Collaborative Writing Skills Enhancement through the Use of Story Jumper

Mejora de las habilidades de escritura colaborativa mediante el uso de Story Jumper

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Abstract

The present research is about improving collaborative writing skills enhancement through the use of StoryJumper. The work aims to know the impact of using StoryJumper as a technological resource implemented to develop the EFL students' collaborative writing skills. The sample was 27 English students who were enrolled in the second year of Bachillerato in a public institution of Loja. These students were divided randomly into two groups; the experimental and the control group. It was an experimental study aided by a qualitative and quantitative analysis through the use of pre-tests, post-tests, class observations, and student surveys. The instruments used to gather the data were a writing placement test, a writing achievement test, a rubric, an observation sheet, and a questionnaire. The data obtained helped to know the effectiveness of using StoryJumper in collaborative narrative writing and the students' perceptions of using this platform. Finally, the findings revealed that the students reached a good improvement in the development of their narrative writing skills in addition to their

remarkable motivation for the practice and development of their collaborative writing skills after the use of the StoryJumper.

Keywords: collaborative writing skills, motivation, storyjumper, students' perceptions

Resumen

El presente trabajo de investigación es acerca de la mejora de las habilidades de escritura colaborativa mediante el uso de StoryJumper, el trabajo tiene como objetivo conocer el impacto del uso del StoryJumper como recurso implementado para mejorar las habilidades de escritura colaborativa de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera. La muestra fue de 27 estudiantes de inglés que estaban matriculados en el segundo año de bachillerato en una institución pública de Loja. Además, los estudiantes fueron divididos en dos grupos: el grupo experimental y el grupo de control. Se trató de un estudio experimental que se apoyó en un análisis cualitativo y cuantitativo, así como en la incorporación de técnicas, tales como prepruebas, postpruebas, observaciones de clase y encuestas a los estudiantes. Los instrumentos utilizados para recoger los datos fueron una prueba de nivel de escritura, una prueba de rendimiento de escritura, una rúbrica, una hoja de observación y un cuestionario. Los datos obtenidos ayudaron a conocer la eficacia de StoryJumper en la escritura narrativa colaborativa y las perspectivas de los estudiantes que utilizan esta plataforma. Finalmente, los resultados revelaron que los estudiantes alcanzaron una buena mejora en el desarrollo de la escritura narrativa, además de su notable motivación por la práctica y el desarrollo de sus habilidades de escritura tras el uso del StoryJumper.

Palabras clave: escritura colaborativa, motivación, percepción de los estudiantes, storyjumper

INTRODUCTION

In Latin America, students have a poor quality of writing in the EFL context. Students have difficulties in writing at an advanced level, difficulties, such as organization, arguments, grammar, and motivation (Luna et al., 2013). In Ecuador, specifically, students from public institutions have similar difficulties in writing in English. The most common errors they have are deficiencies in structuring sentences and developing basic texts (Galarza, 2020). To all of these writing problems students are facing, Neomy (2018) adds that all over the world, collaborative English writing has not been adequately worked by teachers as writing has been perceived as a solitary activity, only performed by a single person without any help from other people.

The students' deficiency in writing skills is affecting drastically their English language development. Among the main causes that have originated this problem, the following ones have been detected: lack of usage of updated methods by the English teachers, lack of application of appropriate techniques and motivating writing activities, and lack of incorporation of digital resources for practicing writing.

In this context, Sim (2010) explains that developing writing skills is significant because it helps learners become independent, fluent, and creative when writing. Sim's thought is complemented with Rae's (2020), who states that writing intensifies creativity and imagination. In this context, EFL teachers must manage to use writing techniques that help their students to develop these relevant skills. One interesting technique that is not frequently used by these teachers is collaborative writing. However, this technique helps a lot to improve the students' writing skills because it allows writers to create simple texts through cooperative work between multiple writers (Dafiani, 2019). Robayo and Hernandez (2013) highlight the benefits of using this technique when mentioning that it helps to prepare students for future group work by improving their group work skills.

For all of the above-mentioned reasons, the present research aims to determine the impact of using StoryJumper to promote collaborative narrative writing on EFL young learners at a public high school in Loja. The following research questions are going to help to achieve the previously mentioned objective: How effective is the use of StoryJumper to enhance collaborative writing in EFL young learners? and What are the students' perspectives about the use of StoryJumper for engaging collaborative writing?

There have been some previous studies related to the objective of this study, which will help to better understand the present research. The first study was conducted by Güvey (2020), who developed research to investigate the use of digital folktale writing activities as a means of writing expression on the opinions of pre-service teachers. By the end of the project, the results evidenced that the use of digital story writing improves the teachers' written expression skills, the correction of spelling mistakes, the correct use of punctuation, and gain awareness of the meaning of words.

The following study was directed by Aktas and Akyol (2020) whose purpose was to determine the effect of digital writing workshop activities on the writing skills and writing motivation of a group of students who belonged to the fourth grade. As a result of the study, the researchers found that the digital writing workshop implementation was effective in improving the students' story writing skills, but there was no evidence that students' motivation using the digital writing workshops increased.

The third study was directed by Mohammad and Yamat (2020). This study aimed to investigate the students' perspective on StoryJumper and motivation in creative writing. After the results were analyzed, the authors concluded that StoryJumper is one of the techniques that teachers can use to motivate students to write and increase their ideas to write creatively. Further, the findings of the study

indicate that the students demonstrated a good perspective and motivation when writing using StoryJumper.

