

**Empowering Young Voices in The Community: An Integrated Strategy Between Genre
Pedagogy Principles and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)**

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Table of contents

1.	Characterization of the problem	12
1.1.	Statement of the problem.....	12
1.2.	Research question	16
2.	Justification.....	16
3.	Objectives.....	18
3.1.	Main objective.....	18
3.2.	Specific objectives	18
4.	Theoretical framework.....	19
4.1.	Literature Review	19
4.1.1.	YPAR Supporting Youth	19
4.1.2.	Writing as a Practice of Awareness	23
4.2.	Conceptual Framework	26
4.2.1	Argumentative Writing (a social cognitive process).....	26
4.2.1.	Genre-based Approach/Genre Pedagogy Principles.....	31
4.2.2.	Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR).....	37
4.3.	Legal Framework	44
4.3.1.	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).....	44
4.3.2.	Constitución Política de Colombia – Artículo 67	45
4.3.3.	Ley 115 de 1994.....	45
4.3.4.	Ley 1651 de 2013.....	46
4.3.5.	Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés – Guías N° 22	47
4.3.6.	Proyecto Educativo Institucional “PEI”: La Excelencia es Fruto de la Exigencia.....	48
5.	Research Methodology	48
5.1.	Research design.....	48
5.1.1.	Setting.....	50
5.1.2.	Participants.....	50
5.1.3.	Researcher-Practitioner Role	51
5.1.4.	Data collection methods	51
5.1.5.	Ethical Considerations	53
6.	Methodological Design of the Didactic Sequence.....	54
6.1.	Didactic Sequence Rationale	54
6.2.	Didactic Sequence implementation	55

6.2.1.	Cycle 1: Let's get together	57
6.2.2.	Cycle 2: Digging into the surroundings.....	61
6.2.3.	Cycle 3: We've got a voice too	65
7.	Data Analysis and Discussion	67
7.1.	Writing Barriers	69
7.1.1.	L1 Influencing L2.....	69
7.1.2.	Writing Elements	74
7.1.3.	Affective elements.....	82
7.2.	Integration of Genre Pedagogy Principles (GPP) and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) 90	
7.3.	Empowering Voices	97
7.3.1.	Cultural and Critical Epistemologies.....	98
7.3.2.	Academic Content (beyond school level).....	100
7.3.3.	Development and Leadership	103
7.3.4.	Youth Organizing and Civic Engagement.....	105
8.	Conclusions.....	108
9.	Limitations and recommendations	111
	Referencias.....	113

Tables List

Table 1 Categories and subcategories for analyzing the data collected..... 68

Figures List

Figure 1 Integration of argumentative writing voices and the YPAR approach.....	56
Figure 2 Pizza-groups based on skills (ingredients).....	58
Figure 3 Part of the reading workshop Exposing Hidden Worlds – Chapter 3.....	59
Figure 4 Recognition of students' community	61
Figure 5 Photovoice activity around the school.....	63
Figure 6 Students' experiences after applying instruments	64
Figure 7 Students perceptions that did not change after researching	66
Figure 8 Students perceptions that changed after researching.....	67
Figure 9 Workshop about other youth and their communities.....	92
Figure 10 Self-reflection towards social issues	94
Figure 11 Ice breaker: common things among us.....	96
Figure 12 Ice breaker Marshmallow challenge	97
Figure 13 Fragment of self-recognition of students in their community.....	98
Figure 14 Fragment of introduction of issue chose for the essay.....	101
Figure 15 Analysis of information by student	101
Figure 16 Students' emotional involvement.....	103
Figure 17 Students' emotional involvement.....	103
Figure 18 Students' emotional involvement.....	104
Figure 19 Students' emotional involvement.....	104
Figure 20 Solutions or recommendations for the issues identified	106
Figure 21 Solutions or recommendations for the issues identified	106
Figure 22 Solutions or recommendations for the issues identified	107

Annexes List

Annex No. 1 Consent letter from the school involved.....

Annex No. 2 Consent form for young students to participate.....

Annex No. 3 Lesson plan sample

Annex No. 4 Problem-solving essay samples.....

Annex No. 5 Pizza-team organization.....

Annex No. 6 Survey sample designed by students.....

Annex No. 7 Data analyzed by students

Annex No. 8 Wrap-up activity

Annex No. 9 Teacher-researcher journals.....

Annex No. 10 Rubric of assessment for the essay created.....

Abstract

Title: Empowering Young Voices in The Community: An Integrated Strategy Between Genre Pedagogy Principles and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)

Author: Laura Juliana Nempeque Murcia

Key Words: YPAR, argumentative writing, Genre Pedagogy, critical awareness

Description:

Changes start from local places where people work together; however, young voices are not always considered when making decisions for the community. Therefore, this qualitative study emerges as a need to empower a group of 10th graders' voices in their communities by constructing an argumentative essay. It takes place in Colegio Bilingüe La Consolata in Bucaramanga. The implementation is through integrating Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) and Genre Pedagogy Principles, which trigger three stages related to critical awareness of social issues, research content, and the construction of a problem-solving essay about the experience in their communities. Through the experiences of these learners, it can be found that L1 and L2 have a strong bond for students' improvement in their L2 writing elements. Moreover, students seem to be empowered due to their involvement with their own communities regarding a social issue and demonstrate how much they care about expressing their emotions, which, in the theoretical part, links with Social Emotional Learning (SEL). As a

way of reflection, secondary-level content needs to strengthen the students' social research skills in students thus, it would advocate for the decision-making to consider tertiary education. As a limitation to highlight, unfortunately, the last third cycle is uncompleted due to lack of time due to the school calendar.

Resumen

Título: Empoderamiento de las Voces Jóvenes en la Comunidad: Una estrategia integrada entre los principios de la Pedagogía del Género y la Investigación Acción Participativa Juvenil (IAPJ)

Autor: Laura Juliana Nempeque Murcia

Palabras clave: YPAR, escritura argumentativa, Pedagogía del Género, conciencia crítica.

Descripción:

Los cambios parten de lugares locales donde se trabaja en conjunto; sin embargo, las voces de los jóvenes no siempre son tenidas en cuenta a la hora de tomar decisiones para la comunidad. Por ello, este estudio cualitativo surge como una necesidad de empoderar la voz de un grupo de estudiantes de décimo grado en sus comunidades a través de la construcción de un ensayo argumentativo. Se lleva a cabo en el Colegio Bilingüe La Consolata de Bucaramanga. La implementación es a través de la integración de la Investigación Acción Participativa Juvenil (IAPJ) y los Principios de la Pedagogía de Género, que desencadenan tres etapas relacionadas con la conciencia crítica de los problemas sociales, el contenido de la investigación y la construcción de un ensayo de resolución de problemas sobre la experiencia en sus comunidades. A través de las experiencias de estos estudiantes, se puede constatar que la lengua materna y la segunda lengua tienen un fuerte vínculo para la mejora de los estudiantes

en sus elementos de escritura en la segunda lengua. Además, los estudiantes parecen sentirse empoderados debido a su involucramiento con sus propias comunidades en relación con un problema social y demuestran cuánto les importa expresar sus emociones, desde la teoría esto se enlaza con el Aprendizaje Emocional Social (SEL). A modo de reflexión, es necesario que los contenidos de secundaria refuercen las habilidades de investigación social en los estudiantes, por lo que abogaría por la toma de decisiones para considerar la educación terciaria. Como limitación a destacar, lamentablemente, el último tercer ciclo queda inconcluso por falta de tiempo debido al calendario escolar.

1. Characterization of the problem

1.1. Statement of the problem

The relationship of argumentative writing and reality is essential for an individual to be able to express their critical thinking about their surroundings, and consequently, to propose and build that community where people live. As Chapetón Castro and Chala (2013) state, writing is the means for people to connect with their situated socio-cultural contexts. Thus, this constant interaction becomes the way for individuals to recognize themselves and re-signify who they are. Now, if these two topics, argumentative writing and reality, are discussed from the educational terms, writing practices are not traditionally considered as a reflection of learners' reality, nor are the students involved in their community as active participants. It should be noted that the relationship between writing skills and reality has been considered a phenomenon in other places and has been studied in other Colombian education levels such as primary and university (Pabón, 2019; Martínez, 2020).

Throughout the constant observation and interaction that I, as an English teacher, have with a group of 26 tenth graders at La Consolata Bilingual School in Bucaramanga, I can get to know about learners' perception regarding their engagement with their community and the process of argumentative writing that they have developed so far in English, as the second

language (L2). In order to gather these voices and delimitate the issue of this project clearly, I take the time to review students writing performance, reflect about the type of topics that they usually learn about in an English class, apply a survey to the whole group, interview five students and collect some of their artifacts: writing argumentative samples. Thus, the phenomena identified will be developed in the following lines.

Firstly, 10th graders believe that the development of L2 proficiency is important; nonetheless, when it is about L2 writing competences, there are different opinions such as some learners admit that this skill is vital to achieve personal and professional goals in their future life; and some others claim that these skills are more relevant in their first language (L1) because their skills in the mother tongue is more developed than in the other one. To reinforce and engage both learners' perceptions and competences, the not-for-profit- organization Battelle for Kids (2019) argues that considering argumentative writing within the 21st century literacy skills, school learner will be "engaged [...] and better prepared to succeed in today's digitally and globally interconnected world" (p.1). That is to say, raising awareness of the importance of argumentative writing skills in L2 might impact a person's academic, social or professional life. Furthermore, some other learners express that despite considering their L1 as support when writing in L2, they still need a wide improvement in the linguistics aspect to increase their vocabulary, grammar structure and way to organize an argumentative text such as an essay. This is back to one of these young people voices in an interview, S1 "Yo siento que soy mucho de usar palabras técnicas entonces me pasa en inglés que esas palabras técnicas todavía no las conozco, por lo tanto, gramaticalmente a mí a la hora de escribir sí me afecta bastante" [I

feel that I tend to use more formal words but when using English, I do not know yet what are those one; therefore, when it is about to write, the lack of those words impacts my performance].

Secondly, based on the interviews I carried out, these young people recognized that helping other people is a way to identify themselves in their community; in one student's words "ya que como dice la frase: los jóvenes son el futuro del país" [As it is said: young people are the country's future]. Also, that there were different ways to support their communities such as helping elderly people in daily chores or supporting other's learning processes through confidence and kindness. These actions can be highlighted as it is evident their willingness to help one another; however, they also expressed that they felt that their efforts to support in their community were not recognized, so they feel that their impact is not as influential as the one made by other type of population. It is crucial to mention that their actions are powerful and can be also supported by Burke and Hadley (2018) who claim that young people can be considered "producers of knowledge and culture who see, know and engage with their community in ways that may be different from the adults around them" (p.219). In other words, it seems that their voices are still invisible for their own community, so these actions need to be boosted to take risks and become active in their local places.

Now, these two issues, low interest towards argumentative writing and not visible voices in the community, can be seen as fields of mutual exploration as the causes of this phenomenon for might be rooted in the teaching approach to writing. On the one hand, from a

formal setting, learners have not had the chance to be part of a writing experience addressed to their reality where they can actively partake in critically and vice versa. Chala and Chapetón (2012) state that it is meaningful when students' voices are visible through writing argumentative texts because they can express themselves in order to reach a transformation of their social and literacy practices that also shape their writing skills. If this root cause is also analyzed from an informal context, these young learners might not have that initiative to create a social contact intended for proposing a social solution. Furthermore, it could be stated that they do reflect on their daily social impact on a small scale but without considering it as a phenomenon and all the research aspects that it carries out. Chala and Chapetón (2012) can also support what has just been stated when they claim that "given the fact that students come into the classroom with rich background knowledge, they may become important supporters of each other; this opportunity can promote learning and may help enrich discussion and debate both in and outside the classroom" (p.25).

On the other hand, there are several factors that might influence, either in a positive or negative way, learners argumentative writing skills in L2. Thus, it needs to be considered the role that L1 plays in the constructions of their L2 performance. Other factors that can influence the writing process in L2 can be the rhetorical aspects, the use of elements of an essay, strategies to collect information, and even their experience in academic writing; affective aspects, emotions and willingness towards writing and the support received and given; and linguistic aspects, grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation (Peloghitis, 2016; Situmorang et. al, 2020; Setyowati et. al, 2020).

In that order of ideas, there is a strong chance that the integration of school content and young people's reality could encourage learners to be critical agents that could re-signify their role in their local surroundings as active and powerful members of their community. Besides, argumentative writing skills could help the development of the learners' autonomy, giving them tools to analyze the pros and cons of every community issue associated with their lives.

As Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) approach "offers different kinds of opportunities for youth literacy development in the direction of community changes" (Burke & Hadley, 2018, p.219), it could be understood as a bridge to connect critically what learners acquire at school, as argumentative writing skills, and what is happening in their surroundings. Thus, they can empower their voices and become a visible member of their local community.

1.2. Research question

Bearing in mind the issues previously identified from learners' practices and teacher's observations, the following question emerged:

To what extent does the integration of Genre Pedagogy principles and Youth Participatory Action Research workshops empower the 10th graders at the Consolata Bilingual School argumentative writing voices in their community?

2. Justification

This proposal called "*Empowering Young Voices in the Community*" intends to contribute to the ELT field by raising a critical and social awareness of the role that young people perform in their surroundings by strengthening writing argumentative skills in L2.

This project is implemented as a strategy to enhance learners' writing argumentative skills in L2 as a way to empower the young population in their community of Bucaramanga. This study shows the significance that writing communication has in developing a critical approach towards social issues. Writing skills are closely related to what participation means within a community, the awareness of being part of it and the willingness to build it up.

For that reason, this research is important because learners would recognize themselves as autonomous and capable of partaking critically in the local community they belong to. Being aware of the influence that youth has in the local surroundings and taking advantage of their learning English progress, these learners would value, be valuable (by their community members) and take a significant position to defend and re-signify their local area.

This proposal is developed through the integration of genre pedagogy principles and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) workshops addressed to allow these teenagers, on the one hand, to identify and analyze a close phenomenon that is affecting their community in somehow; to interact with their community members towards it; and to propose solutions that transform critically their surroundings in search of a trustworthy well-being; on the other hand, to move away from what indifference means in our Colombian territory towards violence, for example, mentioning one of many social and political issues that affect us daily.

On top of that, as a possible impact on L2 language teaching, this study intends to spark reflection on the way English is taught in the classroom. It is usually about grammar content or mechanical exercises to obtain a high score in a standardized exam, or if there is the chance to

have a content class, what cultural background is put into context? the local one or the foreign one? This is the reason why writing has to be seen as a social-situated practice. Young learners have to be able to capture through writing their contexts, background, thoughts and feelings in order to share a more meaningful message to the reader. Chapetón Castro and Chala (2013) describe writers' role as the one who "start jotting down their thoughts, they engage in dialogic communication with the world and with the powers that compel them to write" (p.27).

This action plan aims at guiding teachers to use local social context or establish purpose to shape learners' writing argumentative skills and other abilities that this process triggers as well, such as critical thinking; at the same time, the direct interaction in students' community will be an excuse to be part of the growth of a young individual being aware of their local issues, and above all, promoting solutions.

3. Objectives

3.1. Main objective

To empower the Consolata Bilingual School 10th graders' argumentative writing voices in their community through the integration of Genre Pedagogy principles and Youth Participatory Action Research workshops.

3.2. Specific objectives

- To explore the 10th graders current voices about social phenomena that surround them through argumentative writing.
- To implement a didactic sequence integrating genre pedagogy principles and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) to empower participants' writing voices.

- To evaluate how the integration of genre pedagogy principles and Youth Participatory Action Research workshops empowers 10th graders argumentative writing voices in their community in Bucaramanga.

4. Theoretical framework

4.1. Literature Review

This section is related to previous studies related to YPAR and academic writing. It discloses how each topic has been explored so far, what background each provides and how this data can support the project in question regarding its course while it is being implemented (Creswell, 2012). In that sense, it is divided into two parts: the first one is related to YPAR, where most of the papers are from an international scope. There is only one project from the national one, which might be because of the topic has not been quite developed in the educational field. And in the second part, argumentative writing's studies will be disclosed from both international and national scopes.

