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## **LEARNING LOG AS A DIDACTIC TOOL FOR INDEPENDENT LEARNING**

**EL DIARIO DE ACTIVIDADES COMO  
HERRAMIENTA DIDÁCTICA DE  
APRENDIZAJE AUTÓNOMO**

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## Learning Log as a Didactic Tool for Independent Learning

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of implementing learning logs as a tool on students' independent learning, focusing on how reflective practices impact language acquisition, engagement, and self-directed learning in A2 English students at Martha Bucaram college in Sucumbios province. Learning logs, which encourage students to document and reflect on their progress, provide a structured method for building vocabulary, enhancing comprehension, and promoting metacognitive skills. Through regular use, students gain greater insight into their strengths, challenges, and learning strategies, which fosters increased language retention and self-confidence. Moreover, learning logs serve as a bridge between students and teachers, allowing instructors to offer tailored feedback and adjust their teaching strategies based on individual progress. Findings suggest that learning logs not only facilitate language proficiency but also nurture autonomy and a growth mindset, equipping students with valuable skills for lifelong learning. This research highlights the value of integrating learning logs in language curricula to create reflective, engaged, and independent learners.

**Keywords:** learning log, engagement, independent learning, feedback

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# El Diario de Actividades como Herramienta Didáctica de Aprendizaje Autónomo

## RESUMEN

Este estudio examina la influencia de la implementación de diarios de actividades como herramienta en el aprendizaje independiente, centrándose en cómo las prácticas reflexivas impactan la adquisición del lenguaje, la participación y el aprendizaje autodirigido en estudiantes de inglés A2 del Instituto Superior Tecnológico Martha Bucaram en la provincia de Sucumbios. Los registros de aprendizaje, que animan a los estudiantes a documentar y reflexionar sobre su progreso, proporcionan un método estructurado para desarrollar vocabulario, mejorar la comprensión y promover habilidades metacognitivas. Mediante el uso regular, los estudiantes obtienen una mayor comprensión de sus fortalezas, desafíos y estrategias de aprendizaje, lo que fomenta una mayor retención del idioma y la confianza en sí mismos. Además, los registros de aprendizaje sirven como puente entre estudiantes y profesores, lo que permite a los instructores ofrecer comentarios personalizados y ajustar sus estrategias de enseñanza en función del progreso individual. Los hallazgos sugieren que los registros de aprendizaje no solo facilitan el dominio del idioma, sino que también fomentan la autonomía y una mentalidad de crecimiento, equipando a los estudiantes con habilidades valiosas para el aprendizaje permanente. Esta investigación destaca el valor de integrar registros de aprendizaje en los planes de estudios de idiomas para crear estudiantes reflexivos, comprometidos e independientes.

**Palabra clave:** diario de actividades, compromiso, aprendizaje autónomo, retroalimentación

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## INTRODUCTION

Autonomous learning of a foreign language is needed to create an opportunity to assist in language. Constant immersion is necessary in every kind of foreign language learning. An autonomous learner is not bound to the four walls of the classroom but instead seeks every other avenue outside the formal environment: practicing with native speakers, watching movies, listening to podcasts, and even reading books in the target language. This is how fluency and competence can be achieved through constant exposure and assessing language skills. An instrument for assessing learning is a log. These logs are often used in conjunction with work-based learning, or courses where action learning represents the optimum pedagogical approach to realizing learning outcomes. Learning logs are soundly positioned as an assessment instrument. Their structure is very different from other standard assessments, such as essays and reports, and they are quite useful in facilitating the reflection of students regarding their learning (Friesner & Hart, 2005). In independent learning, the log is an important tool that records, organizes, and reflects an individual's learning experience. By recording activities, setting goals, and pinpointing areas needing improvement, the log lends itself to self-managed learning. One is able to monitor his learning, spot hindrances, and assess the efficiency of his learning strategies through frequent entries (Sheera & Yadav, 2022). Additionally, logs provide a venue for self-awareness and metacognition skills required for autonomous learning. They may be used to solidify the acquisition of new knowledge, modify learning plans, and assess progress in reaching goals. As students develop reflective and self-assessment habits, logs support continued learning and more individualized and effective teaching approaches (Alvarez-Ayure et al., 2018).