For a better understanding of this research project, it is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is the literature review which contains scientific information about collaborative writing, the elements of a story, and the use of technological tools to improve collaborative writing skills. Also, previous studies related to this research. The second chapter covers a description of the methodology used in this research, including the setting, participants, and procedures followed. The third chapter includes the analysis and interpretation of the data, the organization of this analysis considers answering both research questions. This last chapter ends with some conclusions and recommendations. Regarding the beneficiaries of this research, this study intends to directly benefit EFL teachers who look to help their students improve their writing skills through collaborative work.

The study also contributes to researchers who want to take the results obtained in this study as a basis of future research, apply the usage of this platform in different contexts, and investigate the benefits of StoryJumper in other English features. It is worth mentioning that there were no difficulties found during the development of the methodology of this study.

METHODOLOGY

Setting and participants

The present research was carried out at a public high school in the province of Loja. The number of students enrolled in this high school was 340. For the development of this research, the Second year of Bachillerato students were taken as a sample, which was made up of 27 students, whose average age was 16 years. This group of students was on the B1.1 level, according to the English curriculum of Ecuador. Additionally, 62% of the participants were male students and 38% were female students. The sample was divided randomly into two groups: half of the students were part of the control group and the other half of them made up the experimental group.

Procedure

The study was developed through the experimental method in which qualitative and quantitative analyses are developed. The correct use of the method made it possible to collect and analyze the data to provide answers to the research questions. To develop this research, the following techniques were applied: a pre-test, a post-test, observations, and a student survey. For the pre-test, a writing placement test was used. It consisted of ten questions which were divided into two sections. The first section had 10 multiple-choice questions focused on obtaining general knowledge about narrative writing. And, the second section was the writing section. It was oriented to assess the students' narrative writing skills by requesting them to write a 150-word narrative structure about their last vacations.

Similarly, for the post-test, a writing achievement test was used. This test had the same characteristics as the pre-test. In addition, to grade the narrative texts written by the students in the second section of both tests, a rubric was also used as an instrument in which aspects, such as grammar, organization, and punctuation were evaluated. Additionally, for the class observation, an observation worksheet was used. This instrument had 8 yes/no questions focused on the attitudes of the students at the moment of using StoryJumper to improve collaborative writing skills. The last instrument used for the survey was a questionnaire that was applied to the students. This instrument consisted of 9 yes/no questions that the students had to mark according to their opinions about the use of StoryJumper to develop their collaborative writing skills.

The research process began with a literature review that was made on books and scientific papers to gather information about the elements of narrative writing, collaborative writing in EFL students, students' motivation towards writing, technological tools used for collaborative writing, characteristics of the StoryJumper platform, and some previous studies related to this research topic.

To gather the data in the field research, the first step was to apply the written pre-test to the whole sample. This test allowed to measure the students' previous knowledge regarding narrative writing. After that, the sample was divided into two groups, a control and an experimental group. The selection of the students to form both groups was made randomly as it is required in the experimental method. During 5 English classes, the experimental group was taught to write narratives by using the StoryJumper platform. To make the students work collaboratively, this group of students was divided into subgroups with the aim they learn to write the stories with their classmates' collaboration. During each class, observations were done on this group of students to collect information regarding the students' attitudes and motivation to work collaboratively and to use StoryJumper to improve their narrative writing skills. In addition, at the end of the process, a survey was also applied to this group of students to know their perception of the use of StoryJumper for the development of their collaborative writing skills.

On the other hand, during the same number of classes, the control group also learned to write narratives; but in this case, the English teacher in charge of the class used the regular method, techniques, activities, and educational resources to teach this group of students to write the stories. In both groups, students were required to cover inside the narratives some basic grammar structures, such as the past simple, past progressive, and present simple, to help them reinforce what they had been learning in their English subject. And once the stories were written by the students after the five classes, a written post-test was applied to both groups of students to determine which group of students reached a better improvement in regards to their narrative writing skills after the five classes. It is worth mentioning that the short stories written by the students in the second section of the pre and post-tests were analyzed by considering the rubric that is part of the research instruments.

To organize the analysis and interpretation of the results obtained through the field research, the research questions of the project were taken into consideration. Firstly, to identify whether the use of the StoryJumper platform helped to improve the students' EFL writing skills, the data gathered through the pre and post-tests were tabulated in a figure and a table. On the one hand, the figure shows the final averages obtained from the written pre and post-tests of both groups of students, the experimental and the control group. Comparing the results helped to determine how effective is the use of StoryJumper to enhance collaborative narrative writing in EFL young learners. On the other hand, the table contains the data gathered through each one of the aspects considered in the rubric used to evaluate the short stories written by the experimental group of students in the second section of both tests. For the analysis of these data, it was compared the results obtained on each aspect in the pre and post-tests by this group of students. This analysis helped to know which aspect they reached better achievement after using StoryJumper to write narratives collaboratively.

Furthermore, the data gathered by applying the survey to the experimental group of students were included in some figures. It was shown through percentages; and then, the highest percentages in each of the figures were described and compared with the information obtained through the observations. This comparison allowed us to know the students' perspectives regarding their attitudes and motivation towards the use of the StoryJumper platform for collaborative writing.

