

Abstract

This study focuses on the potentials of blogging as an activity for L3 learning as perceived by the students. Blog is a relatively new literary genre (Grüters, 2013), that differs from more traditional genres due to the communicative and interactional aspects involved in it. Literacy competence and digital competence are some of the five basic skills in the Knowledge Promotion leading to increased focus on using digital tools in instruction. Recently there has also been greater focus on the role of writing in language learning. Blogging is a digital learning tool that involves extensive writing practise developing students' literacy skills. It also offers them a real context for language use outside the physical environment of a classroom. Having been introduced to blogging as a learning tool in a study course, I was inspired to examine the topic.

The superior aim with this study has been to examine students' perceptions of potentials of blogging as a learning activity when used in L3 instruction. I am interested in students' reflections as to why blogging may be beneficial for language learning, which specific benefits it may provide for them and how it may promote their motivation. Data have been collected from questionnaires and qualitative, semi-structured interviews, and been analysed thematically.

I found that due to the extensive writing practise blogging involves, and its communicative and authentic character, blogging as a learning activity may provide students with several benefits. When blogging in L3 and receiving frequent feedback on their texts, students may achieve increased language skills, literacy skills in general and increased motivation. The most important of my findings is the decisive role of feedback. A great amount of written production of the language, and frequent and appropriate feedback generate meta-cognitive reflection helping the students to become aware of the gaps in their interlanguage. This in turn may encourage them to act to fill the gaps, hence, leading to increased language skills. Since the focus in blogging is often on the process rather than on the product, it is easy for the students to notice the potential development in their skills. This notion as well as the possibility to use the language in a real context may increase students' motivation to learn the language. However, it is the individual student's attitudes and effort, intellectual abilities as well as the teacher's abilities to give appropriate instruction that decide whether learning takes place or not.

Sammendrag

Det overordnede målet med dette studiet har vært å forske på elevenes opplevelser av bloggingens potensiale for å lære fremmedspråk. Hovedfokuset er på potensielle læringseffekter når det gjelder språklæring, samt på blogging som en aktivitet som øker elevenes motivasjon, slik elevene selv opplever den. Blogg er en relativt ny litterær sjanger (Grüters, 2013), som skiller seg fra mer tradisjonelle sjangre ved dens kommunikative og interaktive trekk. Digitale ferdigheter, samt å kunne lese og skrive er noen av de fem grunnleggende ferdighetene i Kunnskapsløftet, som retter oppmerksomheten mer og mer mot bruken av digitale verktøy i undervisningen. I det siste har det vært et økende fokus på skrivingens rolle i språklæring. Blogging er et digitalt verktøy som innebærer omfattende skrivetrening, og som samtidig utvikler elevenes lese og skriveferdigheter. Når jeg selv ble introdusert for blogging som en læringsaktivitet under mine masterstudier, ble jeg interessert i å forske på dette temaet.

Jeg er interessert i å studere elevenes refleksjoner over hvorvidt blogging kan være læringsfremmende, hvilke spesifikke læringseffekter det eventuelt fører med seg, og hvordan det eventuelt kan øke deres motivasjon for språklæring. Data er samlet fra to ulike spørreskjema og fra kvalitative, halv-strukturerte intervjuer, og er blitt analysert tematisk.

I min undersøkelse fant jeg at siden blogging er en aktivitet som innebærer mye skriving, samtidig som det er et digitalt og autentisk kommunikasjonsverktøy, kan det medføre flere ulike fordeler for elevene. Siden elevene får både omfattende skrivetrening og kontinuerlig tilbakemelding på bloggene sine, kan det føre til økte språkkunnskaper, bedre lese og skriveferdigheter og økt motivasjon. Det viktigste av funnene er den avgjørende rollen tilbakemelding underveis spiller i læringsprosessen. Omfattende skriftlig produksjon av språket, og kontinuerlig respons initierer meta-kognitiv refleksjon. Dette fører til at eleven lettere oppdager mangler i sine språkkunnskaper. Denne oppdagelsen kan vekke et ønske i eleven om å rette opp disse manglene, som i sin tur kan føre til økte læringseffekter. Siden fokus i blogging ofte er på selve prosessen istedenfor sluttproduktet, er det lettere for eleven å legge merke til egen utvikling. Dette, samt muligheten til å bruke språket i en virkelig kontekst kan føre til økt motivasjon for å lære språket. Allikevel, det er den individuelle elevens holdninger og innsats, intellektuelle ferdigheter og lærerens dyktighet til å gi tilpasset undervisning, som til sammen avgjør om læring skjer eller ikke.

Preface and acknowledgements

I have been a teacher in English and French in both lower and upper secondary school for eight years, but have never before used blogging as a learning activity. Being introduced to it in a study course during my master's studies, I was inspired to try it in my French class.

