Unveiling Students’ Identities through Written Responses to Literature in an EFL Virtual Community

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School of Science and Education

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Bogotá, Colombia

2015
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“A thesis submitted as a requirement to obtain the title of Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics to the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language”.

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Bogotá, Colombia

2015
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Artículo 177: “La Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas no será responsable por las ideas expuestas en esta tesis”
This thesis is dedicated to God.

Your encouraging words at my lowest moments were my source of strength.

All my victories are yours.

To the woman who holds my heart.

To my precious wife,

To the one who made me a father.

I love you Ethel.

To Nahum, Aby, and Christine.

My little ones:

All of you are a piece of me

This is for you guys!

To Mom and Dad.

Thanks for your neverending support.

You are such amazing fighters.

You are such great teachers.
Acknowledgment

I would like to thank those who made this professional project possible. To Professor Esperanza Vera; whose timely guidance, support, and patience were the core for the writing of this manuscript. Thanks for being available when I needed you in order to make this happen.

All my professors at the Master’s Program who showed me a more human side of English teaching, and a more challenging side of research. Doctor Clelia Pineda and Doctor Marcela Chapetón: thank you very much for teaching me how to “play the system.” To Doctor Harold Castañeda and Doctor Amparo Clavijo, thanks for your valuable insights on literacy and methodology.

To my students at Gimnasio Femenino. Thank you so much for letting me learn from you. You cannot imagine how much you taught me all these years. You have left a powerful image in my heart that will never be erased.

To all my Masters’ classmates of the 2011 cohort. Thanks for all the moments, support, and motivation. I hope our paths will cross again soon.
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Abstract

This qualitative case study explores the identity relations that four eighth-grade students enacted through their written responses to literature in an EFL virtual community. The participants responded to three literary texts approached in the English Language Arts class during the school year 2012-2013. The written text types the participants used to respond to these literary works were a literary commentary, a poem, and an argumentative composition.

This study concludes that participants’ identities were unveiled with reference to the type of reader stance each of them assumed in her written responses within a continuum, ranging from a predominantly efferent reading stance to a predominantly aesthetic one, Rosenblatt (1995). Furthermore, the participants enacted relations of difference or affiliation through language, in order to establish processes of identity display, construction, or negotiation, (Bucholtz & Hall, 2008).

Key Words: Students’ identity, positioning, differentiation, affiliation, efferent reader’s response, aesthetic reader’s response, reading transactions, virtual community.
Chapter I

Introduction

This chapter introduces the main purpose and goal of this study; the statement of the research problem, the research question and objectives, and the rationale of this study.

This study looks into the way four eighth-grade students from Gimnasio Femenino use different writing genres to respond to literary texts in the English language arts class, the connections that can be established between the reader stance(s) they assume when responding in an EFL virtual community and the identities they portray while interacting in that community. This research aims at exploring the mediation of writing genres in the composition of students’ written responses to literature published in a virtual community, and identifying and describing the types of reader response and the identities portrayed in their interaction in the virtual community.

Statement of the problem

Two sets of problems were identified in the initial stage of this study. The first one is more general, and is related to the focus of previous research in the school’s English department, which looks into the need for increasing proficiency in formal aspects of language. As a result, this type of practices has been extrapolated to annual and term planners, which are used by all the teachers of the English area. The second one is more specific, and has to do with concrete issues that were detected in the participant group by means of observation and interviews; despite the endeavor of some of the English area teachers to incorporate technology in their classes to innovate teaching and learning practices, or to attend students’ needs in regards to formal components of language learning, it has been
evidenced that these efforts to change teaching practices have not been documented. In other words, research into the socio-cultural aspects of language such as identity have not yet been explored or even brought up at Gimnasio Femenino. Instead, more attention has been paid to looking for strategies to solve problems related to formal aspects of language such as low proficiency levels in reading and writing in elementary school.

Hence, the focus of language instruction in the English department of Gimnasio Femenino needs to start looking into the social and cultural dimensions of language learning mentioned above, since language is not a set of perfect forms that disregard its speakers, but it is more like a group of situated utterances in which speakers, in dialogue with others, struggle to create meanings (Bakhtin, 1984). This means that attention to the external, structural components of the language in the classroom needs to be shifted towards a study of the social context(s) in which language is used as a means to interact.

Such written interaction did not exist in this research context before this study started. What I observed in the classes I taught in eighth grade before the implementation of this project was that students were not used to publishing their responses and reactions to the literary works or other reading selections covered in class, as can be noticed in the survey conducted (see appendix A). When they produced a written product, they did not expect a person different from the teacher to read it, which made me, their teacher, their only audience. Interaction among the students in the written form to discuss topics pertaining to the class did not exist (see appendix A). On the teacher’s side, there is a fixed curriculum that dictates the writing genres that need to be taught in all grade levels. The students need to manage the conventions of those written products, write with accurate grammar and spelling, and transmit an appropriate message through their compositions. Ensuring students’ success in that matter is not entirely the teacher’s responsibility; however presenting adequate strategies for students’ successful management of these contents is part of the teaching job.
Therefore, given the fact that every time language learners interact in the second language they are engaged in identity construction and negotiation (Lantolf, 2000) and that language is the primary medium for identity construction (Reeves, 2002), there is a need to:

a. make students’ pieces of writing available for others to provoke interaction and meaningful writing; b. study the phenomenon of student identity in language within such interaction and, c. adapt the fixed components of the English curriculum to meaningful literacy practices in which the students are more central to their own learning process.

Regarding the audience of written texts, Ward (2004) asserts that what students write does not mean anything to them because it does not need to mean anything to anyone else. When asked if they would like to have other peers read their written products, all the participants of this study expressed that they would always like to have other people read their written work before submission to the teacher. However, the reason for them to do so is to have better grades and have their teacher’s approval. In addition to this, they claimed that their texts already had mistakes that should be pointed out by the one who knows their whole writing process (their teacher, see appendix A). These views confirm Ward’s position in regards to the lack of their written interaction, and the formal focus that language teaching and learning has had in the English area. With these ideas in mind, I decided to pose the following research question and objectives.

**Research question:**

- What do students’ written responses to literature in an EFL virtual community reveal about their identities?

**Objectives:**

- To explore the way students’ identities are unveiled in their written responses to literature in an EFL virtual community.
• To describe the identity relations that students enact through their written interactions in an EFL virtual community.

Rationale

This research aims at exploring the mediation of writing genres in the composition of written responses to literature published in a virtual community, and describing the role of that virtual community as a shaper of identity. Considering the importance that information and communication technologies –thereafter ICT are having nowadays in students’ learning processes, this study recognizes a virtual community as a group of people who interact with each other, learn from each other’s work, and provide knowledge and information resources to the group (Hunter, 2002). Additionally, this virtual community was presented as a space for students to share their views and thoughts regarding their literature selections. Students’ interactions in a virtual community are archived, which allows for their ongoing availability, and in turn, “positions participants to revise the images of themselves” (Renninger and Shumar, 2002). This revision of “the images of themselves” could include double-checking their entries before posting, comparing views about the discussed topics over time, affiliation or rejection of positions of other participants, or affirmation of beliefs with respect to a discussion, just to name a few examples.

By including the technological component in this research, this study also contributes to having more students of the school achieve one of the goals stated in the Linguistic Policy of Gimnasio Femenino (see appendix B). This policy declares that both English language skills and research skills are pivotal points to be developed in daily practices in the classroom (p. 8). In this regard, Warschauer (2004) asserts that the inclusion of technology in language learning allows language learners to “master the kinds of information and communication media that will allow them to use their new language in potentially powerful ways, such as
for national and international communication, investigation and research knowledge (…)” (p. 46).

The participants of this study had reflection opportunities to evaluate their own responses and their peers’ through interacting in this community. Lantolf (2000) suggests that every time language learners interact in the second language, whether in the oral or written mode, they are engaged in identity construction and negotiation. In the same train of thought, Bernstein, (2000) claims that studying the identities of language learners is relevant because it deals with the ways students understand their relationship to the social world in which they live, and that could lead to enhancement of language acquisition processes.

In this way, by studying the written responses to literature of these four students, it will be possible to elucidate the identities they portrayed whenever they participated in this EFL virtual community; in addition to this, the way those identities were constructed, negotiated, or rejected through the comments they posted on each other’s responses will be explored.

This document is organized into six chapters: the first chapter presents the research problem that this study intended to approach, as well as the research question and objectives that guided it in regards to written responses to literature in virtual communities and identity display. Chapter II discusses the main theoretical constructs and authors that set the foundations for this study. This chapter discusses literacy as a socially situated practice (Rosenblatt, 1988; Baynham, 1995; Lantolf, 2000), student identity display and construction (McNamara, 1997; Norton, 2000; Bucholtz and Hall, 2005; Omoniyi and White, 2006), and virtual communities (Smith, 1999; Hunter, 2000; Nolan and Weiss, 2002). Chapter III informs the reader about the research design, which is based on a case study methodology (Nunan, 1998), along with a description of the context and the participants of this study, data
collection instruments, validity, the role of researcher and ethical considerations. Chapter IV deals with the instructional design of this pedagogical intervention; it discusses the project’s vision of language, learning, curriculum, and classroom. In addition to this, it presents a thorough description of the phases of this intervention, the literary works, the types of writing the students produced, and a detailed timeline of the phases and readings of this pedagogical intervention. Chapter V describes the process of data organization and analysis, along with the emerged findings and insights gained from said data analysis. Chapter VI discusses the final conclusions of the study, its implications for the field of applied linguistics and pedagogy, limitations, and ideas for further research.
Chapter II

Theoretical framework

This chapter describes the literature that supports this study, such as language and literacy from a social perspective, writing as situated social practice, reading transactions and readers’ response theory, students’ identity, and virtual communities. This study is framed within a socio-constructivist perspective to literacy; hence, I first present a brief discussion of the most relevant social theories of language and literacy from the socio-constructivist and sociocultural perspectives in order to set this study, and afterwards the research studies conducted in relation to the main constructs of this study.

Socio-constructivist and sociocultural theories of language and literacy

Johns (1997) poses three angles on literacy theories: a traditional view, which is based on skills; a learner-centered view, which investigates individual features and psycholinguistic-cognitive traits; and a socioliterate view, which positions learners and texts in a specific sociohistorical context. Since literacy is a social construction (Goodson & Mangan, 1996), any of those three views of literacy has been socially constructed, as well. This study is framed within a sociocultural perspective that connects literacy with individuals’ complex social relationships and cultural practices (Moll, 1994).

At the local level, Quintero (2008) offers appropriate insight into this theoretical idea of literacy. Her action research looks into studying the perceptions of a group of freshmen English Education students of a university in Bogota when interacting with another group of language learners from Canada through blogging. Quintero (2008) concludes that literacy serves as a resource to display the participants’ selves through blogging in order to create a community of writers. Hence, through the findings of this study it is possible to affirm that literacy goes beyond a traditional view or a learner-centered view (Johns, 1997); literacy is
much more than a skill based perspective, literacy needs to be socially situated (Gee, 2003), meaning that it shapes the social world where it is immersed, but at the same time that social world shapes literacy practices.

Language, from a socio-constructivist perspective serves as a channel to involve learners to construct and convey meaning. However, such meaning is constructed through their sharing of significant learning experiences upon the bases of social interaction with others. Then, from this perspective, literacy practices that promote social interaction are construed as meaningful learning experiences, as asserted by Dewey (1938); this author claims that “The principle that development of experience comes about through interaction means that education is essentially a social process. This quality is realized in the degree in which individuals form a community group” (p. 58).

A sociocultural perspective on language involves an understanding of how language and social interaction are entailed in literacy processes. From this perspective, literacy is seen as a cultural process; in which knowledge is not only possessed individually but also shared among community members, and understandings are constructed by people altogether through their involvement in events which are shaped by cultural and historical factors (Goodman et al., 2003). From a sociocultural perspective, language and cognitive development are mingled processes. Lantolf (2000) asserts that it is through language that people gain control over their mental processes as language mediates thinking. Then, the author claims that when social interaction occurs people are able to organize the cognitive processes that support knowledge co-construction. Hence, the language, concepts, and experiences that learners bring with them through social interaction support their cognitive and social development (Gee, 2003).

Baynham (1995), Ferreiro (2003), Chapetón (2007), and Clavijo et al (2008) point out that literacy is a social practice that takes place in social interactions and is situated in a
specific culture or society. First of all, Baynham (1995) points out that “literacy is shaped to serve social purposes in creating and exchanging meaning”, and that “literacy is best understood in its contexts of use” (p. 1). The author claims that investigating literacy does not only involve what people do with it, for instance cracking a written code that conveys a message, but also “what they make of what they do, the values they place on it and the ideologies that surround it” (p. 1). This is to say that literacy practices foster interaction among community members as they produce and exchange meanings so as to comply with a social role in their community.

Likewise, Ferreiro (2003) asserts that reading and writing are practices that are co-constructed through social participation from socially defined activities. However, Clavijo et al (2008) claim that literacy practices are diverse. They do not circumscribe to reading and writing only, they are based on interactions, personal experiences and are situated within specific sociocultural contexts. Chapetón (2007) agrees with this idea claiming that literacy “goes beyond the printed word. Text is everything possible to be read and to be rewritten. Our own realities and life experiences are texts we can read aloud and rewrite by being critical readers of them” (p. 30).

The role of language and literacy practices as an opportunity for individuals to express themselves, share their life experiences and thoughts, and speak out as part of their personal and social development has just been discussed in the first section of this chapter. These practices are supported by writing within a situated social context from the perspective of this study. Thus, the following section of this chapter gives a discussion of writing as a situated social practice.

**Writing as situated social practice**

In this study, writing is seen as a practice that is socially constructed and situated within a particular context, in this case the English class virtual community (Baynham,
This means that authors rely on their experiences, their thoughts, the thoughts of others, and their personal reflections upon certain topics prior to the publication of their texts.

Writing becomes meaningful when the authors’ texts have a purpose and an audience they address to. In this sense, authors’ purposes vary; for instance, authors may write to express personal opinions, to give personal accounts of an issue, to agree with or to reject a particular position, etc. All in all, authors are capable of projecting their own subjectivities, ideologies, and values through their own writing. Such ideologies, subjectivities and values are socially and contextually constructed (Baynham, 1995).

This claim agrees with Goodman’s (1994) views on writing. Goodman (1994) suggests that what an author writes is a reflection of what he or she is and what he or she is trying to convey. In addition to this, the contents of his/her text are supported by the values and customs of their culture. Goodman (1994) also asserts that the text itself does not have a meaning since meaning is not a feature of text. It is the author and the reader who give meaning to a text. In this manner, meaning is symbolized through the text (by the author), and constructed by the reader, subsequently.

In regards to the writing process, Baynham (1995) asserts that authors need to consider purpose and audience of their writing, when thinking of the strength of their publications. Hyland (2002) also points out that students should make the most out of the strategies that involve them in drafting and editing the form and content of a text, and in transmitting ideas logically organized and interconnected so as to create an articulated final product. Despite the seemingly logical configuration that coherent final versions of texts should have, Baynham (1995) states that writing should undoubtedly be regarded as a social practice given the fact that a writer is able to construct meaning through interaction with others, as he/she writes to be read, thus fulfilling a social purpose.
Writing is situated because the author’s implicit thoughts, beliefs, positions, and values in texts are best appreciated from the local and institutional contexts where they are produced and received. Baynham (1995) states that when writing is studied as a situated practice, writing arises as a result of the writer’s involvement in social practices such as reading, thinking, talking, and writing with others within specific contexts. As a conclusion, when authors take on a writing endeavor, they adopt a socially-situated practice that is constructed in their very particular contexts of interactions, considering their inner values, beliefs, behaviors and oftentimes those of others, as well.

It was through writing that students responded to the literary texts read in the English class; for this reason, discussing the theory behind the transactions these students carried out to compose their responses to literature is well worth it. Thus, there will be first an exploration of the reading transactions and the readers’ response theory; and then a review of the theory underlying the writing process.

**Reading transactions and readers’ response**

As I have mentioned, this study examines the participants’ written responses to literature in an EFL virtual community as a means to identify connections among such responses, writing genres, and their identity portrayal in a virtual community. For this reason, it is quite relevant to establish some theoretical ground in which this study stands in regards to the type of reading or readings the participants took part and its subsequent written response.

In this train of thought, Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of reading sheds some light on the way texts can be approached, interpreted, and evaluated. Chapetón (2007) summarizes very well Rosenblatt’s first account of reading transactions in 1938 with the publication of *Literature as Exploration*. Chapetón (2007) points out the following:
Rosenblatt rejected the idea that the text is a static container of meanings and argued that meanings instead arise from the transaction of readers and texts in particular contexts. She explains that reading transactions required recognition of a personal, social, and cultural matrix. (p. 36).

For Rosenblatt, reading transactions involve readers, a text, and the context in which such transaction occurs. This is to say that meaning is constructed through the two-way relationship between the reader and a text during a reading event. Hence, “meaning ‘happens’ during the interplay between the text and a reader. Actually, as soon as we start to say what a text means, we are reporting and analyzing the transaction we have just engaged in.” (Rosenblatt, 1999, p.164). The author also claims that readers return to the text to see how they arrived at their particular interpretations, after drawing on their personal “reservoirs to transact with the text” (p. 164). Such ‘reservoirs’ apply to the personal referents readers evoke when transacting with the text; for instance, “sensuous, affective, imaginal, and associative” reservoirs which embody not only ideas, but also “sensations, images, precepts, and concepts” (Chapetón, 2007, p. 37). Thus, it could be implied that multiple readings of the same text can occur across time. For instance, readers can have multiple interpretations of the same text as their reading is mediated by the immediate context they are involved in, their expectations might change, or someone else might have influenced their interpretation of said text.

Based on Rosenblatt’s transactional model, the participants of this study read three literary texts: a chapter of a novel, a poem, and a play. Then, they composed written responses to those texts, assuming one or both types of reader’s stance: efferent reading or aesthetic reading. A reader’s interpretation of a text may fall anywhere within an efferent/aesthetic continuum that involves the assumption of a predominantly efferent stance to reading, or a predominantly aesthetic stance to reading. Through the emphasis of the
existence of this continuum Rosenblatt (1999) claims: “I am emphasizing the range of possible stances between the efferent and the aesthetic poles. Between the two poles, there is a sequence of possible proportions of attention to public and private aspects of sense.” (p. 165).

The first extreme of the continuum to be discussed will the efferent type. Rosenblatt (1988) refers to efferent reading as “the kind of reading in which attention is centered predominantly on what it is to be carried away or retained after the reading event” (p. 5). In other words, when the reader’s main purpose for reading is to retain information to use it later on, he/she will take an efferent reader stance. This reader stance is referred to as public, and lexical, too. Adopting an efferent reading stance will prevent the reader from appreciating the reading act artistically, since he/she will focus more on what needs to be done with the information taken from the original text. However, taking an efferent stance to reading will not diminish the importance of a text as such; the reading will only have a more formal or structural purpose.

On the other hand, the aesthetic half of the continuum refers to the reader’s positions, connections, attitudes, or feelings towards the text while he/she is reading. In regards to a reader’s aesthetic stance, Rosenblatt (1988) claims that:

In this kind of reading the reader adopts an attitude of readiness to focus attention on what is being lived through during the reading event (…) The aesthetic reader experiences, savors the qualities of structured ideas, (…) personalities, emotions called forth, participating in the tensions, conflicts and resolutions as they unfold. (p. 5).

This means that, as opposed to an efferent reading of a text in which what really matters is what it is to be carried away after the reading event, reading aesthetically involves making connections while reading. Those connections may involve past experiences, prior
knowledge, social and psychological assumptions about the author, language or literature. (p. 7).

At an international level, the study conducted by McElvain (2010) examined the psychosocial effects of reading transactions in a program entitled Transactional Literature Circles (TLC) in a Middle School in California. This program was applied to 75 students who were classified “at-risk.” The results of this study show that “there was an increase in student reading engagement and motivation that positively affected reading self-efficacy, confidence and a willingness to participate in class discussions” (p. 178). These findings ratify the importance of encouraging the incorporation of the readers’ personal contexts when responding to written texts in EFL instruction by following a socio-cultural approach to literacy, as opposed to the traditional, instrumental view of literacy.

I truly believe that Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of reading really enriches this study, as one of the aims of this research is to identify and describe the types of reader stance the students adopted to publish their responses to literature in a virtual community. These responses to literature were composed following a process approach to writing in order to comply with the dictated written curriculum of the school; therefore some theory underlying the writing process will be presented next.

The writing process

It could be stated that writing in a foreign language is a tough task to do, even more for students who do not pursue a writing career, or worry about their English proficiency. Even for native speakers, writing could be complicated. On this matter, Quintero (2008) discusses the complexity of writing asserting that:

Writing implies more than the selection of the right structures, words and general conventions of the language; it is a mental process of using and arranging formal
structures in such a way that they can create actual meaning to what the writer has in his head and wants to express in written language (p. 10).

It is necessary, then, some serious rational thinking to transfer what writers have in their heads into words and put them on a piece of paper. Hence, writing goes beyond the graphic representation of symbols. Regarding this aspect, White and Arndt (1996) affirm that “writing is far from being a simple matter of transcribing language into written symbols: it is a thinking process in its own right, it demands conscious intellectual effort which usually is sustained over a considerable period of time.” (p. 3). Based on this latter view, I believe that rushing our students to produce a sample of writing goes against the writing process itself, given the fact that writing requires thinking (Moje, 2006) and teachers cannot force this to happen.