It is worth mentioning that each one of the comparative analyses done was supported by scientific information to provide validity and reliability to this research. Once the results obtained were

interpreted, some conclusions were established; and based on each one of the conclusions, some recommendations were also made.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

In this chapter, a description, analysis, and interpretation of the data obtained during the application of the field research is presented. For a better understanding, this section starts with a comparative analysis of the results obtained through the pre-tests and post-tests in both groups of students to determine the influence that the use of the StoryJumper platform has on the improvement of the students' writing skills when they work with it collaboratively. After that, the analysis of the students' perceptions regarding the use of StoryJumper to develop collaborative writing is also explored by considering the students' answers in the surveys and the class observations. In general, each one of the analyses is also compared with scientific information to support this investigation. And at the end of this section, some conclusions and recommendations are established.

How effective is the use of StoryJumper to enhance collaborative writing in EFL young learners?

Graphic 1

Total averages obtained in the pre-test and post-tests by the students from the experimental and control groups
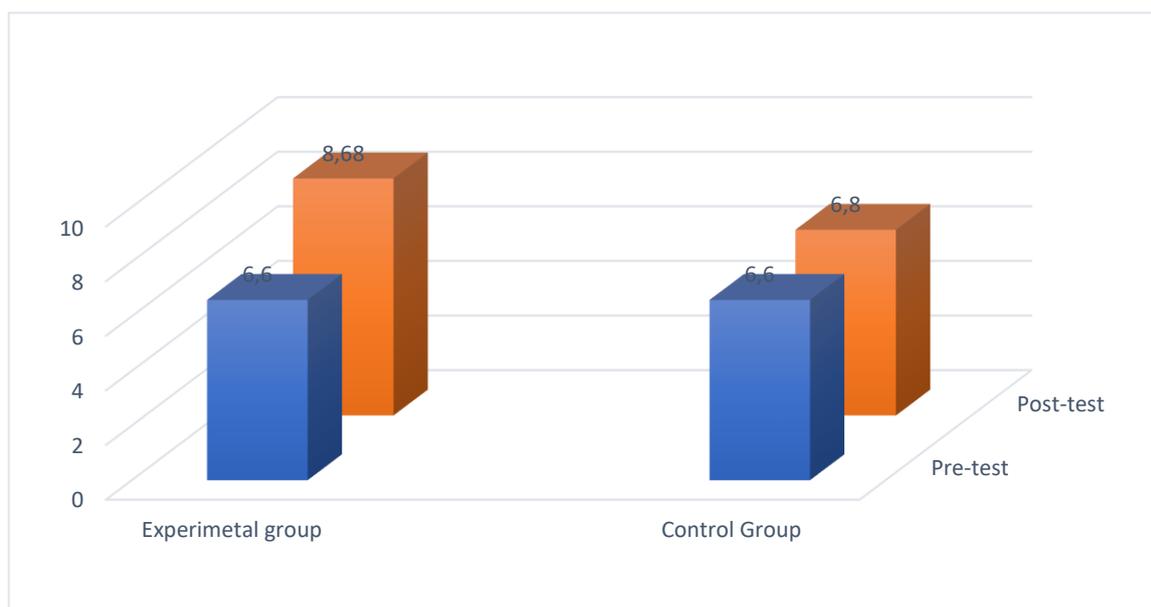
Graphic 1 shows the total averages obtained after applying the pre and post-tests in both groups, the experimental and the control groups. It can be noticed that after applying the pretest, an average of 6.6 out of 10 points was obtained in both the experimental and control groups. Once the research field ended, the elaboration of narrative texts through collaborative writing by using the StoryJumper technological tool in the experimental group, it was possible to obtain a total average score in the post-test of 8.48 out of 10 points. On the other hand, the total average score obtained by the students of the control group in the post-test was 6.8 out of 10 points.

Comparing both results, it should be noted that the experimental group in which the StoryJumper was used to develop narrative writing collaboratively has a great difference concerning the total average

score obtained in the same post-test test applied to the control group of students. It means that the experimental group improved its final writing score by 1.88 compared to the control group. The greater increase achieved in the results of the experimental group of students allows affirming that the StoryJumper platform is an effective technological resource to be used in EFL classes to make the students write narrative texts collaboratively because it helps to develop this group of students' writing skills successfully.

Based on these results, it can be highlighted that the use of StoryJumper positively influenced aspects that could be evidenced once the fieldwork was completed, aspects such as developing students' writing skills and cooperative skills, using better mechanics when writing narrative texts, improving coherence and cohesiveness within the written stories. In addition, it could be evidenced that the use of StoryJumper also influenced the students' motivation towards writing since, at the time of writing, the students did not show boredom and took the class with more impetus thanks to the writing activities carried out on the StoryJumper platform.

Table 1

Averages obtained in each writing criteria from the application of the Writing Pre and Post-tests in the Experimental Group

Experimental Group		
Strategies evaluated	Pre-test	Post-test
Organization of narrative text	2	2,2
Use of mechanics	1,6	2
Coherence/Cohesion	1,6	2,1
Elaboration/Design	1,4	2,18

The first table shows the results obtained in the different criteria assessed after the application of the pre and post-tests to the students of the experimental group. This analysis allows knowing in which aspects this group of students obtained better results. Regarding the organization of the narrative texts, this group of students obtained an average of 2 points out of 2.5 in the pre-test, being the writing narrative aspect in which they obtained the highest score before the application of StoryJumper.

In regards to the use of mechanics in writing, the students obtained 1.6 out of 2.5 in the pre-test, followed by coherence and cohesion; in which, the students obtained a score of 1.6 out of 2.5. In the last criteria considered in both tests, the design and elaboration of a narrative text, the students obtained a score of 1.4 out of 2.5 points, being the lowest score obtained by the students. It must be considered that all of the previously mentioned results were collected before the application of the StoryJumper technological tool in EFL classes to help students to improve and reinforce their narrative writing skills collaboratively.

