students had to keep rereading previous postings to find out the characteristics of the characters, twists in the story line or details about locations. An early misunderstanding about a gender ending transformed the female protagonist into a male with some predictably awkward moments. More importantly, several students quickly picked up on the discrepancy and asked their classmates (within the blog) to clear up the confusion—the lesson they learned was that accuracy in writing is important. A misplaced *o* had caused an entire series of misadventures for their heroine. The students learned that when they were writing in the blog, they were writing for a larger audience and not just a sympathetic instructor who would try and make sense of their prose; they were responsible for form and content.

By the end of the three-week collaborative story writing session, the students had a complex and somewhat confusing story with 10 different characters. The heroine had traveled to four different countries, been involved in a robbery, acquired a husband, and had been killed (and subsequently resurrected). With so many different authors, the twists, turns, and subplots were not unusual, and when we created the screenplay, the students had to agree upon a central plot, the scenes that they would rewrite, and the cast of

characters—this we did in the target language during class. Ultimately, groups of students worked on writing the dialogue for the various scenes of the movie. Filming took one and a half class periods with the instructor editing the final product.

The personal blogs had a much different tone to them. Some students personalized their blogs by adding pictures, but most were content to simply stay within the confines of the theme that they had selected during the preliminary training session.⁸ Assignments for the personal blogs were quite similar to those that one would expect for the second semester of the intermediate level. However, rather than ask students to write two to three short essays, we asked them to complete nine different writing assignments.⁹ The theme of each assignment was designed to complement the topics from the text, grammatical concepts, or literary themes; for example, students had read Pablo Neruda's *Oda a la alcohofa* and then wrote their own "poem" about their favorite food. In another case, we asked students to view Salvador Dalí's *Natura Morte Vivente* and then to write a story about the picture. As expected students approached these assignments quite differently; some wrote perfunctorily while others spent a good deal of time crafting wonderfully creative stories and essays.

Results

Do students write more for graded or ungraded assignments? In the nine graded assignments, students wrote an average of 1300 words in their personal blogs. The amount of writing varied considerably with the least amount of writing totaling 523 words and the maximum amount totaling a little more than 3700 words. In the community blog students averaged 1775 words (low = 393/high=2774) during the course of the semester. Despite having no minimal length imposed and no evaluative measure attached to their writing in the community blog, students averaged more words in the ungraded assignments. This is in contrast to the study of Chastain (1990, p. 11) who found that the total number of words in his subjects' graded compositions was higher than those of the ungraded compositions.

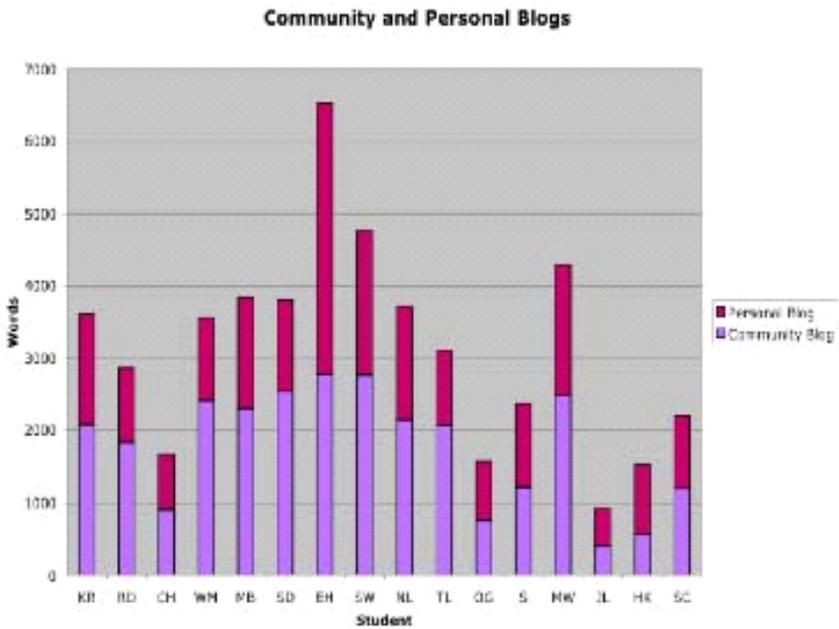


Figure 2. Community and personal blogs

How much did students write online as compared to a traditional format?