With the information presented above, this study proposes to determine the incidence of the learning log in the autonomous learning of English as a foreign language. For this reason, the population of students at Martha Bucaram de Roldós College in Lago Agrio city, province of Sucumbíos, at level A2 will be taken as a reference. In addition, information will be obtained from the teachers of the Language Center (CEDI) from this institution. The concrete reason for this research is a need to investigate the construction of novel visions about the teaching-learning process, efficaciously generating relevant and effective learning results for all, since everybody has to communicate and live in agreement according to a pattern of norms, values, and attitudes.



Previous studies have identified problems in the development of communication skills, which can be evidenced in a high percentage of students in the classroom in topics such as; the lack of fluency in complex words, adding words that are not part of the reading, as well as omitting others, poor understanding of the assigned readings, all of this related to weak autonomous learning. This countless problems detected undoubtedly lead to low self-esteem of the students and, consequently, to their poor academic performance, which is directly related to the loss of the academic period and greater school dropout (Dahua & Baño, 2024).

The present study is in a convenient position for development, thereby enhancing the teaching-learning strategies within didactics that promote autonomous learning of a foreign language. This is because not many studies have been conducted based on the topic of learning logs, mainly dealing with the educational reality of the Ecuadorian Amazon. On the other hand, this research work will contribute to expanding the data on learning log strategies, which will serve to contrast with other studies of the same line of research and thus be able to analyze the results at different levels of academic training. Finally, this study is of methodological use, as the results could serve as a starting point for further research, provided that comparable methodologies have been utilized. This makes it possible to compare it across different periods, and its implementation is feasible because all the resources needed to complete it are available. Finally, this study has methodological utility in that the results may give a baseline on which other studies can be based, assuming those were using comparable methodologies as well. This allows for comparisons across periods, and its execution is viable since all the resources to accomplish it are available.

## **Literature Review**

### **Learning Log**

In the modern and rapidly developing educational environment, as both the need and emphasis on lifelong learning are growing, students should be responsible for their learning as independent learners. Among effective tools that can help students to develop this autonomy, one should point out the learning log. Keeping a learning log changes how students engage with information. It shifts the focus from merely collecting information to a more conscious, reflective approach.



In this way, students gain deeper understanding of the subject matter and extend their capacity to use it in various contexts through regular writing about their educational experiences (Sulaiman Dzaiy & Abdullah, 2024).

A learning log is an organized but adaptable record of the learning journey maintained by students themselves. It would typically include things such as lessons learnt, challenges or obstacles faced, strategies adopted, and personal opinions regarding the process or journey of learning. A learning log is fairly personal and focuses on the individual learner's experiences and perceptions, insights, and own growth. Learning logs may take the form of a digital document or a physical notebook; the format can change according to the objects and individual preferences of each person. The purpose of using these logs has remained constant for promoting self-evaluation and reflective learning (Passarelli & Kolb, 2012).

The main purposes of a learning log are to:

- **Promotes Reflection:** Learning logs provide students with an opportunity to reflect on what they learned, how they learned it, and how this learning connected with prior knowledge. This reflective process will provide deeper understanding and insight into patterns within one's own thought processes.
- **Enhances Metacognition:** Writing in learning logs on a regular basis at University level helps students develop their metacognitive skills, or the awareness of their own learning processes. This facilitates the identification of personal strengths and weaknesses; this will further enhance their learning by making them more aware of which learning strategies are most effective for them.
- **Fosters Accountability and Responsibility:** By documenting their learning experiences, students take ownership of their improvement. Maintaining the log makes them more responsible for their studies, thus enabling them to actively engage with the course material and set goals for personal learning.
- **Encourages Self-Assessment:** With learning logs, there is consistent review of performance and knowledge. It allows them to recognize the lacuna in their knowledge and readjust their approach toward learning; hence, it is a focused improvement (Macfarlane, 2001).