In the same train of thought, and from the student’s point of view, Ward (2004) asserts that one of the main reasons why most students find English writing very challenging is the lack of motivation: what they write does not mean anything to them because it does not need to mean anything to anyone else. Currently, there is not much diffusion of the texts that students write for their English class, since their only reader is the teacher. In the particular case of this study it is evident that one reason why the students would want anyone else besides their teacher to revise their writing is to obtain better grades (see Appendix A). Thus, what Ward suggests here is making students’ pieces of writing available for others to read and comment, in order to give students more encouragement to write. These comments would be taken as a different type of feedback, one that is not given by the teacher. I consider this assertion makes a lot of sense in our Colombian context. Our students are used to having their teachers and only their teachers give a concept on what they write and, as a consequence, students end up writing whatever comes to their mind without paying much attention to the process or the product, since their teachers will be the only readers. Nevertheless, I believe
that if students’ texts are published and given to a wider community, students would try harder to produce better texts, since more people would read them and would provide them with a more varied, and maybe less biased feedback. In this sense, Barnett (1992) affirms that both teachers and students need a change of mind towards the issue of “first-and-final drafts.” A draft that is seen as a final version would not require further attention from a student since it is “final”, and whatever grade obtained from the teacher would be a “final” decision as well.

In the following section of this chapter the views of identity and virtual communities will be discussed, as one of the goals of this study was to depict the way students’ identities are illustrated in their written responses to literature in an EFL virtual community.

**Identity**

To start, I believe it is relevant to state the way the construct of identity is understood within the framework of this study. This approach has to do with the concept of identity as the way a dynamic entity that can be negotiated, transformed and achieved (Bernstein, 2000). This is to say that identity is constructed and co-constructed by the very individuals and others taking into consideration how social dynamics within a particular context are performed and the roles individuals adopt within their community or the roles the community assigns them. Regarding Bucholtz & Hall’s (2005) words, “identity is a relational and sociocultural phenomenon that emerges and circulates in local discourse contexts of interaction rather than as a stable structure located primarily in the individual psyche or in fixed social categories” (p. 585 – 586).

Here, the idea of identity as a phenomenon that is constructed through interaction across time and space start to emerge. Following this line of thought, Bucholtz & Hall (2005) claim that identity is a discursive construct that emerges in interaction. Bernstein (2000) asserts that identity is an active entity that can be negotiated, transformed and achieved. All
this process of identity display, negotiation, and interaction is achieved through language. Following this idea, Reeves (2002), states that language, in a sociocultural view of identity, is the primary medium for identity construction (p.37).

Omoniyi and White (2006) affirm that identities are not fixed; they are rather co-constructed by other individuals who share certain core values (p. 1), like receiving the same type of formal education at school as students of an only-girls school, or belonging to the same social class, which entails similar upbringing. Considering this fact Omoniyi and White (2006) affirm, “identity is a problematic and complex concept inasmuch as we recognize it now as non-fixed, non-rigid” (p. 1). McNamara (1997) agrees with Omoniyi and White in that “social identity is not fixed but depends on (among many things) the particular intergroup setting in which one finds oneself” (p. 564). The performance of social identities, and the support of people’s affiliation with cultures, social groups, and institutions are two of the main language functions that Gee (2001) considers. These two conceptions make sense when identity is considered as a variable process of identification rather than a fixed, unique entity.

Concerning this idea, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) refer to identities’ constantly shifting as interaction unfolds and across discourse contexts (p. 606). Bucholtz and Hall claim, “any given construction of identity may be in part deliberate and intentional, in part habitual and hence often less than fully conscious” (p. 606). In a similar view, Barker & Galansinski (2003) claim, “through the study of language usage we can explore how people make emotional and identity-related claims about themselves and what they are achieving to do so.” (p. 22). Then, it can be asserted that language represents those identities students show, negotiate and construct through interaction.

Identities are commonly cultural specific discursive constructions (Barker & Galansinski, 2003), meaning that language plays a pivotal role in portraying those identities,
but only if the context of production is considered. Hellen (1987) affirms that it is through language that a person negotiates a sense of self within and across different sites at different points in time (as cited by Norton, 2000). According to Gómez (2011) “language can also be considered as an identity kit that indicates membership in particular groups, and that the use of this language may vary according to the context that define the way we relate to others and ourselves” (p. 25).

As we can see, people use language to function and carry out activities related to themselves, those around them, and the world in general. Language is then used as a device to achieve several personal as well as social purposes; it is a multifunctional tool that is used in every social interaction or activity. Gee’s (2001) definition of language agrees with this idea, since he believes that language is not solely a communication instrument; instead, it is through language that various actions and social identities can be performed, and affiliations with cultures and social groups are revealed.

Fairclough (2003) discusses the concepts of social identity and personal identity, two tenets directly connected. The former is related to the function that an individual plays in social events as a social actor, while the latter refers to the individual’s self-consciousness and preconception of those roles. Related to this, Barker & Galansinzki (2003) claimed that “the philosophical argument that identity is not a universal entity but a cultural specific discursive production is grounded in the anti-representationalist understanding of language” (p.29). This means that language does not only represent the world, but also makes part of the world.

Thus, identity really is “complex, contradictory, and multifaceted” as Norton (1997: 419) claims. It can be inferred that students may portray as many identities as the quantity of roles they have within a group; for instance, their families, cliques, schools, etc. Norton (1997) claims that relations of power in different sites influence learners; learners who may
be marginalized in one site may be highly valued in another. Then, the relationship the individuals have with their social world is bound to change and struggle, as the other members of this group may influence his/her views mediated by power relationships. As expressed by Reeves (2002):

The social negotiation of identity, in which others (e.g. other people as well as external discourses) exerts influence in identity construction, coexists with individuals’ agency. Individuals, while subject to external influences on their identity, can construct, adopt, and reject identity positions for themselves. (p.35).

Again, this social negotiation of identity is given through interaction, in which students could agree with others’ positioning, resist them, or let them define them. Reeves (2002) goes on to say that this negotiation of identity happens continually in sustained relationships as well as in brief encounters.

For this reason, students’ positioning is an important component of studying learners’ identities in EFL. These positions and identities may vary through interaction. In this study, such interaction will be mediated by a virtual environment designed for the English language arts class, in which students will position themselves to give their own interpretation and responses to literary works covered in class. Theorizing on positioning, Harré & van Langenhove (1999), offer an interesting definition that involves personal stories and interaction. They claim that “positioning can be understood as the discursive construction of personal stories that make a person’s actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts and within which the members of the conversation have specific location” (as cited in Reeves, 2002, p. 395). Reeves (2002) refers to it as the manner in which temporary roles (identity positions) are strategically claimed (and abandoned) by the self as well as the ways in which a person (or discourse) assigns identity positions to others. (p. 36). Bucholtz & Hall
(2005) relate the concepts of identity and positioning in one sentence: “identity is the social positioning of self and other” (p. 586).

There are several research studies associated to the link between learning and identity. On the international level we find Rainville & Jones (2008), who conducted a study in which they explore identity negotiation from the point of view of an elementary school literacy coach of a rural area in the United States. The main goal of this study was to observe the multiple identities that a literacy coach enacted when dealing with her students. The authors of this study concluded that participants engage in more or less appropriate discourses according to the type of settings in which they are involved, which means that identity is just as much a situated activity as reading or writing. This situated activity entails the enactment of several situated identities that lead us “to understand how and why each of us projects a different way of being in different social situations” (p. 441).

Another international study that studies language learning and identity is Willet’s research (1995). Willet studied a group of first graders who were starting to acquire English skills in an L2 environment. The main goal of this report was to follow-up on the participants’ daily interactions with their peers and teacher. In this context, language served as a social tool that allowed this group of first graders to express their ideologies and social relations, where their identities would be constructed and negotiated. The purpose of language in this study confirms the views of Bucholtz & Hall (2005) regarding identity and social interaction, as identity emerges and circulates in local discourse contexts of interaction (p.585).

At the local level, the interest on studying identity and language learning has been growing. Escobar and Gómez (2010) conducted a study which main purpose was to analyze identity processes that were performed through language. Issues such as power, struggle, and beliefs in the context of ELT in Colombia are highlighted in this study, due to the fact that the
participants of this study were members on an indigenous community. The researchers of this study are emphatic to claim that there is very little room for our own Colombian identity in constructing culturally oriented curricula, since most ELT curriculum builders use the target cultures alone to build programs and disregard what our culture has to offer in terms of interaction in a English as a foreign language. This study offers valuable insight on the relevance of cultural identity in regards to language learning in Colombian contexts.

The last section of this theoretical discussion will be focused on a revision of the concept of virtual communities, as one of the tangible outcomes of this pedagogical intervention was the creation of a virtual community for the English class.

**Virtual communities**

A virtual community is intended to be a medium by which participants let their peers see who they are, what they stand for and how they position themselves through their written discourse. I have found out that all the students that participated in this study belong to a virtual community or social network where they post blogs, links or videos in their own pages. In addition to this, they all believe that they can take advantage of being active members of a virtual community to foster their writing practices.

In this regard, Hunter (2002) considers that virtual communities are people who interact with each other, learn from each other’s work, and provide knowledge and information resources to the group related to certain agreed-upon topics of shared interest. This definition is connected to this project since this is the medium by which students will ‘spill’ who they are and their position towards certain topics through blogs, pictures and other links that can be shared in the virtual community. Norton and Wiburg (1998) claim that people in virtual communities use words and images on screen to carry out several activities that range from exchanging pleasantries to gossiping, but also to engage in intellectual discourse, exchange knowledge, and find friends. Hence, virtual communities suppose a
space, in which members may portray their identities as, gossiper, funny, or lurker depending on the task they are publishing online.

Likewise, Smith (1999) makes an interesting distinction between physical communities and virtual communities and deals with the role of interaction in these types of communities. For him, interaction in a virtual community becomes more highlighted, since there’s no physical presence. This means that if there were lurkers, which are members who evade their social responsibility and do not share information actively in a virtual community, they would have to be encouraged to assume a role within the community. He also claims that a lurker could be construed as a potentially productive participant who is just not ready to make a contribution. This does not mean that ‘lurkers’ are being unproductive; on the contrary, according to Smith, they are just gathering information to hopefully contribute at a later session.

Hunter (2002), on the other hand, disagrees with Smith. She claims that all those people who are participants of a virtual community need to be contributors, not lurkers. In a virtual environment, participants provide knowledge to all the members of the community and they are not just recipients or consumers of information. She conceives technology as a great advantage for virtual communities because members may build extra knowledge, besides the face-to-face interaction they may have offline. It was expected that all members of the virtual community contributed periodically to its construction due to the fact that, according to Hunter, members learn both by teaching others and by applying to their own situations the information, tools, know-how and experiences provided by others in the virtual community. Besides, she claims that an ideal of community apparently leads people to invest themselves in the Internet, which means that participants could feel they would acquire a more extended choice of resources or access to new friendships, a higher status in their class, or other symbolic and material resources, (Norton and Toohey, 2001).
It has been mentioned previously that a common place where students could share their written products, have access to their partners’ texts and their own, make comments on what they post, and show who they are would be an online or virtual community. Nolan & Weiss (2002) explain that the concept of community has changed with the arrival and development of technology; that is to say, technology has somehow shaped communities. According to them, communities used to be groups of people who were localized in the same geographical area. But, later, the concept evolved to include the idea of a group of people who hold something in common or who share a common sense of identity, even if they do not live in a single locale.

There are several local research studies associated to the role of ICT to creating virtual communities for learning environments.

The previous lines of this theoretical framework provided some theoretical reflection on the notions of the writing process, writing as a situated social practice, reading transactions and readers’ response, and the sociocultural and socio-constructivist theories of language and literacy. In addition to this, the views of identity and virtual communities were discussed, as well. The next section will introduce the research design details, including research questions, objectives, participants, context, and instruments, among others.
Chapter III
Research Design

This chapter informs the decisions that were made for the construction of the research model of this study. This chapter discusses: a) a definition and conception of the study including information about the research approach and research methodology; b) a description of concrete procedures taken, and a definition of instruments for data collection and data validation strategies; c) a description and justification of the setting and participants of the study; d) the role of the researcher, including some ethical considerations a research process involves; and finally; e) the description of the procedures implemented for data analysis.

Definition

There are some positions related to the purposes and procedures developed in this study that are worth a description in order to grasp a better understanding of its nature. These ideas are related to the definition of the research project paradigm, and the type of study. These concepts will be defined next.

The Qualitative Paradigm

This study follows a qualitative paradigm described by Larsen-Freeman (1993). According to the author, this paradigm is defined as “a study in which the researchers do not set out to test hypotheses, but rather to observe what is present with their focus, and consequently the data, free to vary during the course of the observation” (p. 11). On this regard, Bonilla-Castro & Rodríguez (2005) assert that since reality is constructed continuously both socially and historically and is in constant change, there is not one unique truth in this paradigm, but rather multiple truths that individuals may construct about reality, and in which populations studied are subjects, not objects.
These ideas are reflected in some of the notions under which this research was developed: a) there was no interest of the researcher to generalize findings; b) multiple truths were accepted as part of the interpretative process of the literary texts used in class, their written responses in the virtual community, and their logs; and finally, c) the virtual community of the English class was intended to be a space to publish the participants’ texts and to share views of the readings they carried out as part of the pedagogical intervention; additionally, it was the source of most of the data, which shows the reflective and reactive qualities of the participants of this study.

Marshall & Rossman (1999) stress two main features of the qualitative paradigm that are evident in this study. First of all, it uses multiple methods for data collection, which will be explained in more detail under the procedures section of this chapter. The second feature portrays its emergent nature, rather than a preconceived or planned hypothesis, which means that it is theory that illuminates the procedures that were implemented, unlike quantitative methods that seek to prove or elucidate what the theory says about the particular context in which the research study was developed.

Type of Study

This research is a qualitative case study. According to Nunan (1998) case studies “center on a single individual or limited number of individuals, documenting some aspects of their language development, usually over an extended period of time” (p. 8). Creswell (1998) defines case studies in terms of the “exploration of a ‘bounded system’ or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context and it is the case being studied –a program, an event, an activity, or individuals. (p. 61).

In the same trend of thought, Merriam (1998) claims that qualitative case study research is an optimal design to interpret and understand the observations of phenomena in
educational settings. The author claims, “this approach aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristics of the phenomenon” (p. 10). According to Creswell, (1998) the point of such observations is to analyze the educational phenomena in order to create generalizations about a wider population. Bell (1999) coincides with this view by stating that each case has its own particularities, which the case study researcher need to identify in order to elucidate how such features influence the way an organization works.

In the case of this research study, the participants’ responses to the literary works they read in class were studied, along with the identities they portrayed when approaching those texts in the virtual community posts, through the writing genres they used to compose such responses.

Context

This study was carried out at Gimnasio Femenino in the English Language Arts class. This school is located on the Eastern hills of the city of Bogotá, in the neighborhood of Bella Suiza, localidad 1 of Usaquén. According to the school’s educational project (PEI), the mission of this school is to achieve excellence in the academic and personal education of women. Emphasis is given to values and social responsibility in an environment full of human quality (p. 5). The vision of this school is to be acknowledged by educating competent, reflexive and critical leaders with social and ecological responsibility to take on the challenges of a multicultural, changing world. (p. 5)

In addition to this, Gimnasio Femenino is a World School, certificate issued by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO). According to the IBO’s mission statement:

“The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging
programs of international education and rigorous assessment. These programs encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.” (Mission and Strategy section).

The Gimnasio Femenino’s educational proposal for the community aims at international perspective as a means to achieve human development. The English department, among other bilingual departments, guarantees mastery of English as a Second Language through the students’ interaction with technology to research and to develop international relationships. One way to achieve this is by offering a six-month academic and cultural immersion program in Canada for grade eight students. These students are placed in Canadian schools and get to live with Canadian host families to ensure experiencing the target culture to its fullest. Another way to achieve this is through the implementation of literature in the English Language Arts curriculum as a source for students to naturally acquire skills in reading and writing in their second language. Students are expected to use models of text analysis and interpretation given by their teachers that will allow them to develop a more globalized and tolerant view regarding respect to those cultures linked to the language of instruction.

Participants and sampling

The participants of this study were selected through criterion, purposive sampling (Patton, 2002). This sampling method consists on selecting cases or individuals who meet certain criteria, in order to make an informed decision about those participants who would be most likely to contribute appropriate data, both in terms of relevance and depth. The criteria that were defined to select the participants of this study were the following: a. grade eight students whose parents signed the participation consent form; b. participants who showed
high willingness to interact with others in the virtual community; c. participants who complied with all the proposed tasks on time; and finally, d. participants who provided rich data according to the researcher’s judgment.

Hence, the selected participants of this research study were four grade eight female students whose ages ranged from 14 to 15 years old and belong to socio-economic strata 5 and 6. All of these students have been to an English-speaking country, and about half of them have lived in an English-speaking country for at least six months. Besides English Language Arts, they take three more subjects in English: Social Studies, Biology, and Art. They receive four hours of instruction of English Language Arts, four hours of Social Studies, three hours of Biology, and two hours of Art; which adds up to thirteen hours of instruction in English per week.

Both the academic coordination and the head of the English department of the school were notified about the aims of this project. In addition to this, permission was granted to collect data from those participants whose parents agreed to sign a consent form. These parents signed during the first week of classes of the school year 2012-2013. (See appendix C)

Now that a brief explanation on the setting and participants of this research study has been given, it is time to move on to the description of the instruments that were used to gather the data in regards to the students’ responses to literature, and their identity portrayal within an EFL virtual community.

**Procedures for data collection**

With the creation of this virtual community for the Grade 8 English Language Arts class, I could collect data systematically from September 2012 to June 2013. I gathered the
data during the three academic terms, following the school calendar and term planners for written products and prescribed readings.

I focused my attention on the participants’ written responses to the readings we covered in class, after the final edition processes and subsequent posting online. Since these responses were posted on the virtual community, I copied the individual responses of each participant into a Microsoft Word document along with the interaction threads that said response generated. The name I gave to these files was obtained through simply stating the participant code I had previously assigned, plus the category name “entries.” For instance, the file called “S1 entries” would contain all three S1’s entries on the virtual community.

I also focused my attention on the participants’ reflection logs, which were Microsoft Word files that each participant would send to my school email address after final posting and interaction in the virtual community. In a similar fashion to the participants’ entries, the name I gave to these files included the participant code, plus the category name “logs.” For instance, the file called “S1 logs” would contain all of the three S1’s reflection logs sent to my school email address.

Then, I created a digital folder named after the participant code in which I saved both files I described previously, the participants’ entries and logs, in order to access to the data provided by each participant in an organized manner. Through their entries and reflection logs I could gain insights about the way the participants displayed their identities, and the way the conventions of each writing genre shaped those identities and the reader stance they assumed. Thus, my purpose was to explore, describe, and analyze those responses and reflections produced after the discussion of the prescribed readings.

Several instruments were used to triangulate, validate, and confirm the data. The information on the particular instruments I used to collect data will be presented next.
Instruments

To collect data that could answer my research question I used students’ artifacts, students’ reflection logs, and a semi-structured interview. A definition of each instrument and how they were administered will be presented as follows.

Students’ Artifacts

Students’ artifacts are one of the richest sources of data for teachers-researchers. They are tangible evidence of what students are able to do and of the range of responses students make to different learning tasks (Hubbard and Miller, 1999). Lankshear and Knobel (2004) claim that when artifacts are collected, an emphasis is made on “collecting pertinent ‘traces’, ‘props’ or ‘products’ used by research participants, or that are relevant to the problem area being studied” (p. 37). In this research study the students’ final versions of their responses to the literary works they read in class were analyzed, as well as the interactions based on their uploaded responses in the virtual community. In total, three student responses were collected; namely, a literary commentary, a poem, and an argumentative composition. These artifacts were the source to observe how the participants portrayed their identities, the reader stance the adopted, their interaction with other members of the community, and the mediation of the specific writing genre in their response.

Reflective logs

A reflective log is a personal record of the participants’ learning experiences. It is in a reflective log where learners reflect upon their responses to situations (base readings and online interactions, in the case of this study), which later on are used to explore and analyze ways of thinking (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004). According to the authors, this type of logs requires that students write in order to collect their personal insights into reflections on an event, practice, concepts, phenomenon, and so on.
Students’ insights on the base reading, their writing process, comments on their own pieces of writing, and participation in the virtual community were expected as part of items to reflect upon in their reflective logs. Once the participants published their responses online, commented on their peers’ texts and received comments on theirs, they were asked to compose a reflective log entry. This means that three reflective logs were collected throughout the duration of this study, each one after the publication of a particular type of response. This instrument has a more private nature since its contents were not published or socialized with all the participants in the virtual community so that the participants could feel more comfortable when disclosing information that might be sensitive to other participants, or information they did not feel like sharing with the rest of the participants.

**Semi-structured Interview**

The type of interview used in this study was a semi-structured interview. This type of interview needs a framework of the issues to be explored; however, such framework is flexible enough, so it allows fresh ideas to be explored as a result of what the participant says. Lankshear and Knobel (2004) assert that interviews are used to elicit desired information from someone. Asking questions bring out the information we could not learn without getting inside our students’ minds (Hubbard and Miller, 1999). For DeMarais (2004), interviewing is a process in which a researcher and participant engage in conversation focused on questions related to research study.

