Promoting Second Language Learners’ Motivation Through The Use of Complementary Internet Activities

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**ABSTRACT**

Modern society, mainly governed by communication and information technology, requires people with essential skills to fit in a constantly-changing world. Mexico is not the exception and for students to fit into this world, they need to have a good command of technology and learn at least one foreign language. All over the country many Mexican students have started to learn English as a foreign language. Even though some students may achieve certain level of proficiency, there may be others who may struggle to obtain positive results. Different factors may affect students’ learning process. One of these factors is motivation which has always played a vital role. Some researchers agree on the importance of motivation and its key role in learner’s achievement. Therefore, the aim of this project was to find out to what extent the use of different internet pages (activities or games) as a tool can motivate elementary students to improve their English learning process. In addition, it was expected to portray an example of the desired effect that motivation can have in the learning process of a foreign language. To gather information, students’ logs were administered in order to find out whether the use of internet activities or games motivate students and had an impact on their performance. Qualitative methodology was used to analyze the data collected to find out the level of impact the use of internet activities or games had to promote motivation and help students to learn English.
INTRODUCTION

Vygotsky (cited in Clarke, 2009) claimed that the most powerful tool in the development of human beings it is the language, it is the greatest asset humans possess. He said that a good grasp of language is synonymous with a sound ability to think. English has become an important language around the world. Learning a foreign language will give youth opportunities to communicate, understand other cultures and be prepared to compete in a global market (Tavil, 2009:332). The first six years are known as the basis for children to develop. They are regarded as an essential part of children’s development since they begin to acquire their mother tongue, their cultural identity and construct their knowledge of the world that surrounds them (Clarke, 2009:8).

Encouraging students to learn English as a Foreign Language and build up in the target language is rather complex and a difficult job. In some situations, students deal with different and difficult situations when learning English so they may be demotivated to learn. Sometimes is quite difficult to promote learning and engage students in different types of activities inside the classroom due to children’s lack of motivation. Motivation has an important part in the teaching and learning process without this element learning may not occur.

The growth and spread of computer technology has created significant ways for human beings to read, write, communicate, produce and share knowledge but also to learn and develop skills. This spread of computer technology has raised particular attention and expectancy to its integration in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Computer technology in EFL teaching has become of significant importance because teachers realize it creates independent and collaborative settings in which EFL learners can attain and practice the language they are learning (Buttler- Pascoe, cited in Kuo, 2008:1). Consequently, the use of websites and online activities and/or games may
help students learn, reinforce and practice different topics in an appealing manner, thus they can have fun, improve their performance and feel motivated at the same time.

Kuo claims that “to meet the challenges of fast-paced globalization and a more demanding high-tech environment of the future, it is imperative to train students for equipping with relevant abilities and competencies...” (2008:1) Having all the aforementioned in mind, I decided to do some research about using internet activities or games to discover if students can feel motivated to learn English, as some of them have shown interest in making use of websites and online activities to practice what they have been learning during the English class. Moreover, when I use these kinds of resources I have noticed students feel excited, willing to participate and they feel more confident even if they make mistakes.

Therefore, taking into account the interest of my students, I would like to find out if the use of this tool could help students to improve their learning process by using different internet activities and/or games inside the classroom and how students react and consider these tools for learning a foreign language. Research about this issue has been conducted in different countries around the world: Taiwan (Ming-Mu Kuo, 2008), (Kung & Chuo, 2002); Saudi Arabia (Zakaria, 2009); USA (Singhal, 1997); and Korea (Shin & Son 2007), are some of the nations where this topic has been studied. However in a Mexican context, little information about the use of websites in an elementary school has been researched on.
CHAPTER ONE: CONTEXT AND FOCUS

Nowadays, information and communication technologies influence society in most aspects of life. People are expected to have the necessary skills to face and integrate into a changing world. Education has the responsibility of providing students with the opportunity to develop the essential skills to become part of this globalized world. Therefore, in order to accomplish the abovementioned, students need to acquire a series of fundamental knowledge such as the use and command of these technologies and the knowledge of at least one foreign language. English Teaching as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certainly represents a headway in the Mexican context. English teaching in the Mexican public educational system is only mandatory on junior and senior high schools. However, significant efforts have been made by the Ministry of education (SEP, 2013) to include the English language subject in the elementary education during the last few years.

It is important to explain that the pilot and expansion stages for the Study Programs of English in basic education follow a scheme different from other subjects at schools. Its design is organized by cycles and not by grades, this ensures continuity and articulation in the different grades and the different levels of basic education. Cycle 1 covers third grade of preschool, first and second grades of elementary school; cycle 2 includes third and fourth grades of elementary school; cycle 3 comprises fifth, sixth grades of elementary school and the first semester of first grade in junior high school. Finally, cycle 4 includes the second semester of first grade, second and third grades of junior high school. In this study, I address primary students as children or young learners.

Teaching English to young learners in the Public Educational Sector in Xalapa is becoming a supplementary subject for some primary schools, as those schools are part of a National English Program. English as a subject is taught once or twice a week. The English lesson lasts around 50 minutes that is 100 minutes, approximately, a week. The
aim of the Program is to provide high quality English language classes to all children in the public school system in Mexico. The teacher should create communicative situations that promote the need to learn and use different types of texts and discourse, which are similar to those that could be found in real life situations.

This research was carried out in a Public Elementary school located in Xalapa, Veracruz. It is part of the National English Program in Mexico. All classrooms were equipped with electronic devices such as a computer, printer, projector and wireless internet. So, students are familiar with these kinds of devices and they are aware of the use of internet for educational purposes. The English subject is taught twice a week and it lasts fifty minutes. English as a subject it is not part of the curriculum content so students seem to undermine the subject and the content course.

INFORMANTS

The informants for this research were twenty-six young learners from fifth grade at a Public Elementary school. Most of the learners argued having a computer and access to internet so they are familiar with these resources. Learners had not been in contact with English language until the school became part of the National English Program. Learners were aware of the fact that English was a supplementary subject and that it did not affect their grades on their report cards. It seemed that due to the fact of English not being a compulsory subject some of the students were not motivated enough to perform certain tasks or activities inside and outside the classroom.