This question was more difficult to answer since practices among instructors at the intermediate level vary considerably and little has been published on the topic. In a survey of 61 U.S. colleges and universities, O’Donnell (2007) found that at the intermediate level 32% of instructors required 1-3 graded writing assignments/semester, 38% required 4-6 assignments, 20% had 7-9 writing assignments, and 4% had 16 or more ($n=50$). When asked what was the approximate length of the *longest* writing assignment 30.8% required less than one page (250 words), 40% required less than two pages, 24.6% required less than three pages, 3.1% less than four pages, and 1.5% more than four pages ($n=65$). We should note that the respondents were asked for their longest assignment and therefore assignments may not have been of equal length. Extrapolating from this data, 70.8% of foreign language students were writing one to two pages in the foreign language for each writing assignment. Additionally, since the majority of students had between one to six writing assignments, then students minimally wrote approximately

250 words/semester, and at most they wrote about 3000 words/semester. Combining both the personal and the community blogs, students in this course averaged over 3000 words, or roughly 12 pages of text over the course of the semester. Without directly examining the responses of O'Donnell's participants, it was impossible to determine how much writing is actually assigned. Did the instructor who asked for six compositions limit them to one page? Did the instructor assign one five-page paper? What we can assert is that in some cases, our blogging students were writing ten times more than some students at the equivalent level, and in some cases writing as least as much as those who write in a nonblogging format.

Data from this study affirms what other researchers have documented about computer-assisted writing. Daiute (1986, p. 3) wrote, "...one of the main observations has been that students of all ages find writing on computers and communicating in cyberspace to be highly motivating—an attitude that has not been reported regarding traditional writing instruction environments." In another study, Huffaker (2004, p. 63) reported that the average blog posting among his subjects was 2000 words per blog. Lohnes (2003) wrote that a weblog used in a Political Science course at Middlebury College produced over 100 pages of text/student "For many of them, the writing became a 'fun' activity rather than something that was seen as drudgery or a hurdle to be overcome" (¶11). Pennington (2003, p. 189) argued that students working in a computer medium tended to write less self-consciously and were more engaged in the process, which resulted in greater involvement with the task and ultimately led the student to write for longer periods of time and produce longer texts. Certainly, in this study students did write a significant amount. However, because of the lack of a control group performing the same assignments in a more traditional manner, we cannot document that students wrote more due to the use of blogs.

Does frequent student writing improve other aspects of language acquisition? During the course, students had three oral exams. In the first two exams we asked students to record a story that they created based on a series of pictures that were logically related.¹⁰ In the third exam, they created a story based on a series of real pictures that were logically related but presented by iMovie™. In a subset of the students in the class we transcribed their oral narratives and analyzed the errors that they made in verb morphology and errors made in aspect in the first and last oral exams. We defined verb accuracy as forms that were correctly conjugated as to number, for example, *Juan habla* (John speaks; 3rd person singular) versus *Juan*

hablo (John speak; 1st person singular), and form, for example, *Juan dijo* (John said) versus *Juan dició* (incorrect form). This was based on the pronunciation of these verb forms; if a student orally placed an accent on the wrong syllable of the verb, that was considered an error, for example, *Juan dijo* for *Juan dijo*. We then evaluated their narratives for accuracy of usage; that is, the appropriate tense/aspect was being used. As seen in Figure 4, students that had demonstrated a low degree of accuracy (less than 80%) with regard to verb form in the first exam improved considerably over the semester. Students that already demonstrated a firm command over morphological accuracy improved only slightly between exams I and III.

Again, without further study and comparison, we cannot say that there is a direct correlation between blogging and improvement in verb accuracy since so many different components of the class may result in improved accuracy over the course of the semester. However, it is intriguing that all students within the subgroup who wrote significant amounts (defined here as at least 3000 words, the class average) did improve their accuracy in the appropriate use of verb tense and aspect. In addition, the same group of students also increased the complexity of their sentences defined as increase in words/T-unit.