On the other side, in the same Table 1, it can be noticed the results obtained by the experimental group of students in the post-test after the application of StoryJumper in the field research. The score obtained in the first aspect, the organization of narrative texts, this group of students reached a score of 2.2 out of 2.5 points, being the highest grade obtained by the students, followed by the aspect elaboration and design of narrative text with a reached score of 2.18 out of 2.5 points, ranking as the second-highest grade. In a similar amount, in the aspect of coherence and cohesion, the students obtained a score of 2.1 out of 2.5 points. Not as far, in the aspect use of mechanics, the students obtained a score of 2 out of 2.5 points.

The results obtained in the pre-test compared with the results that were previously mentioned found in the post-test allow affirming that there is a noticeable improvement in all of the aspects considered in the assessment of the narrative texts. However, the most considerable improvements that this group of students showed at the moment of writing are the improvement they had in the design of a narrative text; in which aspect, they improved 0.78 points concerning the score obtained in the pretest, as well as in the aspect the incorporation of coherence and cohesion within the narrative texts with an improvement of 0.5 points in regards to the pre-test score.

Considering all of these results, it can be said that the work carried out on the StoryJumper technological tool helped in a very significant way to improve the writing skills of the experimental group of the students, both in writing narrative texts and in gaining knowledge about how to elaborate them. The activities prepared and the features offered by StoryJumper helped students in a very positive way. Among the activities, it is included brainstorming, puzzle, open questions and reading comics all with the help of the options offered by the platform like, images, colors and wallpapers, modification, editing. All of these resources and activities helped students to improve their collaborative work, to increase their knowledge in the elaboration of narrative texts; as a result, to develop their writing skills.

It is also worth mentioning that the noticeable improvements in writing and creating narrative texts in this group of students were mainly due to the use and management of the StoryJumper platform as the students were intrigued with the use of this page as well as excited to be able to add cartoons directly related to the text that they were writing. They were also fascinated that when writing the narratives, they could easily share them with their classmates through the platform and the Internet and work with them to create the narratives collaboratively. In addition, it is worth noting the easy handling of the platform since it has an easy-to-use menu, which captures the students' attention.

In addition, during the classes taught, the EFL students showed a lot of enthusiasm and motivation in each practice within the StoryJumper platform, which helped positively in the results found. The students were captivated by the different uses and features that the platform had. Similar results were found by Mousazadeh et al.,(2018) who, in their study, highlighted the easy handling of the StoryJumper platform and the great acceptance that it has by students, so the authors invite teachers to integrate this type of technology into their English classes.

What are the students' perceptions about the use of StoryJumper for enhancing collaborative writing?
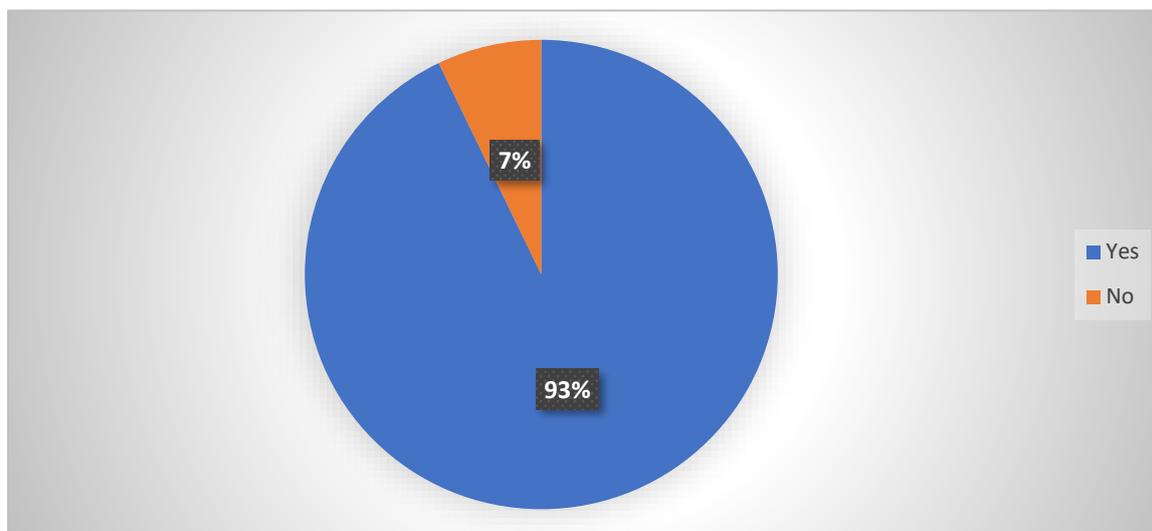
Graphic 2