This last definition of interview gets closer to the vision this instrument is intended to have for this research. At the end of the intervention, I interviewed the participants of this study in order to understand their perspectives on several aspects: reaction to the literature read in class, help when composing their responses, their participation in the virtual community, reactions to other participants’ comments on their own texts, and identity portrayal in each task. A semi-structured interview provided me the opportunity to listen to
the participants of this study in an open way, which also served to verify some observations I
had made throughout the study. I voice-recorded this interview, and later on transcribed it to
facilitate its analysis. (See sample Appendix D).

The instruments described above were pertinent to develop a systematic data
collection process. The students’ artifacts, such as their published responses to literature and
the interactions that arose from them, as well as the reflective journals were useful to
examine the participants’ identity portrayal and the type of reader stance they assumed
towards the base text. Likewise, the semi-structured interview allowed me to corroborate in a
more personal basis the data provided in the aforementioned instruments, and gave me more
insights on their interaction process with the virtual community. As a result, I managed to
confirm or discard interpretations generated from the previous data, and ensure reliable, valid
research categories. On that regard, a brief discussion on data validity an reliability will take
place in the next section.

Validity and Reliability

In order to guarantee quality, credibility and acceptability of this study so as to
produce valid and reliable knowledge, this study used internal validity and reliability
techniques. According to Merriam (1998), internal validity refers to the extent to which the
researcher is able to capture the accuracy of data in the light of his own experience. This
process is achieved by “interpreting the investigator’s experience rather than in terms of
reality itself (which can never be grasped)” (Merriam, 1998, p.167). An important strategy to
achieve internal validity is triangulation, which refers to using several sources of data to
confirm the emergent findings (Merriam, 1998). Burns (2001) defines triangulation as “the
process of comparing different data and techniques to see whether they corroborate one
another: this is a form of comparison by obtaining convergent data through cross validation.”
(p. 163). To achieve validity I conducted data triangulation by gathering multiple sources of
data through students’ artifacts, students’ reflection logs, and a semi-structured interview so as to answer the research question that guided this study.

Reliability, on the other hand, refers to how consistent and dependable the findings are (Lincoln & Guba, 1995, as cited by Merriam, 1998). Reliability in a qualitative case study also demands that results make sense (Choi, 2001). Reliability was achieved by discussing the essential theories of the study, conducting a thorough literature review of the guiding theoretical constructs of the study, triangulating data, and by describing how findings were construed from the data.

**Role of the researcher**

In this study, my role as a researcher was participant-observer. According to Schensul, Schensul, and Lecompte (1999) participant observation is useful to:

Identify and guide relationships with informants; to help the researcher get the feel for how things are organized and prioritized, how people interrelate, and what are the cultural parameters; to show the researcher what the cultural members deem to be important in manners, leadership, politics, social interaction, and taboos; to help the researcher become known to the cultural members, thereby easing facilitation of the research process; and to provide the researcher with a source of questions to be addressed with participants (p.91).

As an example, the participants of this study were asked to produce written texts that needed to go through an edition process before being published. I was part of the team of people who offered constructive feedback to these papers, besides the participants themselves, since peer-feedback was strongly encouraged. This was part of my role as participant observer. Once the pieces of writing were ready to be published, the participants
were asked to read their peers’ entries and make comments on them. As comment threads were evident I observed them and analyzed them in order to identify the students’ emerging identities, and their reader stance. This was part of my role as participant observer. Having discussed the role of the researcher in this study, the ethical considerations for this research study will be presented next.

**Ethical considerations**

Based on the APA’s Ethical Guidelines for Research with Human Subjects (2010), Standard 8 related to research and publication, an informed consent letter was written to the students of eighth grade who participated in my research, as well to their parents for approval. The informed consent letter that the participants’ parents signed contained information on the purpose of the research, research benefits, the role of the participants within this research study, data management, limits of confidentiality, access to the conclusions of the study, and the researcher’s contact information. This letter was handed in to the participants’ parents in the second week of August 2012. (See appendix C).

The following chapter deals with the instructional design of this research. It includes the various conceptions of language, learning, curriculum, and classroom that were embedded during this pedagogical intervention. The chapter includes a thorough account of the pedagogical activities that were carried out per session, base readings, and instruments to gather data.
Chapter IV

Instructional Design

This research aims at exploring the way four eighth-grade students from Gimnasio Femenino unveil their identities through their written responses to literature in an EFL virtual community. In this study I try to elucidate certain identity relations that can be established among the reader stances they assume when responding to literature in an EFL virtual community. In order to do so, I created a pedagogical intervention following the reciprocal teaching approach under the social constructivism paradigm, in which learning occurs through social interaction.

This chapter presents the visions of language, learning, curriculum, and classroom this pedagogical intervention followed. In addition to this, this chapter offers a description of the objectives and tasks of this pedagogical intervention, as well as a detailed timeline including the dates, phases, and specific activities, and an explanation of the virtual community layout.

Vision of Language

This research study supposes a vision of language where self-expression is the main concern. This is to say, language illustrates social identity and self-definition. Lewis (1993), cited by Tudor (2001), claims that the language we use helps other people and ourselves to understand who and what we perceive ourselves to be. In this research study, students used English as a means to publish written products online in which they were asked to respond to a short prescribed list of texts, following some guidelines and were encouraged to connect their lives to such texts. By doing so, students were free to “talk out” -or “write out”, and let their opinions and voices be heard, while portraying their selves in writing. In addition to
students’ publishing their written products online, their peers also made comments on their pieces of writing in regards to its contents.

In this sense, the view of language of my pedagogical intervention does not see language as the grouping of structures attached to meaning (Saussure’s signifier – signified relationship) but as something socially and culturally situated (Baynham, 1995). Regarding this, Bakhtin (1984) asserts that language “needs to be investigated not as a set of idealized forms independent of their speakers or their speaking but rather as situated utterances in which the speakers, in dialogue with others, struggle to create meanings” (p. 183). That dialogue Bakhtin discusses was fostered by having students interact in a virtual setting by using the literary texts they read, the discussions that followed, their own texts, and their peers’ texts as a base.

When reading others’ posts, students could also appropriate other people’s beliefs, ways to see the world, or words to keep developing their own understanding of the issues presented in the literary works. However, according to Bakhtin (1984), the language that is used to state these ideas is not neutral because students express particular value systems and intentions through their pieces of writing. Hence, the language the students used to express themselves may or may not change as they “struggle to appropriate the voice of others and ‘bend’ those voices to their own purposes” (p. 183).

Finally, in the same train of thought, Hodge and Kress (1993) pose a poststructuralist view of language that matches the objectives of this instructional design. They see social relationships as the core of their theory of language, in that language, seen as a text, “arises out of the action of social subjects in particular social situations.” (p. 27). Such social situations were the interactions these students had while ‘reciprocal teaching’ activities took
place, as well as the ones on the virtual community through their written posts; those contexts were the ones in which the participants expressed themselves.

**Vision of Learning**

This research study views learning as a socio-culturally situated practice (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky asserts that social interaction is a key factor in learning. Then, social interaction in this study was intended to occur as students discussed the literary works within aesthetic and efferent perspectives, as they posted their written products, and as they read and commented such responses. Since their written pieces were public within the members of the virtual community, students could have taken the words or the writing style of others, modified it and made it theirs for future responses or comments. This view of learning is connected with Bakhtin’s (1984) view of language, expressed above, in that learners were able to appropriate and “bend” other voices for their own purposes, (p. 117).

In this regard, Vygotsky claims that students can also learn from a “more knowledgeable other”, or MKO. This MKO is understood as someone who is better skilled than the learner as to certain tasks, concepts or processes. A traditional view of learning might count the teacher as the MKO; however, for Vygotsky, peers can also be MKOs. This has a great value for my pedagogical intervention; since it allows learners themselves to be recognized as valuable authors and people their peers can learn from in a socially situated perspective. This learning comes from their own interpretation to the literary works and, as a result, the type of people they are or may / may not become, the way they see themselves, etc.

Since this project conceives learning as situated, a similar view of learning within this intervention is posed by Lave and Wenger (1991), who also assert that social interaction is a critical component of situated learning given the fact that learners become involved in a community of practice. In a community of practice, its members benefit from “sharing their
knowledge, insights and experiences with others with similar interests or goals.” (Wenger, 1998). In this way, the virtual community was intended to work as a community of practice, in which learners were expected to contribute with their texts and comments so that all of its members could be acknowledged as writers and could get a sense of belonging. On this aspect, Lave and Wenger (1991) affirm, “the fact that they [the participants] are organized around some particular area of knowledge [literature in English] and activity [publishing online] gives members a sense of joint enterprise and identity” (p. 98).

As it can be observed this view of learning is what fits best the aims of this study. Here, students can learn from one another because they are knowledgeable of their own experiences, which can enrich others’ pieces of writing. After all this, their knowledge of the literary work and personal experiences around it will be enriched, as students socialize and share their personal views.

Vision of curriculum

This pedagogical intervention deals with curriculum from the perspective of received curriculum. This perspective is part of a generalized curriculum framework proposed by Nunan (1988). This vision of curriculum fits the main purpose of this study, because a received curriculum, according to Nunan, (1988) deals with the students’ bringing their own background and prior knowledge to the classroom. It takes into consideration their previous understanding on issues that are to be taught in the classroom. For instance, in this pedagogical intervention, when dealing with how to write a specific type of writing, for instance an argumentative composition, the students are to bring with themselves all their experiences that are required to write this type of text. As an example, in this intervention the participants were asked to write an argumentative composition that would give an account of
their views on financially powerful people, and their past experiences with that kind of people.

This perspective of curriculum is coherent with a vision of language where self-expression allows students’ identities to flourish, and funds of knowledge to be used. In addition to this, Nunan (1998) affirms that students’ understanding is impacted by each student’s contribution to the class. This can be connected to the social nature of learning in this project: students’ appropriating and bending the voices of others within a socially situated perspective.

**Vision of classroom**

Even when most of the interaction that was analyzed to identify the students’ identities was taken from their responses in the virtual community of the class, some of their identity portrayal may have occurred in the classroom while students worked on their written responses before publication. What is more, the instructional materials of this intervention foster classroom discussions on particular topics; hence, not only did participants need to write down their ideas for their own responses, but also they may have been benefited from the socialization of such topics within the classroom.

According to Tudor (2001), this view of language is known as classroom as socialization. From this point of view the classroom is “a social institution which in the eyes of various social actors is expected to serve a purpose in the development of a certain type of citizenship.” (p. 124). This is characterized by two processes Tudor calls ‘imposed and emergent socialization.’ The former deals with how the classroom “is influenced by the beliefs and value systems of the society in which it is situated and is part of.” (p. 125). The latter discusses local situations related to the creation and promotion of rules and values that are significant and acceptable in a specific setting. While this project was implemented, both
processes of imposed and emergent socialization took place. These processes are recognized by asking the members in the classroom to follow the guiding questions in class, which were outside ideas and values that were brought inside the classroom. Such imposed socialization also occurred when students commented a literary selection; or when students needed to answer predetermined reading comprehension questions. In the case of emergent socialization, the idea was for students to reflect and interpret the given texts in different ways. This is a process that was thought to generate ideas or beliefs in relation to the social or cultural perspective reflected in the literary selections the students needed to read. In this sense, these perspectives are emergent from the classroom and are no longer an imposition.

In the lines below I will proceed to describe the phases that guided this pedagogical intervention, as well as a detailed work timeframe, the base literature and text types that the participants used in order to compose their written responses.

**Pedagogical intervention**

This pedagogical intervention was designed so that the participants could respond to three different literary texts through writing in an EFL virtual community. Additionally, upon the publication of the participants’ responses, they were meant to interact with one another on the virtual community through comments on their responses. In order to achieve that goal, this intervention had three cycles of five phases each. Each cycle comprised one academic term in which I was supposed to follow the curriculum to cover one literary text type, and one kind of written text type. The table below illustrates the units I had to cover in the academic year 2012-2013 in grade 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Term</th>
<th>Literary text type</th>
<th>Written text type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Term: August – November</td>
<td>Novel: To Kill a Mockingbird</td>
<td>Literary commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Term:</td>
<td>Poetry:</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following were the learning objectives that guided this pedagogical intervention:

- To apply a range of reading strategies (questioning, clarifying, summarizing, predicting) to evaluate and appreciate literary works such as novel, poetry, and drama.
- To prepare compositions following the process approach to writing as a way to respond to literary works such as novel, poetry, and drama.
- To use technological and informational resources as a means to self-expression, gather and synthesize information to communicate ideas, feelings, and emotions.

In the next lines I will explain each of the five phases that this intervention followed every academic term.

**Phase 1: Sensitizing.** This phase was directly related to developing awareness on the topics that students were reaching through the literature selections. According to this, the goal of this first phase was to raise students’ interest and awareness on topics that would enrich their understanding of the literary work, and possible connections with the students’ lives. Some of the themes that were approached were based on the actual themes of the base literary works; for instance, racism, and prejudice in the case of *To Kill a Mockingbird*; gratefulness, and accomplishment in the case of *Graduation Morning*; and generosity in the case of *A Christmas Carol*. Some examples of activities that were carried out for the sensitizing phase were brief class discussions on themes, building background on the subject through research and oral presentations, and vocabulary preview games.

**Phase 2: Diving into Literature.** This pedagogical intervention was adjusted to fit within the prescribed scope and sequence contents for eighth grade English at Gimnasio Femenino. This means that the literary genres in which this project was based, as well as the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>November - March</th>
<th>Selected poems</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third Term: March - June</td>
<td>Drama: Selected plays and adapted plays</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
expected written products had already been determined beforehand. For instance; for the first term, the prescribed literary genre was narrative; for the second term, the prescribed literary genre was poetry; and for the third term the prescribed literary genre was drama.

In that manner, the participants had the chance to ‘dive’ into literature by being exposed to several literary genres in order to discuss their themes and bring about personal connections. The literary works that were studied were the following:

- *Graduation Morning*, by Pat Mora. Poetry.

The criteria to select these works within their prescribed genres followed different standards. For example, the narrative work for the first term in eighth grade has been *To Kill a Mockingbird* for a long time, so I did not have much of a choice. However, in regards to the other two works I could pick the ones of my preference within the texts included in the students’ textbook. In that sense, I selected *Graduation Morning* because it is a short free verse rich in imagery; then, I opted for the dramatized adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*, since it is a well-known story by this class and I considered it would be interesting to study its adaptation to drama.

This second part of the intervention followed the reciprocal teaching approach, where the teacher initially leads the literature discussions, and then gradually allows students to take an active role in directing the debates inside the learning groups.

Palincsar & Brown (1984) describe reciprocal teaching as an approach in which group work constitutes a key aspect to develop both comprehension and production. Although along the process the teacher may provide hints, feedback, and comments as needed, students hold the responsibility for their own comprehension and the production of tasks when performing
an active role in the deliberation within small learning groups. In an initial stage, teacher models the way to lead a discussion, and gradually teacher passes the leading role to different students inside the group. This leading role performed either by the teacher or a student follows the next four steps:

**Questioning.** Students generate questions from the passage to be read. Here are some sample questions: Who or what is this lesson about? What do we know about ________? What are the clues that tell us ________?

**Clarifying.** Students make concerted attempts to clarify concepts, vocabulary that is not understood, and correct any potential comprehension difficulties. Here are some sample questions: What does ________ mean? What is a ________?

**Summarizing.** Students produce a concise summary for the passage, concentrating on important information. Here are some sample questions:

- What is the main idea of this passage?
- What is it mostly about?
- What information in this passage tells you that?

**Predicting.** Students deliberate on what is implied in the text and make connections to prior knowledge to suggest what will occur in subsequent texts. Here are some sample prompts:

- Based on the title, predict what you think this story will be about.
- What do you think the next part will be about?
- Who do you think the narrator is speaking to?

When the students are finished reading the passages, the students will have the chance to discuss their reaction to the literary works. These discussions or responses to the texts can
be expressed in two forms, according to Rosenblatt’s (1998) reader response theory; through efferent responses, which are given in a literal level based on factual events of the text; or aesthetic responses, which are related to affective connections or transactions done between the text and their life experiences through association. These responses are the initial point of identity portrayal that may influence their own writing production in the subsequent phases of this intervention.

**Phase 3: Responding.** In this phase of the intervention, the students were required to write three different types of compositions as their reaction to the literary works they read in class. These text types will allow them to give opinions, tell their own experiences, and feelings. The following table describes each written text type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A literary commentary</td>
<td>A detailed examination of a piece of literature (“To Kill a Mockingbird” Chapter 8). Close reading, literary appreciation, reading between the lines, and an understanding of the effects of literary features. IBO (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A free verse poem</td>
<td>A piece of writing which expresses individual views and feelings on the main themes of the base poem – Graduation Morning, such as gratitude or accomplishing goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An argumentative composition</td>
<td>discussing advantages and disadvantages of being financially powerful, mean and stingy (based on the personality traits of the main character of the story.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During this phase of the intervention, the participants of the study relied on their own experiences to compose their responses. They also took into account their own thoughts, and those of others while discussing the base readings in small groups. In this sense, the approach to writing was situated socially (Baynham, 1995). However, a process approach to writing was somehow evident during this phase of the intervention, as well. This means that their compositions also went through the stages of outlining, drafting, peer-feedback, editing, and
teacher feedback (responding on paper) prior to publication in the virtual community (responding online).

**Phase 4: Acknowledging others’ responses online.** In this phase of the project, the group of four participants was asked to comment, react, recognize and give their own points of view to their classmates’ original responses. Depending on the text type, the participants’ comments explored similarities and differences in their responses, identification with characters, or identification or rejection of the participants’ views, to name a few examples. In this phase, each participant was able to acknowledge her classmates’ views by commenting on their entries.

**Phase 5: Reflecting.** In this stage, the participants expressed their thoughts about all the previous pedagogical intervention phases in a digital reflective log. These log entries were not shared online, which means that only I, as a teacher-researcher, could have access to these reflections. The participants gave their insights about the comments they received on their publications, their own writing process, and even the base reading. A pivotal point in these reflections was how intimate they were. This aspect was key to determine the way some of their identities are constructed, as they connected the themes of the base readings with their own life experiences, and what those of their classmates. Such triple interaction of views allows for identity construction from the points of view of Bernstein (2000), and Bucholtz & Hall (2005).

In the next section I will present a description of the three tasks that composed this pedagogical intervention.

**Tasks**

The participants of this study were asked to compose written responses to three literary texts for subsequent publication in the virtual community. Each task will describe the
process that the participants went through from reading the base text, up to the final publication of their responses in the virtual community.

**Task 1: Writing a literary commentary.** The participants’ first response in the virtual community was a literary commentary about chapter 8 of the novel ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’ (see appendix G for an extract of this chapter). Due to the fact that the school where this study was conducted is part of the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) its curriculum and assessment follow the guidelines dictated by this organization; that includes teaching students how to write literary commentaries, discuss literary terms, literary features and literary analysis techniques. Regarding this text form, the IBO remarks:

The term ‘literary commentary’ refers to literary analysis: a detailed examination of a piece of literature. The exercise of commenting on a piece of literature involves: close reading, literary appreciation, reading between the lines, and an understanding of the effects of literary features. Good commentaries typically show independent engagement with the text and a keen understanding of the effects of the author’s use of various literary techniques. (IBO, 2012).

**Task 2: Writing a free verse poem.** The participants’ second written response in the virtual community was a free verse poem as a reaction to Pat Mora’s poem “Graduation Morning.” Poetry is a literary genre that the participants of this study know well, as it was covered in the curricula of grade 5 and grade 7. However, the focus of grade 8 poetry is free verse poetry, as opposed to the major topics in previous years, which greatly focused on metrical and rhythmic patterns, rhetorical devices, and imagery. Free verse poetry has a quite open form; it is basically unrhymed, and follows no musical patterns or any particular structure (see Appendix H for a more detailed definition).
Task 3: An argumentative composition. The participants’ third written response in the virtual community was an argumentative composition as a reaction to “A Christmas Carol,” a short story by Charles Dickens, but adapted for the stage by Frederick Gaines. For this type of composition, the participants of this study were asked to outline four paragraphs first: an introductory one; one paragraph explaining the advantages of being financially powerful, as one of the main characters of the play; another paragraph explaining the disadvantages of being financially powerful; and, finally, a concluding paragraph.