Taking into account the lack of motivation shown by the informants I decided to do some research about using internet activities and/or games to discover if students can feel motivated to learn English as some of them have shown interest in making use of websites and online activities to practice what they have been learning during the class. Besides, when I made use of certain internet resources I noticed some students were excited, willing to participate and they felt more confident.
So taking into account the interest of students, the main objective of this research is to find out to what extent the use of different internet pages (activities or games) as a tool can motivate elementary students to improve their English learning process. Therefore, with this research I attempt to answer the following questions (Figure 1) and in order to respond them, informants logs will be shown as evidence.

Figure 1 Research Questions

- Can internet activities and/or games motivate English learning in elementary students?
- How motivating is using websites for elementary students to learn English?

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

In order to respond these questions informants’ logs will be shown as evidence. Informants were asked to write logs as they reveal people’s attitudes and inner thoughts (Wallace, 1998). With these logs, informants were expected to comment on what they thought about the class presented, how they felt when the teacher used internet activities or games to explain or reinforce certain topic, whether the resources used in class were interesting or not, if they considered it helped them to learn or understand the topic presented and what they learnt with these activities.

RATIONALE

Mann & Stewart (2000) state that the swift expansion of technology will guarantee that opportunities continue to expand. Thus it may be assumed that technology is causing an enormous impact on different fields and aspects of life. Consequently, language education could not be the exception in taking part in this worldwide technological revolution. Nowadays, the growth and spread of technology is creating significant new
manners for people to read, write, communicate, share knowledge as well as to learn and develop skills. Daily improvements in technology, (mainly in software, electronics and communications) are providing teachers with a vast range of tools and possibilities to enhance their teaching and students’ learning process so learners can attain and practice the language they are learning (Buttler-Pascoe, cited in Kuo, 2008:1). Different and useful technology tools, resources and approaches can be used as a teaching aid as they can fuel students with motivation moreover significant, interactive and web-based activities can improve students’ learning process in great manner as learning the language abroad (Paulsen, 2001).

Moreover, research has found that motivation in classroom is quite important for learning a second or foreign language. According to Dörnyei (1994:273-275) motivation is one the main factors to learn a foreign language and it involves psycho-sociological and linguistic factors, various personality traits and social components. Therefore teachers should consider the use of technology such as computers, internet, software, and the like, to offer students with different opportunities and resources to engage and motivate them as technology provides a wide range of tools to promote the development of ELT and the language learning process.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter comprises some theoretical aspects such as the definition of motivation and internet. In order to have a broad idea of how computer technology has been enhancing and shaping EFL teaching and learning, the role of technology and internet in the EFL learning process is presented, the internet as a motivating and technological tool in the classroom and some suggested internet materials. In addition, the role of the teacher and the parents to help learners to make appropriate use of the internet for educational purposes is presented. Finally, the way teachers can make second language learning an enjoyable task will be discussed.

2.1 MOTIVATION IN AN ELF CLASSROOM

Motivation is considered to be a significant factor inside a classroom; it can have an impact on the learner’s performance and achievement when learning a second or foreign language. According to Gardner (cited in Winke, 2005), motivation to learn a foreign language can be regarded as an intricate of constructs that involve effort, desire and a positive attitude toward learning the language. This seems to support the evidence about why some students do not struggle with the language as others do, or why some acquire more knowledge and in a faster way than other students.

Students may also have different perceptions, desires and beliefs towards learning a foreign language. There are some students who want to achieve certain level of proficiency in the target language due to educational purposes, some others who want to get a degree and some others who enjoy learning a language. Regardless the reasons they have for learning another language, it is clear that as individuals each of them have different manners to perceive things and feel motivated. So motivation does not only depend on students but it also depends on what teachers can do to nurture and promote students’ interest during the school year.
According to Winke (2005:1) teachers can initiate, sustain and promote motivation by making use of different resources like authentic materials and by creating classroom tasks that are interesting and engaging for students. Mansor states (cited in Ismail et al, 2007) that the technological advances can increase students’ motivation in English language learning. Internet is probably the most advanced technological source of information today. It may be useful for educational purposes, but it needs to be carefully managed and monitored as there are all sort of positive or negative issues regarding its use.

2.2 THE INTERNET AS A TECHNOLOGICAL AND MOTIVATING TOOL IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

Technology is enriching different aspects of everyday life and the internet is one of the most representative examples of it. Bill Gates claims that we are living in an ‘internet lifestyle’ where internet will be expected to become the first truly ‘personal mass medium’ (Mann & Stewart, 2000:37). The internet has become a revolutionary means of communication, millions of people can share and exchange information, ideas and opinions. Moreover the internet provides with information to everyone, from young children to professionals. It can be used in different fields of life and education is not the exception, mainly when the use of internet is directed to children. Internet can be a powerful resource for teachers because it can provide them with visual stimuli, listening material, vocabulary, videos and newspapers from all around the world (Dudeney, 2000:1). However, it must be used with discretion, as young learners are sensitive to what they see and hear. In addition, Gitsaki & Taylor (1999) states that ‘on the internet learners find websites full of animation, colors, sounds, pictures, interactive forms, and digital video clips which motivate students’.

Moreover the internet enhance students’ autonomy and provides opportunities to be in charge of their learning as there is a vast source of information and authentic materials which exposes students to genuine language.
2.3. INTERNET AS A LANGUAGE LEARNING TOOL

Computer technology in English as Foreign Language (EFL) education is becoming of significant importance for teachers. Educators recognize computer technology as a tool that fosters the appropriate learning environment where learners are able to acquire and practice a foreign language (Butler-Pascoe, cited in Kuo, 2008).

In recent years, the Internet has become a powerful technological tool that it has even pervaded in different aspects of our life like education, business and economics. Even though some people may not be keen-adopter of this kind of technology, it is clear that the Internet will not go anywhere soon. Because of the widespread of the internet in different domains of life, it may be considered to have great potential to be used in the educational field and second and foreign language teaching and learning cannot be excluded.

Learning a foreign language demands commitment, practice and spending hours of study. Regardless the effort one should make, learning a foreign language provides students with great opportunities as they can get better jobs or travel abroad. Nevertheless, it also gives learners the chance to know new cultures and ways of thinking and perceiving the world.