Hunt (1965, p. 21) defined a T-unit, or Minimal Terminal Unit, as one that "is grammatically capable of being considered a sentence." T-units in Spanish may consist of a single conjugated verb, *hablo* (I am speaking/I speak) or have an embedded clause that is dependent upon the main clause, *Creo que Juan es guapo* (I think that John is handsome). Hunt assumed that as students matured in their writing process that the number of words/T-unit would increase. Ramirez (2000), following Gaies (1980) also used T-units as a marker of syntactic growth for the foreign language learner although their studies focused on written samples as opposed to oral. Hunt (p. 23) found the mean length of T-units for 4th, 8th, and 12^h graders to be 8.6, 11.5, 14.4, respectively. Ramirez (p. 213) concluded in his study that mean number of T-units for the Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced levels of Spanish was 6.8, 8.0, and 9.6, respectively. The obvious conclusion is that students increase their T-unit numbers as they increase in proficiency with the language. Students in this subset had a mean of 7.2 words/t-unit in their first oral exam and 8.7 in their final exam¹¹. Interestingly enough, Student F in this subgroup who had a minimal increase in words/T unit

Student A	Total Written Words = 4768	
	Exam I	Exam III
Words	104	150
T-units	17	19
Words/T-unit	6.5	7.74
Accuracy of verb	94%	96%
Accuracy of verb use	77%	100%
Student B	Total Written Words = 3714	
	Exam I	Exam III
Words	89	434
T-Units	12	49
words/T-unit	6.83	8.6
Accuracy of verb	61%	87.50%
Accuracy of usage	61%	70%
Student C	Total Written Words = 6533	
	Exam I	Exam III
Words	74	274
T-Units	10	31
words/T-unit	7.1	8.78
Accuracy of verb	69%	85%
Accuracy of usage	53%	73%
Student D	Total Written Words = 3560	
	Exam I	Exam III
Words	108	313
T-Units	13	31
words/T-unit	7.8	9.5
Accuracy of verb	95%	97%
Accuracy of usage	55%	72%
Student E	Total Written Words = 3808	
	Exam I	Exam III
Words	152	335
T-Units	17	26
Words/T-unit	8.5	11.73
Accuracy of verb	76%	91%
Student F	Total Written Words = 1668	
	Exam I	Exam III
Words	95	174
T-Units	13	23
words/T-unit	7.3	7.4
Accuracy of verb	89%	92%
Accuracy of usage	83%	58%

Figure 4. Student comparison

was also the only student in the subset who wrote less than 3000 words (the class average)—the student wrote slightly more than half the class average. In comparison to the subgroup that averaged 4476 words, Student F wrote only slightly more than one third of the peer group's average. Not only did this student have an insignificant gain in words/T-unit index, but the student's tense/aspect accuracy declined over the course of the semester. Obviously, this is an area for future research.

Did frequency of writing affect students' attitudes about writing in the

L2? At the conclusion of the class, students were asked to complete an online and anonymous survey about their blogging experience. When asked about their perceptions of how their writing had improved over the semester, we found encouraging results: 100% of the students ($n=16$) responded that they felt somewhat or much more comfortable writing in Spanish at the end of the semester. One hundred percent (100%; $n=16$) expressed that they felt somewhat or much more confident in their ability to manipulate the verb forms in Spanish. Our study of oral exams produced by a subgroup of the students seems to indicate that the students' assessment of their verbal accuracy is on track. A more detailed analysis of each student's blog postings will be necessary to accurately judge whether their perception matches the reality. We should also note that students could very well have responded similarly had they been given frequent writing assignments in a non-blogging format.

How did students react to online writing? Over seventy-six percent (76.9%) of the students said that they liked writing the blogs, 15.3% indicated that they did not like it, and 7.6% indicated that they really liked it. When asked if they would have participated in the blog if it had not been required, 61% indicated that they might if they had the time. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of the students indicated that they liked using the software to post their assignments. Sixty-nine percent (69%) indicated that they felt that they wrote more because they were writing online. Ninety-two percent (92%) of the students felt that the software was moderately to very easy to use. One student wrote at the end of the survey, "I generally liked writing in the weblog because I felt like it wasn't as formal as normal essay writing by submitting a copy. There isn't as much stress while using weblog so writing doesn't seem as a hassle." Another indicated:

I liked both the community and personal blogs. I have improved SO MUCH in writing Spanish! Now, I feel much more comfortable

experimenting and using various forms of verbs. The blogs definitely helped me and I am grateful for them. They were fun too!

Finally, a third commented:

I really liked using blogs for class because it was always accessible anywhere on campus. I found it easier to complete the assignments online and where I had easy access to dictionaries and other reference books. I also found it easier to be creative and write about the numerous topics because the community blogs were not graded. I was also willing to attempt things that were more difficult in these community blogs for this reason. I think it has increased my confidence in my writing because we have been putting directly into practice the grammar we have been learning in class in our own time and through various topics without worrying about grades. But I also think that the practice in the non-graded community blogs made the graded personal blogs better, because it was then easier to focus on the topic for the personal blog and write more directly out of our heads instead of have to look up every other word in a Spanish dictionary. Overall, I enjoyed using weblogs and often viewed others [sic] personal pages.