4.1.1. *YPAR Supporting Youth*

Under YPAR approach Pyne, Scott, O'Brien, Stevenson, and Musah carried out the study entitled "The Critical Pedagogy of Mentoring: Undergraduate Researchers as Mentors in Youth Participatory Action Research" in 2014. It was implemented at Elon Academy in North Carolina, USA where undergraduate researchers would be the mentees of the faculty staff, and at the same time, would be the mentors of a group of 15 high school learners to study inequities in their local community concerning the low chances that marginalized families had to apply and

access to college education in their city. The outcomes of this study were obtained from the high school and the college scholars. On the one hand, it was evidenced that the high school population learned about research, strengthened their critical reading and writing skills, and discovered their confidence along personal transformations. On the other hand, college scholars developed a more reflective position towards what their younger students had to tell in their stories and how to manipulate such information as data. It was also seen how these college-researchers developed their abilities as YPAR researchers while wrestling with identities, responsibilities and shared-personal stories. This project can be a reference to inquire about learners' previous knowledge about research and to sharpen such knowledge with research training before the pedagogical intervention is carried out.

In 2018, Burke and Hadley (2018) implemented a strategy that aimed to support the importance of research with youth as part of a community's progress to evolve; and documenting the priority that some companies had to provide access to literacy education for their staff over the needs that the local community could have. Data was collected through field notes, interviews and conversations recorded. One of the most meaningful outcomes from this research was how the concept of village makers was evidenced, which is when the members of the community really worked together to develop youth's skills through the knowledge that they could provide. Thus, it gave the opportunity for youth to realize their abilities they have and at least to consider higher education as another way to help their community back. A reference for the current paper is the YPAR model that this study adopted from Jennings, Parra-Medina, Hilfinger-Messias, and McLoughlin's (2006). It acknowledges six key dimensions: 1) A

welcoming and safe environment. 2) Meaningful participation and engagement. 3) Equitable power-sharing between youth and adults. 4) Engagement in critical reflection on interpersonal and sociopolitical processes. 5) Participation in socio-political processes to effect change. 6) Integrated individual-and community-level empowerment. This model is a guide for the current study Empowering Young Voices in The Community to design and sharpen the aspect of YPAR workshops. In other words, how students would integrate themselves into their community as researchers.

In the same year, Marciano and Warren conducted the study entitled “Writing Toward Change Across Youth Participatory Action Research Projects”. This paper integrated YPAR and writing in order to support students’ active role in examining issues of inequity in their schools and communities. It had a huge impact on Central City in the Midwest of the U.S. because the young researchers were from different secondary schools and worked together to tackle or reduce common inequity in their institutions. Based on the writing reflection, this young population understood the importance of considering youth voices in community-based organizations. They were able to interact with the community-based organizations and secondary teachers of their schools and had the chance to share some recommendations to advocate for equity in such shared spaces. The relevance of this study lies in its contribution to the pedagogical design of the study in question. That is, how students can work in teams; how to organize the sequence within a specific period of time; and how to work with youth to set a fair relationship in which they could feel that they are not conditioned by the knowledge or instructions of an older individual.

From the Colombian context, the project “Using Creative Writing to Explore Identity Formation: a Participatory Study with Adolescents in Post–Conflict Colombia” was conducted by Fuentes Díaz in 2020 with 15 ninth graders from a public school in Colombia. This project aimed to investigate “how this programme aids the exploration of adolescents’ identity formation focusing on the youth participants’ perceptions, as well as on the identity formation aspects they portray in their creative writing” (Fuentes Díaz, 2020, p.2). The six creative writing workshops applied were the result of an integration of art–based and project–based approaches, and social sciences research methods. In the findings, it was stated that having spaces for students to express themselves provided new opportunities to put into practice values such as empathy or respect for themselves and others. Also, the action of writing could be seen as an exploration of students’ inner thoughts or feelings. This study can be highlighted as the few ones that worked with YPAR in the national context. So, it is useful how the approach is implemented at the same time that the researcher worked with creating writing.

Each of the papers mentioned above have meaningful insights on how a YPAR project can be structured, which is key for this proposal design. Besides, it would help to understand how to implement it when there is a language component included as well. Thus, these projects show a sequence of steps that makes sure that learners are guided in the process, even though they would be able to work on the issue that they would find through exploration in their community. As a first action, some researchers consider learners background before implementing their study, for instance, Pyne et al. (2014) take into account learners previous knowledge in research, so there are some sessions of preparation about what research is, some

techniques and methods; in the case of Burke and Hadley (2018), they consider learners' emotional background, which allows them to understand the quality of the connections that each young person has with their community.

On top of that, authors such as Fuentes Díaz (2020), and Marciano and Warren (2018) highlight how flexible YPAR is when having other approaches to implement as writing. In addition, they reflect on YPAR's nature to boost young people to find their own interests and explore them in a critical way.

4.1.2. Writing as a Practice of Awareness

From the international scope, an ethnographic study was carried out by Shizhou Yang (2020) in southwest China. It was named "Critical Pedagogy for Foreign–Language Writing" and its goal was to identify the impact of four key elements of critical pedagogy (relationship, agency, identity, and power) in FL writing. The data collection instruments used were teaching–related documents, ethnographic field notes, students' written reflections, interviews, and questionnaires. These instruments collected perceptions from a large group of 58–61 students concerning how the creative writing course had impacted them. The results indicate that: its impact was an increase in confidence; the boost of an active role to strengthen their writing skills; and how literacy is linked to identity when writing is a collective practice.

Additionally, in Spain, Morell and Pastor Cesteros, (2019), worked with 29 master program students of Applied Linguistics using a research article as the type of text for this genre–based approach to explore participants' knowledge and transfer processes from one language to the other. Throughout the implementation, the researchers applied a set of stages

recommended when applying genre approaches; thus, participants would connect their writing experiences and the textual interactions faced during the study. The stages are *planning learning, sequencing learning, supporting learning, and assessing learning*. These four stages explore participants' previous knowledge of research genres; their interaction with research articles; the construction of a team-research study, and any collaboration that could take place; and the corresponding assessment. Regarding the findings: on the one hand, participants valued the recognition and interaction of research genres to apply this new knowledge in their academic purposes: their final master research study. On the other hand, although their language process transfer did not seem to be affected, it might have some limitations when there are some grammar mistakes fossilized that can be taken from one language to another. The study's content and impact are relevant for this paper considering that even master programs' students still experience issues with their skills performance and the construction of research papers.

It is worth noting that from a national scope, there were found studies about the exploration of writing skills from different approaches and components such as argumentative writing, academic writing, genre-based learning, problem-based learning, or writing as situated learning.

As a reference, a qualitative documented study conducted by Pedro Antonio Chala and Claudia Marcela Chapetón in 2012 was entitled "EFL argumentative essay writing as a situated-social practice: A review of concepts". Its purpose was to document and analyze "EFL argumentative essay writing practices and enhance our capacity to address the issue of writing

as a situated social practice within a genre-based approach”. The data was collected through the analysis of concepts and the evolution of each in the educational field. Within its final remarks, it could be considered argumentative writing as a situated social practice. Besides, through this genre-based approach, any learner could follow a sequence where they would discover the formal aspects of writing (purpose, function, audience), and also, learners’ flexibility, risk-taking, creativity and criticism could be shaped through a situated social practice that let them engage in meaningful, situated social practices. This study contributes to the in-process research with valuable theoretical concepts that are part of the core of the pedagogical design.

In 2013, the same authors mentioned above, implemented the project called “Undertaking the Act of Writing as a Situated Social Practice: Going beyond the Linguistic and the Textual” in a private university in Bogotá, Colombia. The participants were undergraduate students in the Modern Language program. The aim of this study was to identify and describe how students approached argumentative essay writing as a social practice. To reach this objective, several instruments were designed such as questionnaires, audio recordings, artifacts, and semi-structured interviews. Regarding the findings, the researchers revealed that “participants undertook the writing of argumentative essays by bonding with their audience, establishing personal involvement with their texts, and giving support to their arguments” (Chapetón Castro & Chala, 2013, p.1).

On top of that, from Universidad Industrial de Santander, Luisa Pabón brought about the study “Integrating Community-based Learning to Improve Academic Writing” in 2019. The main goal of this action research was to identify the aspects of community-based learning that help students improve their written performance. Data was gathered through interviews, questionnaires, and journals, among others. In the outcomes, it was found that there were factors that influence students on their decisions while building their compositions: as a procedural factor, the absence of proofreading limited the development of their written ideas. As a facultative factor, the difficulty to concentrate while writing was identified as a problem that affected textual coherence. Also, the interaction with the community made students feel more engaged with their writing skills constructing ideas in a coherent whole. The fact of giving responsibility to students for their words and actions is key to having an introspective inquiry about their own learning process.

4.2. Conceptual Framework

The following lines are a discussion of the ground theories, studies and contributions from several researchers that helped to construct and implement this project with the tenth graders of the Consolata Bilingual School in Bucaramanga. In that sense, the first part is related to argumentative writing, possible barriers that learners face, and how it is seen as a social-situated practice. Then, Genre Pedagogy and a genre-based approach model are mentioned through several lenses. Finally, YPAR and its pillars are also defined.

4.2.1 Argumentative Writing (a social cognitive process)

When it is about language, we could consider it as the means that moves human beings' intentions and purposes. In words of Lunsford, Ruskiewicz and Walters (2007) "because language is a human activity and because humans exist in a complex world of goals, purposes, and activities, language cannot be anything but motivated" (p.13). In other words, language is used through a tool called argument in order for everybody to use it in their daily life to produce and analyze each situation faced. Arguments are those claims or statements that are always open to be interpreted and negotiated based on the driven. On the top of that, we cannot omit other factors that play an important role while arguments are being developed. For example: context, emotion and reason are elements that would determine if an argument is legitimate (Lunsford, Ruskiewicz, & Walters, 2007).As we can already notice, we use arguments for any simple task done every day, but of course, we cannot compare the elaboration, purpose and level of complexity that take place between, a claim in an informal context (chatting with a friend) and one in a formal context (writing an essay).

This wide difference is more notorious in the academic life of individuals. It is expected that secondary learners have certain knowledge, experiences and skills to face an academic context, as the tertiary education level. Afful (2007) introduces the term "academic literacy" to define the complex skills that are required for an area of study to be developed. Here is when English takes a different approach: English for Academic Purposes (EAP). It embraces the interaction (understanding and production) that a learner can have with a text applying their communicative skills that evolve to the point, for example, of recognizing how valuable argumentative ideas are in academic writing.

One of the challenges for learners to sharpen their skills for further levels of complexity is distinguishing the characteristics between argumentative and persuasive texts, their purposes, their communicative intentions, and in which type of contexts they can be addressed. When argumentative writing is not well explained, it can be understood as the same as persuasive writing. Regarding this statement, Hillocks (2011) points out how argumentative writing has been misplaced in the classrooms, giving more attention to a persuasive essay in which the information is quite manipulated, as well as the emotional voice to be convincing. Kinneavy and Warriner (1993) state that in persuasive writing, there is a high chance to choose the most suitable evidence and that the single of this type of writing is to be convincing (as cited in Hillocks, 2011, p.17). As an advantage of this usage of persuasive writing, a learner can build texts based on their opinions; nonetheless, there is still a need to consider argumentative writing learning as a basis for support own's opinions providing facts and rationales to develop a critical position towards a topic. In argumentative writing, it is expected that beyond the author's opinion, there is clear proof to back up such statements (Hillocks, 2010, p.24). On top of that, Hillocks (2011) support this idea when claiming that, "argumentative writing is the heart of critical thinking and academic discourse" (2011, p.17). It makes the writer go beyond words and facts, to set a position explaining such decisions. This rhetoric mode could define the number of voices that a person can have based on the development of their argumentative skills (Lunsford, Ruszkiewicz, & Walters, 2007) and how they can be crucial in the achievement of personal and professional goals in one's life, this is "the kind of writing students need to know

for success in college” (Hillocks, 2010, p.25); besides, reaching social, cultural and political goals in the scope of a community or a nation. .

What is described above seems as a good panoramic for an L2 learner to bear in mind, to apply it in their life and improve their writing process constantly; nonetheless, as several studies assert (Qin, 2013; Pabón, 2019; Atehortua Durán, 2020), writing in L2 evidences that it is not a linear process that can be achieved easily. Learners’ academic writing performance in their mother tongue might impact their L2 writing skills as well, being the case of having a lack of basis to elaborate a paragraph, for instance. These obstacles can be interpreted as features that usually do not allow an individual to master a skill. Based on Byrne (1995), problems in argumentative writing can be classified into three: linguistic problems, cognitive problems and psychological problems (as cited in Setyowati et al., 2020). Linguistic problems take place in language mechanics: “structuring sentences such as tenses, word class, using articles, word formation, and word error” (Setyowati et al., 2020, p.283). Cognitive problems meaning “how to organize our ideas, using punctuation, addressing a topic, following a topic, following instructions, and directions” (Setyowati et al., 2020, p.283). And, the psychological problems can be noticed through the anxiety the students experience when developing a text of argumentation; these problems are the negative perceptions that learners have towards argumentative writing.

In addition to these issues already mentioned, there is another aspect that impacted writing performance which is the influence of L1 in the L2 production. It usually can be a

support; however, there is a certain point in which it could turn into an interference for the learner to develop their L2 (Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2009). To tackle these writing barriers just described, in everyday contexts, a way for teachers to define learners' obstacles can be by drawing out their perceptions about their own performance setting a real conversation with these students rather than collecting them from written essays (Peloghitis, 2017). Therefore, the process can provide more details and clearer difficulties from young writers.

In this way, setting a direct interaction between educator and learner would be one first step and feature to start constructing a piece of writing considering it as a social-cognitive process as students start recognizing that their writing process is having some support from their teacher and partners around (Flower, 1988, as cited in Zimmerman, 1998) and a situated activity (Gnach & Powell, 2014; Chala & Chapetón, 2012; Chapetón Castro & Chala, 2013; Pabón Montaña, 2019; Yang, 2020) that takes place in students' contexts exchanging ideas from their own experiences. This statement is supported by Linda Flower (1988) recognizing that there is an interrelated relationship between the individual cognition and the social and cultural atmospheres where the writer produces their texts (cited in Zimmerman, 1998). On the one hand, cultural and social contexts are linked to cognition on several dimensions: behavior, language, norms, social acts, etc. On the other hand, cognition is in charge of regulating and selecting carefully the information that will display a situation, criteria, and strategies to write.

For other authors such as Gnach and Powell (2014), this interrelation is conceived between the textual conventions that exist during the writing process (grammar, word-choice,

cohesion, etc) and the discursive elements (interaction, the roles of each person and societal norms). It turns into social situations in which the linguistic part is important, indeed; however, there is a bigger impact because “for any given writing situation, there are socio–historical, economical, or political impacts on the text production” (p.120). A similar statement is claimed by Yang (2020), as it is mentioned that this situated process is linked to “issues such as power, identity, ideology and morality” (p.124). In other words, what makes situated–writing as critical literacy is the fact that the real and relevant elements for the writer such as their surroundings, their social, political or economic conditions are visible to make an impact on their text.

Beyond considering writing as a social practice, it also displays a set of purposes for the writer and its community. Firstly, it emerges as a need to communicate while the writing process turns into a more conscious activity that improves along the interactions with others (Chala & Chapetón, 2012; Pabón Montaña, 2019); secondly, it establishes a web of connections among people, their own and others cultural and social contexts (Chala & Chapetón, 2012); furthermore, it transforms perceptions into dynamic interactions (Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2009) that would permit the individual to gain an active role in their community and resignify their own identity. This latter factor would allow the writer not only to reinvent themselves exploring unknown areas, but also to validate substantially more their own historical and cultural heritage as it would be reflected on their compositions (Yang, 2020). In that sense, writing as a social situated–practice has an integrated impact for a human being as there is not only about putting into practice cognitive skills, but also to explore how this person conceives the world based on their background.

4.2.1. Genre-based Approach/Genre Pedagogy Principles

A text is seen as the key-open door for a human being to get to know the world. It is a threshold that takes any form and can be susceptible to be read, analyzed and understood; it could be a letter, a mural, a movie, or even a person's gesture. In a text, on the one hand, the reader puts into practice a set of cognitive skills in order to decode the perception of an author, interpret their ideas, analyze, develop, or refute them. On the other hand, the writer chooses their audience with that singular idea that is displaying.

Writing has a different course. Hyland (2004) states two ways in which writing can be considered, in the first one, "learning to write is thus seen as a result of interacting with a more knowledgeable person"(p.34), in other words, the teacher is the guide for learners to make progress in their writing process; in the second one, as a permanent conversation between writer and reader (Bakhtin, 1986, cited in Hyland, 2004, p.80), in which writes also takes the time to anticipate the reader's expectations (Hyland, 2007), thus, the reader would be able to make a wider interpretation of the text and make connections with previous material about the same subject. On top of that, it is commonly thought of as an activity that is mainly developed by a certain group of people because they might be skilled in a specific topic. However, this latter could be a biased statement that can deprive any individual of exploring what writing can offer to their personal, professional, and social lives.