Students like to develop writing activities during English class
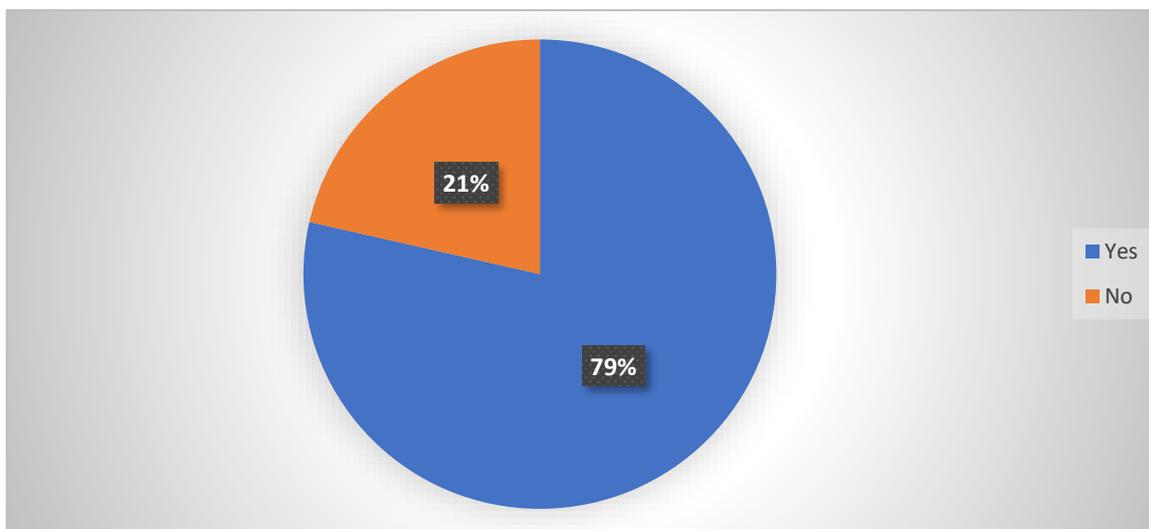
Graphic 2 demonstrates that 79% of students like to develop writing activities during their English classes. On the contrary, 21% of them demonstrate negativity towards the development of written activities in the EFL classes. Taking into account these results, it can be stated that most students like to work on writing activities in English classes. These results were corroborated during the class observation where the students showed good attitudes for working in writing activities in class, collaborating in the activities, and interacting with the teacher during the practices. However, it was also possible to observe a small group of students who did not participate or demonstrated not to enjoy the writing activities proposed by the teacher. It could be due they showed an evident lack of knowledge of the English language, making writing activities difficult to perform for them, In addition, this small group of students demonstrated a deficiency in the use of vocabulary and the meaning of some words. In this context, Alwehaibi (2015) affirms that educators must be prepared to explore different ways of teaching and thus capture the interest of students, through the use of dynamic and motivating activities for students.
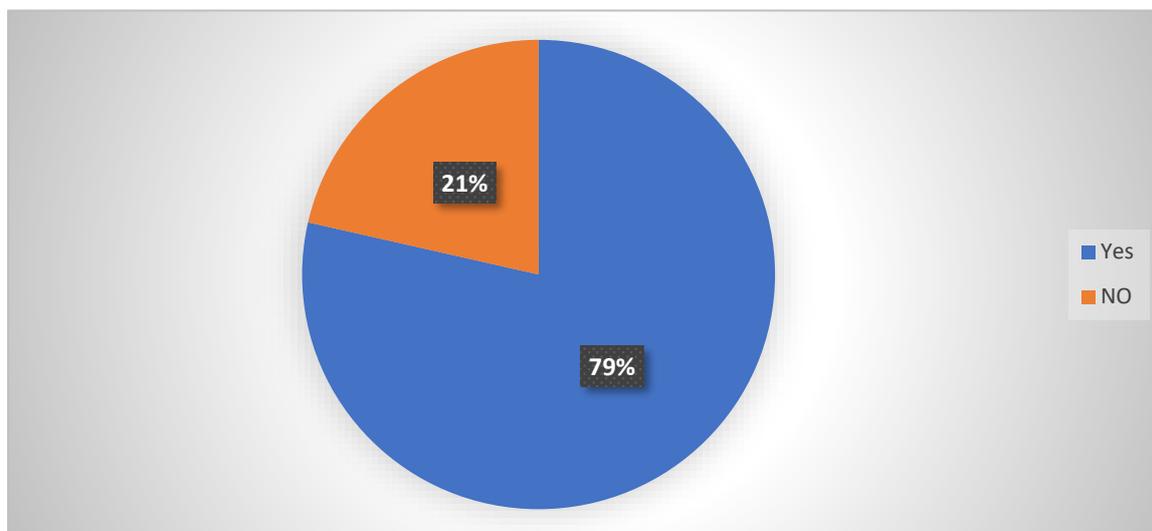
Graphic 3

Students like to use technological resources to develop writing activities in class

Graphic 3 reveals that 93% of students like to use technological resources in English classes to develop writing. On the other hand, only 7% of the same group of students do not like the incorporation of technological elements in English classes. These results allow affirming that the vast majority of students like the use of technological resources for practicing and developing their writing skills. During the research field, these results were corroborated in the class observations in which the students showed a great acceptance of the entire use of the internet and the StoryJumper technological tool for writing narrative texts collaboratively. Their participation was always very active when they had to work on the platform. On the contrary, there was a small number of students who did not work this way at the moment of using the platform since it was observed that the use of the internet or the platform incited them to give them another use and not the appropriate one assigned by the teacher. As indicated by Ahmadi (2018), the effective use of technology is good for students because it helps to improve their English language skills completely.

Graphic 4

*StoryJumper helps to improve the students' writing skills*

Grpahic 4 shows that 79% of students indicate that the StoryJumper platform helped them improve their writing skills in English classes. While 21% of the same group of students indicated that the platform did not help develop their writing skills. Taking into account these results, it can be said that most of the students considered that StoryJumper helped to improve their writing skills. These results were reflected in the class observation where the good development of the narratives written by the groups of the students supports these results. However, the small group of students who stated that the StoryJumper platform did not help them in enhancing their writing skills is mainly due to they did not show much interest in managing the platform and the teacher's instructions towards the writing activities.