The main objective of learning English is to be able to communicate with others, therefore, one of the main goals of English instruction is to provide students with well-rounded opportunities to develop their ability to communicate with people by using the target language in real world situations (Yang & Cheng, 2006:861). Fortunately, for teachers, the arrival of Internet has become of great help that it has made the job approachable inside the classroom. This new age resource may offer a turning point in English education as Internet provides a wide variety of resources but it has also a global reach (ibid, 2006). The use of internet allow learners to have access to language resources focused on reading, writing, vocabulary, listening, grammar and
pronunciation but they can also communicate with English native speakers in real time. These language resources can help learners to broaden their way of thinking about different cultures and diversify their knowledge.

### 2.3.1 A MOTIVATING TOOL FOR EFL YOUNG LEARNERS

The growth and spread of technology has changed the way young learners communicate, learn and share knowledge. They seem to perceive things different from previous generations and that is because they are growing up and living in a digital landscape where technological improvements are part of their normal life (Jukes, 2008:3).

In this 21st-Century digital landscape, young learners have good skills and familiar with sophisticated electronic devices like phones, tablet computers, game consoles and iPods. This is why Mark Prensky (cited in Scrivener, 2011:334) have called them digital natives. As young learners are living in a new digital scenery teachers should introduce the different uses of technology directed to education to students (ibid, 2011:334).

Taking into account students’ familiarity with sophisticated electronic devices, teachers should make use of that knowledge and interest to boost their motivation in the EFL classroom. Moreover, teachers should provide students with different resources and materials to engage students and promote learning. Paulsen claims (2000) that relevant, interactive and web-based activities can improve students’ learning process and fuel students with motivation. Research findings (Kuo, 2008) seem to indicate that EFL student teachers have had encouraging experiences and attitudes when using Internet and that they consider technology as a significant approach in their careers.

### 2.3.2 A WRONG MODEL

The Internet can be a valuable resource for teachers and learners in an EFL classroom. However, teachers must balance the different benefits this technological tool provides
in order to prevent particularly young learners from dangers of internet use like inappropriate content and unwanted commercial information. In addition, learners can get distracted and waste time in surfing the Net rather than performing their task.

Even though the Internet can be an attractive resource, teachers should be aware of some of the difficulties they may encounter when using this tool. Research findings (Kannan and Macknish, 2000) have shown that students’ motivation was lowered when learners met technical problems and when their tasks were de-motivated. So teachers should consider the use of technology only for real purposes as Scriveners claims, (2011:335) a computer cannot do teachers’ job or teach any more than a blackboard can, it is all down to what teachers do with the resources and tools they have.

2.4 INTERNET AS A VALID RESOURCE TO DESIGN MATERIAL

2.4.1 ADVANTAGES
For many years, approaches, methods, techniques and materials to teach a foreign language have been changing due to different factors. Teaching and learning a foreign language are challenging processes that demand learners’ motivation and teachers’ support during this period. Teachers are in charge of the materials used inside the classroom, they have to provide students with different types of materials to boost language learning.

Materials development is an essential part of teachers’ practice as they make use of materials to raise learners’ knowledge and experience of the language to promote learning (Tomlinson, 1998:2). Using some technological aids like the Internet (pages or games), presentation software (e.g. PowerPoint) or videos can promote students’ motivation and language learning as the Internet provides them with “websites full of animation, colors, sounds, pictures and interactive forms” (Gitsaki & Taylor, 1999:V).
This seems to echo Tomlinson’s statement (1998:7) that materials should attain impact to attract learners’ curiosity, interest and attention so they can grasp some of the language in the materials. He also mentions some characteristics that materials should have in order to attain impact, like novelty, variety, attractive presentation and appealing content.

2.4.2 POINTS TO PONDER WHEN USING TECHNOLOGY

Despite the Internet wonders, there are also some aspects to take into consideration regarding the use of internet to instruct young learners. Some aspects an EFL teacher should not disregard are the role teachers, parents and students play regarding the use of internet for teaching and learning purposes.

2.5 THE ROLE OF TEACHERS, PARENTS AND STUDENTS REGARDING THE USE OF INTERNET IN THE EFL CLASSROOM.

According to Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) there are some aspects that contribute to the success of classroom learning. The success of the classroom will depend on the students’ relationship among them, the classroom environment, students working together and communicating effectively and the type of roles teachers and students play.

The concept of role is of significant importance to understand how students and teachers act and behave in certain manner. Although, there are different concepts of role, in general, role has been understood as “interaction, expectations and competence that influence what we do, how we do it and how it shapes our identity” (Lopez, 2008:39).

2.5.1 THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

Teachers have a broad range of roles to play in an educational setting though there are many roles a teacher may play. Shuell (cited in Harden & Crosby, 2000:4) suggests that an essential task of a teacher is to engage students in learning activities that will help
them to achieve outcomes. Taking into account this, the role of a teacher regarding technology should be of incorporating technology in the EFL classroom as a tool for both students and teachers. Therefore, teachers should use the internet to find and select what type of webs, games and/or activities are appropriate for their students depending on their ages, level of English and the purposes and/or outcomes of the lessons.

2.5.2 THE ROLE OF THE PARENT

Parental involvement in their child’s education has been an essential part for the academic success a learner has. The role of the parent, especially for young learners, is of great importance as the parent influences the objectives and achievements of their children (Peters et al, 2007:15). When using internet regarding the purpose to do it, parents should monitor what their children see, what types of webpages, blogs or social networks visit as they are exposed to inappropriate content and other types of dangers young learners may encounter when surfing the net.

2.5.3 THE ROLE OF THE STUDENT

Learners play a role inside the classroom and nowadays they can express what they like and sometimes they can suggest different options in order to help teachers to make the class more enjoyable. When learners are in contact with technology different roles can be perceived such as collaborator, self-learner, knowledge manager etc., (Murchú, 2005). According to Ribak (cited in Livingstone, 2003:5) the key role of children, who have access to internet, it is to acquire and understand it. Therefore, if they do it they may be active, cooperative and they could establish a good communication among peers and teachers.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter examined different aspects of literature connected to my field of research. Some key concepts were established such as motivation in an EFL classroom, the use of internet in an EFL classroom, the internet as a language learning tool, the internet as a valid resource to design material and finally the roles teachers, students and parents play in an educational setting when teachers make use of internet for teaching and learning purposes. In this chapter, the research methodology is presented which is based on an action research project. This study is the first stage of an action research project that aimed at implementing Internet activities to promote students’ motivation. This particular stage of the project was intended to understand students’ opinions of the use of internet activities. To begin the chapter I define my research approach. This is followed by a description of the particular context in which this research was carried out. Finally, I explain the data collection process, which involves a brief description of the modes of collection and the description of implementation.