Due to the idea of writing being for specific areas, classrooms have avoided teaching writing. Educators do recognize that writing is an activity that needs some investment of time to prepare the session, explain, model, and construct a written piece within the learners in charge,

without neglecting that checking papers and delivering proper feedback is another part of this activity can be demanding and time-consuming (Ferris, 2007); or as Harman (2013) states, a few schools ask learners to perform in a writing course no more than a two-paragraph basic text.

For that reason, the fact that young generations would be able to learn about different types of writing is valuable for a society should not be ignored. If a young person has access to literacy sources, they would turn into citizens that would interpret any sign, code or message from the world easily. Besides, they would consider writing as a support tool for any life stage, and would contribute to the construction of an integral writer (Hyland, 2007).

As an initiative towards this previous idea, Genre-based Pedagogy boosted by Hyland, (2004;2007) has taken place in the teaching writing field. As this author states, and is supported by other researchers as well (Chala & Chapetón, 2012; Elola & Oskoz, 2017; Morell & Pastor Cesteros, 2019) the basis of this pedagogy is writers establishing a means of interaction in a specific social context in order to create texts that express meaning and development of learners' writing skills. Furthermore, it is supported by a set of principles that support the improvement of students from a first contact with the text to the inner exploration of their writing needs, and guidance with the teacher. This current is considered since L2 classrooms are not homogeneous, sometimes is frustrating for both teachers and students to make progress in a writing task when there is not the same level of performance; this might be taken as an opportunity to normalize that not everybody has the same pace of learning, and in this case, when constructing a text. Yang, (2020) adds that this approach might transform what learning

and teaching writing in L2 means so far as it would promote equality for all learners to have the chance to look into their writing skills.

To construct a solid definition of what Genre-based Pedagogy is, Hyland (2004) has introduced a set of principles: 1) explicitness offers learners a relevant element of awareness towards the reason why they are learning from certain texts and their structure in L2 (Harman, 2013). 2) A systematic use of text and context provides guidance that connects lexical and grammatical aspects with context and population to give an opportunity for readers/writers to analyze language material, its purposes, its audience and its message (Morell & Pastor Cesteros, 2019). 3) Writers' needs are based on the options they have to interact with a text; these needs might be embedded in the context of the text for writing practices to be easier and motivating (Chala & Chapetón, 2012). 4) A supportive component is crucial when it is linked to a Vygotsky's pillar on "the interactive collaboration between teacher and student" (Hyland, 2004, p.13) in which teacher support learners towards more independent work. This teacher's support decreases as students gain appropriation of the knowledge about a text and demonstrate autonomy in its development. 5) Facility in critical understanding is a way for learners to notice how power and superiority can manipulate texts regarding their interests, and ideologies to maintain this dominance and suppress others. 6) Teachers' development takes place along the information they research about genres, increasing their knowledge and perspective in writing and sharing it with students.

This Genre-based Pedagogy has the chance to allow learners to discover how a text communicates its purpose effectively. This interaction with language displays what, why, and

how to learn from genres to become active agents in contexts in which a person gets involved daily.

It also offers several perspectives for educators to address their writing courses in a conscious and specific way. In the case of this research, it is mainly under the Systemic Functional Linguistic approach (SFL) that “attempts to provide a framework that will help genre use at all educational levels rather than just the post-secondary one” (Correa & Echeverri, 2017, p.28). SFL approach attempts learners to recognize what is similar and different among several texts, or to think of how to structure or respond to each of them, which “is vital to achieving literacy in a second language” (Hyland, 2007, p.154). Moreover, maintaining the same pedagogical pillar of collaborative and scaffolding work (Chapetón Castro & Chala, 2013), Vygotsky is taken into account once again regarding his Zone of Proximal Development theory on how a learner can develop a set of writing tasks collaboratively and some other independently; “What is in ZPD today will be the actual development level tomorrow – that is, what a child can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow” (Vygotsky, 1978, cited in Petrick-Steward, 2012, p.13).

On the top of that, teachers are a key agent whether the point of applying this SFL is to scaffold learners’ process to a skill that will be used at any time in life. Therefore, writing learning will be displayed through a cyclical process that Hyland has improved along this research career (2004; 2007): 1) Setting a context: main reasons why this genre is used and in which settings are shared; 2) Modeling: samples will allow analyzing the stages, variations, and features of the genre; 3) Joint construction: guided practice through specific tasks that focus on

previous stages or features modeled; 4) Independent construction: writing tasks are less guided and more developed by learners on their own; 5) Comparing: making connections with other genres learned and to identifying the purposes when they are taught in specific contexts.

Apart from the process that writing learning can have, as a last factor to discuss through these lines is the role that cultural context takes place in this type of pedagogy. Writers are always influenced by the purpose of the task as well as emotional and physical elements to create a specific type of writing. These influences are the different domains in which a learner can be involved when writing; hence, a context is not only a place but can be any of the aspects said above (Hyland, 2004).

The interaction of a learner with a text evoke *past contexts* that are those experiences that they have had with similar genres either as writers or readers (Hyland, 2004). This reference is evolved by the new participation that a learner creates between the text and their culture, and consequently, it would trigger three important aspects for a writer: 1) Awareness of who makes use of that specific genre. Since there might be a stereotype of who is part of a reading or writing community, young people need to realize that these communities are made by people like them: real people with a cultural background willing to find others with either similar or different ways of seeing their contexts through pages. 2) Intertextuality: it is conceived as the fact the texts are interrelated somehow, and this feature allows writers to write with coherence connecting ideas from other texts; at the same time, readers get benefits in the way they recognize previous statements, transform them through their experiences to sharpen this new idea that is presented. 3) Communication through texts: It displays the wide types of genres

that learners and educators can explore – oral, written, or electronic as alternatives to their everyday interactions. This allows educators to analyze what type of genres are going to be the most useful for learners and at least key in some point of their lives to propose it in the class to work on (p.78).

On top of the advantages that Genre-based Pedagogy might provide to teachers and learners, this approach also offers some space for collaborative work while writing class takes place. Hyland (2007) comments that there is shared consciousness when there is bigger impact in learning when people work together rather than individually. Additionally, he adds that there is also a borrowed consciousness, which is when learners increase their understanding because of having worked with a more knowledgeable person (2004; 2007). In this respect, this previous statement encourages teachers to go beyond traditional teaching techniques or short tasks in L2 writing, and to become aware that each school generation evolves culturally, emotionally and socially; thus teachers need to be open to the wide variety of genres for students to put into practice their writing skills and to consider the idea of that a visual representation as well. In words of Elola and Oskoz (2017), the evolution of the concept of a text “..shows us how a genre itself can be constructed and reconstructed and how our notions of authorship may change” (p.54).

4.2.2. Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)

“We would not be researchers without an inherent commitment to action toward the relief of social injustice, especially in education” (Tuck et al., 2008, as cited in Caraballo et al., 2017, p.322). This reflection takes us to consider the evolution of research in social studies,

validating that everybody can build knowledge from their location and position. At the same time, the researcher's role would evolve to observe the environment in which they are also involved and actively part take with the community (Fals Borda, 1979), also they would be a mediator validating the community knowledge and the one that they can contribute to transform the reality of the people in question. Thus, the chance of applying Participatory Action Research (PAR) means that it is not only about just applying some research methods and techniques but also supporting the endless evolution of social dynamics that would facilitate the community processes to transform their own reality.

In the case of young people, they have been part of a population that is frequently studied and provided with tools, resources, and solutions to tackle any phenomenon that takes place in their environment. However, Fuentes Díaz, (2020) and Ozer (2021) claim that there are plenty of capacities in young people that can be boosted if these studies are developed *with* them rather than *on* them. This statement is also supported by Fals Borda and Rahman (1991), who state that research relationships have to evolve to subject/subject instead of subject/object (as cited in Caraballo et al., 2017, p.315). This is how Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) emerges "to understand the perspectives of those most affected by equitable educational conditions, as well as how marginalized youth have used YPAR to critique, redefine and overcome the very asymmetries they face in their schools and communities" (Caraballo et al., 2017, p.313).

YPAR has been evidenced and recognized in the last two decades in different ways such as college students mentoring school learners or research about low chances that marginalized

people have to apply for college education (Pyne et al., 2014); the integration of YPAR and writing skills to examine issues of inequity in an educational community (Marciano & Warren, 2018); young people working around the concept of village makers to support and develop youth's skills (Burke & Hadley, 2018); limitations of YPAR in private schools due to bureaucratization of education and control of the content that is taught (Keddie, 2021); and even though this study does not follow the YPAR current, it does involve youth as the main actors to the research as young learners were encouraged to interact with their community having a more active role (Rincón Ortega & Clavijo Olarte, 2019).

This type of research is nurtured by different perspectives as well as diverse agents participate in this construction (Ozer & Villa, 2021). Besides, youngsters go through a singular process that starts understanding what justice is and what obstacles come out when inequality is a social issue caused by privileged groups; here, justice might turn into a challengeable and changeable purpose to recognize themselves as an important part of the community where they belong (Caraballo et al, 2017; Krishner, 2015; Cammarota & Fine, 2008).

This awakening process has a strong impact on the emotional area of each young individual, either because of having faced oppressive experiences that are being identified or because there is a blindfold that is taken off in teenagers who have not had the chance to be in a similar experience before. In any of these ways, the chance of loving, caring, and healing will allow learners to build truthful connections with other members of their community who might go through the same process of transforming emotions and learning how to handle them (Ozer & Villa, 2021; Owens, Johnson, & Thornton, 2022)

All this process is very meaningful and “can be useful for any young people wanting to make a difference, and is an especially powerful approach for young people who are experiencing marginalization due to racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, ableism, or other forms of oppression” (Berkley YPAR Hub, 2023, p.1). At the same time, there would be an ongoing construction of the perception of who they are, where they belong to, their voices towards speaking out, and all in favor of building a community of trust.

On another view, it should also be a point of reflection when it is about contexts where obstacles arise and YPAR might turn into a less natural interaction within learners. In the case of Keddie (2021), she argues that there are several boundaries that might limit the full development of a YPAR project in a school, such as power relationships within administrative and academic areas, so students need to maintain a hierarchical interaction with other members of the school to demonstrate that they are being respectful. Besides, prohibition of certain topics in order not to create controversy and contradiction against the institution’s guidelines.

This might be one of countless examples where education is about bureaucratization and biased content. For the same reason, there should be constant intervention of research in classrooms, projects that could go beyond the room and help learners to establish interpersonal relationships as equal; to be able to question and handle any type of topic with a certain level of criticism. Thus, a classroom might be considered the gate for a young person to be active, to feel supported, to validate and transform knowledge. In the words of Contreras León and Chapetón Castro, the classroom “becomes the means to transform social reality” (2016, p.127).

This transformative view, supported by Creswell (2013), as is considered a political milestone in YPAR's view, as it is grounded on realizing that what intends to be fair, regulated and legal for a community, as laws are, it is not in favor of marginalized people (as cited by Caraballo et al., 2017, p.316); policies do not always fit in a society where power interests are the core and surpass social justice and oppression.

For that reason, Caraballo et al. (2017) have gathered different academic voices and have identified a set of starting points when it is about the basis of YPAR: *1) Academic learning and literacy; 2) Cultural and critical epistemologies; 3) Youth development and leadership; 4) Youth Organizing and Civic Engagement*. Each of these elements will be discussed in the following lines:

Academic Learning and Literacy YPAR seeks to provide equality in terms of academic skills for populations in which their conditions are limited and might weaken their possibilities to apply to a high-level academic experience. In that sense, students should be provided with spaces and dynamics that allow them to develop their academic skills to build up new ideas. YPAR also supports other areas in which learners construct their identities into a critical and activist atmosphere seeking to change their living conditions (Morrell, 2013, as cited in Caraballo et. al, 2017). Thus, YPAR would turn into a threshold for young learners to get involved in advanced topics such as social sciences, political or legal topics; furthermore, there is a strong research component that would also support them to sharpen their academic skills (Pyne et. al, 2014; (Rincón Ortega & Clavijo Olarte, 2019).

Cultural and Critical Epistemologies. The ongoing process of constructing our own identity is based on finding patterns in our heritage and unknown paths to take from this point forward. This YPAR element goes beyond deeper academic aims. It focuses on how young people are able to recognize themselves as individuals and as members of a context (Burke & Hadley, 2018), and how this context recognizes them back. This pillar might belong to the core of what YPAR is, as any idea and action starts from the self-perception of that person wondering what for, who will be involved/impacted, and the reason why it should be in that way.

Youth Development and Leadership. When young people are exposed to acting in exploring their community and recognizing any social or political issue under YPAR's principles, it gives these young people the natural opportunity of leadership and matter (Krishner, 2015, p.91). On top of that, these skills trigger another important pillar of YPAR, which is emotional development. Thus, youngsters would make critical decisions about standing for their community to the point of evolving with it.

Youth Organizing and Civic Engagement. Through this element, Caraballo et. al (2018) recognize youth's research skills development and how capable they are of impacting their local policies and practices. In this sense, these authors are calling on educators not to underestimate each effort that a young learner does, as it is part of the aim of YPAR, to boost more young generation to be agents of change, so action-based research can be more visible around the world.

On top of these principles that YPAR follows, different authors have shared some models of how they have carried out their YPAR projects in their communities (Burke & Hadley, 2018;

Pyne et al., 2014; Marciano & Warren, 2018). For this current project, the guidelines suggested by Youth Activism Project (2018) have been chosen and adapted considering the conditions of the community that participated in this study. This activist group proposes a 9-step process in which they highlight that would boost youth's potential role in their community spaces:

- 1) Recruit YPAR team: in this first step, the group of researchers is created and it is considered what kind of characteristics should the members of the group have;
- 2) Build relationships: to set engagement, trust and confidence in the team, it is important that adults and young individuals feel they are in the same level of power and participation as well as getting to know each other better, in a way that a person could feel that they could rely on someone else;
- 3) Develop critical awareness: to start working on youth's community issues, first the team has to learn what an issue is, its roots in a social, historical, economic and environmental level and its consequences that can be evidenced through stereotypes, oppression or discrimination.
- 4) Identify issues: Now that the research team is aware of the impact of an issue, they will start defining the issue(s) they want to explore.
- 5) Create research design: in this stage, the team will decide how they want to collect data.
- 6) Conduct research: it's time to collect this data based on the instruments created. In multiple YPAR projects, it is suggested to have a reflection journal or at least to consider questioning the impact that this interaction has had personally.
- 7) Analyze data: in this part, the team looks for the best strategies to analyze the information already gathered;
- 8) Advocate for change: in this step, the group makes decisions towards the solutions that can come out from the information analyzed. Once a solution or a set of them has emerged, they can share it with the community they interacted before.
- 9) Reflect and repeat:

this last stage is quite important as it is a self-assessment and co-assessment regarding how the project was carried out, its highlights and its challenges for a next intervention.

In a nutshell, YPAR is a powerful tool for young people who are closely engaged in social justice. These young individuals would explore in a deeper and critical way issues that might be taking place in their communities, so they can provide efficient solutions that would improve the quality of life of the local people.

4.3. Legal Framework

In this section, the teacher-researcher discloses the laws and policies that grounds this study to be implemented. It is necessary to mention that as the Consolata Bilingual School, where the project is applied, has an agreement with an international institute in order to certificate students' English level; therefore, the laws and polices presented below are in international and national scopes.

4.3.1. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages "describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively" (Council of Europe, 2011, p. 10). Furthermore, in order to support the language learners' performance, there are designed 6 levels from A1 for beginners to C1 for mastered language people.

4.3.2. Constitución Política de Colombia – Artículo 67

According to the Colombian constitution, every Colombian person is on their right to receive education in order to have access to knowledge, science, culture and other statements that would contribute to the personal growing of this person. As stated in the constitution:

La educación formará al colombiano en el respeto a los derechos humanos, a la paz y a la democracia; y en la práctica del trabajo y la recreación, para el mejoramiento cultural, científico, tecnológico y para la protección del ambiente. [Education shall educate Colombians regarding human rights, peace and democracy; and to practice work and recreation, for cultural, scientific and technological improvement and for the protection of the environment] (Constitución Política de Colombia, Art. 67, 1991).

4.3.3. Ley 115 de 1994

In alignment with the previous article, this law supports that education is a constant process for a human being therefore, it regulates the public service of education in order to achieve the needs and interests of the Colombian people. As this law states in its article 1 “La educación es un proceso de formación permanente, personal, cultural y social que se fundamenta en una concepción integral de la persona humana, de su dignidad, de sus derechos y de sus deberes” [Education is a process of permanent, personal, cultural and social formation based on an integral conception of the human person, their dignity, rights and duties] (Ley 115, Art. 1, 1994).