The next section will present a chart with a detailed timeline of the phases and base readings that this pedagogical intervention followed. Instruments to collect data and expected information to be collected are included in a chart in order to account for better classroom development.
## Pedagogical intervention timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Literary text</th>
<th>Phases</th>
<th>Pedagogical Activities</th>
<th>Instrument(s) to Collect Data</th>
<th>Information to Be Collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First term: August to November 2012</td>
<td>“To Kill a Mocking Bird” Chapters 8. By Harper Lee.</td>
<td>1. Sensitizing</td>
<td><strong>Class discussion:</strong> Students get in groups and discuss being in someone else’s shoes. Why is empathy so important to have good relationships? &lt;br&gt; <strong>Building background:</strong> Students get into a discussion related to similarities and differences between some personal events in the life of Harper Lee (author) and events occurred in chapters 8. &lt;br&gt; <strong>Vocabulary Preview:</strong> Spelling game of key words in the text</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Text:</strong> Novel</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Themes:</strong> Racism, discrimination, prejudice, justice, sympathy, compassion, and education.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>See appendix F for an abstract of chapter 8.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Note: The novel has 31 chapters that were covered throughout the term. By the time this pedagogical intervention started, the students were about to start reading chapter 8; this means</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Diving into Literature</td>
<td><strong>Reciprocal teaching:</strong> Students get in groups of 4 people. Every group needs to have one predictor, one questioner, one clarifier, and one summarizer. Each student performs her role when T indicates so at least 4 times to allow for rotation of roles. &lt;br&gt; <strong>Discussing the reading:</strong> When the reading is over, students answer some factual and inference questions related to the text. Personal comments related to their own lives and the texts are shared here, too.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Responding</td>
<td><strong>Outlining:</strong> Graphic organizer. Elements of a literary commentary.</td>
<td>Students’ artifacts</td>
<td>A detailed examination of a piece of literature. Close reading</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that chapter 8 was the base text the participants used to compose their literary commentary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Responding (On paper)</th>
<th>Literary Commentary/Responding (online)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peer-feedback:</strong> Students get in groups of 4 students to proof-read their peers’ texts and give suggestions to them.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Editing and teacher feedback:</strong> Students make changes to their texts according to the observations made by their peers. Teacher circulates and provides help as needed.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Publishing:</strong> Upon peer and teacher feedback, students upload their final written responses on the virtual community.</td>
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<tr>
<th>4. Acknowledging responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commenting on written responses:</strong> Groups of 4 students will be made. Each student will be in charge of reading and commenting on her other classmates’ posts. Comment ideas may include criticizing the connections made by the author, suggesting new ones, alternative interpretations of the chosen text, etc.</td>
<td>Students’ artifacts (literary commentary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responding to comments:</strong> After someone’s written response has been commented, the author replies to the comments of her audience. Discussion threads</td>
<td>Students’ posts on the virtual community. (Identity negotiation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| reading, literary appreciation, reading between the lines, and an understanding of the effects of literary features. IBO (2012) |

Students’ posts on the virtual community. (Identity portrayal)
### Second term: November 2012 to March 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Reflection logs.</th>
<th>Reflection logs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘Graduation Morning” by Pat Mora.</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Text:</strong> Poem&lt;br&gt;<strong>Themes:</strong> gratitude, affection, parental love, and achieving goals&lt;br&gt;See appendix F for an abstract of the poem.</td>
<td>1. Sensitizing&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Class discussion:</strong> Students watch a video of a high school graduation ceremony. They are asked to write a mini acceptance speech they would give in their graduation ceremony if they were the valedictorians. Who would they thank?&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Building background:</strong> Students reflect on the role of the several caretakers they have had in life.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Vocabulary Preview:</strong> Spelling game of key words in the text.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Diving into literature</td>
<td><strong>Reciprocal teaching:</strong> Students get in groups of 4 people. Every group needs to have one predictor, one questioner, one clarifier, and one summarizer. Each student will perform their role when T indicates so at least 4 times to allow for rotation of roles.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Discussing the reading:</strong> When the reading is over, students answer some factual and inference questions related to the text. Personal comments related to their own lives and the texts can be shared here, too.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Description</td>
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</table>
| 3. Responding (On paper) **Poem:** | Outlining + Drafting: For this session students write a free verse poem that expresses their views and feelings on the main themes of the base poem.  
Peer-feedback: Students get in groups of 4 students to proofread their peers’ texts and give suggestions to them.  
Editing and teacher feedback: Students make changes to their texts according to the observations made by their peers. Teacher circulates and provides help as needed. |
| 3. Responding (online) | Publishing: Upon peer and teacher feedback, students upload the final versions of their poems on the virtual community.  
Students’ artifacts (poem) |
| 4. Acknowledging responses | Commenting on poems: Groups of 4 students will be made. Each student will be in charge of reading and commenting on her other classmates’ poems. Comment ideas may include criticizing the connections made by the author, suggesting new ones, or alternative interpretations of the chosen text.  
Students’ artifacts (poem) |
| 5. Reflecting | Students will feed their reflective logs with a short, critical reflection upon their publication. They may write about their partners’ criticism on their own texts  
Reflection logs. |

Poetry and Imagery: Elements of free verse and haikus and imagery will be shown to students as a reminder of this topic covered last year. Students identify images and stylistic devices that enrich the poem.  
A piece of writing which expresses individual views and feelings on the main themes of the base poem –Graduation Morning, such as gratitude, affection, or achieving goals.
and the type of comments they gave to the texts they read. They could reflect upon the way they portrayed themselves through their poems and if the interaction in the community changed or not their initial views.

| Third term: March to June 2013 | “A Christmas Carol” By Charles Dickens, dramatized by Frederick Gaines. Text: Screenplay (drama) Themes: Making choices, sharing quality time with our loved ones, empathy, and generosity. See appendix F for an abstract of the text. | 1. Sensitizing Building background: Groups will carry out research on the life of Charles Dickens, and the context surrounding “A Christmas Carol.” Class Presentation: Students present their research findings in small groups. Vocabulary preview: Synonyms and antonyms as aids to clarify meanings of unfamiliar words. 20 pre-selected words to be used in context. Class discussion: In small groups, students share what they know or have heard about the story. Then, they discuss values, behaviors, and attitudes that are emphasized during the holidays. 2. Diving into literature Reciprocal teaching: Students get in groups of 4 people. Every group needs to have one predictor, one questioner, one clarifier, and one summarizer. Each student will perform their role when T indicates so at least 4 times to allow for rotation of roles. Thinking through the literature: Students will discuss their views about certain behaviors of some characters through a class discussion. Then, the students write a reflection on their journals. Students’ reactions to attitudes and behaviors of some of the characters and... |
| 3. Responding on paper (argumentative composition discussing advantages and disadvantages) | **Outlining:** The teacher will model how to write an **Argumentative Composition discussing Advantages and Disadvantages,** following the steps of a detailed outline: introduction, advantages, disadvantages, and conclusion.  
**Drafting:** Students will draft a 4-paragraph argumentative composition in which they discuss the advantages and disadvantages of being extremely powerful financially, mean, and stingy as the main character of the story previously read.  
**Peer-feedback:** Students get in groups of 4 students to proofread their peers’ texts and give suggestions to them.  
**Editing and teacher feedback:** Students make changes to their texts according to the observations made by their peers. Teacher circulates and provides help as needed. | **Students’ artifacts** (argumentative compositions) | **Students’ views** on the advantages and disadvantages of being financially powerful, mean and stingy |
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Responding Online</td>
<td><strong>Publishing:</strong> Upon peer and teacher feedback, students upload their final versions on the virtual community.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Acknowledging Responses</td>
<td><strong>Commenting on argumentative compositions:</strong> Groups of 4 students are made. Each student is in charge of reading and commenting on her other classmates’ posts. Comment ideas may include criticizing the connections made by the author, suggesting new ones,</td>
<td><strong>Students’ artifacts</strong> (comments)</td>
<td><strong>Students’ reflections</strong> on the choices they would make if they were financially</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
or alternative interpretations of the chosen text.  

5. Reflecting  

| 5. Reflecting | Students will feed their reflective logs with a short, critical reflection upon their publication. They may write about their partners’ criticism on their own texts and the type of comments they gave to the texts they read. They could reflect upon the way they portrayed themselves through their written responses and if the interaction in the community changed or not their initial views. | Reflection logs. | Reflection logs. |

Semi-structured group interview: The teacher-researcher will look into the participants’ reaction to the pedagogical intervention overall, any help they received / gave when composing their responses, their participation in the virtual community, their reactions to other participants’ comments on their own texts, and identity portrayal in each task.
The virtual community “My Responses to Literature 801” was created on the online platform ning.com in August 2012. Ning presents itself as a site to create social networks for people or organizations. Ning offers the facility to create a community website with customized appearance; it also offers features such as video, photo gallery, forums, blogs. This virtual community was created before Ning introduced new plans and pricings to its customers and phased out all free networks. Eventually all the information from the virtual community that had been stored in the Ning platform was all phased out, since the free yearly plan was not renewed after the introduction of the new pricing plans. However here are some samples of the layout of the virtual community.

The screenshot above illustrates the layout of the homepage of a member of the virtual community. When it was time for the participants to post their written responses, they
only needed to click on the “post new entry” button, type their written response, and then click on the “publish” button. Once a written response was posted it was ready to receive comments from other participants; to post a comment the participants they needed to click on the “comment” button and then click on the “publish” button.

Some other screenshots illustrating specific comments and replies will be shown in Chapter 5 to elucidate certain findings emerged from the data. However, here is a sample of a short comment thread that shows phase 4 of the first cycle, consisting on acknowledging the comments other participants left on a given written response, in this case, a literary commentary.

![Comment by on October 23, 2012 at 7:34pm](image)

Well, I don't believe in ghosts normally. In my family my parents have ever been very scientific, and taught me that even the creepiest stuff can be explain by reason. They taught me so good about believing in science that several times I have been considered as an atheist with my friends because I question almost everything about religion. Personally, I believe that they think so because I support several ideas of a IIW.W German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche who gives revolutionary ideas about God. In my opinion I respect the idea of believing in ghosts but, even ought I don't believe in them I don't like to mess up with things of that kind.

![Comment by on October 24, 2012 at 8:39 am](image)

jajajaja I love how you get inspired talking about your beliefs on science. So if you don't believe in ghosts, where do you think the spirits reminice after death? Only religious and scientific hypotesis? Lulu the scientific!!!
Chapter V

Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter shows the description of the process followed to organize and analyze the data gathered to answer the following research question: what do students’ written responses to literature in an EFL virtual community reveal about their identities?

This chapter also describes the findings that emerged from the data analysis and the insights that were gained through this analysis. Furthermore, the categories that emerged from data analysis are described and supported by data extracted from the instruments. The findings will be presented in terms of the connections between writing genres, participants’ responses to literature and the identities they portrayed when responding to such texts.

Research context for data analysis

This qualitative study explores the mediations of three writing genres in students’ responses to literature and the identities these students portrayed in an EFL virtual community. In other words, this study inquires into the relationship between writing genres, types of reader response within an efferent/aesthetic continuum (Rosenblatt, 1988), and identity portrayal in an EFL virtual community. The writing genres they used to compose their responses to literature were a literary commentary, a poem, and an argumentative composition, which were subsequently posted in an online community powered by Ning.com. During this pedagogical intervention data were gathered through students’ artifacts, students’ journals, and a semi-structured group interview that was transcribed at the end of this intervention (May 2013).
Data management and coding

Organizing and analyzing data is a rigorous activity that requires careful consideration so that the researcher can make sense of the emerging information to answer the research question. It is through systematic data organization that the researcher can guarantee the recognition of commonalities and relationships that will identify the necessary information to achieve that end (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004). Hence, it is relevant to describe the data organization process of this study.

Since all the data used for this analysis was digital, I kept digital files of this information in my personal computer. The first thing I did was to copy-paste the participants’ responses to literature; that is to say, their literary commentaries, their poems, and their argumentative compositions into a Word document. This process was done in order to manage this “raw data” in a comprehensible manner for initial coding. I compiled all the responses of the four participants in a single file named after their participant code and the type of instrument that information came from. For instance, the file named P1 artifacts contained all the responses published in the virtual community by P1, and the comments the other participants wrote about that particular response. Information from the participants’ reflection logs was labeled in the same manner. For example, the file named P1 logs corresponds all the reflection logs by P1 about all her responses. Regarding the semi-structured interview the procedure was more complex. First, I transcribed the interview into a Word document and then numbered every line to facilitate information location (Nunan, 1998); then I copy-pasted each participant’s intervention into a separate file named after the participant code and the word ‘interview.’ The transcription of the interview was kept in a single file since it was conducted to the three participants at once.
When the data were organized, the analysis process started. The data analysis approach I used was grounded theory. Charmaz (2010) defines grounded theory as “systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves” (p. 2). This approach is merely inductive and analytical and seeks to discover theory that emerges from collected data through a comparative and systematic analysis. This approach considers three coding stages: initial coding, focused coding, and axial coding.

Initial coding refers to assigning a tentative name to a concrete data segment after interpreting it. On this stage of data coding I went over the data and took initial notes with general personal comments and reactions to what the data were telling me. I went over these observations back and forth to identify patterns or labels that would stand out and that were meaningful to answer the research question. This stage is referred to as focused coding. These labels were studied in the light of the literature review and further commented and reflected upon through memos and charts that allowed me to visually observe those emerging patterns. When I studied the analysis charts along with my memos, I could establish more connections among them. While grouping those connections into larger categories, a reflection process was undertaken to examine the emerging categories with the research question. This is the last stage proposed by Charmaz (2010) called axial coding.

Once the axial coding was carried out, I contrasted the emerging categories with the three instruments I used to collect data to boost the analysis and give more credibility to the findings. Consequently, the categories of this study resulted from that analysis.

Data analysis categories

After describing the process of data management and coding, I will present the categories that emerged from that analysis. These categories were constructed by considering...
first the data and afterwards the theory consulted related to writing genres, reader’s response, virtual communities and student identities. Below I describe the emerging categories sustained by examples taken from the data in order to better elucidate them in relation to the research question.

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<th>Research Question</th>
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| What do students’ written responses to literature in an EFL virtual community reveal about their identities? | 1. Identities are unveiled with reference to the type of reader stance each participant assumed in her written responses.  
2. Participants enact relations of difference or affiliation through their interaction so as to establish processes of identity display, construction, or negotiation |

**Category one: identities are unveiled with reference to the type of reading stance each participant assumed in her written responses.** This category refers to the way the participants revealed their identities through their written responses to three different literary texts in the EFL virtual community, and to the reading stance each of them adopted when approaching those texts. In addition, this category elucidates a pattern that could be established involving explicit identity portrayal and predominantly aesthetic reader responses. This is to say that when the participants adopted a predominantly aesthetic stance to reading a text, they were able to portray their identities more explicitly, as opposed to those instances when they assumed a predominantly efferent stance (Rosenblatt, 1995). The following table illustrates the three types of literary texts each participant responded to, and the written response text forms the participants composed. More detailed information about the contents of each literary text can be found in Appendix F.
In the next lines I will describe, illustrate, explain, and interpret the data that supports this category by examining the evidence obtained from all the participants’ written responses and reflective logs task by task, and the semi-structured interview conducted at the end of the pedagogical intervention. I will approach the reading stances and the identity display patterns that were evident in each of the tasks beginning with the literary commentaries, then the poems, and finally, the argumentative compositions.

**Predominantly efferent reading stances in participants’ literary commentaries.** As it can be observed below, a literary commentary can be a very structured text form that involves compliance with certain conventions and evidence of critical reading skills in order to “attract high marks” (IBO, 2012). For this reason, the reading stance that was mostly evident in the participants’ first written response was a predominantly efferent one. Rosenblatt (1995) affirms that efferent responses are produced when the reader needs to take away or retain something after reading the base text. That assertion confirms the stance the participants of this study took when responding to the chapter through a literary commentary. The participants’ attention while reading the base text focused mostly on the information they needed to retain or carry away from such a text in order to respond. As an example of this, P1 manages to identify some literary features such as ‘theme’ in order to show evidence of understanding. For information purposes, the term ‘theme’ is defined in a glossary of literary
terms, found in Appendix H

In the story many things happen and many themes are used, for example the good and evil and innocence. The kids think that Boo is evil, because of the stories they have heard about him. And they think that everyone who seems nice is a good person, showing their innocence.

[First artifact: literary commentary, P1, October 22nd, 2012]

In the previous excerpt, P1 was able to identify the good versus evil theme represented by the character ‘Boo Radley’ who is in reality a very innocent man who behaves like a kid, but due to fake stories and rumors about him, the kids consider him evil. In the same way, this participant pinpointed the theme of innocence in the kids’ behavior, as they still believe that “everyone who seems nice is a good person” which shows she is reading between the lines.

Another literary feature explored by participants in their literary commentary is ‘allegory.’ Allegory refers to those universal, abstract ideas that can be symbolized in the shape of characters or objects (see Appendix H). In the same train of thought, P4 also referred to this literary feature in her response, attaching symbols even to objects, which also reflects her efferent stance to reading the base text. P1 found out the allegory represented by each one of the main characters in the base text.

The characters represent many different things, for example Scout who is a smart little girl is the allegory of innocence. Atticus may be the allegory of knowledge and justice, and Dill could be the allegory of curiosity and bad influence. Boo may be a mocking bird, because he hasn’t done any thing wrong but still he is accused [sic] for something bad and is prisoner in his own house.

[First artifact: literary commentary, P1, October 22nd, 2012]

In this writing we can find allegories that represent important details to analyze this novel, for example the snow, or the snowman can symbolize the same idea of suspense, a cold environment during the situation or maybe the meaning of this is going to be discovered on the next chapters.

[First artifact: literary commentary, P4, October 22nd, 2012]
In the previous extracts, P1 and P4 exhibit a predominantly efferent stance to reading because these participants’ attention was primarily focused on “selecting out and analytically abstracting the information, ideas, or directions for action that will remain when the reading is over.” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 32). Those ideas for action that Rosenblatt refers to remained in these participants when the reading of the chapter was over. Those ideas for action denote some of the skills that the IBO expects their students to manage when conducting written literary analysis, namely, identifying and understanding the effects of literary features and analyzing the author’s use of various literary techniques, to give a few examples.

In the same logic, P2 abstracts other literary features from the base text that were useful to compose her literary commentary. In the extract below, P2 briefly overviews the following literary features: type of narrator, flashback, diction, and tone. (See Appendix H for definitions of these literary terms)

In the passage, it is possible to identify different literary elements. As it is written in first person, narrating the different childhood memories of Scout, it will have a constant usage of flashback in order to tell the story. Also, Lee will use some grammatical mistakes; abbreviations and/or regionalisms on the dialogs between characters the ones will outline the fact that the characters talking will be kids of the 1930's living in the southern of the United States. Finally, the eight chapter as well as the rest of the book will have a mysterious tone, full of suspense, in which the reader wonder how the history of Boo Radley will end up. Nevertheless, in this, the mystery will start getting solved, taking into account that in it for the first time Boo Radley is seen by a character, Jem.

[First artifact: literary commentary, P2, October 21st, 2012]

Due to the fact that the participants had certain goals in mind to compose their literary commentaries, it is possible to corroborate the predominantly efferent reading stance they adopted when approaching the base text. In order to achieve those goals, the participants needed to exercise their critical reading skills, such as observing what the writer was saying, observing why it was being said and why it was being said (McGee, 2002). An example of those goals were reading the text closely and paying careful attention to text structure,
author’s words choice, language patterns, and literary devices.

After having analyzed and illustrated the predominantly efferent reading stances in the participants’ literary commentaries, I will proceed to briefly recapitulate the definition of the concept of identity that guides this study; and then, discuss the patterns that emerged in regards to identity display within that type of reading stance.

**Identity portrayal in predominantly efferent reading stances in participants’ literary commentaries.** According to Bucholtz and Hall (2005) identity is a socio-cultural phenomenon that emerges and circulates in local discourse contexts of interaction (pp. 585-586). Ivanič (1998) affirms that when reading the most important should not be a text itself but “an event, and the people and actions that constitute it” (p. 63) and that interaction and the immediate social context would be included within that event. All that means that identities are displayed deeply when there are interactions or transactions between the text (chapter 8 of *To Kill a Mockingbird*) and the reader (the participants) within a social context of interaction (class discussions and the virtual community).

However, as it has been discussed above, composing literary commentaries instilled the participants to grasp the required information from the base text so they could use it after the reading event, which evoked predominantly efferent responses that offered, in most cases, very infrequent connections between the participants and the text. That lack of connection or interaction supposed little identity display in the participants’ responses, as opposed to limited moments in which the participants could relate to the reading, and displayed their identities; which cases will be presented in a further section.

Participants shared this perspective as well; an example of this is P2, who claims that some writing genres allow more for identity portrayal than others, and that is the case of literary commentaries.
Yo creo que uno siempre muestra la identidad pero no la muestra de la misma manera en todos los textos, entonces hay veces que uno se muestra más en algunos, por ejemplo, el poema, que en otros que son como más académicos como los literary commentary o los argumentative composition.

Identities are not portrayed in the same way in all the texts. There are texts in which one is more exposed than in others; for example one is more exposed in a poem than in more academic texts such as literary commentaries or argumentative compositions.

Another similar perception is shared by P3. When asked if she observed any awareness of her identity display in her written responses at the end of the intervention, she agrees with P2 by stating that she totally showed who she was in her poem, unlike her literary commentary.

En el poema, pues mostré totalmente quien soy y una parte muy importante de mi vida, en el literary commentary, pienso que no mostré mi identidad, porque era algo que era muy literario y muy sacado de un libro.

In the poem, well, I totally showed who I am and a very important part of my life. In the literary commentary, I don’t think I showed my identity, because it was something too literary, something quite extracted from a book.

In the previous quote, P3 affirms that she did not show her identity through her literary commentary, but she totally did through her poem. Then, it is possible to infer that the more connections or transactions a reader has with a text, this is to say, when a reader adopts an aesthetic stance to reading, he or she will possibly reveal more detailed aspects of his/her identity. When responding through a literary commentary, some of the participants of this study did not exhibit their identities in a deeper level because there were just a few personal connections between the base text and their lives, which is not the case when responding through a poem. However, those few personal connections make up evidence of
an aesthetic reading stance, and in turn, identity display. A discussion on the identities portrayed in the participants’ literary commentaries and poems will follow in the next section, and also when the next task is presented.

After having discussed evidence of predominantly efferent reading stances in the participants’ literary commentaries, and the phenomena of (lack of) identity portrayal in this kind of reading stance, the next section will focus on the analysis of a few written responses that do indicate the adoption of an aesthetic reading stance in the composition of literary commentaries. Besides this, the identities that the participants displayed when assuming an aesthetic reading stance in their responses will be studied in this section.