Some authors support the results obtained in this analysis when mentioning that StoryJumper manage to attract the students' attention, so teachers can use this website as a teaching tool due to its practicality and benefits to help students learn (Pratiwi & Adnyani, 2019).
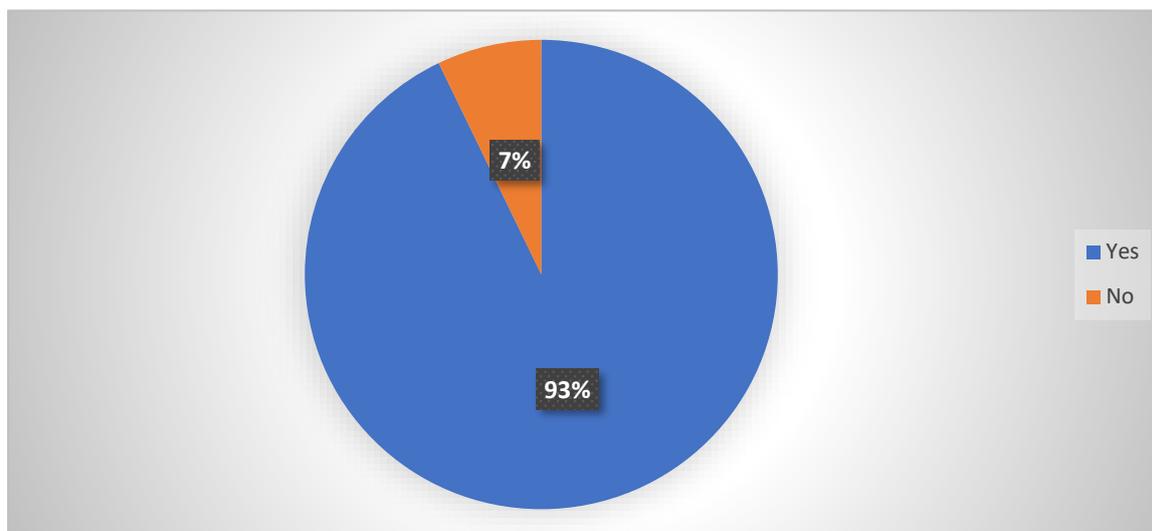
Graphic 5

StoryJumper creates a participatory environment in English classes
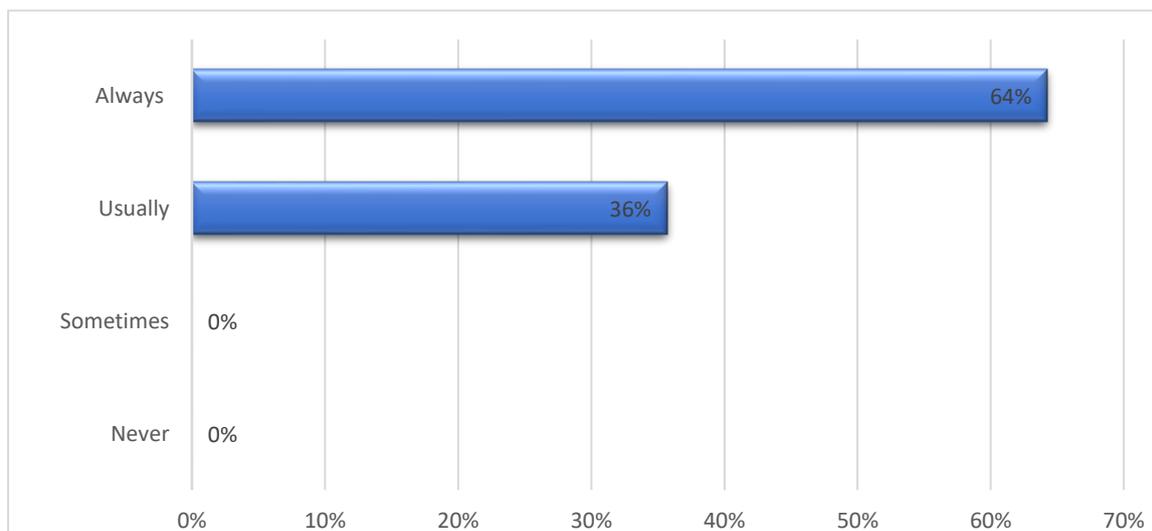
Graphic 5 demonstrates that 64% of the students consider that the StoryJumper platform always creates a participatory environment among students within English classes. While 36% of them state that this platform usually helps to create a participatory environment in the EFL classes. Taking into account these data, it can be declared that the majority of the students consider that the StoryJumper platform always helps them to work in a participatory environment when they are attending English classes. It could be confirmed in the observations when it could be evidenced how the students maintained hard work within their groups and all of them participated at the same time in the elaboration of their narrative story collaboratively within the Storyjumper platform. On the other hand, it could also be noticed that in certain workgroups, there was a minority number of students who did not participate mainly because it was evident that they did not have good relationships with their classmates, which made participation and collaboration difficult. According to Madjdi & Rokhayani (2021), learning activities critically affect the collaborative learning environment, a good learning activity makes students have a good contribution in class as well as a good development in group activities.
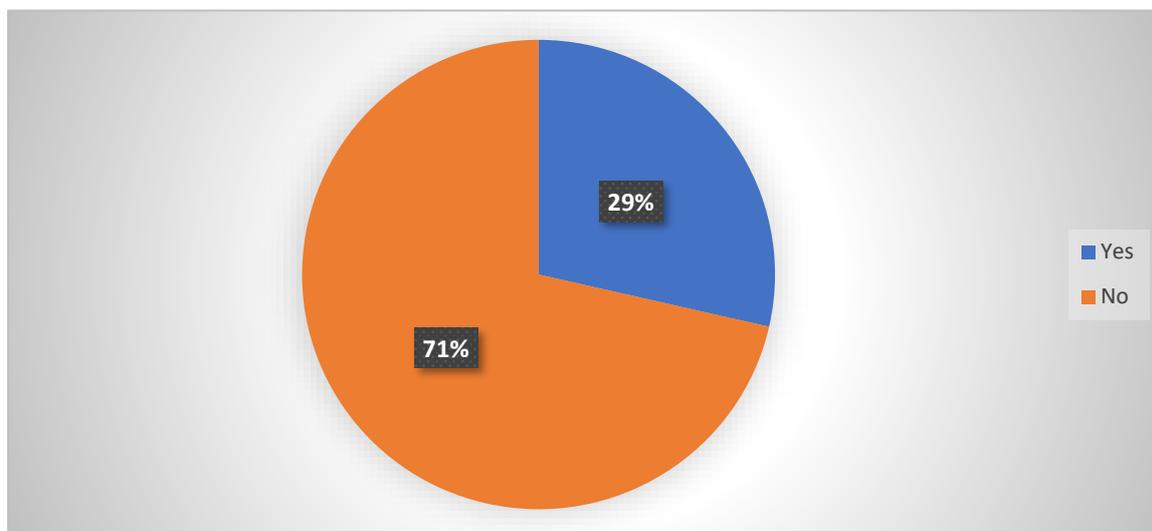
Graphic 6