## Structure of a log

In the classroom, there is no set format for capturing students' knowledge. Nonetheless, certain pertinent data should be noted:

- **Date and theme:** Each entry should first record the date and the subject or task that the student is remarking on. This helps in systematically organizing the log and monitoring the progress over time.
- **Sum up learning:** This must then be followed by a summary of what was covered or learned from a study session or class. It may include ideas, theories, or abilities that are key.
- **Personal reflection:** Students reflect on the learning process here. They could be thinking: What did I find easy or hard? What strategies did I use? How did I feel about what I learned? Was anything confusing?
- **Future steps:** This section mentions the future plan. The student can note any questions they have to ask, the tactics they would like to try during their coming session, and/or what they need to review or focus on next time (Ayoub, 2020).

Learning logs nurture good habits of self-assessment and reflection that help students develop skills of considerable significance for life-long learning. Beyond the classroom, these behaviors can then promote continuing professional and personal development. Lastly, learning logs have proved a very valuable tool for students in developing critical thinking, self-awareness, and ongoing reflection-vital ingredients for successful learning and personal growth (Branigan & Donaldson, 2020).

Finally, learning logs are an effective teaching tool that helps not only teachers but also students. They inspire students to be in charge of their learning through self-assessment, metacognition, and reflection. Students will become more motivated and engaged in their study by setting goals and tracking progress. Besides, learning logs improve writing, enhance critical thinking, and give the teacher information for more tailored lessons. In the end, learning logs create a more inclusive, reflective, and student-centered learning environment through which the means are given to students to become successful in their personal lives as well as their academic pursuits.



## **Independent learning**

In the modern world of access to innumerable amounts of information, independent study has grown to be a key part of modern education. This speaks to the ability of students to take responsibility for one's own education, manage time effectively, and develop the skills to search out information independently. Independent learning, indeed, is a very critical component of academic success, lifetime learning habits, and preparation for challenges in the world (Agustina & Fajar, 2019).

Independent learning, which is also sometimes referred to as autonomous or self-directed learning, is significantly more than doing homework assignments or studying outside of the classroom. Rather, it involves a number of skills, including time management, self-motivation, critical thinking, and the ability to set and work toward goals without constant supervision. In the context of independent learning, students take responsibility for their education: they choose what and how to learn or how to check their progress. This approach provides students with an opportunity to feel that they are in the driver's seat of the educational process, which is important in both their academic and personal development (Loeng, 2020).

While independent learning allows students to be actively involved in their education, traditional learning systems are teacher-centered: the learner follows a predetermined curriculum and receives constant support. Apart from a textbook or class, they could research additional materials, ask questions, and learn about topics of interest. It is within independent learning that the ground is paved for students to be critical thinkers and actually decide in which direction they take their learning process (Nalongo, 2024).

Other benefits that exist with independent learning extend beyond improved academic achievement. In this connection, the other benefits include the development of important life skills, increased motivation, and encouragement of lifelong learning. Some of the biggest advantages of self-directed learning revolve around vital life skills that accrue from it. Most independent learning exercises will aid in sharpening the critical thinking, solving, and decision-making capabilities of students. It is these types of abilities that would be beneficial in a real-world context, such as professional or personal life, rather than academic contexts. They can also cope better with the challenges later in life when students learn to acquire information, sift it, and make judicious decisions (Al Shloul et al., 2024).





## **Benefits of Learning Logs in Autonomous Learning**

One of the major benefits of a learning log is that it enhances the emergence of reflection and metacognition. Students reporting on their experiences are forced to reflect critically on the learning process. In this way, they are in a position to tell what works and what needs improvement. A language learner might reflect on a speaking exercise by identifying where they felt it was the most challenging, for example, about certain vocabulary or grammatical structures. Reflection brings increased awareness of one's learning habits, and effective self-directed education means deeper awareness of one's learning style (Miller et al., 2012).