In order to fulfill the aim of this research project, qualitative research methodology was used, so that we could discover the extent to which the use of internet may motivate young learners. Denzin & Lincoln (2005:3) claim that qualitative research is a situated activity that placed the observer in the world to make it visible through an interpretative and naturalistic approach. Moreover, to carry this out, researchers study matters in their normal settings in order to make an attempt to interpret phenomena of the meanings people give them to get a better inside of the subject matter (ibid, 2005:3). Another important aspect of qualitative research is the fact that it aims at understanding a particular research problem from the view of the informants involved and it is mainly effective in obtaining specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors and social context of specific populations (Mack et al, 2005:1).
A great advantage of qualitative research is its ability to provide intricate textual descriptions about how informants experience certain research issues. Besides the information that provides is the often contradictory behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals. Mack et al (2005:1) state that qualitative methods are useful to recognize imperceptible factors whose role in research may not be easily apparent. These are factors such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity and religion. Those aspects can be interpreted and give researchers a better understanding of the complexity of a real given situation by implementing qualitative research (ibid, 2005:1).

3.1 CONTEXT

This qualitative study was carried out in a Public Elementary School in a major city in the north-east of Mexico. This school formed part of the National English Pilot Program in Basic Education. The Ministry of Education implemented this program in some elementary schools along the Mexican country. Before the school became part of the National English Program, young learners have not had previous English lessons. Therefore, with this program most of the learners were in contact with the language for the first time. The subject is not part of the curriculum as it is complementary. Grades are not part of their formal report card though students do take examinations every two months after covering each unit of the curriculum and they are given grades.

Students knew that the English subject was not mandatory and that the grades did not affect their general performance. Therefore, this factor seemed to lessen the significance of the subject, course content and the students’ motivation inside the classroom. Even though, students were not quite motivated to participate and be active learners in class, the educational setting was an asset to carry out the first stage of the action research. All the classrooms were equipped with some electronic devices such as a computer, printer, projector and wireless internet. All these resources made easier to work in class with different internet activities (games, videos and webpages)
and presentation software (PowerPoint presentations and games). On the other hand, learners had English lessons twice a week on Tuesdays and Fridays and every lesson lasted fifty minutes.

Another important aspect about this group was the fact that there was a good learning environment, good communication among students and the teacher and a low level of disruptive behavior; all these aspects facilitated the process of doing research in this specific context as well as the support from the teacher in charge of the group. She was respectful and she allowed me to work with the group and to make use of the technological resources (computer, printer and projector) they had in the classroom.

3.2 THE INFORMANTS

The informants chosen to provide the data were twenty-seven young learners from fifth grade. The learners were cooperative and willing to write the logs when I asked them to. Moreover, they agreed to be part of this research project as well as their parents. I decided to work with this particular group of young learners because they seemed to lack motivation, some of them were reluctant to work in class, pay attention and only a few of them participated and felt confident to ask more than once if they did not grasp certain topics. They were old enough to give their opinions and write about the feelings towards the materials presented in class to learn English. Even though the time for each lesson was short, students worked hard to finish the activities on time and they hardly ever missed classes, so the regular attendance was another factor that influenced the selection of this particular group. The majority of the learners mentioned having access to a computer and internet. Therefore, they showed interest when internet materials were used to give a class (before the research project started) as some of them wanted to visit the same webpages and sites presented in class to practice what they learnt. Students seemed to be excited, willing to participate and they seemed to feel more confident when using internet resources as teaching tools.
3.3 INSTRUMENTS

To gather information, the instruments used during the data collection process were students’ learning logs (see appendix A) to find out their opinions and feelings about the use of some Internet resources (games, videos and webpages) to learn, practice and reinforce certain topics in class. With the learning logs learners had a “vehicle for reflection” (Moon, 2003:3). According to Hopkins (2002:107) logs are a brilliant manner to obtain truthful feedback so the teacher can obtain an indication of the general class environment in order to improve the quality of the class by means of involving learners. This particular instrument seemed to be adequate for the purposes of this research project for several reasons: learners had the chance to record and reflect upon their individual behavior in the learning and teaching context over the period of time they were asked to write, and this was also a good record of how this thinking changed with time. They recorded what influenced this change in their thinking and the impact of the Internet activities on their initial behavior, feelings and opinions during the time the data was collected. Moreover, logs provided information about behavior that is not easily observed such a positive attitude toward the class or school, it develops and insight of the informants’ of difficult access when interacting with them (The University of Sheffield, 2013).

The logs were written in Spanish in order to avoid misunderstandings about what they had to write due to the lack of English vocabulary and knowledge. Students were allowed to write in Spanish to give them confidence to express themselves freely, but most important of all, to make them feel comfortable with the task as they had not had previous knowledge of English so it would have taken them more time to write their opinions and feelings in the target language. The logs were based on four main questions to help them reflect upon their insights of the internet as a tool for learning English. The purpose of the learning log was to know the young learners feelings, and thoughts about the English class.
There were four questions included in the learning log. The first question was designed to know the students’ thoughts about the activities in class and about the manner they perceived the Internet resources were presented.

The second question aimed at knowing students feelings such as excitement, nervousness, concern, etc., during the class. The purpose of the questions was to have a personal description of students’ reactions towards the activities and why they consider they felt that way. The third question explored whether students considered they learnt something through the activities and what it was that they learnt. This question attempted to help students to reflect upon their individual learning.

Finally, the fourth question was designed with the intention of examining students’ opinions about the use of Internet activities like games and videos to learn English. The main purpose of it was to find out learners’ personal opinions regarding the use of Internet aids to learn English. Therefore, with the learning logs I sought to understand the insights of the informants about the use of some Internet resources to learn English at their particular educational settings. Moreover, I attempted to understand the impact of Internet on young learners’ motivation.