4.3.4. Ley 1651 de 2013

When it is about bilingualism education, this law states that it is important to develop a set of communicative skills in a second or foreign language that would provide to an individual access to tertiary education and opportunities in the professional environment. “Desarrollar las habilidades comunicativas para leer, comprender, escribir, escuchar, hablar y expresarse correctamente en una lengua extranjera” [To develop communication skills to read, understand, write, listen, speak and express oneself correctly in a foreign language] (Ley 1651, Art. 2, 2013.)

Furthermore, this law is also supported by the public national policy in bilingualism which is a continuation of the bilingualism policy that has been applied in the Colombian education for the last 10 years. This lasted policy states that:

La presente tiene como objeto crear la Política Pública Nacional de Bilingüismo (PPNB) a través de la configuración del marco institucional y normativo necesario para su materialización, la modificación de las normas existentes en materia educativa que versen sobre la materia, y la creación de criterios homogéneos para todos los programas de educación superior en términos de formación para la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de una segunda lengua. [The purpose of this policy is to create the National Public Policy on Bilingualism (PPNB) through the configuration of the institutional and regulatory framework necessary for its materialization, the modification of existing educational norms on the subject, and the creation of homogeneous criteria for all higher education

programs in terms of training for the teaching and learning of a second language] (Proyecto de Ley número 062 de 2022, Art. 1, 2023).

4.3.5. Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés – Guías N° 22

The Ministry of Education also states what schools have implemented in terms of teaching guidelines in order to promote English learning as a second language for Colombian people. “La gran mayoría de las instituciones educativas colombianas ha optado por ofrecer a sus estudiantes la oportunidad de aprender el inglés como lengua extranjera. Con ello pretenden brindar un lenguaje común que permita a niños, niñas y jóvenes mayor acceso al mundo de hoy.” [The vast majority of Colombian educational institutions have chosen to offer their students the opportunity to learn English as a foreign language. This is intended to provide a common language that allows children and young people greater access to today's world] (Ministerio de Educación, 2006, p.7). It is necessary to make clear that this goal was set in 2006; however, the evolution of this policy has not been completely successful to back up their own statement. By 2012, Fandiño-Parra, Bermúdez-Jiménez, and Jugo-Vásquez analyzed the challenges that the National Program for Bilingual Education and stated that this educational project was not connected to Colombia reality. In other words, it promoted inequality for people to reach the established goals as schools lacked of updated sources to support students. Additionally, it denied that there were other languages in Colombia that for indigenous people, for example, were their L1 and Spanish was their L2 or their foreign language. In that sense, not many children would be able to learn English with certainty that their process it would be progressive and positive. Some other studies more recent, as the case of Sierra Ospina, (2020),

highlight that there has been some improvements in the conditions of learning and teaching; however, there are some settings that are not aligned with the real education atmosphere that teachers and students face everyday in their classroom.

All in all, the improvement of education in our country is a complex situation; however, from our local educational contexts, teachers can work with students toward better conditions for upcoming generations.

4.3.6. Proyecto Educativo Institucional "PEI": La Excelencia es Fruto de la Exigencia

The institutional educational project (PEI) for Colegio Bilingue La Consolata stands for: La Excelencia es el Fruto de la Exigencia (excellence is the result of hard working) and grounds its education on religious principles proposed by the blessed Jose Allamano. This PEI (2022) establishes a pedagogical model that can be meaningful and integrative for the learner to build their own knowledge, skills and to strengthen their emotional intelligence to allow students recognize themselves with a purpose through their pedagogical practices.

5. Research Methodology

5.1. Research design

This study is framed under the critical paradigm since it helps to transform inequity of social issues in better opportunities for the community (Hatch, 2002). It is aligned with this research because of the invisible voices that youth has is the social inequity since they are also considered members of a community. This paradigm asks the teacher-researcher, learner-researchers and community to be integrated and maintain a constant interaction (Hatch, 2002). The research approach that is the most suitable for this proposal is qualitative. As the

phenomenon intends to be identified and explored from learners' interactions in a natural context towards their community role, in the words of Hatch, "the lived experiences or real people are the objects of study" (2002, p.6). Furthermore, as Hatch (2002) describes it, qualitative research also seeks to understand learners' perspectives of their reality that is driven by a set of values, axiological elements, and own experiences. Therefore, qualitative research is the most appropriate approach since the phenomenon is associated with the participants' core reality (Bisquerra, 2009).

Following the critical paradigm and qualitative approach described above, this study adopts the design of action research that "addresses a specific, practical issue and seeks to obtain solutions to a problem" (Creswell, 2012, p.577). From the study, considering the non-relevant perception that students have towards their L2 writing skills and their passive role as young members of a community, the teacher-researcher can tackle such issues by studying and facing them bearing in mind the need for constant development or change at a school environment (Mertler, 2019). Thus, it requires a cycle that engages all the participants and the researcher and that could be assessed, modified, and implemented again as a spiral. Kemmis and McTaggart (1982) propose a diagram that allows to develop a *plan* of action to better the issue already identified; to *take action* to implement what is planned; to *observe* the effects in the chosen context; and to *reflect* on these effects as a basis to consider modifications that for further sequence action (as cited in Townsend, 2013, p.12).

5.1.1. Setting

La Consolata Bilingual School is a private school in Bucaramanga that seeks to promote bilingualism in the students that are enrolled in this institution. In its English area, the development of skills is presented in a realistic view where there are two subjects: Oracy, addressing the improvement of listening and speaking skills; and Literacy, sharpening reading and writing skills; in this latter, the study will be developed. This approach is applied for high school in order to seek a remarkable improvement in English as L2 and to allow students to be capable individuals that get along with the constant worldwide change.

In Literacy class for tenth graders, students are provided with critical material to read in order to strengthen their reading comprehension and to link the content read with their surroundings; moreover, the writing component is crucial to prepare students themselves for their university and professional life.

5.1.2. Participants

The participants are twenty-eight students of tenth grade whose ages are from 15 to 17. Their English level is between B1 and B2 based on the proficiency English Test (PET), proposed by Cambridge English, that they have to take within 9th, 10th and 11th grades in order to become a high school graduate.

In relation to the participants' social strata, they remain between medium and high social status, where inequity is also experienced as a community issue.

5.1.3. Researcher–Practitioner Role

In order to implement this study during the English classes of tenth graders, the researcher has to perform the role of teacher as well. Thus, not only implements the study and collects data; but also, makes decisions in the classroom regarding management, content and assignments for the students.

Having said so, the fact of working with a population being teacher and researcher at the same time demands that this person dives into a deep reflective process of their own teaching practices in terms of their school, classes or lessons. This is a valuable experience for this teacher–researcher because they would have a continuous transformation of that has been learned so far and the elements that can improved. “In this reflection, action researchers weigh different solutions to their problems and learn from testing ideas” (Creswell, 2012, p.586).

5.1.4. Data collection methods

The methods chosen and instruments designed have the goal of helping the researcher to extract pieces of information from the reality that he/she has recreated (Bisquerra, 2009). This data collected is meaningful in order to analyze it and obtain outcomes that can answer the main research question. In this research project, based on Bisquerra (2009) the instruments are classified into two types of techniques: direct or interactive ones and indirect or non–interactive ones.

On the one hand, the direct techniques are described by Bisquerra (2009) as the ones that allow the researcher to obtain information from first sources as the participants being

themselves in their natural context. In that way, the instruments that would suit as direct techniques are a field journal and a focus group as a semi-structured interview.

Field journal. According to Creswell (2012), a journal field is the “text recorded by the researcher during an observation in a qualitative study” (p,216). Creswell also highlights the process when observing in a context in order to identify a phenomenon and analyze it. Among those steps, it can be found: to identify the who or what to observe as essential to start a study; to establish a frequency to observe that context, thus, there will be a clearer and better understanding of the site; and to decide what aspects are going to be recorded during the observation. For this study, observation is important in order to record in descriptive and reflective ways the 10th graders’ attitudes towards the decision making they would do in their role as active individuals and their performance in argumentative writing. This observation recording is carried out every time the class is designed for the YPAR workshops of the project *“Empowering Young Voices in The Community”*.

Focus groups as semi-structured interviews. The focus group that is organized in the last stage of the pedagogical intervention has the purpose to collect all the perceptions and feelings that the sample group can share from their experiences in the YPAR workshops and their frequent argument writing practice. Having in mind the semi-structured interview factor, most of the questions formulated are already designed; however, there is space to improve and make clearer a participant’s answer formulating questions at the moment of the interview. In words of Creswell (2012), focus group interviews sometime could be challenging for the interviewer “who

lacks control over the interview discussion” when taking notes about participants opinions and then transcribing, especially when it is an audio–recording; therefore, the focus group applied in this study will be video–recorded.

On the other hand, Bisquerra (2009) claims that the indirect or non–interactive techniques gather information required in two ways: by documents that present the progress of the studies, approaches and knowledge in a certain field; and by written personal perceptions about the phenomenon to work on. In that order of ideas, the indirect or non–interactive instruments implemented for the study “*Empowering Young Voices in the Community*” are argumentative writing samples, lesson plans where Youth Participatory Action Research workshops are evidenced, and literature analysis/ data analysis.

It is also important to mention that the way how the instruments above are going to be analyzed is through Grounded Theory and its three phases of coding: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Creswell, 2012, p. 425). This procedure allows to give response to the study considering not only the gathered data and coded information, but also unexpected complexities that might emerge along the implementation.

5.1.5. Ethical Considerations

The nature of a youth participatory action research is to establish relationships of trust between the teacher–researchers and the young participants; that also means, that the researchers are expected to be in the same level of contribution as the other participants. Therefore, some of the main aims are to keep a natural environment where participants are not

forced to do something they are uncomfortable with; and as any other action research, to be aware of a possible open-ended interaction.

In the words of Creswell (2012) “this commitment entails open and transparent participation, respect for people’s knowledge, democratic and nonhierarchical practices, and positive and sustainable social change among the action research community” (p.148). Put differently, in order to guarantee to these young learners that their participation would not be biased, the school authorized the implementation of the study (See annex1), and the teacher-researcher hands out to each student a consent form to fill in with their parents, as they are under 18 years old (See annex 2).

6. Methodological Design of the Didactic Sequence

6.1. Didactic Sequence Rationale

Education evolves, and for that reason, teachers have to reevaluate the content they deliver in their classes, especially its purpose for learners’ lives. In that sense, the didactic sequence of this project, “Empowering Young Voices in The Community,” is created based on the reflections made by Tobón et al. (2010) on how to implement a didactic sequence considering students’ thinking development, collaborative learning, and problem-based learning. For this project, the sequence of units aimed to prepare students to activate their previous knowledge or build their basis for research work and critical awareness. Thus, they were guided through the assignments to work as a team and collaboratively to strengthen their integrative skills as peer-interaction took place.

While English sessions went on, the tasks challenged students regarding the content delivered, their beliefs, and their learning experiences so far. The type of problems that challenge the learners' thinking must come from discussions among the teacher and the students, from real contexts as a reference, and the chance to construct a project to step in the context (Tobón et al., 2010, p.44), so they would have authentic situations that strengthen their skills.

6.2. Didactic Sequence implementation

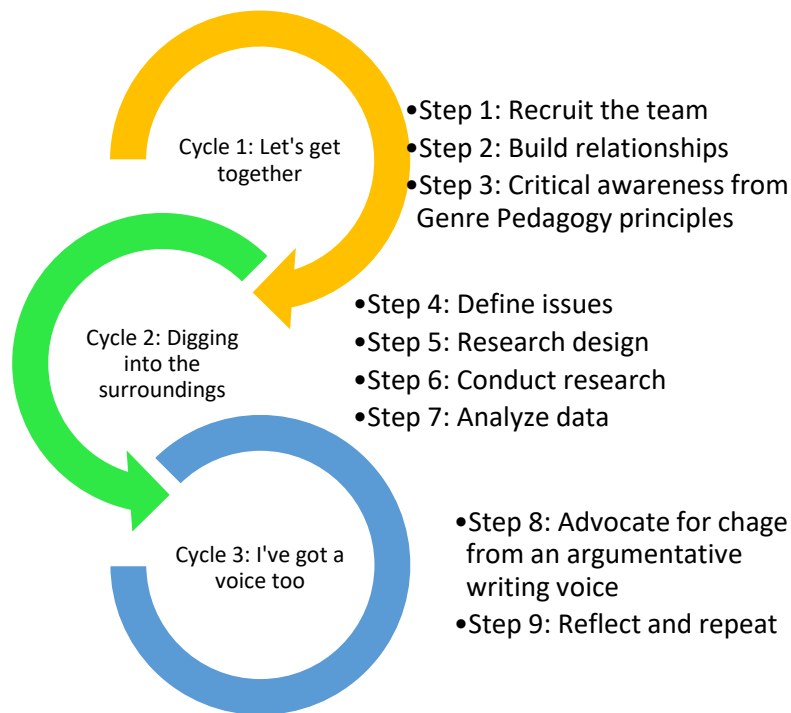
The pedagogical intervention for this study, "Empowering Young Voices in the Community," was conducted along two academic school terms from July 12th, 2022, to November 16th, 2022, in the Literacy class, which was an English subject mainly focused on reading and writing based on the school methodology. The implementation was conducted most of the time in two of the four periods of class per week that the students had, each period was 90 minutes. Then, for the second academic term, and considering that usually at the end of the school year there are numerous events, the four periods of class were taken for the learners to work on their paper, which was part of the last stages of the proposal.

The intervention was divided into three stages: *Let's get together*; *Digging into the surroundings*; and *I've got a voice too* (See Figure 1). These three approaches were chosen to engage the learner in the workshops and turn their role into an active one, in which they were able to make decisions by themselves about the type of problematic to explore, or how to construct their argumentative essays. It is worth mentioning that the strategy was adapted

through project-based approach, genre-based pedagogy and collaborative approach. On the one hand, the project-based approach was quite linked to Youth Participatory Action Research

Figure 1

Integration of argumentative writing voices and the YPAR approach



(YPAR) because both aim to interact and get involved with communities to identify, analyze, and act towards a problem identified. On the other hand, the genre-pedagogy approach is crucial to enhance learners' argumentative writing skills. Furthermore, the collaborative approach can be embedded in the previous approach since peer-interaction and peer-support occur.

Note. Cycle designed by the teacher-researcher

Moreover, these sessions were adapted to carry out the didactic sequence in three main phases. Each phase had a set of steps to follow according to the Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) cycle model proposed by a Youth Activism Project (2018). Bearing in mind this

sequence developed in research workshops that would be evidenced in the lesson plans (Annex 3), 10th graders had the chance to be themselves, get engaged, and feel they were taking action towards their surroundings. At the same time, they worked together in small groups of five people. Notably, at the beginning of the implementation, the teacher–researcher introduced the project to the students to explain the reason for the upcoming topics for the class. On top of that, to prepare the participants, during the previous term (April 20th to June 17th), these young learners explored the social justice domains while learning basic structures for constructing arguments, and research techniques and instruments for collecting data through case studies.

6.2.1. Cycle 1: Let's get together

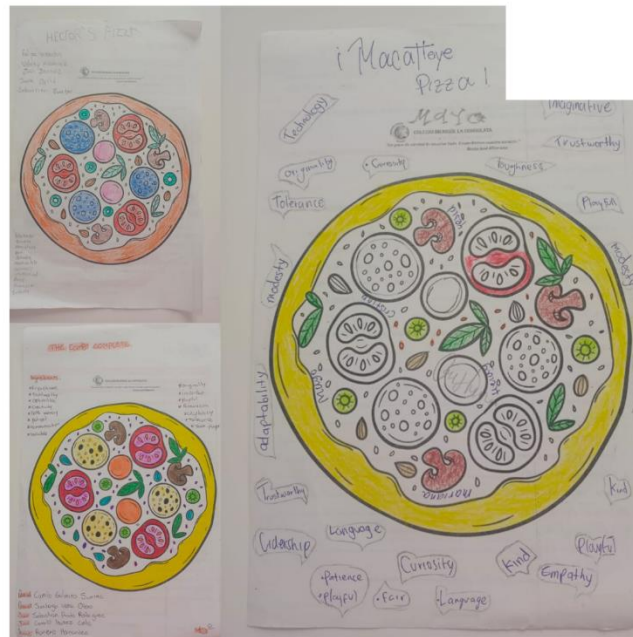
This first cycle was divided into three parts. The first one was about organizing the teams where these young learners would work together for the following three months. To give relevance to each part of the cycle, the teacher researcher started this cycle by applying a test for strengths when working on teams. In that sense, students would easily recognize their strengths and weaknesses and be aware of what skills they could contribute to the team they belong to.