Another important aspect besides independent learning, which is enhanced by learning logs, is self-assessment. In recording their progress on a regular basis, students will be able to judge just how well they are reaching their goals consistently. It encourages people to take responsibility for their own learning and enables accountability. For example, a student whose goal is to improve their listening in a foreign language could track progress by making a note of how much they understand in numerous audio exercises and in real life. Learning logs also facilitate learners in goal setting by enabling them to break down larger, long-term goals into smaller, achievable tasks. Students intent on focusing their work and organizing themselves in the learning of any particular subject might use the diary to list what they have done to study every week. Apart from being more productive, setting goals with learning logs instills a sense of achievement the moment these benchmarks are met (Ponomarioviene & Jakavonytė-Staškuvienė, 2024).

On the other hand, a learning log is also somewhat easier to keep track of progress over time since the log serves as a pretty detailed chronological record of the learner's journey. In cases where students record their activities regularly, they can always refer back to some of their previous entries and see just how well they have come along. This might also prove to be particularly motivating because observed improvement enhances self-confidence and persistence. Also, over time, trends begin to emerge, such as which learning techniques seem to work the most effectively or which areas seem particularly challenging consistently. Once these trends can be identified, students are in a position where they can make the necessary adjustments to their approach, thereby rendering learning more effective and efficient (West, 2023).



In conclusion, recording and reporting on the learning experience allows individuals to recognize knowledge gaps, establish clear goals, and modify an approach if necessary. Other than just enhancing knowledge retention, such active involvement develops critical lifetime learning skills. A learning log, in the end, transforms self-directed learning into more systematic, directed, and effective work, thus enabling students to make ongoing academic progress.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The following study uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches, each of whose results mutually reinforce. In other words, this research applies a mixed approach. This method, therefore, has an in-depth understanding of the research subjects due to the combined strengths of both approaches. The research can look at complex issues from many perspectives by combining both kinds of data, which means it can get a more complete, nuanced picture than it would with just one approach. Mixed methods involve data collection and analysis in both quantitative and qualitative ways. The timing of collection for both forms of data, sequentially or simultaneously, is determined by the study design. The domains in which the Mixed Method Approach will be useful include education, social sciences, healthcare, and business research (van Griensven et al., 2014).

The present research has an inductive, deductive, analytical, synthetic, qualitative-quantitative, and cross-sectional design. Quantitative data is based on questionnaires from students at the A2 level of English and interviews with English teachers, to be carried out in the Instituto Tecnológico Superior Martha Bucaram de Roldos. In this way, the population of different ages and years of experience are represented, to obtain several points of view (Sarwono, 2022). Additionally, the Likert scale is applied to the survey questioning items. This type of scale is a measurement instrument available in social research to measure attitudes (Gante et al., 2020). The research is carried out based on a scale of frequencies that include responses of “always, sometimes, never”. Finally, qualitative data is obtained through the implementation of interviews with language center teachers who will relate their pedagogical experience after having implemented the learning log in their sample class plan.

To obtain data to support this research, the instruments were implemented in four stages:

- Stage 1: Present teachers and students with a learning record format to collect data such as::
  - a. Date



- b. Topic
  - c. One sentence class summary
  - d. Interesting aspects of the class
  - e. Questions
  - f. Personal Reflection
- Satge 2: For one week, teachers will include the learning log format in their class planning and will provide students with 5 minutes to fill out said format.
  - Stage 3: During the week following the implementation of the learning log, an ungraded evaluation rubric will be implemented for students where data such as; reflection and depth, organization of ideas, self-evaluation, and depth in the doubts and questions that were generated in classes and that could be collected through the format.
  - Sate 4: Finally, a structured base survey will be applied to students and an interview guide will be carried out with teachers about their experience in implementing the learning log.

**Table 1.** Population

Population	Number	Percentage
English teachers	2	3%
A2 level students	72	97%
Total	74	100%

Note: The distribution of participants throughout the ITS Martha Bucaram is displayed in this table.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A learning log can potentially wield considerable power in classes, serving useful purposes for students and instructors alike. In many ways, the learning log is a record kept by students of their reflections on what they learn, a tracking of their own progress, and a recording of any questions or insights that arise. Herein, the benefits and challenges of learning logs are reviewed; how these may influence future educational innovations, including how this modality stands in comparison to more traditional classroom settings.