**Identity portrayal in predominantly aesthetic reading stances in participants’ literary commentaries.** The excerpts presented above exemplify predominantly efferent responses to the chapter 8 of To Kill a Mockingbird due to the fact that the participants focused their attention mostly on the information they needed to retain or carry away from the base text in order to respond. However, there were some participants’ responses that fell somewhere within the aesthetic half of the aforementioned reader response continuum without being predominantly aesthetic responses. In regards to a reader’s aesthetic stance, Rosenblatt (1999) claims that:

In this kind of reading the reader adopts an attitude of readiness to focus attention on what is being lived through *during* the reading event. The aesthetic reader experiences, savors the qualities of structured ideas, personalities, and emotions called forth, participating in the tensions, conflicts and resolutions as they unfold. (p. 5).

This means that, as opposed to an efferent reading of a text in which what really matters is what it is to be carried away *after* the reading event, reading aesthetically involves making connections *while* reading. In the next excerpt, P3 makes connections between the main character’s family structure and her own.
This chapter is very important and interesting, plus keeping the reader's attention by showing elements of every person in the daily life such as the family positions the characters have, like in my family where the girl is the youngest and the boy is the big one that takes care of her besides the parents, and the one that lives many experiences with her.

[First artifact: literary commentary, P3, October 22nd, 2012]

In the previous extract, P3 relates the main character’s family positions with her own, assigning the roles of caretaker to an older brother, just like in her family. This participant established a personal connection between her own family and the main character’s family that came to her mind while she was reading the base text. When this participant was asked how she felt when she responded to the texts they read in class this is what she responded during the semi-structured interview:

Yo creo que siempre que uno lee algo, hay un personaje con el cual se siente identificado o siente como más empatía y le gustan sus acciones, por ejemplo en el caso de To Kill a Mockingbird yo con Atticus me sentía caracterizada casi que en todas las acciones o con lo que él decía y eso y fue un personaje que me llamó la atención y me dio ganas de leer el libro por la manera en la cual él defiende los valores, las leyes establecidas y en la cual le gusta y tiene pasión por lo que hace y por lo que cree y como defiende los principios y lo que él cree que es correcto, no acepta un no de nadie sino que siempre va a creer en los principios que el cree y que le enseñaron a seguir. Además de eso, mi mamá es abogada y mi familia gira en torno a la política, entonces eso también me llamó la atención y pensaba en mi familia mientras leía lo que le pasaba a la familia de Atticus.

[Semi-structured interview, P3, May 27th, 2013]

I believe that every time one reads something, there is a character one feels identified with or a character one feels more empathy to because one likes his or her actions. For instance, I felt characterized in To Kill a Mockingbird’s Atticus in almost all of his actions, his words. He is a character that called my attention very much and I felt like keep reading the novel due to the way he pursues values and established laws, the passion he has for what he does and what he believes, and how he defends principles and what he believes is right. He does not take a no for an answer, he will always follow the principles he believes in, those principles he was taught to follow. Besides that, my mom is a lawyer too, and my family life turns around politics; that also called my attention and I thought about my family while I read what happened to Atticus’ family.

[Semi-structured interview, P3, May 27th, 2013]
In the following portion of P3’s reflection log entry, we are going to observe a partly efferent, partly aesthetic response. P3 discusses how the author’s purpose determines the mysterious tone of the text (efferent reading stance), which produces a positive reading experience described as a “page-turner” from the participant’s point of view as she enjoys reading mysterious novels (aesthetic reading stance).

It is a very well written novel, based on mystery elements that maintain the reader concentrated for inferring important events to show or understand the purpose of each of the chapters. Despite the topic and vocabulary are very complex, and a classic novel, it is very interesting and is used as a reference for young writers because of the way each event and element are presented with gothic and fantastic elements such as the existence and rumors of this man called Boo, that can be seen and compared the reader's daily life. Through all these elements the reader can infer that the purpose of the 8th chapter is to convince the children that Boo is not bad as they think. This thing will keep the reader's attention making the book a really good page-turner, which is good because when you are bored you can easily take it and read it. I’ve always liked mystery novels and this chapter was really mysterious.

[First reflection log entry: literary commentary, P3, October 23rd, 2012]

P3’s reflection log entry focuses predominantly on the form of the base text as P3 judges the topic and vocabulary of the base text as “complex”, but interesting. So far, it is possible to appreciate an efferent reading stance on this reflection. After this, P3 mentions the presence of the gothic and fantastic elements characteristic of the base text that “could be compared to the reader’s daily life.” It is then when P3 shows us that she also approached the base text from an aesthetic reading stance; the fact that her analysis transcends to her own daily life through a comparison is evidence that she is starting to portray bits of her identity, her identity is starting to emerge.

Regarding this phenomenon of identity emergence, Bucholtz & Hall (2008) claim that it is through interaction with others that identity emerges. Nevertheless, up to this point, P3 had not interacted with any other member of the virtual community yet, only with the base text, so to speak. Thus, it could be assumed that the reader’s ‘interaction’ with a literary
work, in which the readers draw on their past experiences with life and language to make sense of the printed page, is what constitutes an aesthetic stance to reading, and therefore, triggers the phenomenon of identity emergence.

On this regard, Rosenblatt (1995) affirms that the term ‘interaction’ is misused when describing the reading process, and has coined the term ‘transaction’ to illustrate the constructive, selective nature of this meaning-making process over time in a particular context (p. 26). While it is true that a reader may interact with a text when the printed symbols impress their meaning on the reader’s mind or when he extracts the meaning embedded in the text (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 26), the term ‘interaction’ disregards other factors that are quite involved in the reading process; normally these elements are very personal and unique to each individual and may change over time, just like the dynamic, active nature of identity (Bernstein, 2000). Rosenblatt (1995) asserts: “the reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition.” (p. 30). In other words, it is the willing reader who brings in his/her identities to the transactions with the individual literary texts, and the other way around; the reader’s individual transactions with an individual literary text may evoke past life experiences, knowledge, or personal likes, that set the ground for identity emergence.

This means that, in the particular case of P3, her attitude towards the base text allowed her to perform reading transactions that evidenced both an aesthetic reading stance and identity portrayal in her written response. Thus, it is possible to affirm that P3 displayed her identity as someone who regards mystery texts positively, a mystery buff.

Following the same chain of thought, P2 claims that some events in the base text can be connected with her real world, exhibiting automatically an aesthetic reading stance in her
written response. P2 gives an example that depicts the main character of the base text showing fear of snow, which is a rare weather event where this text is set.

It is possible to connect the every-day-life with the multiple events described in the chapter. For example, Scout's reaction towards the snow in Maycomb “The world’s endin’, Atticus! Please do something—!” p.86 is completely normal for anybody who doesn't know about it.

[First artifact: literary commentary, P2, October 21st, 2012]

Then, she proceeds to compare that event with a similar, but “irrational” fear of snow that Mrs. Ramos has. Mrs. Ramos is a woman P2 knows personally.

There is the case of an elderly woman, Mrs. Ramos, who said that if she got out of her house on a snowy day she will get frozen in the middle of the street. Some weeks passed and she was so frightened that she got a cold; she used it as an excuse to trip herself back to her home in South America, shortening her vacations at New York a month, leaving her husband alone there with her daughter.

[First artifact: literary commentary, P2, October 21st, 2012]

This connection displays an aesthetic stance to reading, as this participant brings her personal encounters with other people she knows to her reading experience and to her written response. However, unlike P3, P2 performed transactions with the base literary text that evoked someone else’s life experiences, not her own. In this case it would be imprecise to claim an identity emergence for P2 that arises from such transactions; nonetheless, P2 constructs Mrs. Ramos’ identity as irrationally fearful and elderly woman. Thus, P2 managed to establish a relationship between a fictional character from the base text and a real person in her own world. Then, it could be argued that P2’s reading transactions and associations of events and characters of both “worlds” bridged a gap between her real world and her fictional world of “To Kill a Mockingbird.” When readers assume an aesthetic stance during the reading event, the conflict between the unreal worlds they construct through their reading transactions and their real worlds is settled.
To sum up, predominantly efferent reading stances were more frequently evidenced in the participants’ literary commentaries to chapter 8 of “To Kill a Mockingbird,” than those predominantly aesthetic ones. The reason why the former reading stances may be more common than the latter are related to the very structured nature of the text form of that written response, which involves observance of certain writing standards and critical reading skills. Likewise, students’ identities were displayed much more evidently in the written responses of those participants who adopted a predominantly aesthetic reading stance to the base text.

The next type of written response that will be analyzed is the participants’ poems. A similar approach to the analysis and description of the participants’ literary commentaries will be followed; this is to say, the way the participants’ identities were unveiled or concealed in reference to the reading stances the participants adopted. The next section will describe and illustrate the reading stance that was most visibly evidenced in the participants’ written responses to the poem “Graduation Morning” (see poem in appendix I) and how their identities were displayed by adopting this reading stance.

**Predominantly aesthetic reading stance in students’ poems.** At this point it is important to remember that in Rosenblatt’s transactional theory (1995) the reader takes an active role through the transactions he/she exerts when making sense of a text. Those transactions fall within an efferent/aesthetic continuum. All the participants assumed a predominantly aesthetic reading stance to respond to the poem “Graduation Morning”, which speaks of a Mexican household worker who daily crosses the Rio Grande to clean houses. She calls the boy of the woman she works for “lucero,” bright star, an expression of the love and pride she feels in a child not her own. On the morning of his graduation, when they look at each other at the graduation venue, she cannot help but cry of happiness. This means that most participants drew on the personal connections, attitudes, or feelings inspired by the base
reading to compose their own poems. For instance, we can find these lines in P2’s response poem:

(...)
I know it's short, but I mean it,
you have been always besides me,
since the very first beginning,
you have taught me all I know,
and made me who I am today; (...) 

[Second artifact: poem, P2, January 28th, 2013]

In this excerpt of P2’s poem it can be observed that she established a connection with the subject of the base poem, she took it for herself, and adjusted it to her personal reality to write a poem. P2 shows a strong feeling of affection for a person in her response. It is not clear to whom this poem is dedicated until she clarifies it later on in her reflection log.

Well, I decided to dedicate my poem to my dad. He has always supported me in every single idea I have had, no matter how crazy it could look like. He has encouraged me to do everything I've done and I couldn't be more grateful with anybody but him.

[Second reflection log entry: poem, P2, January 29th, 2013]

P2 reveals that the person she dedicated this poem to is her dad. The reasons she gives have to do with his consistent support in any idea she has had “no matter how crazy it could look like.” P2’s dad is the person who has encouraged her to do everything she has done, and for that, “I couldn’t be more grateful with anybody but him.” It is implicit that their father-daughter bond is a high quality one. Hence, P2 is acknowledging the role of her dad’s guidance in her life. Rosenblatt (1998) claims that awareness of the ideas that are the residue of past psychological events involving the words in the base text and their referent constitute an aesthetic response (p. 5). Rosenblatt’s statement is evident in P2’s response, since P2 gained awareness of her dad’s on-going support while reading the base text and, consequently, composed a poem for him.
P1’s response is another example of how awareness involving words in the base text and their referent is reflected through an aesthetic stance. In the same way, awareness on current life experiences provoked by the base text could count as aesthetic responses. Here is a short excerpt of P1’s response.

(…) In this world full of fakes,
cruel people and hate,
My dad has always been there
to help me with my pain (…)

[Second artifact: poem, P1, January 29th, 2013]

The fact that the author of the base poem describes gratitude to her role figure created awareness in P1’s life situation by the time she composed her poem, which is expressed through the lines above. In those lines P1’s dad is seen as protection figure that will always help her. This awareness is reinforced explicitly in P1’s reflection log:

My inspiration to write this poem was my dad, he is a really important person in my life and he has always been there for me. I made [sic] the poem about him because I feel gratitude, love, and admiration towards him.

[Second reflection log entry: poem, P1, January 30th, 2013]

P3’s written response also follows the trend of composing poems about men, which P1 and P2 started. In the next extract it is possible to observe the main subject of her poem. The main difference seems to be the type of relationship between the participants and the male figure. In this case, the following extract seems to have a romantic nature.

I’d like to let you know
why I love this man so much
he is handsome, good looking and polite
he is everything I ever dreamed about (…)

[Second artifact: poem, P3, January 29th, 2013]
In another stanza, P3’s poem exhibits a humorous tone that describes her man type, and how this man relates to other members of her family, namely her parents and brothers. This is evidence of an aesthetic stance that “stirred up affective aspects of consciousness” (Rosenblatt, 1995:33)

(…) He likes my father very much
but, sorry for him, is my mother who rules the house
he has to learn to live with that, or just go away
he is everything I ever dreamed about (…)

[Second artifact: poem, P3, January 29th, 2013]

However, P3’s poem was not really intended to have a romantic nature. After having published her written response in the virtual community, she revealed the following in her reflection log:

When I first thought of writing a poem, I wanted to do something about the perfect man for me, I wanted to express the love I have for my father, but then when I was thinking of how would it be, I thought it was better if it was kind of funny more than something as personal as the love I have for my father and the relationship we have, so I decided to write about another kind of “perfect man” in my life, but with some humor in it.

[Second reflection log entry: poem, P3, February 1st, 2013]

Here it is possible to appreciate another poem written for a dad. It is evident, so far, that all the participants have drawn upon the theme of ‘family appreciation’ to compose their written responses. The base poem ‘Graduation Morning’ instilled in these three participants past experiences with their dads, and other connections that allowed them to express gratitude to them; for this reason, the way these participants related to their relatives through their written responses is a clear example of a predominantly aesthetic stance to reading, as described by Rosenblatt (1988): “those connections may involve past experiences, prior knowledge, social and psychological assumptions about the author, language or literature.” (p. 7).
Nevertheless, not all of the participants of the study composed poems for their dads. Unlike the other participants’ written responses, P4 breaks the pattern of composing poems for a male figure by writing a free verse about happiness and love without a clear type of recipient. In addition to this, P4 does not seem to have drawn upon the themes of the base text to compose her response poem, as her response only takes the poem form—free verse—into account: she drew upon one of the motifs of the base text: ‘lucero’ or morning star (see appendix H for literary terms). Both poems P4’s and the base poem written by Pat Mora will be presented below:

Life without preoccupations,
Live being happy.
Happiness is the answer,
The answer of life.
Live your real life,
Live it like a fantasy.
Life is only one.
Love and be loved,
Let someone look at your eyes,
And let them be part of your life.
Happiness is the answer,
The answer of life.
Remember you only live once.

[Second artifact: poem, P4, January 29th, 2013]

She called him Lucero, morning star,
Snared him with sweet coffee, pennies,
Mexican milk candy, brown bony hugs.

Through the years she’d cross the Rio Grande to clean his mother’s home. “Lucero, mi lucero,” she’d cry, when she’d see him running toward her in the morning, when she pulled stubborn cactus thorns from his small hands, when she found him hiding in the creosote.

Though she’s small and thin,
black sweater, black scarf,
the boy in the white graduation robe
easily finds her at the back of the cathedral,
finds her amid the swirl of sparkling clothes,
finds her eyes.

Tears slide down her wrinkled cheeks.
Her eyes, luceros, stroke his face.

*By Pat Mora.*

‘Lucero’ or morning star is the pet name the woman in the poem calls the boy she
would babysit, and then is graduating. Not only does the motif ‘lucero’ or morning star refer
to the informal, close way he gets called by his babysitter, but also to her own eyes or to her
striking glance; especially when she and him stare at each other from the distance when he
gets called to receive his diploma.

Thus, despite the fact that P4 did not resort to one of the themes of the base poem to
compose her response, like the other three participants, it is evident that she did resort to one
of the motifs of this text. Therefore, when P4 exhorts her readers to “let someone look at your
eyes, and let them be part of your life”, she is referring to that specific part of the end of the
base poem when the babysitter’s eyes or ‘luceros’ strike the boy’s face.

This connection elucidates the fact that not all the readers focus their attention on the
same aspects of a text when adopting an aesthetic stance to reading. A reader may focus his
or her attention to those elements that are the most relevant for them in that precise point in
their lives. This readers’ discernment shows creativity from the reader’s part, which is not the
result of his or her indifference, as this is how reading transactions happen. Rosenblatt (1995)
compares the reader’s ability to select his or her focus to approach a text with that of an artist
creative endeavor. She claims that there are selective factors that mold the reader’s response:

He comes to the book from life. He turns for a moment from his direct concern with
the various problems and satisfactions of his own life. He will resume his concern
with them when the book is closed. Even while he is reading these things are present as probably the most important guiding factors in his experience. (pp. 34-35).

To conclude, it can be stated that the participants of this study resorted to personal connections, attitudes, and feelings, themes, and motifs while reading the poem ‘Graduation Morning’ in order to compose their written responses. Those connections, attitudes, and feelings led to some awareness of their personal life situations, which in turn enabled them to assume an aesthetic stance towards reading. In the next section the connection between their poems and identity portrayal will be illustrated.

**Identity portrayal in predominantly aesthetic reading stances in participants’ poems.** This section of the analysis of the participants’ second written responses to the literature deals with the way the participants’ identities were unveiled in those responses, while adopting a predominantly aesthetic stance to reading.

When discussing identity portrayal in the previous task –literary commentary–, the theories of Ivanic (1998), and Bucholtz and Hall (2005) helped to establish that identities were displayed more deeply when the transactions between the reader and the base text within a social context of interaction were more clearly explicit. The cases illustrated above show that there is a predominantly aesthetic stance in their responses due to their poetic nature, which leads to explicit connections because of more direct transactions between these participants and the base text.

This means that, contrary to what was evident in the previous category, identities are very well portrayed in poetry given the aesthetic nature of the participants’ responses. The participants of this study seem to share this perspective as well; P3 is a clear example of this assertion since she claims that the poem was the response that showed more her identity.

[216-219] En la [respuesta] que más demostré mi identidad y quien soy, pienso que sería en [mi] poema porque se llamaba ‘my man’ y hablaba de una parte para mí muy
P1 agrees with P3 in the sense that out of the three responses she published, her poem was the response that showed more her identity, as well. P1 claims that poems are very personal, hence, they show more the essence of a person.

So far it has been explained that identity portrayal is more evident in poems due to the types or response the participants engaged in when composing their texts and the personal nature of poetry, which has been acknowledged by the participants. In this regard, Bucholtz and Hall (2008) shed some light on the issue of identity portrayal. They declare that “identity emerges in discourse through the temporary roles and orientations assumed by participants” (p. 591). Such interactional positions end up tagging the identities the participants portrayed in their poems. The next example illustrates how P4 portrays a “life-lover” identity in her poem as her text gives a message of happiness and love. Unlike the other participants’ written responses, it seems that this poem is not dedicated to anyone else. It reads more like a message or invitation for people to be happy and love life.

Life without preoccupations,
Live being happy.
Happiness is the answer,
The answer of life.
Live your real life,
Live it like a fantasy.
Life is only one.
Love and be loved,
Let someone look at your eyes,
And let them be part of your life.
Happiness is the answer,
The answer of life.
Remember you only live once.

[Second artifact: poem, P4, January 29th, 2013]

Furthermore, P4 reveals in her second reflection log entry that the people with whom she spends time shape her life-lover identity, as she affirms that the people that surround her inspired her to compose her response.

I think it’s important to have some people with you, in which [sic] you can find a support during your entire life, and these people present in my life are the ones that gave me the inspiration to write this poem.

[Second reflection log entry: poem, P4, January 30th, 2013]

In P3’s poem “My Man” the participant seems to portray a romantic image of herself, just like P1 and P2’s poems. The mere title “My Man” and the repetition of the lines “he is everything I dreamed about” create a romantic effect in her poem; however, as it has been presented in the previous section *Predominantly aesthetic reading stance*, P3 did not really mean the words she wrote. She intended to show her “funny” or “goofy” side by making her audience believe that her poem was supposed to be a romantic one, when in reality she was referring to her dad all the time.

**MY MAN**
I'd like to let you know
why I love this man so much
he is handsome, good looking and polite
he is everything I ever dreamed about.
Nevertheless he is not such a perfect guy
he can not stand his mother in law
and he is afraid of my two brothers
he is everything I ever dreamed about.
He likes my father very much
but, sorry for him, is my mother who rules the house
he has to learn to live with that, or just go away
he is everything I ever dreamed about.

[Second artifact: poem, P2, January 29th, 2013]

In the second stanza, when she writes that her man “cannot stand his mother in law”,
P3 actually means that her dad cannot stand P3’s mom, that is, his own wife; and when she
expresses that her man “is afraid of [her] two brothers, she means that her dad is afraid of his
own sons. P3 even expresses that it is her mom who rules and her that has to deal with it or
go away. Then, P3’s further publication of her reflection log on the poem offered quite a
twist on who was thought to be the main character of her poem. Following P3’s poem
publication, she wrote a reflection log in which she admitted that she did not refer to a
boyfriend when she composed her poem. She actually referred to her dad. She thought she
could use a funny tone rather than a sad, sentimental one to disclose a father-daughter
relationship. Here is how P3 revealed the actual main character of her poem.

When I first thought of writing a poem, I wanted to do something about the perfect
man for me, I wanted to express the love I have for my father, but then when I was
thinking of how would it be, I thought it was better if it was kind of funny more than
something as personal as the love I have for my father and the relationship we have,
so I decided to write about another kind of “perfect man” in my life, but with some
humor in it.