During the socialization of the results in terms of how they felt about those strengths and weaknesses they got on the test, several of them expressed that they were not consistently recognized by their best qualities. By the end of the activity, it was reflected that both sides are essential for personal growth and that each needs to be improved in every opportunity a human being has.

Then, students were asked to organize their groups, considering the skills that they could contribute to teamwork and good rapport during their assignments. In this part of the

Figure 2

Pizza-groups based on skills (ingredients)



stage, students seemed to be quite motivated. They also had to represent this new group through the design of a pizza in which their team's names were on the top, and every ingredient was a characteristic that they could offer to this new team such as adaptability, leadership, good memory, empathy, tolerance, communication, or curiosity (See Figure 2 and Annex 5).

Note. Representation of learners' group through a pizza drawing

When it was about the critical awareness section, the teacher-researcher assigned a reading to work on for the following weeks. This book was "Exposing Hidden Worlds: How Jacob Riis' Photos Became Tools for Social Reform" by Michael Burgan. This reading was chosen based

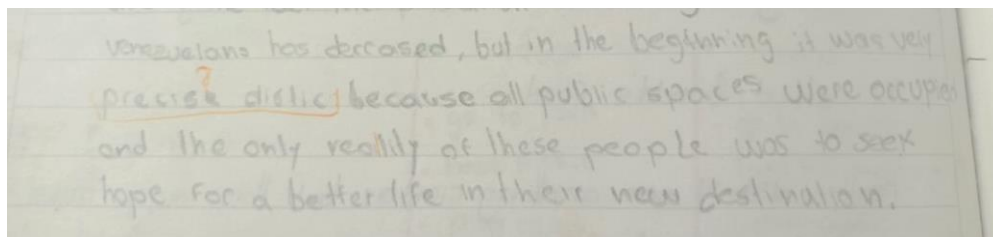
on its social and political content. It displays how photograph turned into the means to report the conditions of a community of immigrants, to analyze the political movement that was taking place during that time and, therefore, the reason for some social issues, and to reflect on how this photographer was able to achieve some suitable conditions for that community.

For learners to work on each assignment, the teacher-researchers and the class had access to an education platform called "MyOn", where they could read at their own pace, leave notes, check vocabulary, and use the platform from their phones or laptops.

The content of the book allowed them to explore intertextuality as the issues mentioned in it were related to the current situation with migrants and how the harsh conditions forced them to become homeless people. In that sense, students were quite sensitive about the problem they witnessed in the city and their position towards it; for instance, some students expressed that even though the situation has not stopped completely, they did recognize that it has decreased. They also expressed that they sometimes helped as they saw these communities quite often in their neighborhood. Some other learners recognized that they did not experience that problem in their areas; however, they did acknowledge its existence around the city (See Figure 3).

Figure 3

Part of the reading workshop Exposing Hidden Worlds - Chapter 3.



Note: Answer to the question “How similar/different can be Colombian children’s conditions from the ones described in the chapter?”

It was also possible to discuss these social issues on an international scope, considering past and current wars and their consequences so far. Thus, students were explained that to understand completely each problem, there was a root cause and how the power of some part of a community might drive to create those issues in favor of them, such as lands, money, or even more power.

It is important to highlight that in several activities with this reading, students were asked to walk a mile in others’ shoes or even go back in time to find their own families’ roots. It was the case when they learned about Jacob Riis’ journey (the photographer and main character), as they could identify how many times he had to move with their family to survive and find better opportunities, even considering going abroad as a refugee. This activity allowed students to understand that social issues have a more significant impact than we think. This type of phenomenon has made people settle in many places that were not the original ones where they were born.

In that sense, students had the chance to draw their own maps based on their families’ settlements. During the development of this activity, learners were surprised by their background information and others’ as well. This exercise was taken as a reflection for students to understand that their families also have roots from other places close or far from where they were born or were currently living.

Throughout the reading assignment, students were immersed in biographies or testimonies of people who had to face political and socio-economic consequences. Additionally, learners could identify how some influential leaders from that time were willing to put social justice into practice and improve the conditions of this population. It was also remarkable that some empathy was expressed by the students regarding immigrant people who have arrived in our country and the type of treatment that they would like to receive if they were in the same situation as them.

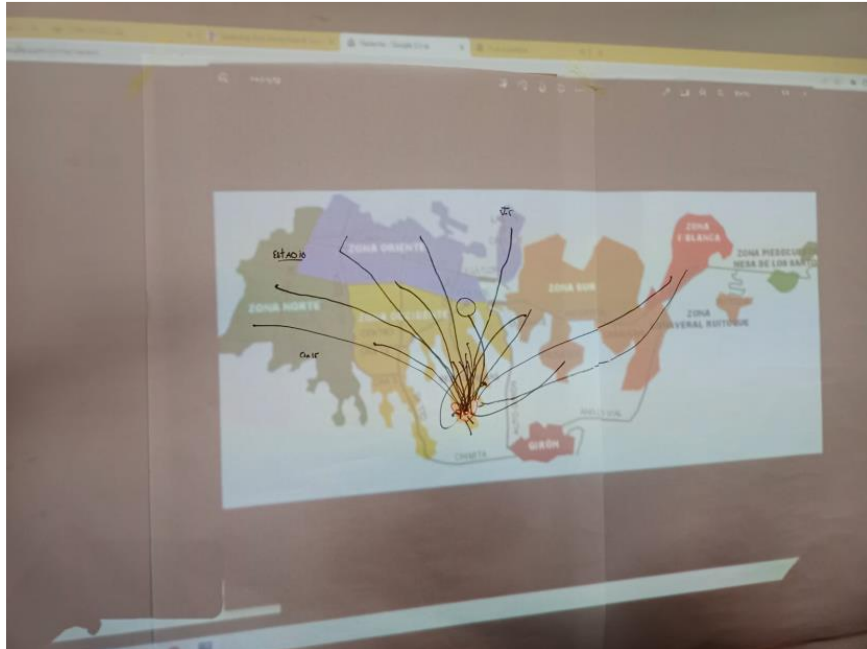
6.2.2. Cycle 2: Digging into the surroundings

For the second stage, students had to start building their small-scale projects based on their communities.

As a first awareness activity based on their place of residence, they had to locate on a Bucaramanga map where they lived and how far it was from the school (as one of the places considered part of their community) (See Figure 4). It is relevant to mention that students seemed excited as they felt that their normal lives were being taken as part of the class to work on and that they shared a bit of it with their class.

Figure 4

Recognition of students' community



Note. Students recognizing where their home and school are located in their city.

The primary purpose of the activity was to recognize their surroundings and what specific places they considered part of their community. Furthermore, they assessed those areas and pointed out the issues that took place in each part chosen, and now, with expertise in the topic, to understand possible root causes and the responsibility that every member in that community had. When it was about recognizing those issues, learners felt that the problems identified were less relevant or big than the issues that had been studied in the book. Part of the teacher–researcher role was to be a guide for learners; in that sense, this previous concern that some students expressed was a suitable situation to let them know that issues could not be compared from one place to another as there would be diverse aspects that would impact each place differently.

This previous intervention from the teacher–researcher engaged students better so that they felt more comfortable pointing out issues such as garbage in parks, informal

transportation, unsuitable conditions for homeless people, use of marihuana in open spaces, or use of phones in the school. The teacher–researcher guided this understanding of the impact of each issue, considering how relevant it was for them to have a place to grow with rights and duties. Besides, if there was enough time to carry out their projects, students were asked to consider how reliable and risky it would be to implement it.

Throughout the process of building these small–scale projects, students learned how to design instruments to collect data, such as surveys, interviews, photovoice, or observation grids. During several sessions, they had the chance to learn the purpose of each instrument, how to create it, apply it, and analyze it with some practical exercises around the school (See Figure 5).

Figure 5

Photovoice activity around the school

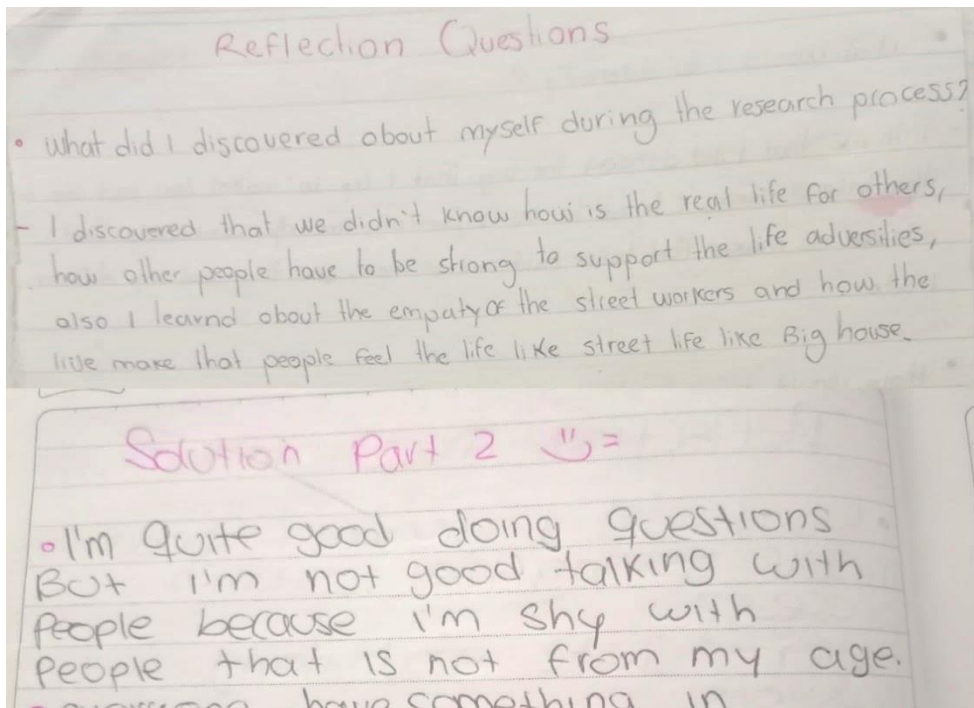


Note. Practice of research instruments, in this case, photovoice.

Students were asked to design two instruments to collect data in the communities they chose. Then, once they were checked, learners were ready to apply them (See Annex 6). The session after this assignment was meaningful for the group as they were excited to share their experiences in the class regarding how people reacted or answered their questions. For instance, some tenth graders mentioned that some people were rude as they felt that those were not topics related to young people; in other cases, students were empathetic with the situations they discovered and how a social issue can affect a human being. Some others expressed that their social skills were not strong, but they did their best interacting with the community (See Figure 6).

Figure 6

Students' experiences after applying instruments



Note. Answer to the question “What did I discover about myself during the research process?”

After sharing these experiences, learners were asked to code the data gathered, identifying patterns in people’s answers (See Annex 7). This stage took longer than expected as some students had to transcribe the interviews recorded.

6.2.3. Cycle 3: We’ve got a voice too

In this last stage, students had the chance to link their prior knowledge regarding writing elements such as the use of punctuation, citations, and have as a reference the structure of the argumentative essay. To start with, as an introduction, learners got to know the purpose of an argumentative essay and its different types of structures. Thus, they were able to start drafting their ideas to turn them into an essay.

The construction of this paper was different for everybody, and the lessons started to turn into guided sessions by the teacher and supportive opportunities among partners. That is, each young writer needed different guidance as they had different development of their writing skills. For that reason, there were autonomous sessions for working on writing and students were welcomed to reach their teacher anytime they had a doubt. From time to time, learners also had the chance to work in peers reading their texts to each other and receive their classmates’ advice to perform better in their writing assignments. For instance, some shared their own techniques on how they usually started writing or how they gathered the relevant information from different sources that needed to be included in the paper.

After this last activity where students had the chance to put into practice their knowledge in writing, the whole experience was discussed and assessed based on the type of activities, their purpose, and how they felt. This exercise was collected through Google Forms (See Annex 8) and discussed in the classroom after having answered the questions. There were three different ways to see this research assignment. For instance, the first group of students shared that their perception of the issue stayed the same as they were already aware of the problem in their community, so the research activity was a way to reaffirm their thoughts (See Figure 7).

Figure 7

Students perceptions that did not change after researching

Its the same, havent change my opinion yet.

The truth did not change much, because I am part of this community I was aware of the problems

Ever i have a similar idea about this comunity, this activity only confirm My teory

I think my point of view doesn't chance, but i want to highlight that i have had fun interviewing people

Note. Further explanation to the question "If your answer for the previous question was that your perception was different (or in somehow), how would you describe this new perception briefly?"

Additionally, some other students mentioned that they became empathetic with the people who were directly involved in these social issues as there they got the chance to know the personal reasons for being involved in it, such as informal transportation or being a homeless person in the city. Moreover, a last group of students mentioned that they did have a different perception of the issue before doing this research, as they considered themselves as

part of the issue, for example, polluting the parks with garbage, or they completely ignored the impact that it could have for their community (See Figure 8). It means that after their conscious involvement, they had a change of perception and could feel responsible for how their actions could impact their community.

Figure 8

Students perceptions that changed after researching

My perception change with the project because I was the type of person who polluted too I throw garbage to the floor and the streets or any parts of the city but after that I realized that I really have to change and I did and now I change and I don't do that anymore

Well,before the project I used to think that the garbage in the cigarras park was minimum and I never worry about it but now I know that it's important to clean and persevere, and I see that a lot of people really care about the pollution in the park

I think that before, when I went to the park, I could see the trash and the contamination, but I didn't matter too much, but when I interviewed people, I knew it was a big problem and we had to help or at least know about it.

Note. Further explanation to the question "If your answer for the previous question was that your perception was different (or in somehow), how would you describe this new perception briefly?"

7. Data Analysis and Discussion

The section below will present a detailed discussion regarding the main objective of this paper, to empower students' argumentative writing voices in their community through the integration of Genre Pedagogy principles and Youth Participatory Action Research workshops. The information gathered was obtained from the designed and applied instruments: 1) focus group; 2) teacher-researcher journal (See Annex 9); 3) argumentative essays as students'

artifacts (See Annex 4), and Grounded Theory was the means to analyze the data through several processes. First, the researcher coded the information gathered by each instrument separately. Each document was read several times to start finding patterns or differences, which were labeled with specific colors and tags. Then, there was a thorough review, this time gathering all the documents, in order to simplify the codes and turn them into the categories that would lead this chapter.

It is important to mention that the analysis process was carried out in the light of the reviewed theory by the time the project was designed, and on top of that, it was addressed to provide a response to the specific objectives. In that order of ideas, the three categories were *writing barriers; integration of Genre Pedagogy Principles (GPP) and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR); and empowering voices* (See table 1), which will be described in more detail in the lines below.

Table 1 Categories and subcategories for analyzing the data collected

Specific objectives	Category	Subcategories
To explore the 10 th graders' current voices about social phenomena that surround them through argumentative writing.	Writing Barriers	L1 influencing L2
		Writing (Rhetorical elements and mechanics)
		Affective elements
To describe how to integrate genre pedagogy principles and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) to	Integration of Genre principles and YPAR	Documented analysis

empower participants' writing voices.		
To evaluate how the integration of genre pedagogy principles and Youth Participatory Action Research workshops empowers 10 th graders argumentative writing voices in their community in Bucaramanga.	Empowering Voices	Cultural and Critical epistemologies
		Academic content
		Development and Leadership
		Youth organizing and Civic Engagement

Note: Table designed by the teacher–researcher

7.1. Writing Barriers

This category started as an exploration of the students' argumentative writing and their perception in regards to their first language (L1) and second language (L2) writing skills.

In order to explore their writing achievement, the teacher–researcher applied a semi-structured interview divided into three sections (subcategories): first language (L1) influencing second language (L2); writing elements; and affective elements. Of course, it cannot be disregarded that the teacher's journal and the writing artifacts from students were considered as well.

7.1.1. L1 Influencing L2

For the first subcategory, students shared their experience in argumentative writing and literacy skills in their L1. To start with, most of students felt confident about writing in Spanish. They highlighted that spelling and vocabulary had been two aspects easy to learn as their writing experience increased.

“Mi conocimiento yo sí lo considero bueno sobre argumentación, la verdad creo que pues para la parte de escritura soy muy buena respecto a ortografía y conectores como para que sea un texto fácil de leer.” (S2 – Focus group excerpt)

[I consider that my knowledge about argumentative skills is good. In fact, I think that I am good at writing in relation to spelling and connectors in order to read the text easily.]

The argumentative writing experience that students have gained so far might be built from two different contexts: on the one hand, from their Spanish teacher as most of the students recalled that their L1 teacher had taught them not only argumentative texts and structures that might be applied in a tertiary level of education, but also, this teacher had made a reinforcement of the purpose and impact of providing well-constructed reasons when it is about life-choice.