## Pocedure

### Teachers Interview

As already mentioned, once the learning log was implemented during a regular week of classes and its content was evaluated, the English teachers were interviewed and the following data was obtained:

**Table 2.** Teachers' interview analysis

Question	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Analysis and interpretation
<b>Have you ever used learning logs in your classes?</b>	Yes, I use them to work with beginner students, I apply learning log as a self-assessment tool.	Currently I use logs through reflection questions to know the topic that causes difficulty for students and I design feedback activities through said reflections.	Logs are tools used by English teachers mainly as a self-assessment tool that allows identifying weaknesses in students' language use.
<b>What benefits have you observed in students who regularly use learning logs?</b>	Writing what they have learned helps students to set in mind what they have grasped. Reflecting on class material at the end of each lesson reinforces understanding and long-term retention.	Learning logs used regularly allow the student to practice and improve their writing and communication skills.	When students record their learning experience in Logs, they indirectly practice and strengthen writing skills, which allows for long-term understanding and retention of content.
<b>Do students seem to take more ownership of their learning or become more reflective through this process?</b>	Most students, keeping a record of doubts generated during class, make them worry about the communication deficiencies they have.	In some cases, the student's concern is seen, however, there are mechanical students who only focus on copying and pasting texts but when they are ask to reflect on them it causes them problems to describe them.	When students keep track of their learning progress, their sense of responsibility for themselves increases. By writing down what was clear, what was tough, and which topics there is still a need to work more with, students automatically become more active participants in their studying process.

<b>Have you noticed any changes in your own teaching approach or understanding of students' needs since implementing learning log?</b>	During this week the logs have allowed me to identify students' communicative deficiencies in depth through their self-assessment, this in turn allows me to provide more effective feedback.	In this respect, I have changed to a more student-centered approach as a teacher through the efficacy of reflection in learning which I have witnessed.	Teachers are also increasingly using modes of student-centered teaching and promoting self-assessment and reflective learning. Indeed, students have been seen engaging in active self-reflection; this motivates the teachers to insist on critical thinking and personal goal-setting as part of their lessons.
<b>Do you plan to continue using learning logs in future classes? Why or why not?</b>	Yes, because learning logs allow me to emphasize the critical thinking, self-assessment, and setting of personal goals of students, thus assuming responsibility for their learning.	Yes, but not all the time, because there are strategies such as repetition drilling to learn vocabulary that do not need this tool.	Including learning logs in future teaching enables an interactive, reflective, and growth-oriented classroom environment to be developed. Nevertheless, one has to be caring about the reflecting skills of the students.

## Global Analysis

Teaching through learning logs becomes a powerful means of engaging students in language learning-developing skills of reflection, self-assessment, and the setting of relevant targets. It gives students a format through which they can do some writing, record the progress of the language learned, and establish goals for themselves; meanwhile, the teacher can also use this to understand the specific language development of each student and generate feedback activities. The incorporation of learning logs in the English lesson creates a setting where the students in time will be more actively involved in the language process. Setting goals, reflecting on new knowledge, and identification of strengths and weaknesses enables students to develop critical thinking, linguistic skills, and self-awareness.