[Second reflection log entry: poem, P3, February 1st, 2013]

Apparently, P3 is telling her audience about the man she is in love with. She describes
why she loves her man, and describes his attitudes towards some members of her family. She
uses a humorous tone to let the audience know that he is afraid of her mom, but she is still in
love with this man. She also uses repetition in the last line of each verse of her poem, which
shows that P3 took the risk to use certain stylistic devices to enhance her poetry writing, more
specifically the poem’s tone and rhythm. The use of these technicalities indicate that not only did this participant write this poem as a way to show her individual connections or feelings with/towards the base text, but also how much she cares about how her audience will read her.

The previous poem and its subsequent clarification in P3’s reflection log entry show that P3 is able to use language deliberately in a crafty way to trick her audience into believing what she wants, in this case, that her poem is a romantic one. For these reasons, it is believed that P3 portrayed her identity as “goofy” through her choice of words in her written response.

To wrap up, it is possible to state that poetry is a text form that allows a great deal of identity portrayal through the participants’ adoption of an aesthetic stance to reading that is really evident in their written responses. The fact that the participants were not required to follow strict conventions to compose their free verses seemed to have contributed to a more personal writing that favored identity portrayal. In this manner the multiple nature of students’ identities expressed through their poems was quite evident.

The next type of written response that will be analyzed is the participants’ argumentative compositions. The kind of reader stance that each participant assumed will be key to find out the identities that each one of them portrayed in this form of written response. The next section will describe the reader stances the participants assumed in their written responses within Rosenblatt’s (1988) efferent-aesthetic continuum, and an analysis of identity portrayal in their responses.

**Efferent and aesthetic stances to reading in participants’ argumentative compositions.** While the participants went through a reciprocal teaching approach, as mentioned in chapter 4, to tackle the adapted play, the participants did not know what they would do afterwards in terms of the written product they would compose as a response to that
text; unlike their first task, when they produced their literary commentaries and they already knew they would be reading the novel excerpt in order to write a literary commentary. For this reason, it was during class socialization time that transactions between the characters of the adapted play and the participants of the study first arose, prior to telling them what they would do with that information.

It is in this sense that aesthetic responses were initiated during that group socialization. However, when the participants of this study were asked to compose their argumentative compositions in which they needed to explain their personal points of view on being financially powerful P2 and P3 did draw explicitly on references from the base text to start their compositions.

Being financially powerful can push people to become selfish, grouchy and even stingy, as Scrooge from A Christmas Carol. However, this isn’t always as bad as several people would think it is. In fact, there are several advantages and disadvantages to take into consideration. Some of them will be explain [sic] later on this composition.

[Third artifact: argumentative composition, P2, April 8th, 2013]

Just as Scrooge, there are lots of people in the world that are financially powerful, stingy and mean. This can bring several advantages and disadvantages such as being capable of spending on luxuries and personal desires, besides this will give authority and control over many things and people. Even though, because of the rude and greedy attitudes, friends and family members will stay away from these people and will become lonely, also the most probable thing is, if some time stingy people need help from others, they will not receive it because nobody wants to help someone that does not share and is not generous and has not helped others.

[Third artifact: argumentative composition, P3, April 8th, 2013]

Resorting to the base text in order to start a written response is quite common when the reader becomes a writer, according to Rosenblatt’s transactional theory. Rosenblatt (1988) asserts that “the reader-writer may return to the original text to recapture how it entered into the transaction” (p. 11). This is not the case of the other two participants of the study. On the other side there are P1 and P4, who did not start their argumentative
compositions by returning to the original text. It seems like they did not have the need to ‘recapture’ the way the original text entered into the transaction, assuming an aesthetic stance from the beginning of their compositions.

Being rich is almost a dream for many people, and it seems almost perfect for those who aren’t rich. Of course, rich people can afford things that the normal working class can't, and having economic profit gives them many opportunities. This [sic] people often find themselves acting in a wrong way and they don't realize that they will have to pay the price for their actions; sometimes this price is really high. They can lose the people they love and even end up being alone.

[Third artifact: argumentative composition, P1, April 9th, 2013]

In this society, being stingy is a way of conserving goods by not wasting the money on different things. In addition, being stingy is a way if [sic] preserving their power in society. There are advantages and disadvantages of trying to conserve their social power.

[Third artifact: argumentative composition, P4, April 8th, 2013]

Now, reverting to the idea of the participants’ initiated aesthetic responses while reading the adapted plays, and their link with the presence or absence of base text traces in their argumentative compositions it is pivotal to discuss the role of what Rosenblatt calls “choice of stance.” In this regard, Rosenblatt (1988) asserts that when the writer’s purpose in her text is that of explaining, analyzing, summarizing, or categorizing information drawn from the reading it seems like the writer’s choice of stance would be an efferent one, even when “the reading has been predominantly aesthetic” (p. 11), which is precisely the case of P2 and P3 seen above. In their case it is possible to appreciate in their introductions the way they are explaining and summarizing Scrooge’s behavior in order to illustrate the disadvantages of being financially powerful. Nevertheless, that does not mean that P2 and P3 assumed a complete efferent stance in their composition. In this regard, Rosenblatt affirms, “the aesthetic stance might be adopted in order to communicate an experience expressing the response or the interpretation” (p. 11). Thus, such aesthetic stances to reading do convey their personal encounters through their written responses.
Then, it is possible to appreciate that P2 and P3’s responses reflect both stances, since their main arguments communicate their experiences expressing their interpretation on being financially powerful, exhibiting author’s ‘choice of stance.’ In the next example P2 adopts an aesthetic stance by expressing her personal account on materialism and pleasure.

If for someone, having the latest Apple device is the key of happiness, let it be. Is [sic] his/her problem. No one is in position to judge another person’s decisions. If they want to miss the outstanding free delights of life, like watching a summer sunset, or dancing under the rain because they can’t appreciate the magnificent of simple things, it’s THEIR problem.

[Third artifact: argumentative composition, P2, April 8th, 2013]

The previous example illustrates how P2 advocates that it is up to each person to decide their own key to happiness, either by buying the latest technological devices or by appreciating simple things in life. This excerpt shows that this participant assumed a predominantly aesthetic stance to reading in order to convey a point of view that expressed her own interpretation on the issue of being financially powerful.

Despite the fact that all the participants carried out an aesthetic reading of the adapted play in class, and predominantly aesthetic responses were expected, efferent responses did emerge in some of the participants’ argumentative compositions, namely P2 and P3, as illustrated above. Following Rosenblatt’s claims, this can occur since the ‘reader-turned-writer’ has to face the problem of choice of stance (p. 11). Adopting an efferent stance to reading would be an appropriate option when it comes to finding words to explain an interpretation or a recreation of events. However, it is when these participants expressed their personal experiences with the text and its evocations that the previously assumed aesthetic stance takes part in their written response.

Next, the portrayed identities of the participants within their argumentative compositions, and the possible connections with the type of responses they assumed before and while writing this product will be illustrated.
Identity portrayal in participants’ argumentative compositions. In the previous discussions of identity portrayal in writing genres such as literary commentaries and poems has been established that there is a relationship between aesthetic responses and the participants’ explicit identity portrayal. Thus, it would be appropriate to state that the more aesthetically predominant a response is, the more it accounts for overt participants’ identity display and construction. Examples of identity display and construction were very evident in their poems, but not that much in their literary commentaries due to the stance the participants assumed when reading the base texts. As far as argumentative compositions are concerned, the data analysis determined that some participants chose to take a brief efferent stance to explain or illustrate the selfish behavior of Scrooge’s – the main character -, as well as an aesthetic stance to express their feelings and beliefs of being financially powerful. On the other hand, some other participants went for predominantly aesthetic responses to show their own involvement with the base text. This short review of identity portrayal in the past two writing genres, as well as the types of responses the participants adopted when writing their argumentative compositions help further illustrate the relation between the reading stance the participants took and identity display.

Next, the interactional positions assumed by the participants in their argumentative compositions will be presented and analyzed. The first example illustrates how P1 constructs her identity as “different” from the other participants, since she believes that her views on being financially powerful may diverge from her classmates’.

I focus [sic] this essay on the good things stingy people have. I know a lot of my classmates may criticize my essay because I know all of them are going to write that being stingy is bad, but I wanted to be different and say the good things about that. I also said that being rich is good because you can afford all the things you want and be happy, while poor people can’t do that.

[Third reflection log entry: argumentative composition, P1, April 10th, 2013]
P1 is a student that is recognized in her class by being outspoken and frank in her criticism and her social relationships in general. She believes that being stingy is good, just like being rich is good. If her classmates did not agree with her view, she would not have been bothered; on the contrary, she would be proud. She confirmed these views when she was interviewed at the end of the pedagogical intervention as shown in the following excerpt.

[392-394] A mi en realidad no me dio pena en absoluto publicar ninguno de los escritos en la comunidad, ya que no me avergüenza lo que pienso y no me avergüenza mi forma de escribir, entonces no le veo ningún problema en publicar lo que hago.

[392-394] I was not embarrassed at all about publishing my written responses in the virtual community, since I am not ashamed about what I think, and I am not ashamed about my way of writing, so I do not see any problem in publishing what I do.

[Semi-structured interview, P1, May 27th, 2013]

Even though P1 intended to construct her identity as “different” from the rest of her classmates, there are passages in her argumentative composition that are essentially very similar to those of the other participants of the study. This finding illustrates the changing, non-static nature of identities. In order to illustrate this claim, an extract of P1’s argumentative composition will be compared to one of P4’s.

As a conclusion in this composition it can be evidenced that having economic power and being stingy can be good and bad at the same time. It depends on the different points of view, the fun life and being left living alone. Even though rich people may look very happy and their life may seem perfect, being wealthy may not be so good at all because it brings suffering and dander. I strongly believe that being stable is important

[Third artifact: argumentative composition, P1, April 9th, 2013]

In this extract of P1’s argumentative composition this participant claims that being financially powerful can be good and bad at the same time, which contrasts with her view stated in her reflection log and the semi-structured interview. This is an example or how unstable identities can be, even within individuals. Considering this fact Omoniyi and White
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(2006) affirm, “identity is a problematic and complex concept inasmuch as we recognize it now as non-fixed, non-rigid” (p. 1). P1’s exemplifies how identities are not static, non-fixed. Likewise, McNamara (1997) states that “social identity is not fixed but depends on (among many things) the particular intergroup setting in which one finds oneself” (p. 564). Such intergroup could be both the virtual community and her school community to a greater extent. Taking into account that there are different members in each intergroup it could be inferred that an individual could exert as many different identities as intergroup he/she belongs to.

Returning to the participants’ interaction in the virtual community, an extract of P4’s argumentative composition will be presented to elucidate convergent points with P1’s text, such as presenting both sides of the argument and similarities in their conclusion.

Being stingy is a bad way of living, according the affective side of each person with this [sic] characteristics. But this, can be also an advantage on a not extremely way, in the way of interacting with people that want to take advantages on you.

In that brief excerpt of P4’s argumentative composition both sides of being financially powerful are evident, just like P1’s text conclusion. However, in the same manner as P1 leaned towards the good side of being financially powerful and claimed to be “different,” from the rest of her classmates, P4 claimed to have a strong character or, in other words, a “dominant personality.”

I find another advantage of being stingy, and maybe this is the most important one because it is about not letting others take advantage on you, and this is also connected with having a strong character because other people (the ones that want to take advantage on you) start respecting you. Sometimes having a strong character is a benefit; a real example is me, and people that are closer to me because they really know how I am with the people in which I don’t trust on [sic].
P4’s identity in her argumentative composition has been portrayed in different manners. First she affirmed that being financially powerful posed both advantages and disadvantages. Then, she felt more inclined towards supporting being stingy and having a strong character; she even showed herself as an example of the benefits of having a dominant personality. In the next lines P4 seems to contradict her previous positions presenting a new viewpoint of being stingy.

In this composition I said that stingy people are alone because of their attitudes, I agree with this and in my composition is shown too, because their character make other people doesn’t want to have contact with them [sic].

[Third reflection log entry: argumentative composition, P4, April 9th, 2013]

These changes in P4’s positions illustrate the non-static, non-fixed nature of identities. Concerning this idea, Bucholtz and Hall (2008) refer to identities’ constantly shifting as interaction unfolds and across discourse contexts (p. 606). What could have happened in the time between P4’s argumentative composition writing and her reflection log writing the next day? There is no answer to that question; however, Bucholtz and Hall claim, “any given construction of identity may be in part deliberate and intentional, in part habitual and hence often less than fully conscious (…) (p. 606).

This means that all the identity layers P4 portrayed through her argumentative composition, though contradictory, exhibit a deliberate or perhaps habitual construction. This was evidenced when she explicitly identified with Scrooge’s strong character and attitude. P4 is likely to portray that “dominant personality” identity deliberately in other local contexts of interaction like her classroom, her academic community, or even her soccer team. On the other hand, when P4 published her reflection log the next day, she portrayed a more nuanced facet of her “dominant personality” identity less consciously. She affirmed that people with strong characters are usually alone because the other people do not want to have contact with them, while the day before she had expressed that people with strong characters were
respected. This shows how individuals are able to display as many identities as circles or
groups they belong to in conscious or unconscious manners. Their displayed identities may
also be expressed differently when they publish their written responses on the virtual
community and when they write their reflection logs, which confirms Bucholtz and Hall’s
views about identity construction.

In short, the participants’ argumentative compositions exhibited evidence of both
efferent and aesthetic stances to reading. Some participants showed predominantly efferent
responses when they chose to use the events or characters from the main text to discuss the
writing prompt or start their responses. Some other participants exhibited predominantly
aesthetic responses when they approached the text in the preceding class discussions and
when they got closely involved with a determined position, which is illustrated by P2’s
comments quoted previously.

This category was the result of careful data analysis to answer the main research
question that guided this study: what do students’ written responses to literature in an EFL
virtual community reveal about their identities? After this analysis process it is possible to
claim that there is a relationship between aesthetic responses and the participants’ explicit
identity portrayal. When the participants adopted a predominantly aesthetic stance to reading
the base text, their written responses would show their identities more clearly and explicitly.
The opposite situation occurred when the reading stance they assumed was an efferent one. In
those cases, their identity display would not be as explicit. It was evident that the text type in
which the participants adopted the most predominant efferent stance to reading was the
literary commentary, and the one in which they adopted the most aesthetic stance to reading
was the poem. In regards to the argumentative composition, the data analysis determined that
some participants chose to take a brief efferent stance to explain or illustrate Scrooge’s
selfish behavior, as well as an aesthetic stance to express their feelings and beliefs of being
financially powerful. On the other hand, some other participants went for predominantly aesthetic responses to show their own involvement with the base text.

The next category will elucidate several phenomena of identity negotiation and identity construction evident in participant-established relations of differentiation and affiliation given in their EFL virtual community interactions through comments.

**Category Two: Participants enacted relations of difference or affiliation through their interaction so as to establish processes of identity display, construction, or negotiation (re-construction / co-construction).**

In the previous category, it was established that the participants were able to display their identities more implicitly or explicitly in their written responses and reflection logs depending on the reading stance they assumed when approaching each text. This category refers to the way the participants engaged in processes of identity display, construction, or negotiation by means of their interaction through comments in this EFL virtual community. This is to say that the analysis of the interactions among participants in the EFL virtual community provided the framework for the emergence of this category. It was observed that the formerly examined participants’ identities were not fixed (Omoniyi & White, 2006) and, therefore, underwent negotiation processes such as identity re-construction or co-construction that emerged through the participants’ interaction in the EFL virtual community (Bucholtz & Hall, 2008). This process of identity display, construction, and negotiation was achieved mainly through relations of difference or affiliation evidenced in the comments they posted on their classmates’ written responses. This process was also evident in the participants’ reflection logs they composed after seeing their written responses online along with the other participants’ comments on these responses.
In the next lines I will describe, illustrate, explain, and interpret the participants’ relations of difference or affiliation by which their own identities are displayed, constructed and negotiated. These relations of difference or affiliation with other participants are evident in the comments they left on other participants’ written responses, the ones they received on their own, and their reflection logs.

**Participants’ affiliation and differentiation through interaction.** Participant One’s (P1) first written response on the EFL virtual community complied with the conventions set for a literary commentary, and for this reason there is not much room for identification moments, as it was previously analyzed in category one. The following excerpt illustrates this point:

In the story many things happen and many symbols are used, for example the good and evil. The characters represent many different things, for example Scout who is a smart little girl may represent innocence. Atticus may represent knowledge and justice, and Dill may represent curiosity and bad influence.

[First artifact: literary commentary, P1, October 22nd, 2012]

The previous passage presents several allegories portrayed by several characters in chapter 8 of “To Kill a Mockingbird.” Allegories of evil, innocence, justice, curiosity and bad influence were brought forth as a way to analyze and evaluate this literary piece; however, there is not evidence of P1’s identity display in her first written response published in the EFL virtual community, which is also connected to the predominantly efferent reading stance this participant assumed there.

Conversely, P1’s first reflection log entry does offer more personal insights on several other real-life issues that were not part of the conventions of the text type she was required to write, but were still related to the base text. In the following extract of P1’s first
reflection log entry, she brings about the issues of poverty, and discrimination; and then, she links them to her real world.

“This chapter is very good because it talks about many social problems like poverty, racism, and discrimination that we can see nowadays. I don’t think I am racist but I think sometimes I see poor people different, maybe because they can’t get an education like the one we get and that is bad.”

[First reflection log entry: literary commentary, P1, October 23, 2012]

When she does that she constructs her identity as someone who is not poor, someone who is different from “them.” Therefore, she resists or rejects belonging to the group of “poor” (they); she belongs to other group of people who can get another type of education (we). This is a first indicator of how P1 established a relation of difference through language in order to construct her identity as “not poor” and “educated.” Barker & Galansinzki (2003) refer to this as the “interpersonal function of language,” which is what permit us to build and keep social interactions with others. By engaging with this function of language we are able to acknowledge who we are and the ones around us in diverse social contexts. In the same way, we enact these relations of difference to construct or negotiate our identities.

A second indicator of how P1 established relations of difference to enact her identities is presented in the next extract of her first reflection log entry. P1 discusses corruption, and education in the light of her own position compared to the opposite position of “the others.”

Education can solve all the poverty in the world, they have to steal things in order to survive, but politics [sic] in charge of education policies steal to be richer and richer.

[First reflection log entry: literary commentary, P1, October 23, 2012]

For P1, education is the lens through which the group she belongs to is different from the poor. P1 conceives the poor as a group of people who have to steal things in order to survive. To P1’s mind, nevertheless, the poor are not the only group of people who steals.
Politicians in charge of educational policies also steal but with a different purpose: to be richer and richer. In this way, P1 seems to reject the behavior of stealing, no matter the purpose, distancing herself from those groups: she is not poor, nor is she a politician. The excerpt above also illustrates a possible solution to the issue of poverty, which is education, but an education with policies formulated by politicians who do not steal. By getting involved with one of the themes of the base text in this level, one in which this participant is able to propose solutions of this kind, P1 assumed a predominantly aesthetic stance to reading which had not been shown in her actual written response. Evidence on the adoption of this reading stance in P1’s reflection log confirms one of the findings of the previous category: the more predominantly aesthetic a response is, the more likely it will be for students to display their identities.

Later on, P1 published a poem on the virtual community about her dad as a written response to the poem “Graduation Morning.” P1 decided to name this poem “Perfection.” In this written response P1 portrayed herself as a daughter who has a strong feeling of affection for her dad. P1’s full version of her written response is presented below.

My dad is such a gentle man,
he always makes me smile.
When I am mad or sad
he is there to make me smile.

When I am afraid or need help
he is always there
always there for me, always easy to reach.

In this world full of fakes,
cruel people and hate,
My dad is always there
to help me with my pain.
My light my inspiration my reason to live
my dad is perfect, so much it can’t be real.

Thinking about him brings me joy
I can only remember his smiles and his jokes
always so calm organized and smart
my role model and hero is my perfect dad.

[Second artifact: poem, P1, January 29th, 2013]

P1 picked up on what really mattered to her from the base poem “Graduation Morning” to compose a written response. As a writer, P1 managed to share a piece of her own family world with her classmates within the EFL virtual community, which is evidently an aesthetic response. For P1, her dad is the personification of perfection. As it is evident above, P1 describes her dad as someone gentle, someone who makes her smile, who is always there, easy to reach, her light, her inspiration, her reason to live, her role model, and her hero; someone calm, organized, and smart. She feels so much admiration for her dad that it is possible to infer that P1 is a daughter of an involved father, and she uses this kind of appreciative language to portray her identity as the daughter of an engaged father.

After reading P1’s written response, P2 posted a comment that let us see how P1’s poem served as an exhortation for her to change her attitude towards her dad. Here is the comment P2 posted on P1’s response.

[Comment by P2 on P1’s poem. February 1st, 2013]

I want to tell you that I love your poem. I think sometimes we forget to remember our dads and they are really important because they were the first boy in your life, and that will never hurt you or leave you alone. Although I don’t have a good relationship with mine, I have to be very grateful with him because he has been there for me in all my hard moments and this poem made me realize I really need to change my attitude with my dad. I love the way you describe that hero in our life is very cute how you express your relationship with him. I wish I have the same relation with mine, as I said before I LOVE YOUR POEM.

The previous comment shows how P1’s written response caused P2 to revisit the idea she had about her own family. Phrases such as “this poem made me realize I really need to change my attitude with my dad” and “I wish I have the same relation with mine” reflects
how P2, as a reader of P1, adopted an aesthetic stance to look at her own family world through P1’s eyes. Her family views were revisited despite having published her own written response three days before. This revisiting resulted in P2’s identity negotiation. According to Bucholtz & Hall (2008) this identity negotiation “happens as interaction unfolds across discourse contexts” (p. 608). This also shows how P2 “bent” P1’s voice to her own purpose (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 183) as she struggled to appropriate the voice of P1 to express views on her family through written language.