“Pues durante todo el año, Ms. Denis nos ha inculcado hacer muchos textos que ella dice que en la universidad nos va a servir de mucho, entonces pues, creo que desde el primer periodo siempre hemos hecho textos argumentativos sobre diferentes temas, películas.” (S4 – Focus group excerpt)

[During the whole year, Ms. Denis has taught us to write many texts that she says will be very useful in college, so I think that since the first period we have always written argumentative texts about different topics, movies.]

“Pues como dicen ellos también, sí, todo el año hemos visto eso con Ms. Denis. Sí ha sido muy importante para nosotros y para nuestro futuro académico también poder

argumentar bien nuestras ideas que tenemos y lo que pensamos.” (S6 – Focus group excerpt)

[Well, as they also say, yes, all year we have learned that with Ms. Denis. Yes, it has been very important for us and for our academic future to be able to state well our ideas and what we think.]

On the other hand, their L1 experience might be built from the reading habit that some of these students had, as in several conversations with them, students had brought up the latest book they had been reading or the last one read. These two ways of support from their L1 can be considered part of their cultural transfer, considering that the Spanish teacher advised on academic reasons to learn argumentative writing, moreover, students are moved from their preference to read. According to Wang, (2014), these two situations can be taken as part of the cultural transfer that a learner faced acquiring an L2.

It is evident that L1 cannot be tagged in only positive or negative aspects of influence for L2 learning. Through previous studies such as Rinnert and Kobayashi, (2009); Yiwei, (2017); Morell and Pastor Cesteros, (2019); and Wang, (2014), the authors state that there is a strong dynamic relationship between the mother tongue and the L2; as Yiwei (2017) expresses “L1 contributes to L2 acquisition as well as to the development of L2 writing” (p.274). The fact that some students found L1 as a support means that they have had the chance to be exposed to their L2 in a longer period of time, so their perception of the learning has changed to create bonds that can improve their learning.

Within the characteristics found in the L1 literacy skills experience, students found Spanish content class as language support when in English classes they were reviewing structures and types of texts as well. At the same time, high confidence was noticed when students considered as a booster the fact of being aware of having the same level of vocabulary in both L1 and L2; however, it turns into an obstacle, when they did not remember a word in L2 as it would create frustration to continue writing in L2.

“Pero lo que se me complica a mí, como decía Piña, los conectores y hay muchas palabras formales que se usan cuando estás escribiendo o estás argumentando, bueno, por lo menos yo no conozco que si conociera, podría tener una mejor argumentación en inglés.” (S3 – Focus group excerpt)

[But what is complicated for me, as Piña was saying, the connectors and there are many formal words that are used when you are writing or using arguments, well, at least I do not know them, and if I knew, I could have a better argumentation in English.]

In the same way, during this focus group, students also recognized that when it was about formal vocabulary, their production turned into a more difficult process.

“Lo único que se me dificultaría es como al momento de expresar las palabras es que suene como algo más...por decirlo más formal.” (S2 – Focus group excerpt)

[The only thing that would be difficult for me when expressing the words is to make it sound more... more formal.]

This perception might be conceived in this way because students are not used to include formal vocabulary in their every-day conversations neither see it in the type of texts they are familiar with. This is also supported by the teacher-researcher through the observation made while students were constructing their papers:

"While I checked the individual process of the SS, some asked for help in terms of vocabulary, especially, connectors or words related to a very specific area of study. In order to support their autonomous development, I provided to them a list of connectors to use depending on the purpose." (Teacher-researcher journal / Oct 31st – Nov 4th)

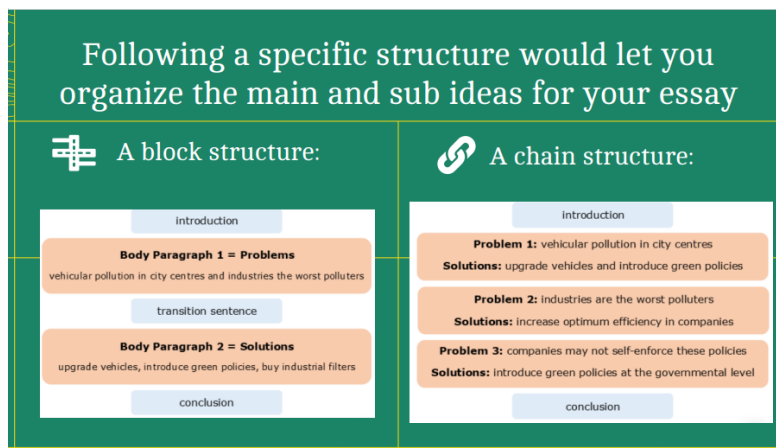
Through this exploration, sometimes learners noticed that their L1 was a great support, and some other times, they felt that it was more difficult either because of the lack of vocabulary or the linguistic level of the text. Hence, it could be stated that these young learners faced a process in which their old knowledge influence their new knowledge (Wang, 2014). For instance, in terms of vocabulary, it is recognizable that this factor is different in any language which is also attached to a specific culture (Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2009); however, it would influence positively or negatively depending on how similar or difference the word in L1 is from the translation in the L2 (Wang, 2014). This is a similar situation with the structure of the text as itself, as students would let themselves be guided by the general structure but would skip some differences at the linguistic level of each language. Rinnert and Kobayashi, (2009); Wang, (2014); and Morell and Pastor Cesteros, (2019) share a similar statement as they point out that

there are textual features that a L1 can share with the L2; however, there would be specific distinctions that would not allow to transfer the knowledge from one language to the other.

7.1.2. Writing Elements

For the second subcategory, *writing elements*, not only the interviews were considered but also the argumentative papers that students created were a key source of analysis (See annex 4). Students were asked to choose between two types of argumentative problem-solving essay structures: 1) block structure, in which the first section of the body part is for listing the problems found and the second section is for stating the solutions of each of the problems already mentioned; and 2) chain structure, in which each problem and its solution are developed in one chunk of paragraph (See figure 4). These structures were shared with the students in a class session as a preparation to the writing assignment.

Figure No. 1 Problem-solving essay structures



Within the elements analyzed in this writing exercise, the structure could show that if learners had a layout of their essay, it would have a better development of paragraphs and

would be also easy to understand. A clear example of what was just mentioned is how the thesis or topic statement was constructed and led to the whole development of the idea. Nevertheless, there was a very serious situation which was the indiscipline of the students. As an interpretation of this feature, it seems that students, who were able to invest their class-time on working on their essays, were able to draft their ideas and then to build their paper in a more organized way, of course, considering the normal mistakes that a language learner might have.

A second item analyzed was that even though most students chose to work with the block structure, a great number of them seemed to understand it quite literally; for instance, they constructed two extended paragraphs, one for problems and the other for solutions, without considering whether the development of each problem was long enough to start a new paragraph with a consecutive idea.

Additionally, the way how students made use of connectors was also reviewed. Some demonstrated that the purpose of these linking words was clear as they applied them with accuracy and proper punctuation.

Pollution is when waste, residues and garbage enter spaces where they normally should not be, such as parks, natural reserves, among others, due to affect the ecosystem in a bad way. For this reason, the Cigarras Park in Bucaramanga has been seriously affected by this problem. (S3 – Problem solving essay. See annex 4)

As we can evidence in the paragraph above, this learner has described what pollution means and where it affects the most. Likewise, they use the linking word “for this reason” to mention a

place that has been impacted specifically and have used punctuation to help the reader understand each idea clearly. Nonetheless, in some other texts, it was noticed that students used connectors not with the most accurate purpose.

They all know the rules of the institution where the use of cellphones is restricted, however they ignore it, presenting problems of indiscipline. Finally, it was concluded that students use the device inside the classroom, mostly for entertainment, having a negative effect, since it produces addiction, low academic performance and poor attention in class. (S5 – Problem solving essay. See annex 4)

In the example above, this learner has used the connector “finally” that might indicate that the text is about to end. However, what this young learner intended to do was to list the last of several issues that they found after observing the impact of cellphones usage at the school and interviewing some students of their school as well. In this case, they could have used a different connector such as “additionally”, “furthermore”, or “on the top of that” that would introduce another idea to complement the paragraph just built.

Within this second section of writing elements, the opinion of students was also a segment to bear in mind. Their opinions were identified based on their research made on the chosen issue, so not only had information from the practice but also, they had the chance to find data and theory that could support their small-scale investigation.

One aspect identified was that there were different perceptions on what is like to provide an opinion in an essay. Some students expressed that it was easy for them as long as they were interested in the topic or had made some research before.

“Para mí también es muy fácil porque después de tener tanta información de lo que uno ha leído del tema, pues ya uno como que se va familiarizando con él y le es más fácil a uno dar la opinión” (S3 – Focus group excerpt)

[For me it is also very easy because after having so much information about what one has read on the subject, one becomes more familiar with it and it is easier to give an opinion.]

On the contrary, there were some situations in which other students pointed out to manifest when it was hard to provide an opinion. For instance, their perception of the topic has not been well-developed along the paper, so students feel that their voice is being repetitive. Also, they have found difficult to support other people’s idea with their own words.

“Yo digo que es complicado pues tratar de conectar algo o una opinión de otra persona.”
(S5 – Focus group excerpt)

[I think it's complicated because trying to connect something or the opinion of another person.]

Additionally, learners have claimed that sometimes they disagreed on the assignment statement and they found overwhelming the fact of having too much information that support that opposite idea. So, they do not know how to defend their position.

“Normalmente es difícil porque en esos artículos que uno encuentra están respaldados por, aunque uno no esté de acuerdo, por mucha información que es verídica.” (S6 – Focus group excerpt)

[It is usually difficult because those articles you find are supported by, even if you disagree with them, a lot of information that is true.]

Another element that was identified was how the opinion expressions were used. In some essays, there was a third-person writing which made implicit those expressions such as the excerpt below:

The possible solution proposed is to raise awareness among people in our social circle who usually use this means of transportation to find someone who has given them an excellent service. (S7 – Problem solving essay. See annex 4)

Nonetheless, when the essays had a first-person voice, this use was explicit as it is shown in the following fragment:

I think there are some solutions from my point of view and the first would be that the school implements more the use of cell phones. (S5 – Problem solving essay. See annex 4)

It is necessary to highlight that as these young learners were talking about their own studies and both usages are fine for academic writing. In addition, although it is traditionally conceived that academic papers should be written in third person, there are also some authors that support that learners are able to “re-enunciate” what have just been acquired in order to express it from their own interests and perceptions (Porto & Byram, 2022). Put another way, when students make use of the first person in a text, implies that there is an identity that this writing is disclosing through the text.

A last writing element was the references and quotes that students included in their essays to support their research and voice regarding the issues they chose to work on. Learners were asked to apply APA 7th version guidelines. This aspect was included in order for students to recall or recognize the relevance of having support in their ideas or to believe in previous works.

Within its findings, when these youngsters made use of sources in Spanish and wanted to include a direct quote, they kept this short statement in the original language and also include its translation. Also, when the citation was longer than 40 words, they wrote the idea in a block paragraph. On top of that, they made use of indirect quotes as brief and clear:

González and Buitrago (2021) states that immediacy, comfort and economy are some factors that encourage citizens to make use of informal transportation service. (S2 - Problem solving essay. See annex 4)

In terms of references, it was evidenced that students used either an online citation generator or a software from their laptops, which allowed them to record the sources correctly. Nevertheless, it is necessary to highlight that not everything in this brief exercise of quoting was peaches and cream. There were some features that could be considered as mistakes when it is about references such as not having a balance between direct and indirect quotes, as there were a bigger number of direct quotes than indirect ones; based on the source, it could be told that the original language of the cite was Spanish, however, it was quoted as a translation.

Quoting from an article in the magazine chain "El Tiempo", "In terms of moderate cannabis consumption, Colombia is in first place, with 62.5%. The figure is alarming, as it greatly exceeds those of Peru and Ecuador, which appear in the first three places with 28.6% and 14.8%" Delgado, M.C. (2021) (S8 - Problem solving essay. See annex 4)

As a last feature to mention, there was a few papers in which citation was minimum or there was none, consequently, there were not references either.

The findings analyzed in this subcategory (rhetoric elements, elaboration of opinions, and references and quotes) can be aligned with the categorized writing problems that Byrne (1995) listed and disclosed in the research of Setyowati et al. (2020): linguistic and cognitive problems; also, in other studies by Kormos (2012) and Zabihi (2018), these phenomena are called variables. According to Byrne (1995), linguistic difficulties are related to sentence structure, word choice, word error and tenses of sentences. On the other hand, cognitive problems are linked to how ideas are organized and developed or use of punctuation.

Additionally, it is necessary to keep in mind that as writing is a complex activity where several processes take place at the same time, so these problems can overlap at some point as well (Byrne, 1988).

In the case of these tenth graders, linguistic and cognitive problems were seen when students had to follow instructions on how to construct their essays. For instance: even though they were not able to organized the text correctly providing a paragraph to each problem and solution, they did include other rhetoric elements that an argumentative essay should have. Another element that was recognized as cognitive problem was how learners developed their opinions, in what sources they were based on, and, of course, how they structured the references from that data gathered.

On the one hand, the issues just mentioned can be linked with the lack of experience in argumentative writing making use of rhetorical structures in both L1 and L2 (Peloghitis, 2017). On the other hand, those mistakes are part of first practice steps that learners were taking in this writing area in order to start recognizing that set of elements that usually composes an argumentative text. This statement can be supported by McLaughlin (1988), who explains that it might occur due to these young writers “lack the necessary information in the second language or the attentional capacity to activate the appropriate second–language routine” (as cited Myles, 2002). That means that even though there was a delivered session to explain to students the two types of structures, and during the writing process there was feedback about how to

organize the essay correctly, their levels of attention could have been focused on the writing production as itself and not checking the aspects of cohesion.

Moreover, in terms of organization of ideas and opinions, Myles (2002) and Zabihi (2018) argue that learners have to make a great effort creating and reorganizing these ideas in L2 considering that this process might be quite automatic in their L1. For that reason, for students who are fluent in writing can be an easier process and can have efficacy in the assignment (Myles, 2002; Kormos, 2012; and Zabihi, 2018). Nonetheless, if the learner still struggles, the development would delay as they need to retrieve from their L1 the requested information to achieve the task.

It has to be noted that writing is a skill that get sharpened over time but still there will be always challenges to face even for upper levels of education (Morell & Pastor Cesteros, 2019); however, throughout constant practice, learners would exploit their L2 writing capabilities. This idea is supported by Manchón (2011) and Williams (2012) who express that “it helps learners to notice and internalize new linguistic knowledge, provides output opportunities, and thereby promotes automatization, knowledge consolidation, and hypothesis testing” (as cited in Kormos, 2012, p. 392).

7.1.3. Affective elements

This section is related to the feelings and emotions that can arise when it is about a writing task. Here, different perspectives such as Byrne (1988); Kormos (2012); Finn (2018);

Setyowati et al. (2020), and among others, are considered regarding how feelings can influence throughout the L2 writing process of a learner.

During the focus group made, the teacher-researcher asked students about those first feelings that emerge when getting to know that there was an English writing assignment. A few number of learners shared that they felt still and confident when they knew how to build the text by themselves. On the contrary, with a different emotion, most of students expressed that their first feelings were frustration, fear, panic or nervousness.

“A mí me da pánico la verdad... Me da un poquito de nervios al hacerlo”

(S4 – Focus group excerpt)

[I panic to be honest.... It makes me a little bit nervous to do it]

“Un sentimiento como de miedo” (S5 – Focus group excerpt)

[A feeling of fear]

“Yo diría frustración más que estrés” (S2 – Focus group excerpt)

[I would say frustration more than stress]

“Para mí es como confusión” (S3 – Focus group excerpt)

[For me it's like confusion]

These young learners explained that one of the reasons why they had those feelings was due to the pressure of what it was expected from them to know in English based on the level (or

grade) in which they were at that point, so they felt that their L2 proficiency should be at the same level of their mother tongue. Learners also shared that these emotions took place when making use of vocabulary that had several meanings depending on the context and it was difficult for them to identify each use.

Even though students described their first feeling towards writing as overwhelming, they also added that this sensation was part of their learning process because they recognized that after some time working on the task, their fear turned into a challenge mark for them to do a better job.

“me hace perderle miedo al inglés, y me hace como, cada texto que me ponen lo puedo realizar mejor cada vez”. (S7 – Focus group excerpt)

[It makes me lose my fear of English, and it makes me like, every text I am assigned a text, I can do it better and better.]

Furthermore, they also shared some strategies that they used to mitigate those obstacles or to turn them into a booster such as to take some rest, to eat a candy, to read something that one could find interesting or to listen to music.