StoryJumper is easy to use and understand for the students

As it can be seen in graphic 6, the results show that 93% of the students affirmed that StoryJumper is an easy-to-use and understand tool, unlike 7% of students who confirmed that for them the platforms were difficult to handle or understand. With these results obtained, it can be affirmed that the students were able to handle and understand the StoryJumper platform quickly and effectively. These results could be corroborated during the classes where the easy mastery of the students to use the platform was evidenced: handling the devices to enter the platform, the speed with which they created their access accounts; and, the way and speed they manage the tool to create the stories. On the other hand, the small amount of the students who declared that StoryJumper was difficult to use or understand for them could not be corroborated in the class observations since all of the students worked in groups and it was not possible to observe exactly whom of all the students had more difficulties. However, what could be corroborated is that the students did not ask too many questions about whether the application was complicated or difficult to use. Even when the teacher asked each student specifically if they understood the handling of the StoryJumper platform, they answered that they could; for these reasons, the students who had these kinds of problems could not be identified. According to Ezeh (2020), StoryJumper is an easy-accessible technological tool in which people can create books and share them on the web. It means that the tool is easy to use and facilitates collaborative writing, feedback, and authenticity for students.

Graphic 7

Students like to practice writing on the StoryJumper platform


In graphic 7, the results reveal that 71% of the students affirm that they like to use the StoryJumper platform to practice writing in English classes. On the contrary, 29% of the students stated that they do not like using the same platform for practicing writing in their English classes. The results obtained allow us to declare that the majority of the students like to use StoryJumper to practice writing in their English classes. These results were confirmed during the observations where it was possible to verify that the majority of the students had a good attitude when using the platform to demonstrate what they were learning about writing narratives in English. In addition to the fact that the platform has different features that catch the students' interest in practicing and applying what they learned. The tool also caught their curiosity since they had the possibility to add images, cartoons, and pictures to their narrative writings. Therefore, it could be seen that this tool interested them since they enjoyed writing through the use of the platform.

The StoryJumper platform helps students to practice collaborative writing, even those who do not have good writing skills, as the tool offers them the opportunity to observe other people's writing and take them into account for their writing. In addition, the fact that the platform includes the option to share their stories with the world and perceive themselves as part of a larger network encourages them to improve and put more effort into the development of narrative writing (Mohammad & Yamat, 2020).
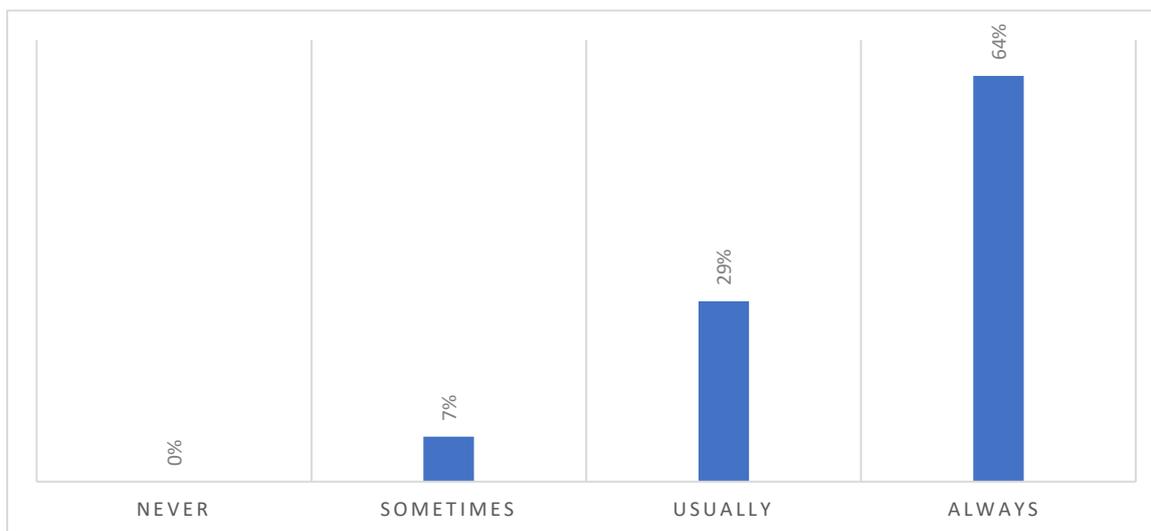
Graphic 8