P3 also adopts an aesthetic stance to reading P1’s poem to express affiliation. Affiliation is understood as one of the two main language functions Gee (2001) proposes, where language is used to support individuals’ connections with cultures, social groups and institutions. The same author also assures that language plays a key role in depicting identities when the context of production is considered, which is the point of this case study. Through P3’s comment on P1’s poem it is possible to observe how both P1’s and P3’s fathers are perceived as helpful and problem-solvers. As Bucholtz & Hall (2005) pose it “identity is the social positioning of the self and others” (p. 586).

P3 reinforces P1’s idea of her dad being perfect with phrases such as “I see the meaning of perfection refers to ‘the best dad in the world’” and “with this name I can see that your dad is doing amazing things through your life. I feel similar, my dad is always trying to give me a hand in my problems, and she teaches me how to resolve them in a better way, and not having a dad could be awful in all people’s lives. I love this poem!! I can see how the love of a dad is important, remember.. I love you champ haha.”

[P3’s comment on P1’s poem. February 1st, 2013]
using phrases such as “I feel similar” since she is using that kind of language to express a connection. Thus, P1, P2, and P3 ratify a triple bond among themselves that is characterized by the manifestation of the importance of a paternal figure in their lives. These three participants decided to express their positive feelings about their dads through their poems, which reflect the importance of the role of dads in their daughters’ lives.

P4, on the other hand, adopted an aesthetic stance to reading P1’s poem to express her appreciation, and then differentiation to P1’s response. In the following comment posted by P4, we can see how this participant established a relation of difference through language with P1 to indicate distance from the group of “daughters of engaged dads.” However, she does state: “I would love to have that type of inspiration for my [her] dad.” P4’s comment on P1’s response is presented below:

![Comment by P4 on February 1, 2013 at 8:39 am](image)

P4’s comment on P1’s poem. February 1st, 2013

P4’s comment on P1’s response displays a phenomenon of identity co-construction by which P4 used language to reinforce certain qualities or behaviors that P1 had already exhibited in her written response. P4 co-constructed P1’s identity as someone who shows admiration and gratitude to her dad when she asserts, “I think that this is true love that will last forever, I also think you express admiration and gratitude.” On the other hand, P4 exerts
differentiation explicitly by stating literally “I don’t feel identify [sic] with your poem I haven’t feel [sic] that way toward my dad.”

In her last written response, P1 brings arguments in favor and against being rich and stingy. Despite her saying that it is better to be stable and be part of the “normal working class”, the arguments she presents are not balanced, as there is a higher number of arguments in favor of being rich and stingy. For this, P1 displays contradictory positions in her argumentative composition, which can be evidenced in the next excerpts:

As a conclusion in this composition it can be evidenced thet [sic] having economic power and being stingy can be good and bad at the same time. It depends on the different points of view, the fun life and being left living alone. Even though rich people may look very happy and their life may seem perfect, being wealthy may not be so good at all because it brings suffering and danger.

[Third artifact: argumentative composition, P1, April 9th, 2013]

I strongly believe that being stable is important but being a millionaire is better, having less drama in your life and living happier surrounded by good people who love you.

[Third artifact: argumentative composition, P1, April 9th, 2013]

In the first excerpt there is no evidence of a strong argument that supports only one point of view; she claims that it is better to be part of the “normal working class” so as to not have so much drama and live happier. In the second excerpt it seems as if P1 believed that it is better to be financially stable, but then P1’s third written response and reflection log entry emphasize the conflicted, contradictory nature of her identity in that particular moment. She focused her composition on the good aspects of being stingy. She calls herself to be “different” since she knows that most girls in her class will argue the opposite point of view. However, in her reflection log entry, she is justifying again the arguments of her composition, which are mainly favoring the fact that being rich is better than being poor. Then, she seems to switch this view again, claiming that:
It is better to be financially stable and happy because I know a lot of friends of my parents that are not happy because they owe money to banks and other people to maintain their status with their friends.

[Third reflection log entry: argumentative composition, P1, April 9th, 2013]

Participant Two’s (P2) first written response on the EFL virtual community complies with the conventions given to write a literary commentary. An identification moment appears at the end of the written response; however, this identification moment is not a personal. An event of Chapter 8 of “To Kill a Mockingbird” is connected with a story P2 evoked while writing her response. The following excerpt illustrates this point:

There is the case of an elderly woman, Mrs. Ramos, who said that if she got out of her house on a snowy day she will get frozen in the middle of the street. Some weeks passed and she was so frightened that she got a cold; she used it as an excuse to trip herself back to her home in South America, shortening her vacations at New York a month, leaving her husband alone there with her daughter.

[First artifact: literary commentary, P2, October 22nd, 2012]

The previous quote illustrates P2’s claims about how some events in the base text can be connected with the real world. P2 gave an example that depicted the main character of the base text showing fear of snow, which is a rare weather event where this text is set. Then, she compared that event with a similar, but “irrational” fear of snow that Mrs. Ramos has, being Mrs. Ramos is a woman that P2 knows personally. This connection is relevant as it displays an aesthetic stance to reading due to the fact that this participant is bringing her personal encounters with people she knows personally to her reading experience, and she portrays all that through her written response.

In addition to this, further research on some historical facts was evident in P2’s first written response to prove some characters wrong, and to justify some characters’ behaviors from the base text. This research was not prompted, for this reason it is a unique behavior observed among the participants of this study. This is how P2 constructs her identity as an
“inquirer.” In the following excerpt from P2’s first written response, we can see how she brings in some background inquiry for her text.

[Mr. Avery] decides to blame Jem and Scout for the [snowing] event, ensuring his statement by making reference to two historical facts, "The Rosetta Stone" and "The Appomattox". Lee [the author] decides to include them for different reasons. The Appomattox was one of the last wars of the American Civil War, and is used in order to show the readers how in the 1930’s, even if the war ended, the American citizens still related each misfortune with it. On the other hand, the Rosetta stone is used to show how the grown ups of the time, took advantage of the ingenuity of the children. As Mr. Avery blame the kids by saying that: "it was written on the Rosetta Stone that when children disobeyed their parents, [...] the seasons would change"p.85; which is not accurate, due that the Rosetta Stone gives a translation for the different Egyptian hieroglyphics but it's unrelated with predictions of the future or something similar.

[First artifact: literary commentary, P2, October 22nd, 2012]

After this, P1 expresses affiliation to reinforce P2’s inquirer identity through the comment below. P1 also acknowledges that thanks to P2’s background research she managed to understand the base text in a better way, establishing a co-construction of P2’s identity as “inquirer” through this affiliation relationship.

Another example of P1’s identity co-construction through her interaction in the virtual community occurs in a response she gave to P4’s literary commentary. P4 related the paranormal events occurred in Maycomb, Alabama with certain spooky events that have happened to her. This is an excerpt of P4’s written response.
I had felt the same way. Because I have a camp house at Villa de Leyva were it’s supposed to be “ghosts”, so I feel interested on something paranormal happens in spite I have been used to be at that house, sometimes I get scared because many religious people had died there, and also some others of my family.

[P4’s literary commentary. October 22nd, 2012]

In the previous excerpt we can observe how P4 feels nervous about certain paranormal events that have occurred in her house in Villa de Leyva, and how this event is connected to the main mysterious event occurred in the base text. In the next excerpt, I am going to illustrate how P2 establishes a relation of differentiation with P4’s commentary and, thus, constructs her identity as “rational” and “atheist.”

P2 claims that she does not believe in paranormal events because her parents have
always been “scientific,” meaning rational people that stick to facts and think that everything can be explained by reason; hence, the identity of “rational.” The “atheist” identity is one that has been previously co-constructed by her and her friends due to her Nietzschean ideas on religion. This shows how P2’s identities are shaped taking into consideration the roles she adopted within her community or, like in the previous excerpt, the roles the community assigned her (Bernstein, 2000). Then, P4 replies back commenting on the way P2 gets inspired when she discussed science, and then, reinforcing P2’s “atheist” identity to allow for an identity co-construction process given in the virtual community.

Affiliation was also expressed when the participants composed their responses about similar issues and had parallel views about such issues. This affiliation creates identity co-construction phenomena, which strengthen bonds among community members. This is mostly evident in their second written response. The majority of the participants composed their poems about the influence their fathers had in them; therefore, the affiliation relations were massive and expressed through their replies to the poems. In the following image we can observe P2’s poem comment thread. Examples of relations of affiliation and differentiation, identity negotiation, construction, and co-construction were evident all throughout these written responses, interactions with other peers in the EFL virtual community, and reflection log entries. In the same way, it could be confirmed that participants’ aesthetic written responses disclose their identities more explicitly through language than the efferent ones.

In the next chapter, the conclusions of this study will be presented, explained, and illustrated. The next chapter will also offer a brief summary of the categories that answered the research question that guided this study.
Chapter VI

Conclusions

The present qualitative case study sought to explore the way students’ identities were unveiled in their written responses to literature in an EFL virtual community, and to describe identity relations that these students enacted through their participation in that virtual community. To achieve these goals a main research question was set: what do students’ written responses to literature in an EFL virtual community reveal about their identities?

Creswell (1998), Nunan (1998), Merriam (1998), and Bell (1999) have all defined qualitative case studies in terms of a detailed exploration centered on particular individuals with particular characteristics through meticulous data collection instruments that document certain aspects of precise educational phenomena. The cases this study explored were the written responses to three prescribed literary texts that four students of 8th grade published in an EFL virtual community. The researcher sought to delve mainly into those written responses to literature to explore their identities, and the role of an EFL virtual community in regards to students’ identity portrayal. The researcher also looked into the participants’ reflection logs and confirmed certain pieces of information through a group semi-structured interview towards the end of the intervention.

After concluding a grounded approach to analyze data, and using the research questions established at the onset and throughout this process, the following three categories emerged:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Categories Emerged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do students’ written responses to literature in an EFL</td>
<td>1. Identities are unveiled with reference to the type of reader stance each participant assumed in her written</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
virtual community reveal about their identities?

First, it was determined that the participants’ identities were unveiled with reference to the type of reader stance each of them assumed in her written responses. The participants’ first response was a literary commentary, which is a very structured writing type that needed observance of certain conventions. For this reason, the type of response that was mostly evident was an efferent one, which according to Rosenblatt (1998) was produced when the reader needed to take away or retain something after reading the base text. Since there was little personal involvement in the participants’ responses, it was evident that there was little participants’ identity portrayal due to the restrictive nature of the task; thus, whenever an efferent response was recognized in a participant’s response, identity portrayal proved to be limited. In a few cases the participants showed evidence of connections with their previous knowledge or experiences in their responses. When this occurred, the type of response given was an aesthetic one. According to Rosenblatt (1995), this kind of stance refers to the reader’s positions, connections, attitudes, or feelings towards the text while he/she is reading. This explains why the participants’ attitudes, past experiences, and knowledge were educed to compose their responses to this text type. This kind of reading stance was less evident in their written responses than the efferent ones; however, an aesthetic stance to reading was pretty evident in most of the participants’ reflection logs, which were written once their responses were posted online.

This finding contrasts with the type of response that was the most evident in the participants’ second written response, as well as the way their identities were displayed. The participants revealed their identities in their written responses (poems) to the base text, in the responses they received to their own poems from their classmates via comments, and in their
reflection logs. However, writing poems and commenting on other people’s responses allowed for deeper identity portrayal, as it was possible to evidence multiple and contradictory identities, unlike the first task when the participants wrote literary commentaries to respond to Chapter 8 of “To Kill a Mockingbird.” It is evident that the participants established multiple transactions and resorted to the main themes of “Graduation Morning” such as gratitude, affection, parental love, and achieving goals to respond to both the base text and to their classmates’ texts. Hence, most of their responses implied a predominantly aesthetic stance to reading.

As far as their argumentative compositions are concerned, both reader stances were evident in their written responses; therefore, their identities were displayed more explicitly when the reader stance they adopted was predominantly an aesthetic one. The opposite occurred when the participants resorted to the base text to provide a recreation of events; then, it was not possible to spot explicit participants’ identities.

Second, when the participants interacted in the EFL virtual community by responding to other written responses, or by reading the comments others had left on their own written responses, it was noticed how the participants enacted relations of difference or affiliation in order to establish processes of identity display, construction, or negotiation. The relations of difference and affiliation were established through language, and happened as interaction unfolded across contexts, namely the EFL virtual community (Bucholtz & Hall, 2008). When the participants established relations of differentiation, they would use language to disagree or reject points of view, ways of being, cultures, or positions. Conversely, when they determined relations of affiliation they would use language to express agreement and similarity. Identities could be displayed through their own written responses, or their own reflection logs; and identities could be constructed or negotiated through the comments on other participants’ written responses, when they could revise the image of themselves after
reading those comments, or simply when they would give an opinion about a determined written response.

The last chapter of this study will present the pedagogical implications, limitations and further research.
Chapter VII

Pedagogical implications, limitations, and further research

Pedagogical implications

This study contributes to the academic community by exploring the cases of four eighth-graders’ identities portrayed in their written responses to literature in an EFL virtual community. Traditional literacy practices in the EFL classroom have defined success as the acquisition of certain language forms and functions that allow learners to have some knowledge about the target language or culture; however, under a sociocultural perspective of language learning, language is considered as a vehicle for self-expression; thus, teachers may get to know their students in deeper levels by exploring their students’ identities.

For teachers in middle school or high school understanding their teen students has been an important goal in order to have a better rapport with them, and have a non-threatening learning environment. I, personally, managed to see other faces of my students through their written responses to literature and was able to observe how they used the target language to make identity-related claims and take position on certain real-life issues brought about in literature. Through their written responses to literature I could learn more from my students’ backgrounds, beliefs, hopes, morals, and funds of knowledge; which has a great value for me as an educator when it comes to designing meaningful units and materials. Literature performed as the medium that students approached to get to know themselves better, and that fostered processes of identity portrayal, construction, and negotiation.

Students may also use the target language as a means to convey messages about their worlds more meaningfully to others. The participants of this study reported having gotten to
know more from their classmates’ worlds through this pedagogical intervention despite having shared with them personally for more than 7 years in some cases. In addition to this, other social implications for the students include writing and publishing their compositions for a real audience, which helped them to think of writing as a more serious and meaningful activity. For this reason, EFL teachers should note that they need to stop being their students’ sole writing audience and think about ways to get their students to share and publish what they write. For this purpose, the use of an EFL virtual community seems to have served this intention.

The setup of the class EFL virtual community was intended to serve a double purpose: first, making the participants’ compositions available to their peers, and second, provide a motivating and innovative learning environment that could get the students to participate frequently under no kind of pressure. While the class’ virtual community complied with the first purpose by which it was created, some participants did not find this virtual space so motivating or innovative. One of my assumptions in the earliest stages of this project had to do with an everlasting positive response from the participants to their interaction in the virtual community. Sadly for me, some participants acknowledged towards the end of the intervention that visiting the virtual community, reading the posts, and then commenting them became tedious, especially when I would take the entire class to the computer lab and the internet connection would slow down due to simultaneous, heavy traffic on the same website. Using technology in the classroom is not guaranteed success. It may happen that students will end up linking virtual community participation with mandatory interventions on it that will cause them to get either a very high, or a very low grade depending on the number of comments or the length of the conversation thread. That was not the original idea under which this project was conceived, but eventually, the participants that avoided long
interaction threads in the virtual community opted for more straightforward comments towards the end of the intervention so it did not feel like “a lot of work.”

**Limitations**

This study had a few limitations that hindered the performance that had originally been devised during the pedagogical intervention stage of this study. Nevertheless, a vast majority of the goals set was met. The limitations that will be presented have to do with the restricted life of the virtual community, time constraints, slow internet connections, and optional comments from the participants of the study. After that, some ideas for further research related to the core of this study will be presented.

The first and, probably, the most shocking limitation is related to the restricted life of the class’ virtual community. By the time I created this community on ning.com (August 2012) I had already started other five EFL virtual communities on this site, so I felt quite comfortable with its use and features. One month after I invited all my eighth grade students to sign up I started to receive notices about the end of the free hosting plans and the beginning of paid plans. The community remained open until August 2013, then it closed and all the store data was erased. I could only keep some screenshots I had taken before then, but fortunately I did manage to copy-paste all of their work onto MS Word by May 2013.

Another limitation for this study had to do with time constraints due to the strict written literacy curriculum (English Language and Literature) of the English department. Due to these time constraints I could not get my students to work on more personal writing types such as memoirs and autobiographies that I consider might have been more effective in regards to identity display or construction and negotiation through comment interaction in the virtual community. Instead, I had to stick to written types such as literary commentaries and argumentative compositions.
Due to the technological nature of this study, a very strong Internet connection was necessary since the virtual community would be blocked every time all the students accessed it at the same time. Some students’ comments had to be re-written several times with no saving possibility. This caused that the students preferred to work on the comments for their peers at home and plagiarism cases began to be exposed.

Finally, as far as commenting goes, these were made optional since the beginning of the pedagogical intervention. That caused that a wide part of the class chose to not write comments ever, arguing that their teacher was the only one with enough language knowledge to correct. That showed they got a wrong idea of the project as they suggested I was looking into language proficiency in their comments and written responses.

**Further research**

Some ideas for further research are included below:

- Students’ identity display and negotiation in personal narratives published in a virtual platform (such as blog or wiki)
- Students’ identity display and negotiation through multimodal literacy tools.
- Reader-response activities as a means to construct a group identity.
- New literacies and personal electronic devices in the EFL / ELA class.
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Appendix A

Sample of initial surveys

Dear 801 students, please answer the following confidential survey. This information will be used in the context of the study I am conducting about students' responses to literature in an EFL virtual community.

1. Which texts have you written in the English class in the last two years?
   - Memoir
   - Autobiography
   - Poetry
   - Any other? Yes, No
   - Which one? Short story

2. Have you published these written products anywhere? For instance, a blog, your classroom’s bulletin board, or the school’s website.
   - Yes
   - No

3. Do you usually ask your classmates to revise your written products before submission to your teacher?
   - Yes
   - No

4. Have you ever revised or given comments to any of your classmates written products before submission to her teacher?
   - Yes
   - No

5. Would you like to have other peers revise your written products before posting them in our class virtual community or before submission to your teacher?
   - Yes
   - No

6. How so?
   - Because I want to improve my grade

7. How do you usually discuss the texts you read in the English class with your classmates?
   - Orally
   - Through writing
   - Through videos
   - Other
   - Which one?

Thank you very much!!!
Appendix B

Extract from Gimnasio Femenino’s linguistic policy

DESADE LAS OTRAS ÁREAS
En las demás áreas existentes en el Colegio, los profesores también modelan y corigen las habilidades comunicativas bajo la declaración ya mencionada: “todos los profesores son profesores de lengua”. Igualmente, hay espacios adicionales creados en todas las secciones para trabajar a manera de refuerzo con el fin de que los estudiantes que presentan debilidades logren los niveles esperados.

EVALUACIÓN DE LA PRIMERA Y SEGUNDA LENGUA
Para la evaluación del aprendizaje de la primera y segunda lengua, contamos con descriptores de eje de desempeño que miden las habilidades básicas del aprendizaje de las lenguas, de acuerdo con las diferentes etapas de desarrollo de las estudiantes, incluyendo los criterios de evaluación requeridos antes y en el Programa Diplome en las distintas áreas. Además, se tiene en cuenta los indicadores de logro establecidos por el MEN (Ministerio de Educación Nacional), los cuales coinciden con los descriptores institucionales.

Esta evaluación apunta a la constucción de nuestro perfil lingüístico que lo hemos definido de la siguiente manera:

PERFIL LINGÜÍSTICO
“Nuestras estudiantes comprenden y expresan ideas con confianza, creatividad, respeto y claridad tanto en español como en inglés de acuerdo con el contexto en el que se encuentren y son conscientes de la importancia de la función de la lengua en un mundo globalizado”.

Esta declaración nos permite tener confianza en nuestras estudiantes cuando demuestran conocimientos en espacios individuales, grupales y de la comunidad educativa, partiendo de ideas propias (pensamiento crítico).

La investigación con propósito y el uso racional de las TIC (Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación) incluidos en nuestro currículo, también nos permiten desarrollar y evaluar la creatividad, el respeto hacia las ideas ajenas (por ejemplo: uso de fuentes bibliográficas), y detectar la claridad con la que nuestras estudiantes logran comunicarse.

Los objetivos/desafíos que tenemos establecidos se operacionalizan desde tres ámbitos específicos así:

Desde lo Académico
Cada una de las áreas está comprometida desde su instrucción a que las estudiantes comprendan aspectos tanto de forma (estructura de la lengua) como de contenido (propio de cada área), desarrollando a la par habilidades de pensamiento crítico que se manifiestan en las diferentes producciones orales y escritas realizadas en ambas lenguas.

GIMNASIO FEMENINO
Appendix C

Consent letter

Bogotá, D.C., 25 de agosto de 2012

Apreciados Padres de Familia y Estudiantes del curso 801:

Les informamos que el profesor Diego Cortés se encuentra actualmente cursando cuarto semestre de la maestría en lingüística aplicada a la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera, ofrecida por la Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. Para optar al título de Magíster actualmente él está desarrollando una investigación sobre las conexiones que pueden establecerse entre las respuestas que producen las estudiantes a las obras literarias que leen en clase, su socialización en una comunidad virtual para la clase de inglés, y los procesos de construcción de identidad que surgen de dicha interacción.