Due to different aspects like the lack of motivation and confidence shown by some students, learning logs seemed to be an appropriate resource to be in contact with quiet learners and to have and understanding of their opinions. Carlsmith claims (cited in Moon, 2003:4) that journals make possible for reticent students to establish and give their opinions...journals promote active learning and they help learners to feel relax and find their own voice.

3.4 PROCEDURE
To carry out this action research project, it was needed to take into account different factors to collect the data. I had to think about specific questions needed to obtain the
necessary information, to see if they were understandable and clear to answer the questions for the purposes of this research project. Moreover, I had to be specific about the length (between 4-8 lines for each question) and read aloud every question so the informants understood what they had to write. Informants were aware of the fact that the log was a tool for them to express freely so they were asked to be honest as much as possible. The time was the main concern during the whole process as the classes only lasted fifty minutes each session, therefore a careful planning was required to cover the lesson and give students enough time to write their logs after each class.

The logs were written immediately the lessons were over. Learners had to write about their opinions, feelings and thoughts regarding the Internet resources presented in class to learn English. They had some time to reflect upon what they learnt, how they felt and if they thought the activities helped them to learn something and what it was that they learnt.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The data collection took place during the month of April 2013. The logs were written during the last five minutes in class, immediately after the lessons were over. Learners wrote one log per week, over a period of four weeks. As the logs were in Spanish, I translated some of the information into English so that the language fitted with the research project one. It is important to take into account that because of the translating process some ideas had to be expressed differently to maintain the original meaning.

The data provided by the informants was analyzed and categorized based on grounded theory methodology. Grounded theory was originated in 1967 by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. This research methodology aimed to originate theories of human behavior from empirical data (Urquhart, 2001:2). Strauss & Corbin (1994:273) claim that grounded theory is:
A general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed. Theory evolves during actual research, and it does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection.

Therefore, it was the most appropriate way to analyze the information collected to meet the general objective of this action research project, as I was interested in knowing whether the use of certain internet resources would promote young learners’ motivation or not and what their thoughts, opinions and ideas were. A similarity between Grounded theory and qualitative research is that the sources of data are the same, for example, interviews, field observations and diaries, letters, autobiographies, biographies, and newspapers (Strauss & Corbin, 1994:274).

An important aspect about Grounded theory is that categories emerge from the data itself. Therefore, Grounded theory data analysis “involves searching out the concepts behind the actualities by looking for codes, then concepts and finally categories (Ke & Wenglensky, 2010)”.

In this action research, the categories that emerged from the informants’ learning logs were six. In order to uncover these categories Grounded Theory methods were used.

The first step of the data analysis was open coding. According to Strauss and Corbin open coding is a procedure where “the data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and questions are asked about the phenomena reflected in the data (cited in LaRossa, 2005:841)”. Therefore, in this stage, I identified important group of words in their learning logs and then I labelled them to develop variables in order to gather the key points of the data.
After having identified the important group of words, the following step was axial coding. According to Birks & Mills (2010:12), this stage involves to “reconnect the data in ways that are conceptually much more abstract than would be produced by a thematic analysis”. Therefore, after having identified the key points and re-reading the informants’ learning logs, I examined the variables and their relationship among them and I assembled the data of similar content to be grouped in categories.

Once, I had framed the concepts I integrated them in categories in a way that were relevant to the objective of my action research project. This evolved from comparing the events to focusing on emergent properties of each category. This stage of Grounded theory is known as selective coding. The categories were novelty, satisfaction, active learning and interactive behavior, beneficial, self-identification and autonomy.

### 3.5.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION

This project examined a fifth grade elementary class where the use of different Internet technology was used as main resource. To carry out this action research project, it was necessary to plan the lessons carefully, to search for the appropriate Internet sources and materials (pages, videos and games) to accomplish the objective of the lesson. Young learners attended class twice a week during the course of one year. For three weeks, learners took part in a class where Internet technology was the main aid to provide students with activities, games and videos for learning purposes. Each class was fifty minutes in length. Therefore, it was necessary to devise some activities with the aim of stimulating and widening young learners’ motivation inside the classroom, to help them grasp the grammatical point of the unit and considering at the same time the length of the class.

In order to present the main topic of the unit, I implemented the Topic-based instruction also known as Themed-based instruction. In this approach, the language
structures of the course are designed around certain topics or themes (Brinton et al cited in Yang, 2009:162). The main characteristics of this approach are that classroom activities and learning materials are organized around a specific theme or topic and its objective is to help students to acquire competence in the target language (Brinton et al, cited in Lúðvíksdóttir, 2011:10).

The grammar point of the unit was Simple Past. Therefore, the Internet materials and activities revolved around this topic. To introduce the theme, I used presentation software or best known by its product name as PowerPoint (Microsoft), some games from a web page called http://www.eslgamesplus.com (see appendix) and some videos from YouTube to practice and reinforce the verbs formation in simple past. These presentations were aimed at getting students interest and helping them to understand the Simple Past grammar point and how to build the past form of regular and irregular verbs.

The first week was divided in two sessions, according to the schedule they had lessons on Tuesdays and Fridays. In the first session, the grammar explanation was introduced through a PowerPoint presentation. The activities where divided in three sections previewing activity, while-viewing activity, and post-viewing activity. Because of the length of the classes (50 minutes) in the first session the previewing and while-viewing activity were carried out, the post-viewing activity was performed in the second session.

**Previewing activity**

The name of the topic was presented and students were asked to brainstorm some ideas about what they thought the topic was about. They looked intrigued by the name of the topic but after a few minutes young learners started to participate as they connected their knowledge of what they knew about the Simple Past tense in Spanish with the name of the topic.
**While-viewing activity**

The slides consisted of a grammar explanation about the use of the Simple Past, some examples and a set of regular verbs. Each verb had their own image to represent it in order to avoid the translation of the verbs into Spanish. This activity was intended to stimulate participation among students as well as to discover on their own how to form the past simple of the regular verbs. Once they had an idea of how the verbs changed, students started to raise their hands to give the past form of the rest of the verbs.