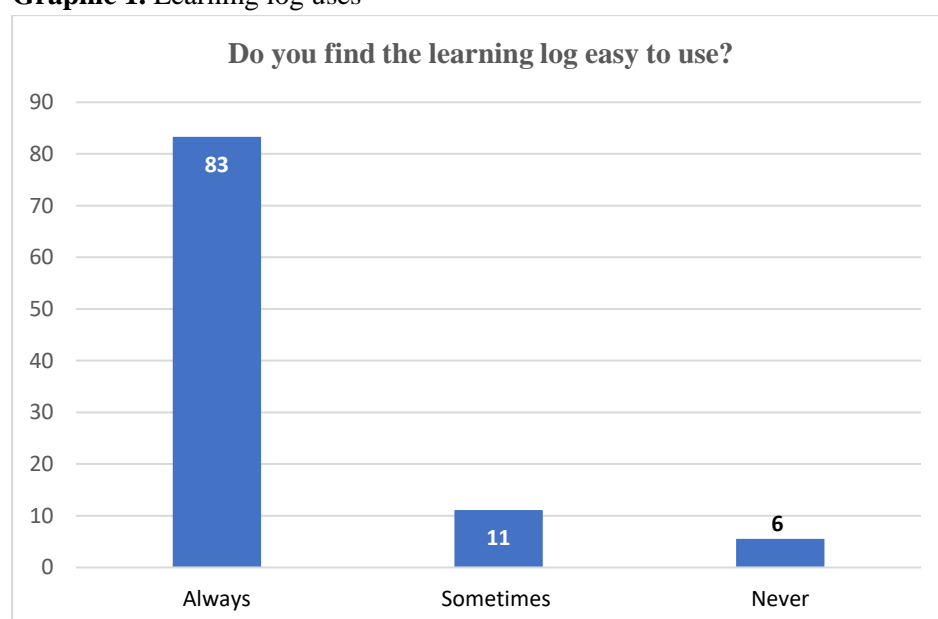


Learning logs make this process of language acquisition more personalized, reflective, and rewarding in nature; they build confidence and proficiency in English over time.

### Survey for A2 level students

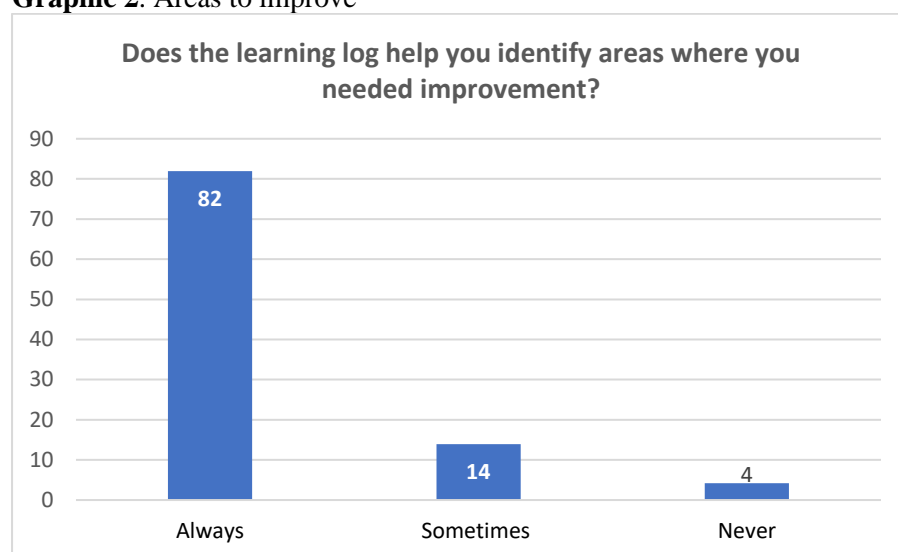
In this section, a quantitative analysis of the data obtained through surveys of structured-based questions applied to 72 A2 level students is applied. Furthermore, with these data, a quantitative interpretation was carried out and thus determine the incidence of learning log in the autonomous learning of the students surveyed after its implementation in a week of class.