While some students were at first surprised to learn that they were expected to blog, the overall experience proved to be a positive one for students. This new generation of computer literate students found blogging an appealing way to communicate. Indeed, some research is equating online chatting, either asynchronous or synchronous, with conversations because it shares certain features of face-to-face interaction (Davis & Brewer, 1997, p. 3). While this topic is beyond the purview of this article, it presents a fascinating area of future study given the time demands of learning a foreign language and the limitations of contact time.

Was this beneficial to the students? Certainly, the variety of writing meant that students engaged in different types of writing with different functions, for example, persuasion or informational writing. Students used a variety of tenses, moods, and vocabulary to express their ideas. In addition, some students showed significant improvement over their mastery of verb forms and the accurate use of those forms although we cannot claim, at this time, that the increase in writing by way of the computer was responsible for this improvement.

Kern and Warshauer (2000, p. 2) wrote, "The computer, like any other technological tool used in teaching (e.g., pencils and paper, blackboards, overhead projectors, tape recorders), does not in and of itself bring about improvements in learning." Using blogs in a course does not necessarily make students more proficient or guarantee that students will write better, but we are encouraged by the fact that students, in writing more frequently, and perhaps, more informally, reported feeling more confident in their ability to write in the target language. As with many of the new technologies that we now can bring into the classroom, blogs offer us an additional medium for foreign language interaction.

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Notes

1. In 1999, Pitas launched the first build-your-own-web log tool followed by Pyra's Blogger, Groksoup, and Edit This Page. Others—Blogger, Pyra's Blogger, Groksoup, and Edit This Page. Others—Blogger, Pyra's Blogger, Groksoup, and Edit This Page.

LiveJournal, MSN Spaces, Userland Radio, and Xanga joined field later. Many of these weblog services offer a level of free service while providing fee-based options with greater capabilities.

2. Access <http://www.technorati.com/> for the most current statistics.
3. EDUCAUSE, a nonprofit association whose mission is to advance higher education by promoting the intelligent use of information technology, provides a rich resource of articles and publications pertaining to weblogs in education as well as supporting its own community blog at <http://www.apple.com/au/education/hed/adc/exchange.html>. Apple Computer, with the help of many committed educators, has established the Apple Digital Campus Exchange (<http://www.apple.com/education/hed/adc/exchange.html>), an open community for higher education faculty and academic leaders interested in sharing lessons learned, best practices, and ideas about new ways of teaching and learning—which includes weblogs, discussion forums, podcasts and other online resources.
4. In a similar fashion, students were assigned pages in their workbooks to complete throughout the semester (5% of their entire grade). Like the blogs, these never received an evaluative grade. If students completed their assignment, then they received full credit. If they didn't complete the assignment then they received only partial credit.
5. Student names were removed from Figure 1 in order to protect their anonymity.
6. There was also a student auditing the class without credit. By choice, this person did not participate in any of the blogs or take exams. One student of the 16 taking the course Pass/No Pass participated less actively than the students taking the course for a grade.
7. All 16 students signed consent forms agreeing to allow us to use examples from their blogs, exam results, and survey results in this analysis.
8. This was an unexpected development. Despite the fact that the weblog made use of hyperlinks and visuals to engage students in the material at hand, most students followed a very traditional and linear approach to their prose writing. See Jeske (2004) for an interesting commentary on

the future of expository writing in colleges and universities.

9. The instructor typically has students write numerous short paragraphs during the semester rather than several longer essays. Students may write anywhere from 10-15 “párrafos” over the course of the semester. These are quite literally paragraph length responses.
10. The first storyboard came from *Dos Mundos* and the second from *Invitaciones*, both are elementary level texts for college level Spanish, so students were likely to be familiar with the vocabulary needed to tell the story.
11. T-units are usually used to measure complexity in writing, but we applied them to students orals for the following reason: while students were not allowed to write anything during the exam, they were permitted to listen to their recordings as they created the story and then re-record sections as they saw fit within the time parameter that they were given. Much like editing a written piece of work, they were editing their oral production.