**Post-viewing activity**

The post viewing activity consisted of a PowerPoint game to reinforce the formation of regular verbs in past. The first slide had a brief explanation of the spelling rules for the regular verbs. The following slides consisted of some images and sentences referring the images, students had to choose the correct verb to complete the sentence to move forward (see appendix B). To carry out this activity students were divided in teams so everyone could participate.

During the third session, students discussed what they learnt from the PowerPoint presentation about past simple, the spelling rules for the regular verbs and what they liked about the activities they carried out the previous session. In this third session, students were introduced a set of irregular verbs through a PowerPoint presentation. Students looked at the image and the name of the verb in infinitive. Then, by clicking the images, the verbs changed into their past form.

The Internet resource used to practice and reinforce what students learnt was a music video of a song called “I saw her standing there” by The Beatles. This music video was aimed at promoting young learners’ motivation, helping them with the listening skill and also to reinforce the formation of some verbs in past simple. In order to make the activity appealing I used the video from the game called “The Beatles Rock Band” (see appendix C) instead of presenting a video with just the lyrics.
**Previewing activity**

Before listening to the song and watching the video, some images related to the band were presented. These images were the UK flag, the four members of the band and the name of the band. Students were asked whether they knew something about the band, where they were from, why they were famous and if they had listened to their songs.

**While-viewing activity**

Students were given a handout with the lyrics. They had to fill in with the verbs in past simple while music video was playing for the first time. Then, I played the video one more time and students remained in silence and watched the video.

**Post-viewing activity**

After that, they had a group discussion about what they thought of the song and the video whether they liked it or not. They read the lyrics aloud to practice the pronunciation. This time I played a music video with the lyrics on the screen so learners could read them and sang along the song.

During the last session and in order to conclude the grammar point of the unit, students had a review of the work that it had been done in class. They practiced what they learnt through games. For that purpose I used the web page http://www.eslgamesplus.com (see appendix D). The games were aimed at practicing the past form of the verbs. They played “Irregular Past Tense Jeopardy” (see appendix E). In this game, there were four rows and each of them had different boxes with different scores. Every team had to choose a box and then a sentence appeared, they had to choose and complete it with the correct form of the verb given. The team with more points won.

The “Sentence Monkey Past Simple Irregular Verbs” game (see appendix F) had the same purpose of reinforcing the irregular verbs, as they are problematic when learning
English. In order to give everyone the chance to participate, students got in teams and every member of the team took their turn to answer. If they felt insecure, the team members could help them to answer the sentence. In this game, they had to read the sentences and then, they discussed the answer. They took turns to go to the computer and they had to drag and drop the words into the correct spaces to complete the sentence. After that, they clicked submit. If their answers were correct, the monkey would get a banana and danced. The team with more correct answers won the sentence monkey game. The team took their turn to answer. If they felt unsecured, the team members could help them to answer the sentence. In this game, they had to read the sentences and then, they discussed the answer. They took turns to go to the computer and they had to drag and drop the words into the correct spaces to complete the sentence. After that, they clicked submit. If their answers were correct, the monkey would get a banana and danced. The team with more correct answers won the sentence monkey game. All the activities were carried out in the classroom so students did not work on their own at home, therefore the learner’s parents were not involved the learning process as it would have been wanted during this project.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

A Grounded theory method was employed as the framework for the first stage of this action research project. It was required to establish an analytic model (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) based on the analysis of learning logs in order to make an attempt to understand young learners’ opinions and feelings about the use of some Internet resources to learn English at a public primary school.

The intent of a grounded theory study is to “generate or discover an abstract analytical schema of a phenomenon that relates to a particular situation” (Creswell, cited in Kim 2008:245). Therefore, Grounded theory was the most appropriate form of analysis as the process consisted of creating codes, categories, discovering themes and from those creating hypotheses about the informants’ feelings, opinions and thoughts along with the integration of a literature review and the opinions of some experts in the matter.

Any words or sentences relating to the students’ feelings, opinions and thoughts of the role of the Internet resources (games, videos and web pages) as well as the role of the computer technology (PowerPoint presentations) were coded, conceptualized and then categorized using the constant comparative approach until the categories were saturated. Six categories emerged from my data. These were novelty, satisfaction, active learning and interactive behavior, beneficial, self-identification and autonomy.

The first category is novelty. This is closely related to the changes that occurred in the learning environment and the stimulus that resulted from the use of computer technology as the informants pointed out in the data provided.

4.1 NOVELTY

In this extract, the fact that teamwork is promoted is a dynamic that calls this student attention. This may be a type of work she is not accustomed to develop
in class. However, games should be used to have a good time in class, but as, in this case, promote teamwork.

001
I feel happy in the English class because I have a lot of fun. We play games like bingo and sometimes the teacher even makes us work in teams. I have had a lot of fun (Margarita).

Along with novelty, what emerged from the data analysis was the manner in which students affirmed to feel when they were presented the different Internet resources inside the classroom and how they felt when they perceived this computer technology had helped them to acquire knowledge about the language.

4.2 SATISFACTION
The following extract shows how important is for the student to have a feeling of strong gratification in a learning environment in order to acquire the target language. Furthermore, the use of computer technology seemed to promote that feeling of gratification as the informant affirmed that he had acquired new knowledge with the help of those resources and this pleased him as well.

002
I felt good because I learnt something new about the language. The Internet activities and games helped me to understand the topic besides they were funny and interesting. I also felt happy because I can see that every day I learn something new and that makes me feel motivated (Abif).

Along with novelty, what emerged from the data analysis was the manner in which students affirmed to feel when they were presented the different Internet resources inside the classroom and how they felt when they perceived this computer technology had helped them to acquire knowledge about the language.
4.3 ACTIVE LEARNING AND INTERACTIVE BEHAVIOR

The next extract demonstrated how the informant was engaged in their own learning, the manner in which they reacted to the activities and how those activities promoted participation in the classroom. Therefore, the use of varied teaching materials helped to get students involved and promote student activity and reflection about their own learning. In addition, the informant recognized computer technology as a mean that nurtures the appropriate learning environment in order to acquire and practice a foreign language.

003
I like to learn from the Internet because I feel stimulated; it has helped me to improve my knowledge of English. Before, I did not understand much but since the teacher had made use of PowerPoint presentations, music videos and Internet games the classes are easier, interesting and we all participate. Furthermore, the activities helped me to learn and reflect upon the formation of verbs in past simple (Mica).