Esta experiencia permitirá a las estudiantes publicar sus escritos en una comunidad virtual privada, ser lectoras de los textos de sus compañeras y elaborar un criterio informado sobre los mismos. Así, sus textos serán leídos por una audiencia diferente al profesor y tendrán la oportunidad de usar la Web 2.0 como herramienta de apoyo de su proceso de lectoescritura en inglés. Además de esto, se generarán procesos de reflexión que les permitirá analizar la manera en que sus identidades se reflejan en sus narrativas a través de su publicación y la interacción con sus compañeras en esta comunidad virtual.

Los datos para dicha investigación serán recolectados desde agosto de 2012 hasta abril de 2013. Para tal propósito se harán entrevistas y grabaciones; igualmente, las estudiantes llevarán una bitácora de reflexión personal sobre esta experiencia. Cada uno de sus escritos publicados y sus respectivos borradores serán archivados en los portafolios de cada estudiante y almacenados en línea en la página de la comunidad virtual. Esta información será recolectada por el docente investigador, con el objetivo de ser analizados posteriormente.

Cabe anotar que la participación en esta investigación es de naturaleza voluntaria y no afectará las notas de las estudiantes. Las personas que deseen participar lo harán bajo las siguientes condiciones:

- Se asegura total anonimato de su identidad, por lo cual se usarán nombres ficticios.
- Si las estudiantes quieren escoger un seudónimo para identificarse lo pueden hacer en el espacio provisto al final.
- La información recolectada será usada con absoluta confidencialidad.
- Las estudiantes tendrán la posibilidad de revisar sus declaraciones antes de ser hechas públicas para evitar posibles interpretaciones erradas.
Las entrevistas, por ejemplo, se revisarán después de ser transcritas, especialmente en aquellos casos en que los comentarios no sean muy claros para el investigador.

El colegio, las participantes y sus padres tendrán acceso a las conclusiones de la investigación y serán invitados a la socialización del proyecto.

Para hacer formal la participación de las estudiantes, por favor diligenciar el desprendible adjunto y devolverlo lo más pronto posible al profesor Diego.

Si hay alguna duda al respecto, los invito a que me envíen un email a diego.cv@gimfem.co, o a través de la agenda de la estudiante.

Cordialmente,

TRUDY MARTÍNEZ DE RUÍZ
Directora
Bachillerato

JUAN CARLOS CAICEDO
Coordinador Sección
Bachillerato

DIEGO CORTÉS VELANDIA
Director de curso – 801

CIRCULAR JSB – 10
PROYECTO DE INVESTIGACIÓN OBRAS LITERARIAS CURSO 801.

Estoy de acuerdo con la participación de la estudiante:
___________________________ del grado 801 en el proyecto de investigación liderado por el docente investigador Diego Cortés durante los dos primeros periodos académicos del año 2012-2013.

PADRE DE FAMILIA: __________________________ y __________________________

SEUDÓNIMO: ________________________________
Appendix D

Semi-structured interview base questions

Questions:

1. Cómo se sintieron cuando respondieron los textos que leímos en clase.
2. Alguien les ayudó con la composición de las respuestas o lo hicieron solitas, ayuda de compañeras.
3. Como se sintieron en la participación en la comunidad virtual, en cuanto a postear las respuestas, a los comentarios.
4. Como creen ustedes que han mostrado quienes son ustedes a través de las respuestas de los textos que leímos en clase.
5. Hay un texto especifico en el que se mostraron mas? Literary commentaty, poem o argumentative composition?
6. Como crees que mostraste tu identidad en dichos textos?
7. Cada vez que ustedes tuvieron que publicar algo en la comunidad, ustedes se daban cuenta de la manera en que ustedes se estaban mostrando a sus demás compañeras? Ustedes eran conscientes de la manera como ustedes se estaban mostrando o se dieron cuenta después?
8. Para las que dijeron que sí se daban cuenta que muestran su identidad cuando escriben, como mostraron sus identidades cuando escribieron los textos?
9. Cuando leiste las opiniones o los posts de tus otras compañeras y viste que tenían un punto de vista diferente al tuyo, sentiste que ya no querías publicar tus respuestas?
10. ustedes notaron a lo largo de este año y con su participación en la comunidad virtual, algún cambio de su manera de pensar o de la forma como ustedes se estaban mostrando a través de las respuestas?
11. Tú crees que la manera que te mostraste en tus escritos cambió de alguna forma a través de todo este año o se mantuvo igual.
12. Tu crees que a través de la interacción que hubo en la comunidad, es posible que tu identidad o identidades se puedan transformar?
13. Cuentenme sobre la interacción que hubo entre ustedes en la comunidad virtual.
14. El hecho de ser parte de una clase social, de ser niñas adolescentes, de estudiar en un colegio femenino, tiene algo que ver con la manera en la que ustedes se mostraron en sus escritos?
15. Hubo algún texto en particular en el que tu crees que tu identidad como adolescente colombiana de determinada clase social, se vio más reflejada, en alguno de los tres textos.
Appendix E

Sample of instruments

Excerpt of participants’ artifacts: literary commentary

ENTRY 1: TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

Posted by [Posted By] on October 22, 2012 at 8:00 pm

To kill a mocking bird tells the story of a girl named Scout who lives in a sleepy town with her brother and father. Just like the authors father Scout’s father, Atticus is a lawyer. In the story the siblings become friends with Dill, a very curious boy who is interested in the mystery of the Radley’s place.

The kids start playing games trying to get Boo Radley to come out of the house. Doing these games they are disobeying Atticus and getting in trouble. Something unexpected happens in Maycomb, it snows for the first time. In this town is said that when children disobey their parents, weather changes. Scout and Jem feel guilty for this. But after doing a snowman out of dirt and snow they forget about it. Later on miss Maudie’s house burns down and in the middle of the confusion boo Radley puts a blanket over scout’s shoulders making her freaked out about it. Because of this they end up telling Atticus everything that has happened lately.

In the story many things happen and many symbols are used, for example the good and evil. The kids think that Boo is evil, because of the stories they have heard about him. And they think that everyone who seems nice is a good person. The characters represent many different things, for example Scout who is a smart little girl may represent innocence. Atticus may represent knowledge and justice, and Dill may represent curiosity and bad influence. Boo may be a mocking bird, because he hasn’t done any thing wrong but still he is accused for something bad and is prisoner in his own house.

This is a good novel that shows many interesting things about childhood, innocence, good and evil, and social problems that ocurrd in that time. This novel
ENTRY 2: PERFECTION

Posted by on January 29, 2013 at 7:30 am

My dad is such a gentle man,
he always makes me smile.
When I am mad or sad
he is there to make me smile.

When I am afraid or need help
he is always there always there for me,
always easy to reach.

In this world full of fakes,
cruel people and hate,
My dad is always there to help me with my pain.

My light my inspiration my reason to live
my dad is perfect, so much it cant be real.
Thinking about him brings me joy I
can only remember his smiles and his jokes
always so calm organized and smart
my role model and hero is my perfect dad.

Comment by on January 29, 2013 at 7:57 am

My inspiration to write this poem was my dad, he is a really important person in my life and he has always been there for me. I made the poem about him because I feel gratitude, love, and admiration towards him. For me order, patience, and good humor are really
ENTRY 3: MONEY ISN´T THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN LIFE

Posted by on April 9, 2013 at 7:49 am

Being rich is almost a dream for many people, and it seems almost perfect for those who aren't rich. Of course, rich people can afford things that the normal working class can't, and having economic profit gives them many opportunities. This people often find themselves acting in a wrong way and they don't realize that they will have to pay the price for their actions; sometimes this price is really high. They can lose the people they love and even end up being alone. Positive and negative aspects are going to be discussed in this composition.

Having money and being wealthy allows people to have a comfortable life, a life full of luxury and opportunities. Celebrities, for example, drive luxurious cars and live in big and comfortable houses. We can even see them walking through the red carpet with the most extravagant clothes and accessories. Wealthy people are able to do whatever they want whenever they want to. Money also comes with options and opportunities that people of the normal working class don't have. Economic power gives them many gifts, discounts and free things; often the brands give those items of their store because if they wear or use those things then people of the normal working class would want to buy them.

Rich people associate with people of the same social class, and they become richer by doing so. In addition, wealthy people teach their children how to manage money and even the family business therefore, making the family wealthier. Millionaires get to travel the world, meet many places and new people. Rich people can also afford the greatest parties making their life really fun. Being wealthy also gives them the chance to support charity and help many unfortunate people. There are often news about celebrities donating huge amounts of money to organizations that help either children or cancer and even organizations that aid people infected with HIV.

On the paragraphs above some of the advantages were discussed, but being wealthy isn't so perfect. Being rich can also make people stingy, being stingy can be good. It helps persons to regulate their money; they don't waste it so much. Being stingy also gives rich people a strong character and personality and it helps them recognize

JOURNAL 1: LITERARY COMMENTARY

I can say that I like this fragment of To Kill a Mockingbird and that I agree with what the critics have said about it, the ones I mentioned in my commentary. I think it is possible to connect the every-day-life with the multiple events described in the chapter. For example, Scout's reaction towards the snow in Maycomb: "The world's anizia., Atticus! Please do something!" I p. 66 is completely normal for anybody who doesn't know about it. Most of the times, the snow can cause curiosity but, as there's a people who enjoys playing with it such as Jem, there can be some more others who had, rational or irrational fears to it, and need some help in order to learn to live with it. Only that, sometimes a little help isn't enough... There is the case of a elderly woman, Mrs. Ramos, who said that if she got out of her house on a snowy day she will get frozen in the middle of the street. Some weeks passed and she was so frightened that she got a cold; she used it as an excuse to trip herself back to her home in South America, shortening her vacations at New York a month, leaving her husband alone there with her daughter. Could it have been a good decision?
Excerpt of participants’ reflective logs: poem

JOURNAL ENTRY 2: MY MAN.

I wrote my poem this way because when I first thought of writing a poem, I wanted to do something about the perfect man for me. I wanted to express the love I have for my father, but then when I was thinking of how would it be, I thought it was better if it was kind of funny more than something as personal as the love I have for my father and the relationship we have, so I decided to write about another kind of “perfect man” in my life, but with some humor in it so it would not be a sad and tear poem. I think I am showing who I am through this poem because of the way I live my life in every aspect, I express myself and always add humor and happiness to the situation so I can enjoy everything I do.

Excerpt of participants’ reflective logs: argumentative composition

JOURNAL 3: ARGUMENTATIVE COMPOSITION

In this composition is said that stingy people are alone because of their attitudes, I agree with this and in my composition is shown too, because their character make other people doesn’t want to have contact with them. If stingy people have money to buy so many things for them, and not to help others that maybe doesn’t have the same opportunities, I think this is one of the worst disadvantages of being stingy.

I think I showed everything I was when I talked about stingy people. I showed my thoughts and my ideas about spend money, like how one can spend power and everything you have. Personally, I am not really materialistic so this things are not logic in the world in which we are living nowadays. What I wrote show what I am but without intention.

Excerpt of semi-structured interview transcript and analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSCRIPT</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>128 – 132 Pues uno tenía que comentar y digamos pasó varias veces que uno no sabía que poner, porque uno no podía decir, si quedó muy chévere me gusto, chao y uno no sabía que más poner y pues cuando uno comenta, uno debería como hacer un comentario opcional, pues si tu comentas es porque tu decidiste hacer un comentario.</td>
<td>When asking this participant to make a structured comment on her peers’ blog entries she claims that such comments should be made optional and not a requirement for every one. Then, how do researchers make sure participants are participating??</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix F

### Summary of genre, titles, and abstracts of base texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Literary Text</th>
<th>Abstract</th>
<th>Written response text form.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novel</td>
<td>“To Kill a Mockingbird”  Chapter 8. Written by Harper Lee</td>
<td>For the first time in years, Maycomb endures a real winter. There is even light snowfall, an event rare enough for school to be closed. Jem and Scout haul as much snow as they could from Miss Maudie’s yard to their own. Since there is not enough snow to make a real snowman, they build a small figure out of dirt and cover it with snow. That night, Atticus wakes Scout and helps her put on her bathrobe and coat and goes outside with her and Jem. Miss Maudie’s house is on fire. The neighbors help her save her furniture, and the fire truck arrives in time to stop the fire from spreading to other houses, but Miss Maudie’s house burns to the ground. In the confusion, someone drapes a blanket over Scout. When Atticus later asks her about it, she has no idea who put it over her. Jem realizes that Boo Radley put it on her.</td>
<td>A literary commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>“Graduation Morning.” Written by Pat Mora</td>
<td>This poem speaks of a Mexican household worker who daily crosses the Rio Grande to clean houses. She calls the boy of the woman she works for “lucero,” bright star, an expression of the love and pride she feels in a child not her own. On the morning of his graduation, when they look at each other at the graduation venue, she cannot help but cry of happiness.</td>
<td>A poem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short story adapted into play</td>
<td>“A Christmas Carol” Story by Charles Dickens. Adapted for the Stage by Frederick Gaines</td>
<td>Ebenezer Scrooge, obsessed with solitude and greed, collides in a nightmare with his own youth and his lost love. Scrooge is visited by the spirits of Christmas Past, Christmas Present, and Christmas Yet to Come. The visiting spirits of Christmas force Scrooge to confront people and scenes from his life that remind him of his friendlessness – he even sees his home and his future corpse being rifled by his own servants. Finally, he awakens to the reality of Christmas morning and discovers the joy of giving, loving, and caring for others.</td>
<td>An argumentative composition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G

Extract of Chapter 8 “To Kill a Mockingbird”

For reasons unfathomable to the most experienced prophets in Maycomb County, autumn turned to winter that year. We had two weeks of the coldest weather since 1885, Atticus said. Mr. Avery said it was written on the Rosetta Stone that when children disobeyed their parents, smoked cigarettes and made war on each other, the seasons would change: Jem and I were burdened with the guilt of contributing to the aberrations of nature, thereby causing unhappiness to our neighbors and discomfort to ourselves.

Old Mrs. Radley died that winter, but her death caused hardly a ripple—the neighborhood seldom saw her, except when she watered her cannas. Jem and I decided that Boo had got her at last, but when Atticus returned from the Radley house he said she died of natural causes, to our disappointment.

“The world’s endin’, Atticus! Please do something—!” I dragged him to the window and pointed.

“I quote—‘As it has not snowed in Maycomb County since 1885, there will be no school today.’”

Eula May was Maycomb’s leading telephone operator. She was entrusted with issuing public announcements, wedding invitations, setting off the fire siren, and giving first-aid instructions when Dr. Reynolds was away. When Atticus finally called us to order and bade us look at our plates instead of out the windows, Jem asked,

“How do you make a snowman?”

“I don’t want you all to be disappointed, but I doubt if there’ll be enough snow for a snowball, even.”
Appendix H

Glossary of Literary Terms
Adapted from www.literary-devices.com and www.poetryfoundation.org

**Allegory**: An allegory is a symbolism device where the meaning of a greater, often abstract, concept is conveyed with the aid of a more corporeal object or idea being used as an example.
Example: Faith is like a stony uphill climb: a single stumble might send you sprawling but belief and steadfastness will see you to the very top.

**Diction**: Diction is the distinctive tone or tenor of an author’s writings. Diction is usually judged with reference to the prevailing standards of proper writing and speech and is seen as the mark of quality of the writing. It is also understood as the selection of certain words or phrases that become peculiar to a writer. **Example**: Certain writers in the modern day and age use archaic terms such as ‘thy’, ‘thee’ and ‘wherefore’ to instill a Shakespearean mood to their work.

**Flashback**: Flashback is a literary device wherein the author depicts the occurrence of specific events to the reader, which have taken place before the present time the narration is following, or events that have happened before the events that are currently unfolding in the story. Flashback is used to create a background to the present situation, place or person.
Example: Back in the day when Sarah was a young girl…

**Free Verse**: Nonmetrical, nonrhyming lines that closely follow the natural rhythms of speech. A regular pattern of sound or rhythm may emerge in free-verse lines, but the poet does not adhere to a metrical plan in their composition. Walt Whitman explored the possibilities of nonmetrical poetry in the 19th century. Since the early 20th century, the majority of published lyric poetry has been written in free verse.

**Motif**: The literary device ‘motif’ is any element, subject, idea or concept that is constantly present through the entire body of literature. Using a motif refers to the repetition of a specific theme dominating the literary work. Motifs are very noticeable and play a significant role in defining the nature of the story, the course of events and the very fabric of the literary piece.
Example: In many famed fairytales, the motif of a ‘handsome prince’ falling in love with a ‘damsel in distress’ and the two being bothered by a wicked step mother, evil witch or beast and finally conquering all to live ‘happily ever after’ is a common motif.

**Narrator (Type of)**: A **FIRST PERSON** narrator is an "I" (occasionally a "we") who speaks from her/his subject position. That narrator is usually a character in the story, who interacts with
other characters; we see those interactions through the narrator's eyes, and we can't know anything the narrator doesn't know. A SECOND PERSON narrator speaks in "you." This is an extremely rare case in American literature. A THIRD PERSON narrator is not a figure in the story, but an "observer" who is outside the action being described. A third-person narrator might be omniscient (i.e., able to tell what all the characters are thinking), but that is not always the case. Third-person narration may also be focalized through a particular character, meaning that the narrator tells us how that character sees the world, but can't, or at least doesn't, read the mind of all the characters this way.

**Theme:** The theme of any literary work is the base that acts as a foundation for the entire literary piece. The theme links all aspects of the literary work with one another and is basically the main subject. **Example:** The main theme in the play Romeo and Juliet was love with smaller themes of sacrifice, tragedy, struggle, hardship, devotion and so on.

**Tone:** The tone of a literary work is the perspective or attitude that the author adopts with regards to a specific character, place or development. Tone can portray a variety of emotions ranging from solemn, grave, and critical to witty, wry and humorous. Tone helps the reader ascertain the writer’s feelings towards a particular topic and this in turn influences the reader’s understanding of the story. **Example:** In her Harry Potter series, author J.K. Rowling has taken an extremely positive, inspiring and uplifting tone towards the idea of love and devotion.
Appendix I

Poem “Graduation Morning” by Pat Mora

She called him Lucero, morning star, 
snared him with sweet coffee, pennies, 
Mexican milk candy, brown bony hugs.

Through the years she’d cross the Rio 
Grande to clean his mother’s home. “Lucero, 
mi lucero,” she’d cry, when she’d see him 
running toward her in the morning, 
when she pulled stubborn cactus thorns 
from his small hands, when she found him 
hiding in the creosote.

Though she’s small and thin, 
black sweater, black scarf, 
the boy in the white graduation robe 
easily finds her at the back of the cathedral, 
finds her amid the swirl of sparkling clothes, 
finds her eyes.

Tears slide down her wrinkled cheeks. 
Her eyes, luceros, stroke his face.

Author: Pat Mora
Appendix J

Excerpt of the play: “A Christmas Carol”.
Story by Charles Dickens. Adapted for the Stage by Frederick Gaines

Scene I. Scrooge in His Shop

The play begins amid a swirl of street life in Victorian London. Happy groups pass; brightly costumed carolers and families call out to one another and sing “Joy to the World” softly as the children talk. Bob Cratchit, a clerk who works in Scrooge’s office, comes in. He takes some coal from the mound and puts it into a small bucket. Scrooge’s nephew Fred enters, talks with the children, gives them coins, and sends them away with a “Merry Christmas.”

FRED:
A Merry Christmas, Uncle! God save you!
SCROOGE:
Bah! Humbug!
FRED:
Christmas is a humbug, Uncle? I hope that’s meant as a joke.
SCROOGE:
Well, it’s not. Come, what is it you want? Don’t waste all day, Nephew.
FRED:
I only want to wish you a Merry Christmas, Uncle. Don’t be cross.
SCROOGE:
What else can I be when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out with Merry Christmas! What’s Christmas to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older but not an hour richer. If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with “Merry Christmas” on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart.
FRED:
Uncle!
SCROOGE:
Nephew, keep Christmas in your own way and let me keep it in mine.
FRED:
But you don’t keep it.
SCROOGE:
Then leave it alone then, much good it may do you. Much good it has ever done you.
FRED:
There are many things from which I might have found enjoyment by which I have not profited, I daresay, Christmas among the rest. And though it has never put a scrap of gold in my pocket, I believe it has done me good and will do me good, and I say God bless it!

SCROOGE:
Bah!

FRED:
Don’t be angry, Uncle. Come! Dine with us tomorrow.

SCROOGE:
I’ll dine alone, thank you.

FRED:
But why?

SCROOGE:
Why? Why did you get married?

FRED:
Why, because I fell in love with a wonderful girl.

SCROOGE:
And I fell in love with being alone. Good afternoon.

FRED:
Nay, Uncle, but you never came to see me before I was married. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?

SCROOGE:
Good afternoon.

FRED:
I am sorry with all my heart to find you so determined; but I have made the attempt to honor Christmas, and I’ll keep that good spirit to the last. So, a Merry Christmas, Uncle.

SCROOGE:
Good Afternoon!

FRED:
And a Happy New Year!

SCROOGE:
GOOD AFTERNOON! (Fred hesitates as if to say something more, he sees that Scrooge has gone to get a book down from the shelf, and he starts to leave. As he leaves, the doorbell rings.) Bells. Is it necessary to always have bells? (The Gentleman visitor enters, causing the doorbell to ring again.)