The fact of letting students recognize the roots of their feelings towards their writing experience allowed them to take a look at their own performance in English and to admit that their vocabulary was enough for most of the tasks that they had to face in the school context. This action of recalling and recognizing their abilities belongs to a sensitive part of a class

session when most of students expressed that they were not recognized by their abilities quite often. That can be supported by the journal entrance of the teacher–researcher:

“When it was about the topic of weaknesses and strengths, they looked quieter and also shy. It could be because of some questions related to whether they were recognized or rewarded due to their skills” (Teacher–researcher journal / Jul 18th – Jul 22nd)

Nonetheless, it was claimed the need to improve their level, in terms of structures and vocabulary, as they felt it was basic considering the type of questions that they sometimes asked to their English teacher.

By contrast, these participants did notice that although they still needed to work on their English learning, they were able to read authentic texts, to understand its general idea and some specific details. In addition, considering one of the school requirements, as their bilingual approach, to take the PET exam, students recognized that it is quite useful for them to learn about writing in their English classes as they found it as an opportunity to continue improving their performance as itself.

Pues ahorita que tenemos un examen internacional nos sirven demasiado por si nos llegan a pedir alguna clase de texto pues ya sabemos con qué estructura y de qué manera podemos hacerlo. (S4 – Focus group excerpt)

[now that we have an international exam, it is very useful for us because if we are asked to write any kind of text, we already know the structure and the way we can do it.]

Regarding the affective elements studied, it was also relevant to know how students supported each other along their writing process and how they perceived their English teachers' guidance. On the one hand, students felt supported as they relied on their friends to clarify any doubts in terms of instructions, vocabulary, or syntax in their texts. However, when it was about to recall if they helped others, they stated that writing was an individual process, which means that they did not see themselves as a supporting partner. Besides, some mentioned that their English knowledge was not that solid, as they noticed it in other classmates from whom they received support if they had to provide some suggestions to others.

Sí, es muy individual (...) es como más de comprensión lectora, pues no creo que uno se pueda apoyar mucho en el otro compañero. (S6 – Focus group excerpt)

[Yes, it's very individual (...) it's more related to reading comprehension, because I don't think one can rely much on the other classmate.]

On the other hand, when it was about the support and feedback that students received from teachers, they highlighted that their English teachers were always willing to collaborate in any doubt that they could have as providing advice about making use of suitable words, structures, or organization of the text as itself. They also stated that their educators cheered them up along their process, so they felt supported.

Bearing in mind that every student experience L2 writing in a different way, it can be understood as well that when it is about communication, people use orality as an immediate way to do it and receive a prompt response or feedback from an interlocutor. Nevertheless, the

act of writing does not happen in the same way: it actually lacks interaction, and pushes the person toward an individual and complex activity that would cause several emotions or feelings to emerge when facing the task. This situation can also be identified as psychological problems or variables when writing (Byrne, 1988; Kormos, 2012).

In the case of this study, having assigned an argumentative writing task is the cause of feelings or emotions that can influence learners writing performance (Kormos, 2012; Zabihi, 2018; Setyowati et al., 2020; and Chen et al., 2023). Therefore, based on what learners have struggled with so far, there could be a connection between previous experiences (Finn, 2018) and the current ones explicitly related to argumentative writing. In addition, it would be necessary to highlight the possible long-term impact of those feelings on students' learning (Chen, Liu, & Lin, 2023). Through the analysis of these writers performance, emerge a clear example of the process of S4, who by the time of the interview, she mentioned that she panicked and was scared when she had to deliver a writing assignment in L2. Afterwards, her essay was also analyzed and it could be evidenced that this student was not completely engaged with the assignment in question. In fact, she did deliver her essay; however, it lacked several requirements of the checklist that they had to keep in mind by the time they finished their essay (See annex 10). For instance, there was no extra information that would support her statements, there was a lack of citations and references as well. In that order of ideas, Kormos (2012) reminds us that:

If students lack strong goal orientation and interest and do not believe in their ability to successfully acquire the L2, then they are only likely to complete the writing task itself and may not engage in further cognitive processing or collaborative effort to learn from the task. (p.399)

Despite this statement above in which it is evidenced that affective factors can influence negatively students performance during their writing process, it is also possible to support their claims when they stated that those feelings could be taken as an advantage to improve their texts. Thus, Veran Macayan et al. (2018) insist that anxiety can boost students' performance in order for them to review their composition, stay focused on the goal, and excel in their writing. Moreover, learners are willing to part take in a writing task when their education context provides a suitable environment for writing. This was a strategy that the teacher-researcher took into account when students had to invest time in writing tasks:

“Considering that the writing process is different for every individual, the choice to either stay in the classroom or be outside was open for SS in order to have better concentration in the paper.” (Teacher-researcher journal / Oct 31st – Nov 4th)

In addition to the alternatives that the teacher can offer to guide youth people's learning in L2 writing, it has to be mentioned that students' personal goals and their well-developed skills also play a relevant role when performing a task. It means that teachers need to make students aware of their abilities, so they can take advantage of them to feel that they are

capable of achieving the task, and that throughout the practice, there would be persistence that would allow them to master such skill (Kormos, 2012; Finn, 2018; and Zabihi, 2018).

On top of that, some of the strategies that students shared to tackle or mitigate such feelings were aligned with what Setyowati et al. (2020) found as solutions proposed by students: some stated that they needed some time to prepare themselves before starting a writing assignment; also, reading either sources related to the topic chosen or different material would help them feel more confident.

As a final element to discuss, whether students do not consider themselves as supportive partners for others, it could be as writing is an individual practice and some students might preferred to do this task alone (Chen et al., 2023), but it might also be related to their low self-confidence when comparing their performance with others' or having pressure to achieve others' goals (Setyowati et al. 2020). Nonetheless, when there was a task distribution within a group of students, they did not feel that pressure and their attitude turned into a more collaborative one. This can be supported by the journal entrance of the teacher-researcher:

"When I had the chance to go through each group and ask them about the workshop development, I noticed that one group divided the questions so each SS was in charge of a specific item. Then, when I passed around after some time, they had finished their individual research and now they were socializing to the rest of the group their what they found."

(Teacher-researcher journal / Aug 8th - Aug 12th)

In a nut shell, it is clear that a L2 learner faces constant challenges regarding what they have acquired so far and how they integrate it into the new learning phase. But in order to light their process in terms of pressure, educators should guide learners to find accurate resolutions for their own issues and 'to think of themselves not as "failures", but as students who are continuing to develop as readers and writers in English' (Finn, 2018, p.106).

7.2. Integration of Genre Pedagogy Principles (GPP) and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)

Two approaches were integrated: Genre Pedagogy Principles (GPP) and Youth Participation Action Research (YPAR). After research, it was found that each approach offers a type of cycle to reproduce. On the one hand, GPP was oriented on writing to build an argumentative text. On the other hand, YPAR was focused on designing a small-scale project addressing a community issue. In that sense, the teacher-researcher made an integration of both cycles for this specific study, then they were distributed into three stages: Let's get together; Digging into the surroundings; I've got a voice too.

It is worth highlighting that both approaches GPP and YPAR have a very strong social critical component. On the one hand, GPP seeks to promote writing as a social practice (Hyland, 2004), and to raise critical awareness towards literacy from writers own area while its principles are explored. On the other hand, YAPR advocates for youth people to be aware of equity and justice in their own community and how they can part take to become an active agent in the place they belong (Caraballo et al, 2017; Krishner, 2015; Cammarota & Fine, 2008).

For the first stage, the first three steps were the introduction of both approaches. For YPAR: recruit the team and build relationships, and for GPP: critical awareness. The steps were organized in that way in order to establish a safe and confident environment for students from the beginning; for instance, applying an ice breaker that can create an atmosphere of closeness and confidence, or letting them choose who they wanted to work with and name their group.

The introduction for GPP was through a book, which content was about a photographer who not only experience several social issues, but also persisted to make them visible to others, and at the end to take action to transform their reality. This pedagogical material gave the chance for other resources to be included, such as songs, interviews, videos or articles, so learners explored the root causes and consequences of some social issues and were able to connect those situations with their own reality. It can be evidenced through the teacher–researcher journals that in order to develop young learners critical awareness, it was necessary to make the right decisions in terms of the content shared with them and to persist on how they could reflect, think beyond the content and always provide their point of view.

“Some SS are aware that there are social issues but they are not aware if those problems that surround them. Some others did share that their city has been impacted by migration and it has had several consequences, but they don't know how young people can take action on these situations” (Teacher–researcher journal / Jul 25th – Jul29th)

“This was a good strategy to make SS more aware of how close social issues are from them.

The fact of discussing issues that impact childhood or youth is more visible due to their age,

so in this case, they did become aware that even on the way to go to the school, they recognize that there are people who are directly impacted by these issues.” (Teacher-researcher journal / Aug 16th – Aug 19th)

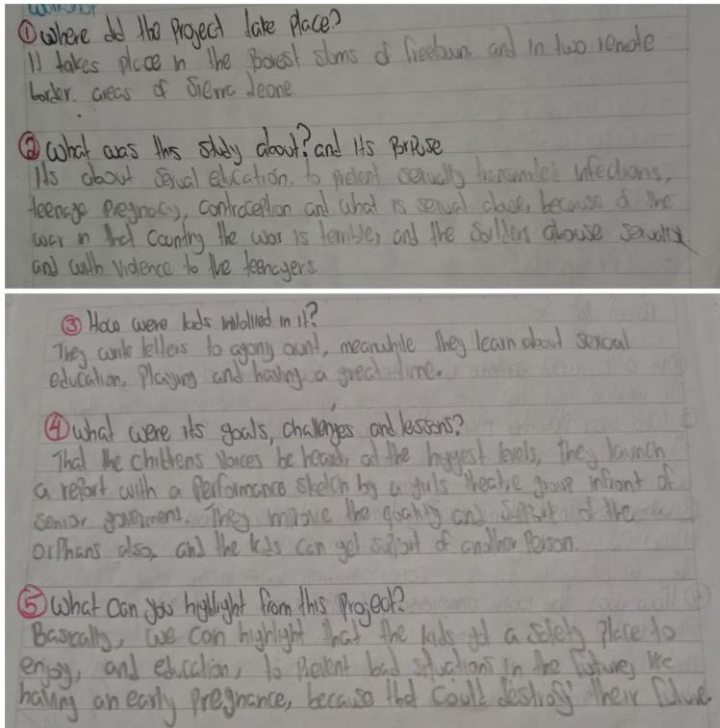
By the end of August, students were able to acknowledge and recognize that young people can also work with their community:

“Having shared those articles has been another way to make SS notice that youth can really take action in their communities to provide a better environment for other young people to live.” (Teacher-researcher journal / Aug 22nd – Aug 26th)

This can be also supported by the answers that students registered in their notebooks based on some reading comprehension questions about articles of youth working with their communities (See Figure 9) The chance to learn about social issues through several sources aims one of the GPP principles that is the systematic use of text and context (Hyland, 2004). In that sense, learners have the chance to analyze the content of the material, its purposes, messages, etc.

Figure 9

Workshop about other youth and their communities



Note. Workshop questions and answers about other young people taking action on their communities

In the second stage, there were the next steps of the cycle: define issues, research design; and conduct research. It is worth noting that these three steps were mainly related to YPAR. Through this stage, students experienced what the research process carries out as they chose a place, designed and apply some instruments, then, gathered and analyzed data, and finally, they gathered to discuss the information analyzed. This research path is part of YPAR principles as its goal is that young people learn about topics that not only go beyond the regular school content, but also it supports their academic abilities (Pyne et. al, 2014; Rincón Ortega & Clavijo Olarte, 2019).

In order to guide students through this process, it is important to turn the activities into something practical for them, so they would learn by doing rather than by only seeing. It is

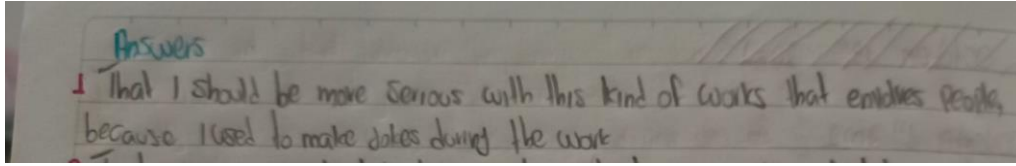
relevant to mention that students had a smooth learning experience regarding research thanks to the workshops designed and shared by Berkeley YPAR Hub on their official website (<https://yparhub.berkeley.edu/investigating-problem>). Of course, they were adjusted to the purposes of the study in question. A key moment of this stage is to give the opportunity to youth of sharing their first experiences interacting with people in their community in regards to situations that might impact them as well. This exercise is quite engaging as students reaffirm their identity as a member of their community (Caraballo et al, 2017; Burke & Hadley, 2018). From one journal entrance of the teacher-researcher, it could be proved the impact of this interaction on these young learners:

“SS were quite excited and all wanted to share their experience interacting with people. Some were surprised about how people were willing to share their point of views about a specific problematic in the area, these people also were curious about who the SS were and why they were doing that activity. Some others were shocked that people were rude with them and refused to help SS.” (Teacher-researcher journal / Oct 24th – Oct 28th)

In addition, students also had the chance to reset their attitude towards real and local issues as S7 acknowledged how he could transform their perception to a more serious position about such issues (See Figure 10).

Figure 10

Self-reflection towards social issues



Note. Answer to the question “What did I discover about myself during the research process?”

In the last stage, there are the last two steps of the cycle: advocate for change from an argumentative writing voice, and reflect and repeat. In the former step, GPP takes place in order to introduce the problem-solving essay that would be constructed later. In fact, this action addresses another principle of this approach: explicitness of the type of text to learn and the reasons why it is taught (Hyland, 2004; Harman, 2013). Then, the writing assignment as itself is placed integrating teacher feedback and peer feedback, in that sense, there would be a collaborative work that supports the paper of each learner considering every one has their own pace to elaborate a text. It should be considered that as each student works at their own pace, some peers would have to go beyond and above for their partners guiding them to reach the goal of the assignment as the teacher researcher describes in her journal:

“I asked them to choose a partner and to exchange their writings in order to check their partners’ and provide some feedback on things that they could improve. there was a couple of friends who were quiet passive and then when I checked on them, one of the SS was still in the first part of the essay. So the other S say “Miss, what should I correct here? He doesn’t have the essay yet”. I suggest her to offer them support reviewing and sharpening the draft ideas in order for them to develop their essay properly.” (Teacher-researcher journal / Oct 31st – Nov 4th)

For this step, students are also expected to share the data analyzed, results, and conclusions directly with their community. However, this part of the study and the last step, reflect and repeat, were not possible to apply due to lack of time as the school year was about to end in that moment that there were several school events.

Through the implementation, ice-breakers were important, especially the ones focused on strengthen teamwork, as these groups had worked for a complete semester and it might be understood if there are ups and downs within the members of a group. A couple of activities applied were “common things among us” (See Figure and “mashmellow challenge”).

Figure 11

Ice breaker: common things among us



Note. Students make groups of different amount and find common things among them.

Figure 12

Ice breaker Marshmallow challenge



Note. Students have to build a structure with 5 specific items in 18 minutes.

7.3. Empowering Voices

YPAR is the means for youth to step into their communities and take a critical position towards issues they might face. However, this encouragement of young people only sometimes occurs at any given moment. This is why there are teacher-researchers who guide young learners to understand and see their communities through a lens of reality and objectivity. Moreover, a set of pillars is present through a process like this, which, in this case, is essential to understand how empowered the young learners of this study felt. For that reason, each of the pillars that constitutes YPAR will be disclosed in the following lines:

7.3.1. Cultural and Critical Epistemologies

This component is related to a self-recognition process that a young person faces while exploring their community and understanding possible phenomena there. In the case of these learners, firstly, they reaffirmed themselves as 10th graders of the Consolata Bilingual School of Bucaramanga. Then, the fact of not only having chosen a specific place explains how they situated themselves into a community as part of it, for instance, a shopping mall, their school, or some parks in the city, but also how they took the time to do some research about the place to either identify an issue or validate it with previous information. It can be seen in the following fragment of an essay in the statements in red. (See figure 13).

Figure 13

Fragment of self-recognition of students in their community

In this essay I'm going to talk you about the contamination in the parks of Bucaramanga more specifically about the Cigarra's park and why there is so much contamination on it. As we can see, contamination is a serious problem that is affecting the whole world because of the lack of awareness and this generates other problems such as global warming and other environmental problems.