The use of computer technology as a means of offering benefits was another category that emerged from the data analysis in this research project. The informants considered the use of the Internet activities as educational and beneficial as it helped them to improve their knowledge about the language as it is shown in the next extract.

4.4 BENEFICIAL

In this extract, the student regarded the use of computer technology as something that derives advantages for their learning process, as the use of different Internet activities seemed to be a tool for reviewing and reinforcing what they had learnt in class. Therefore, the incorporation of technology in students’ learning experience should not be disregarded.
The class helped me to review and reinforce the topics from the previous lessons. The games, the PowerPoint presentations and the videos helped me to learn more about the language in a different way. Moreover, I would like to do more activities like these to prepare myself for the exam (Carlos).

The following category is related to the informants’ self-identification. This category examined the informants’ personal thoughts about themselves and the manner in which they perceived their feelings and knowledge regarding the learning environment and the activities performed in class.

4.5 SELF-IDENTIFICATION

This extract draws the attention to how students self-perceived regarding their learning process and how their knowledge about the language had changed positively with time and by engaging in the activities presented in class. Thus, computer technology when used in an appropriate manner can help students to reflect upon their selves and own learning.

At the beginning, I felt a little insecure as it seemed difficult for me to learn English but the Internet games, videos and PowerPoint presentations helped me to learn new things I did not know before. Now, I feel happy because I am learning more about the language with the help of the activities (Alex).

The last category that emerged from the data analysis was autonomy. The data presented in the following extract showed that students demonstrated an awareness of their knowledge as well as using that knowledge to put into practice what they learnt to do the activities without the teacher’s guidance.
4.6 AUTONOMY

The following extract examines the role of students in an EFL learning environment as they considered the Internet activities as a mean to promote personal independence inside the classroom. This student identified the use of Internet as a resource to learn and develop autonomy inside the classroom as it enabled the student to work without the constant supervision and feedback from the teacher, promoting learners autonomy in the classroom.

I think the use of the Internet makes things easier because there are different colorful and attractive activities that can be used and with the teacher’s explanation, I can perform the activities by myself, as we know how to use a computer (Benjamin).

An attempt to answer the two main research questions helped me to understand young learners’ feelings, opinions and thoughts regarding the use of computer technology inside an EFL classroom at a public elementary school. According to the data analyzed, the use of computer technology was a manner to introduce novelty inside the classroom; furthermore, it enhanced student interaction by promoting teamwork. The use of Internet resources promoted a great sense of satisfaction among students as they affirmed to acquire knowledge through it. In addition to satisfaction, the Internet encouraged active learning and interactive behavior among students, as they had the opportunity to reflect upon their own learning process and their previous learning experiences in the classroom. Learners claimed that the activities were beneficial for their learning purposes, as they helped them to improve their knowledge about the language, to review and reinforce what they learnt in the previous classes. The technological resources exposed the role of the students as they could notice how their self-image (self-identification) changed from a starting point when the teacher did not use those resources to the point when they were integrated in the classroom. Finally, autonomy was the last aspect that emerged in this research project, as learners
argued feeling confident enough to perform the activities without the constant help and direction of the teacher.

Therefore, the use of technological aids within my research context fostered novelty, learner satisfaction, interactive behavior and learner autonomy; all of them are aspects teachers strive for inside the classroom. Taking into account the positive effects technology can bring about and the different perspectives for language learning, EFL and ESL teachers have accepted the use of technology for language learning as different research shows computer technology can enable communication, decrease anxiety and boost student motivation (Yang & Chen, 2007:862).
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND REFLECTIONS

After exploring and interpreting the data in the previous chapter, what emerged from the present study is explained in this chapter. The six categories uncovered in this research action demonstrate that young learners’ reactions towards the use of computer technology inside the classroom had a positive effect in the manner how they perceived themselves as active learners, the feeling of satisfaction regarding the acquisition of knowledge and at the same time, the motivation promoted by the different Internet materials. The positive impact on students’ behavior demonstrated that when computer technology is focused in an appropriate manner can boost students’ confidence, motivation and teamwork when learning a foreign language, reducing anxiety.

The first category, novelty, addresses the importance of bringing varied teaching materials to the classroom in order to gain students interest and promote stimulus to engage students in the learning process. This was clearly related to how computer technology can be used as a valid resource to design material and to seek and gather useful materials for both, teaching and learning. This seems to echoes Tomlinson’s statement (1998:7) that materials should attain impact to attract learners’ curiosity, interest and attention so they can grasp some of the language in the materials. Furthermore, novelty, variety, attractive presentation and appealing content are some characteristics that materials should strive.

The second category indicated that self-esteem relates positively with satisfaction and the learning process. If learners felt good about themselves, it provided more satisfaction and confidence; this created a positive learning environment. This category showed that it was important for students to feel satisfied with themselves as they connected the feelings of gratification with acquiring knowledge. They regarded the acquisition of knowledge as something positive that boosted their confidence to
participate in class. Therefore, if teaching resources promote gratification inside the classroom, students will feel good about themselves and they would be motivated to learn. This is related to what Paulsen (2001) states that interactive and web-based activities can enhance students’ learning process and boost students’ motivation.

The third category addressed active learning and interactive behavior. According to what students indicated, the use of Internet games arose positive stimulus in the classroom. Therefore, stimulus involved students in making decisions, communicating with their peers, promoting teamwork inside the classroom. Moreover, they were aware of their role as students inside the classroom as active learners. As they were engaged in their own learning, they perceived their motivations, attitudes and their positions within the class and the activities performed. It allowed students to be actively thinking about the information presented and to perform different skills typical in teacher-centered lessons. This seems to support Ribak’s statement (cited in Livingstone, 2003:5) about the key role of children regarding the use of internet, their role is to understand the use and the purpose of Internet in order to establish good communication among them and the teacher so learners can be active and cooperative.

It also emerged from the data that students regarded the use of computer technology as something beneficial for them. As they affirmed that the technological resources helped them to learn, remember, reinforce and review different aspects of the topic presented. That meant that students were involved and engaged in the class; teamwork was promoted which provided students with real life situations where they will have to make decisions and learn to work with others. Here, the teacher plays an important role, as they have to provide students with appropriate and varied teaching materials according to their students’ needs. This supports Dörnyei and Murphey’s (2003) statement about the aspects that contribute to the success of classroom learning. According to them, the success of the classroom will depend on the students’
relationship among them, the classroom environment, teamwork, effective communication and the type of roles teachers and students play.