**Graphic 1.** Learning log uses



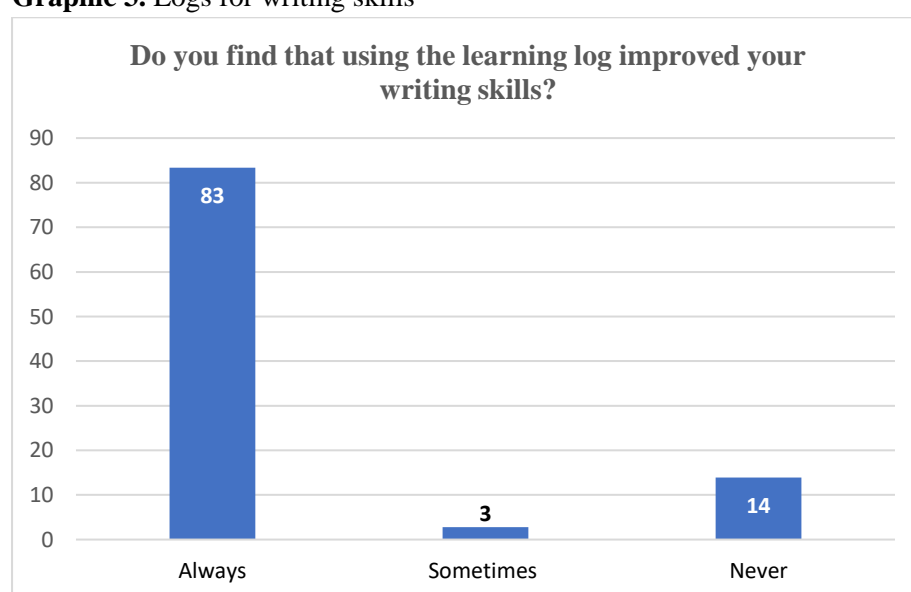
According to the data presented in graphic 1, it is established that 83% of those surveyed always found it easy to use the learning logs during the week of their implementation. On the other hand, 11% of respondents sometimes found the log format easy to use, and finally 6% of respondents never found it easy to work with the log format. The data obtained gives us to understand that the use of learning log during English class sessions is easy to work with. This is due to the simple data collection structure of the format, which provides the student with the freedom to write down the information they believe is relevant (self-study).

**Graphic 2.** Areas to improve



In accordance with the data established in graphic 2, 82% of students believe that the learning log always helps to identify weaknesses during the process of acquiring English as a foreign language, in addition, 14% of respondents assure that sometimes the logs help to identify areas to strengthen during their learning. Finally, 4% of the surveyed population claims that the logs never help to identify areas to improve during the classes where it was implemented. What this data demonstrates is that the learning log is a reflective tool that allows students to be aware of their communicative weaknesses in the use of English since by recording their experience during each class it makes them aware of the learning content, and what areas need academic reinforcement.

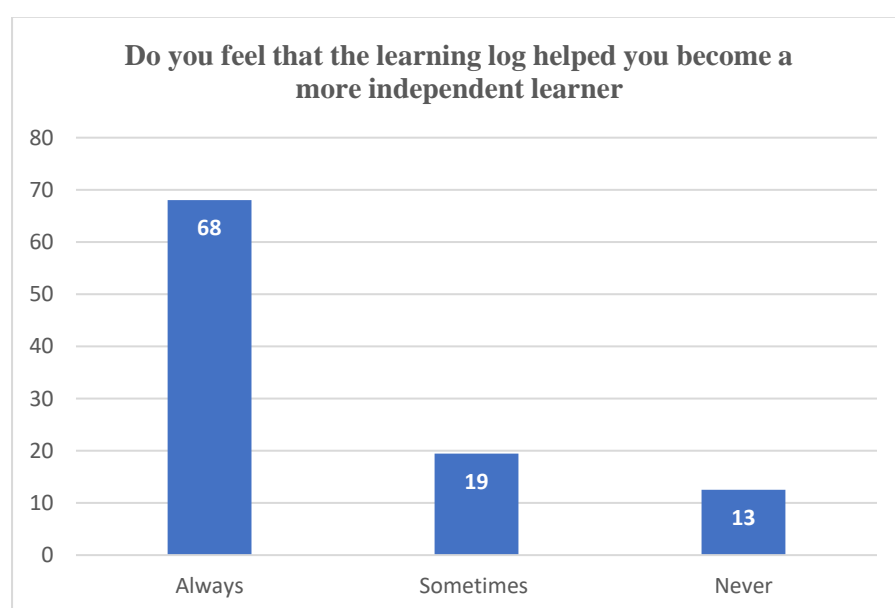
**Graphic 3.** Logs for writing skills



For the analysis of graph 4, it is observed that 83% of those surveyed mention that their writing ability

has always improved during the week that the learning log was implemented. On the other hand, 3% of students think that the learning log has sometimes helped them improve their writing skills. And finally, 14% of students mention that the implementation of logs has not helped to improve their productive writing skills. These data give us to understand that the learning log indirectly helps to improve writing skills, this is mainly due to the fact that the registration of activities in the format must be done by hand, which allows practicing and implementing vocabulary in a way unconscious and at the same time describe weaknesses or problems during the class presentation.