A group of students from the Consolata Bilingual School asked a serie of questions and surveys about the different types of contamination in the park. In the developing of this project it was possible to clearly evidence the causes of the contamination in the Cigarra's park. Bellow I will present some problems that generate contamination and their respective possible solutions.

Note. (S4 - Problem solving essay. See annex 4)

Throughout the first steps that the students took to get empowered and involved with their community for a different purpose, it can be evidenced how their identity and cultural knowledge were intertwined to achieve this purpose.

On the one hand, Flórez (2018) claims that identity is how individuals see themselves toward a specific community because of their beliefs, traditions, history, or language alignment. Thus, for these young learners, part of their identity is being a member of an educational institution in Bucaramanga, Colombia. Furthermore, the language skills they used during this project also allowed them access to several roles that constitute their identity, such as a neighbor, a friend, a student, and so on (Fuentes Díaz, 2020).

In addition, the possibility of using two different languages allows them to have other interactions that can be dynamic and have different purposes (Chala & Chapetón, 2012; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2009). Firstly, using Spanish with their community creates an exchange of knowledge and an opportunity to spread their own culture. Secondly, using English to write their papers was a tool to express their experiences and reflections on how valuable a place could be for a community.

On the other hand, cultural knowledge can be understood as learning that youth acquire beyond an academic purpose (Caraballo et al., 2017). Young people can feel driven to explore their communities or own culture to connect with their background or roots; they can also be engaged in real content that could have a purpose in their lives. For the tenth graders of La Consolata Bilingual School, their cultural knowledge improved when they chose their own place to observe, to design some instruments to gather data, and on top of that when they dove into their communities to have a broader perspective of the impact of a social issue that was taking place in their locations. Through this examination, students could read the world while their

teacher–researcher set a structure and guided them along this path. For the documentary *Precious Knowledge* (Palos, 2011) and supported by Irizarry (2009), these actions can also describe the 10th graders as 21st-century empowered youth due to a multigenerational exploration in their own society.

7.3.2. Academic Content (beyond school level)

Throughout generations, the real impact that school content might have on learners and their future lives has been discussed. Sometimes, a school program can be addressed to develop national tests that would guide learners to focus on specific skills to take this task. Some other times, the content that is taught is not quite connected to the daily life of a student, so this might be why they cannot relate in a meaningful way to what they have in the classroom. In that order of ideas, the tenth graders demonstrated that they were interested in topics that go beyond the typical content of an English class, such as syntax or semantics, as it is evidenced in the following excerpts.

The first feature to identify is how students use an explanation to introduce their essay topics and why it is relevant to explore it. For instance, in the blue fragment below (See Figure 14), the students explain that the essay's main point is to get to know and assess their community's opinion towards informal transportation in the area. It is relevant that students can validate local people's perception of a social issue such as informal transportation. Moreover, the chance of having access to this opinion allows them to build their critical thinking skills and position as young citizens.

Figure 14

Fragment of introduction of issue chose for the essay

Informal Transportation

Illegal or informal transportation is a phenomenon reflected daily in the streets of Bucaramanga, Colombia; since traffic jams are frequently generated due to the need of people to move to their destination. González and Buitrago (2021) states that immediacy, comfort and economy are some factors that encourage citizens to make use of informal transportation service. Likewise, the lack of employment, opportunities and strength in judicial processes are other determinants that do not allow this problem to be eradicated. *This essay consists in evaluating the opinions of citizens in the Acropolis Shopping Center in Bucaramanga, Colombia, about informal transportation and how it influences this community.*

Note. (S2 – Problem solving essay. See annex 4)

The second feature identified was how learners analyzed the information gathered through a critical lens to develop their ideas. In the case of the excerpt below (See Figure 15), this young learner defined several problems in the park that might have been the cause of its contamination.

Figure 15

Analysis of information by student

One of the biggest problems in terms of contamination is that there are a large number of people who pass through this park and consume food and do not put of their garbage in the correct place, which are the garbage cans. One solution to this problem is to put more garbage cans to people deposit their garbage there. Another possible problem possible problem is the food vendors who are the biggest promoters of non-reusable plastics in which they package the food and this plus the consumers not disposing the garbage in the right place generates a lot of contamination. However, a possible solution to this problem would be for the government to provide some biodegradable containers to these food vendors to reduce the percentage of contamination in the park due to plastic containers. The excrement of dogs, cats and other animals is also one of the causes of contamination, since when their owners take them out to relieve themselves, the owners themselves do not pick up or clean up the excrement of their pets and leave the waste on the ground. A possible solution to this problem is to have a bagging station in the park so that people with pets can take a bag, pick up the waste and throw the bag in the garbage cans. The last problem that the students found was the lack of awareness on the part of the citizens, who were not really interested in the conditions in which the park was because of the contamination. The solution to this problem would be to make awareness campaigns of how the park is because of the contamination, shows statistics of how day by day is the dirty park by garbage thrown on the ground, and possibly form a group of people who want to help clean the park voluntarily and once a week do a cleaning day.

Note. (S4 – Problem solving essay. See annex 4)

Therefore, as a conscious alternative to situate more meaningful learning for students, one of the bases of YPAR is to prepare young people for tertiary education; in this case, the fact that students are involved with the community with a real purpose of change strengthens their critical thinking, this statement is supported by Pyne, et al., (2014). In the same way, as Irizarry (2009) documents and highlights from different studies and supported by Palos (2011), more critical people are part of the social change due to democratic spaces where academic insights and daily-life knowledge can be articulated.

On top of that, the problem-solving and research skills that students have acquired are valuable for them. As they stated in the focus group, learning about elements of academic writing in English would give them advantages for their future studies at the university. That is, the limited access for students to apply to higher education would decrease, yet the academic skills that are usually required might get sharpened (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Pyne et al., 2014;

Caraballo et al., 2017). That is to say that YPAR is positively working to bridge the gap that prevents a certain number of citizens from having the right to study.

7.3.3. Development and Leadership

As discussed throughout this paper, YPAR engages youth in several ways and provides enormous opportunities for them to sharpen their skills for life. From this specific pillar, through the following excerpts of the students' argumentative essays, it is evidenced how much these young learners care about their communities and how their emotional part is also involved (See Figures 16, 17, 18, and 19).

Figure 16

Students' emotional involvement

In conclusion, **illegal transport cannot be completely eradicated because it is the economic livelihood of part of Bucaramanga's population.** Also, **there are many people who make use of this service because of its economic accessibility.** There are other alternatives to move around the city in a safer way, with different prices and fares that guarantee good service and are adapted to people's needs.

Note. (S2 – Problem solving essay. See annex 4)

Figure 17

Students' emotional involvement

This is a problem that the subject is too extensive to talk about, **in my opinion the citizens should be more aware of the damage that is being done in this park.** I would be good to do awareness campaigns and it would also be good that all the people who transit this in this park can place their grain of sand to help decrease contamination.

Note. (S4 – Problem solving essay. See annex 4)

Figure 19

Students' emotional involvement

mismanagement and investments in their economic lives or social or marital complications which can lead people to lose all they have, in accordance with Guillermo Gonzalez (2022) a common habitant of Real de Minas that I interview express his disagreement about the incompetence of the government to help homeless, in order to significantly reduce the use of drugs and alcohol consumption among people in need, people could be made aware to stop giving alms and allocate money to non-profit foundations that focus on sectors of the city, in addition to being supervised not only by

Note. (S6 – Problem solving essay. See annex 4)

Figure 18

Students' emotional involvement

the same government programs that take care of this, but the leaders must be chosen well to avoid corruption, which is one of the causes of poverty everywhere. We need to stop generalizing all homeless people the same way and be more empathetic to others by putting ourselves in their shoes and how we wish they would help us in their conditions and how bad it would feel to be ignored and belittled.

Note. (S6 – Problem solving essay. See annex 4)

The fragments above describe different moments in which youth had the chance to step into their local areas. On the one hand, some students were able to recognize that issues such as informal transportation have a root cause regarding the unemployment rate or the economic income of most of the population of the city. On the other hand, these young students expressed feelings of worry, sadness, self-recognition, empathy, or tolerance towards the interactions and findings gathered. In other words, there is a youth's concern about the impact of people who are not aware of the social issues that they reproduce by themselves, such as

pollution in public spaces, segregation of homeless people, or low tolerance for different opinions.

This profound analysis is a clear insight into young people who really matter and can be emotionally engaged through such experiences. Ozer and Villa (2021) explain that YPAR is reasonably linked to Social Emotional Learning (SEL) because young learners can manage feelings or emotions that could have impacted them from prior experiences. They also add that SEL helps young people “to perceive problems; to navigate those difficult questions; to communicate with other young people and adults in their setting” (Ozer & Villa, 2021, 10m28s).

As can be seen in this study, this sensitive process has also driven them to increase their curiosity to explore and observe their community critically; that is, to have accurate and meaningful interactions with all kinds of people from their surroundings or the chance to create connections based on common interest topics. On top of that, the sense of belonging (Kirshner, 2015; Caraballo et al., 2017; Ozer & Villa, 2021) is a vital element that would encourage any young person to continue exploring and questioning the surroundings.

7.3.4. Youth Organizing and Civic Engagement

For this group of tenth graders, this might be the first implemented project where they had the chance not only to explore their writing skills through an academic approach but also to share with their community and to interact with them to get to know more about the social issues that it faces.

These young people had the opportunity to identify a relevant issue, gather information from their interactions with the community, and propose some solutions. Unfortunately, due to the academic calendar, there was no time to share or suggest their solutions with their community or even apply them. Nonetheless, it was still possible to identify students' willingness to support their local places when proposing recommendations or solutions to the problems found as can be evidenced in the fragments below (See Figures 20, 21, and 22)

Figure 20

Solutions or recommendations for the issues identified

The world, not only Colombia, is full of people and it is very difficult that we all think the same or have the same opinions; so, Colombia is not only very diverse in its landscapes and culture, but also in opinions and points of view. Any country in the world should seek an equality of views, but no one will ever be happy with every situation, especially with something as controversial as cannabis. *I do not think it would be appropriate to end up in violent arguments or disrupt the harmony of a park for families like San Pio, even being a family environment where cannabis is consumed, but there is also recurrent presence of children should seek a regulation in the schedules so everyone as individuals can enjoy their activities and free time without "invading" the space of another citizen;* we would win a point as a society because we would accept as tolerance the right that all citizens have to enjoy public recreational areas. Tolerating does not count, even more so if we can move forward step by step together.

Note. (S8 – Problem solving essay. See annex 4)

Figure 21

Solutions or recommendations for the issues identified

For this, *the possible solution proposed is to raise awareness among people in our social circle who usually use this means of transportation to find someone who has given them an excellent service,* that is, is known and does this job.

Note. (S7 – Problem solving essay. See annex 4)

Figure 22**Solutions or recommendations for the issues identified**

A very good solution to overcome environmental contamination in the Cigarras Park, according to the analysis made by the students of the tenth grade of the Bilingual School La Consolata to the population that resides and goes to the park, is a campaign for the collection of garbage where all the people interested in having a clean park attend to help the environment and reduce the amount of waste on the trails and green areas of the park so that in the future they can go and not have problems with the waste in the park. The best solution for the second problem is a public talk inciting young people and adults of all ages to refrain from doing these acts either in the Cigarras park or anywhere else to also prevent the spread of this type of pollution throughout the city and take care of everyone.

Note. (S3 - Problem solving essay. See annex 4)

As can be seen in the statements highlighted in pink, students have demonstrated their development in different skills and civic engagement by creating recommendations on how to mitigate some social issues. In that sense, Caraballo et al. (2017) propose that “YPAR has provided a pathway for youth to gain useful organizing skills and provide pertinent data for issue-based campaigns to influence decision-makers” (p.322). On the one hand, based on the findings, these authors have a point as learners were able to read behind-the-line how issues might be regular for people who frequently walk through the chosen places; furthermore, after gathering data, they had to build a discussion with their team about the recommendations on how to mitigate the issue or improve a strategy tackle this issue. In the words of Kirshner (2015), the actions just described are named critique, as “the practice of questioning and denaturalizing the sociopolitical context of one’s life” (p.25), and collective agency, as the team

who works together to abolish obstacles in their education or to build new ways of education what were not considered before.

On the other hand, Keddie's project in 2015 demonstrates that youth are not always able to participate or make an impact in the laws or policies made for educational contexts when a YPAR project is meant to be implemented. This can occur more frequently in private schools that keep an elite status, and YPAR principles could disrupt their hierarchical order or the types of curricula. As Keddie (2015) claims, these schools are unwilling to handle students' reactions towards controversial topics that might go against the allowed content in the school. In consequence, YPAR would be turning into a *schoolifying* research, which means that it is bound by school policies that trigger a non-authentic atmosphere where students can develop life skills.

8. Conclusions

The experience of working with youth is meaningful in the way that, somehow, there is a chance to modify common social patterns and make a difference. This is why, in the findings of this implementation, several elements have to be highlighted as they have impacted these young people's growth. Those elements were identified according to the question that guided this study: To what extent does the integration of Genre Pedagogy principles and Youth Participatory Action Research workshops empower the 10th graders at the Consolata Bilingual School argumentative writing voices in their community?

To start with, through the exploration of students' writing skills, it can be stated that beyond writing barriers, as Byrne defines them in 1995, there are variables, as Kormos (2012) and Zabihi (2018) classify them, that would influence writers' learning path. The study demonstrates that there is mutualism between L1 and L2 because there are elements involved that turn into support through the learning process of the L2, such as knowledge learned in L1 and the similarities that can be found in L2. Nonetheless, there are distinctions between both languages as well. Hence, learners have to be open to understand that each language also has its own uniqueness (linguistic, social, cultural factors, among others) and they need to embrace it in order to enter into the community of this L2.

In addition, student's self-perception and self-beliefs of their own performance in writing can influence cognitive and affective factors. The findings show that feelings towards writing tasks can be either temporary since it takes place at the beginning of the process, and then, it becomes a booster afterwards to achieve the purpose of the assignment completely; or a constant during the whole task that causes high levels of struggle in the writer up to the point of executing just one specific task: to write just because, and putting the essential elements that construct an argumentative essay aside.

Furthermore, learners' willingness and confidence increase when they can count on their peers or teachers to receive support and feedback about their writing process. Nevertheless, these features weakened when students are in charge to provide support to others. On top of

that, it is worth highlighting that teachers can guide students to resignify their own capabilities and knowledge to write, and make them aware of the lacks that they need to tackle.

Another point to consider regarding the writing experience that these tenth graders faced is that they valued that English classes had a different component that usually is not included at the secondary level: processes and elements of research. This statement, connects directly with the other main topic of this study that is YPAR. According to the data provided, the research content that this approach proposes strengthens students critical thinking and academic topics that would be required at a tertiary level; it also means that the literacy levels of young people applying to college or university would increase.

The research aspect of YPAR evidences that throughout its stages, learners are in a constant inquiry about their role in the community, and are placed in a critical awareness position to restate who they are as individuals from a specific community; to make decisions about how to conduct a small-scale project; to organize the data collected and provide possible solutions, which is aligned with the purpose of the essay assigned; and to show empathy about how their community faces social issues.

The results related to how much learners care about their community also illustrates that this sense of care has arisen in manifested feelings such as concern about the consequences that it has generated in the place itself and in the population close to it, and empathy to understand others' situations. In addition, based on how they expressed what they felt throughout this experience, it was possible to identify that YPAR is entirely related to another

approach known as Social Emotional Learning (SEL), which supports learners in processing emotions that the issues have also provoked in them (Ozer & Villa, 2021).

9. Limitations and recommendations

It is worth mentioning two limitations that emerged during this study. Firstly, as the group was heterogeneous, which is standard in any classroom, their development and improvement in writing skills were based on each learning style, strengths, and weaknesses. Therefore, it was difficult to track the growth of each learner. Secondly, the school calendar hindered the nature of YPAR, as there was not enough time for students to share their proposed solutions and recommendations for/with the community.

For colleagues who want to implement a project with similar characteristics to the one in question, please be aware of the following:

- It is recommended to provide enough time for students to develop their writing task, in case students need some more time or strategies to know how to write, so learners would have a smooth progress of their task regardless of the type of genre that want to be taught.
- YPAR is considered an approach with a social purpose, so if it is applied in schools, it is necessary to ensure that the teacher researcher would have work continuity from one year to another so the process is not impacted and can be concluded successfully.

- If it is considered integrating several approaches, make sure that they all have similar components; for instance, in this project, both YPAR and GPP have a socio critical one, this would make easier the interrelation.
- To work on social issues, it is suggested to have a progressive awareness of them so students would have the time to understand, analyzed and make connections of that is taught.
- Keep learners not only interested in the implementation, but also engaged with their research partners through teamwork activities.

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