The data analysis brought out another aspect that contributes to promote motivation inside the classroom. This is learners’ self-identification regarding their learning process, behavior in class and teacher’s direction. The informants of this research project affirmed computer technology derives advantages for their learning process, as the use of different Internet activities helped them to nurture their knowledge about the language, besides, through computer technology students reflect upon their selves and own learning. This category relates to the role of the student inside the classroom. Learners are expected to have an active role rather than a passive; they are expected to develop reflection about their learning progress, to be cooperative and to establish a good communication and relationships among them and teachers in order to have a successful classroom learning (Dörnyei and Murphey, 2003).

Finally, the last category addressed is autonomy. The category was clearly related to the role of the teachers as facilitator and resource provider inside the classroom. According to the data analysis, learners regarded the use of computer technology as the center of the class and not the teacher as information provider. It had a positive impact on students’ personal independence (autonomy) as they perceived computer technology as a useful tool for learning and acquiring knowledge about the language. They affirmed having knowledge about how to use a computer so this means that learners can have control over their learning process and be little dependent on the teacher’s direction. Furthermore, they were in charge of making decisions when working in teams, evaluating their progress and defining if the computer technology was in somehow useful for them.

This research project demonstrated that the use of Internet games and videos along with PowerPoint presentations had a positive impact on students’ feelings, opinions
and thoughts when it was used as a resource to promote language learning and motivation. Moreover, results showed that some positive effects in the classroom took placed. As learners pointed out, in this case the role of teacher changed, as students perceived her as a resource provider and facilitator and rather than being the center of the attention. Furthermore, computer technology favored a pleasant learning environment where it promoted teamwork, students’ self-esteem increased and they developed reflective thinking as they analyzed and made judgments about what had been happening with their own learning process. This point is particularly relevant to the fact that a class can be enjoyable by using technology and it can be productive at the same time in order to reduce students’ anxiety. Therefore, teachers should not abuse of the use of computer to promote successful language learning environment.

The use of Internet games, videos and web pages as well as PowerPoint presentations provided students with virtual environment. In the virtual environment students explored the impact of their decisions made, they were engaged actively in their learning process by constant reflection about how they perceived the process of acquiring a foreign language through the integration of theory and practice contextualized in games and videos. Computer technology helped students choices about how to convey a given idea, word or concept through videos, animation, text, colors and images.

Concluding this section, we can say that creating a positive effect on students learning process and promote their intrinsic motivation are the challenges of any teacher. Ngeow asserts (cited in Boulter, 2007:122) that learning theorists have stressed that learners need a reason, a desire and a positive attitude to attain learning. Therefore, promoting and strengthening students’ motivation are some of the most important activities in the classroom to successful learning and these activities are of paramount importance for teachers to strive.
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The study has gone some way towards the understanding that computer technology could open a wealth of resources for EFL teachers and students; it can help teachers to motivate young minds and promote a different learning environment. It is not the remedy for all the teaching and learning situations, it depends on the teacher to decide when to use it and how to use it for the benefit of the learners. Based upon the findings from this study, it can be assumed that computer technology can be seen not only as an instrument but also as pedagogic support to gain students’ interest. As internet can help teachers to find different teaching materials which otherwise would be in somehow difficult to find, besides, the internet is full of audios, animations, pictures, videos and reading materials for different learning styles.

The context was an important aspect for this study. School conditions were factors that helped me to carry out this research project, as the classroom was technologically equipped. This facilitated the implementation of the Internet activities inside the classroom. Therefore, computer technology integration will depend on viability and the teacher’s context.

Despite, the wonders of Internet, there are certain aspects to take into consideration before using it. Some of the limitations of this study were technological malfunctions problem like a slow Internet connection that made teacher waste valuable time and lose students’ attention. This is something teachers must bear in mind before making use of it, as slow Internet access or not access at all can wreck the entire lesson. In addition, it was also necessary to invest time to search for the appropriate materials, to select web pages and activities according to the level of English, purposes of the class and the suitability for students’ ages. This is related to the role of the teacher, as it was necessary to design appropriate activities where technology could be successfully integrated, the teacher’s ability to present the teaching materials and how they
consider is the appropriate manner to use the computer technology to promote students’ awareness of their learning process and help them to discover content knowledge by themselves.

The work carried out in this research project has exposed some areas worthy for further investigation such as:

- The integration of technology in the curriculum for EFL young learner’s instruction.
- The implementation of complementary Internet activities as a tool to promote English learning in young learners.
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APPENDIX A

The paper learning log that was used to gather information after the lesson was concluded.

My English Log

Name:

Escribe brevemente cómo te ha parecido la clase, qué has hecho en clase, cómo te has sentido y cuál es tu opinión sobre el uso de actividades o juegos de internet para la clase de inglés.

La clase fue muy buena, la maestra Zaira nos enseñó cómo hacer preguntas conforme a lo que queríamos. Me he sentido bien. Mi opinión sobre los juegos de internet y las actividades es que son muy buenas porque respecto a eso aprendemos más, sobre lo que vemos y escuchamos.

My English Log

Name:

Escribe brevemente cómo te has parecido la clase, qué has hecho en clase, cómo te has sentido y cuál es tu opinión sobre el uso de actividades o juegos de internet para la clase de inglés.

La clase me ha parecido interesante e interactivo. He aprendido sobre las preguntas. Me he sentido activa con ganas de aprender más. Mi opinión es que nos enseñen más para no preguntar que se ignoren. Esto que enseña en inglés sobre el uso de internet me parece interesante por que así se aprende virtual encima.
APPENDIX B

The following game had the aimed of helping students’ to reinforced what they had learnt in class after two sessions. Team work was promoted through this.
APPENDIX C

Music Video from the song “I saw her standing there, The Beatles Rock Band”
APPENDIX D

Game from the web page www.eslgamesplus.com
APPENDIX E

Jeopardy game to practice past simple irregular verbs. In this game students worked in teams and they had the chance to choose their character to represent their team.