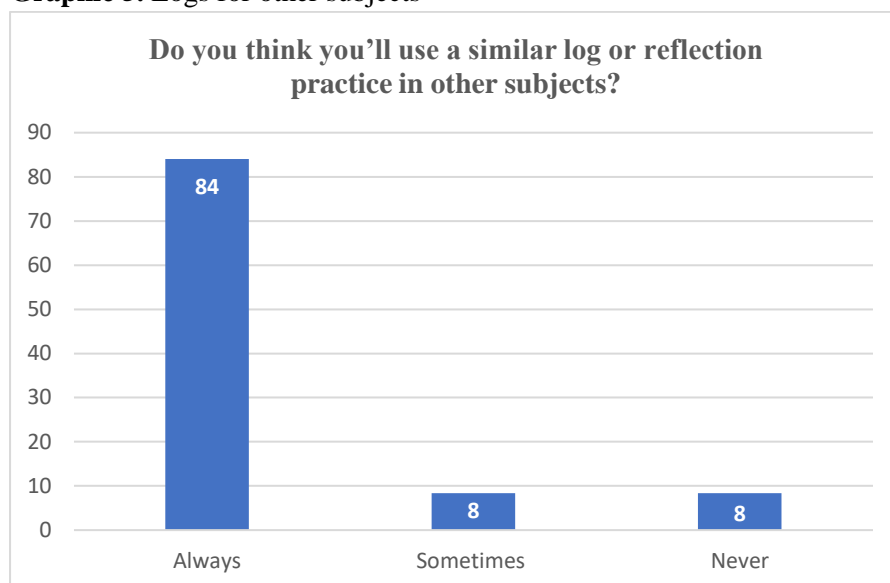
**Graphic 4.** Independent learning



According to the data established in graph 4, it is identified that 68% of students think that implementing learning in class always motivates them to carry out autonomous learning, while 19% of students mention that sometimes learning log helps independent learning. Finally, 19% of respondents believe that learning logs never help promote autonomous learning. These data mean that learning logs motivate autonomous learning, this is because by registering doubts, topics learned or interesting data from the class, they encourage the student to search for the missing information in the record of their format. On the other hand, it is seen that there is a large percentage of students who do not carry out correct autonomous learning, this corroborates what was mentioned in the introduction of this research.



**Graphic 5.** Logs for other subjects



In graph 5 it can be seen that 84% of students will always use learning logs as tools to record relevant data in other subjects, while 8% will sometimes use learning logs in other subjects. Finally, a similar number of 8% of students will never use learning logs in other subjects. These data give us to understand that students are interested in replicating the use of logs in other subjects as a learning methodology, this favors autonomous learning not only of English. In addition, students will be able to help their teachers generate new teaching strategies based on the records they make during their classes.

## CONCLUSIONS

The introduction of learning logs has brought a remarkable positive effect on the foreign language learning process. Learning logs will provide structured space for reflection that shall enable the learners to take an active attitude toward their learning processes, monitor their progress, and set goals by themselves. This reflective practice will enhance language retention, strengthen vocabulary acquisition, and improve the ability to express one's thoughts in the target language, creating confidence and promoting fluency over time.

Learning logs foster metacognitive skills in that students are asked to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses, which inculcates a more autonomous and self-directed way of learning one's language. Another role of learning logs is communicative, whereby key information from a student may be gleaned and utilized by a tutor to provide feedback and support matched to that student's specific learning process.

Finally, learning logs in the foreign language classroom consolidate linguistic skills and develop reflective, independent learners who have means for continuous improvement and lifelong development of languages.

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