Students are motivated to write in English by using the StoryJumper platform
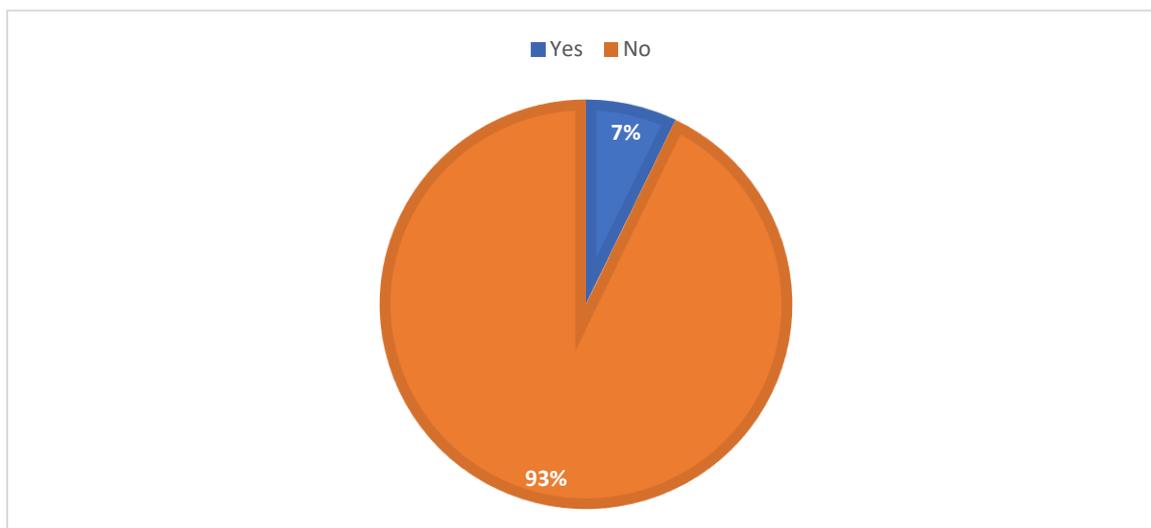
Graphic 8 shows the 93% of the students affirmed that the StoryJumper platform helps them to improve their motivation towards writing in English. Only 7% of the students stated that the use of the StoryJumper platform does not help them in their motivation to carry out writing activities in the English classes. These results allow affirming that the StoryJumper platform motivates students to write in English. These results are corroborated during the English classes where it could be observed the enthusiasm with which the students wrote the narrative, also it could be seen that they were so attracted to the idea of practicing writing on an online platform and not on a piece of paper as in the traditional classes. On the other hand, the students affirmed that the StoryJumper platform does not motivate them to write in English. It could not be corroborated or identified by the teacher since during the fieldwork, it was observed that all students showed a special interest to work on the platform. These findings were corroborated by Choo and Li, (2017) who confirm that students live in an era in which traditional writing is boring and tedious; however, when using technology, they are enthusiastic since today the digital age prevails. Therefore, teachers must include new technological tools to motivate them to write.

Graphic 9

The students would like to continue working on StoryJumper in their English classes

Regarding the results that graphic 9 indicates, 64% of the students would always like to continue working collaboratively, writing narratives through StoryJumper in the English classes. On the other hand, 29% of them indicated that they would usually like to use StoryJumper in the EFL classes. Only 7% of them indicated that they would sometimes like StoryJumper to be used in classes of English to practice writing collaboratively. Considering these results, it can be stated that students would like to continue using the StoryJumper platform for writing in English classes. In addition, this could be corroborated during the fieldwork, since the majority of the students had a good acceptance of the platform during the classes. They also showed comfort great handling and familiarity with the platform. These results are actually positive because according to Güvey (2020), StoryJumper helps to improve skills and written expression in students who practice on the website as well as improves personal and academic development, and encourages group work.

CONCLUSION

StoryJumper is a technological tool used to develop students' writing skills as it significantly helps in the development of collaborative writing activities in the students participating in this project, thanks to the fact that the platform offers countless options to create narrative texts, Students demonstrated improved performance in grammar and narrative writing after using the StoryJumper tool.

The StoryJumper platform helped to considerably improve narrative writing in students, highlighting the improvement in the organization of narrative texts in which students take into account the order of composition of a narrative text, resulting in the development of more understandable texts.

The students had a great acceptance when working with the StoryJumper platform since the participation on the part of the students was very active, the students developed their narrative texts with a very good attitude within the classes with the StoryJumper platform.

The use of the StoryJumper platform had no difficulty in the practices, rather its use was easy and simple for the students since the management of the platform and the creation of accounts to enter did not present any difficulty, as well as the management of the different options within of the page.

The StoryJumper tool motivates students in the practice of narrative writing since they took the classes with great enthusiasm, in addition to emphasizing that they prefer the use of technological tools before the traditional method of notebooks or books

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