This Master's thesis is a result of intensive reflection, reading, searching for answers, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, reading even more, and finally, extensive writing during a period of nine months. The process has been extremely interesting and useful both regarding my profession as a language teacher, and regarding my personal development. It has given me new perspectives and forced me to reflect over what I am actually doing and why more than I have done before. It has sometimes been difficult to separate the two roles, a teacher's role and a researcher's role in the classroom, but I hope that my students have experienced me mostly as a supportive teacher.

A process like this is seldom one person's work. As to this thesis, there are several others who deserve their part of the honour. It has been challenging to combine being a mother and wife, a teacher and a student/researcher at the same time, and has required much not only from me personally, but also from those around me. Fortunately, I am surrounded by wonderful, supportive, encouraging and understanding people, whom I want to thank.

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1. Introduction

I had never been blogging myself before I was introduced to it as a learning tool in a study course where blogging was included as a form of portfolio assessment. It was a bit scary since I felt that I “revealed” myself to the entire world, but at the same time it was an exciting experience. I chose to blog in English, which for me is an L2. I found it challenging, but extremely beneficial to blog in English, as I wrote to potentially authentic readers, and felt that I needed to put an extra effort into my writing, not only regarding grammar and language, but also with respect to the content of the blog postings. Through my own blogging, I experienced that I developed my language skills as well as literacy skills remarkably. This discovery inspired me to find out if the same would happen in my own class, even though the students are younger and would be blogging in French. French is the students’ third language, a language in which many of them feel having low proficiency.

In my teaching practice I have experienced that many students see no or only little need for knowing a third language and for that reason do not make much effort to learn it. Low proficiency often leads to decreased motivation, and if the motivation already is low, it does not help if they do not see any development in their skills or any good reasons for learning the language. I suggest that if they blog regularly during a longer period of time, they will better be able to form their own path as they go and more clearly see the development that hopefully will take place. Ideally, the realization of the fact that they actually become better writers will awaken anew their motivation to learn.

Steve Graham (2008) who is the Warner Professor in the Division of Educational Leadership and Innovation in Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, emphasizes that it is important to foster students’ interest, enjoyment, and motivation to write, pointing to writing assignments that serve a real or meaningful purpose. Blogging exposes students to authentic communication situations whether they want it or not. Writing to “the entire world” might open their eyes to see the benefits of being able to communicate in other languages, and furthermore increase their motivation to learn.

The purpose of this study is then to explore what potentials there are for learning when blogging is used actively for educational purposes. The study attempts to shed light on a

group of students' perceptions of learning French as L3 through blogging. I have outlined three research questions and one hypothesis, which will be presented in section 1.2.

Theories about the significance of writing in language learning, as well as other research done in the field have provided the necessary background. An important part of this thesis is to bring the theories to a practical level, showing how a blog can be used as a tool for language learning and how students themselves experience it. Since literacy competence and digital competence are included as basic skills in the *Knowledge Promotion*, an additional aim is to give some ideas for foreign language teachers about how they can better integrate these competences as a natural part of their teaching practice. The *Knowledge Promotion* also requires using authentic communication situations in language learning. Blogging offers an authentic platform that may open up for communication with native speakers of the target language.

By braiding the theory with the practice, and researching individual parts in depth to gather them to a unity, I hope to bring to light new perspectives regarding the use of a blog as a digital tool in language learning. My superior aim with the study is to shed light on why and how blogging could be used as a learning activity that may increase students' general language skills and motivation. In the study there are two focus areas. First, on the role of writing in language learning, and second, on blogging as a digital writing tool that offers an authentic communication situation. The results of the research serve to verify the argumentation presented in Chapter 6. I will also present examples of students' blog entries to concretize the argumentation. The examples have been chosen for their representative value that gives insight into students' texts on different levels.

In this chapter I will first locate the aspects of writing in language teaching and learning in order to bring focus on an otherwise often overlooked part of language learning. A paragraph on previous research in the field is included as a basis for comparisons and discussion. Further, I will present the project in its entirety, which will then form the basis for the subsequent discussion.

Chapter 2 presents relevant theory about the role of writing in learning relating it to language learning particularly. In Chapter 3 I present and discuss the methods used for this study and Chapter 4 shows how the data has been analysed. Chapter 5 presents the results of the study.

The discussion in Chapter 6 draws on a comparison between the theory, previous research and the results. In the final part, Chapter 7, I will conclude the whole study and propose topics for further research.

1.1 The role of writing in language teaching and learning

As a language teacher I have experienced that the value of writing practice in the foreign language learning process has often been underestimated and writing as a learning activity remains in the shade of other activities. Languages are often regarded as oral subjects in Norwegian schools resulting in higher preference for oral activities and grammar teaching than learning through writing. In particular, methods for teaching foreign languages in Norway, where reproduction and textbooks are still the main resources - have remained mostly unchanged for twenty years (Lindemann & Speitz 2002 in Gjørven, 2008). At the same time, the focus in the subject curriculum has changed from pure reproduction of the language to increasing focus on communicative and cultural competence as well as digital skills. Additionally international mobility and communications have contributed to increased focus on literacy skills in language instruction (Cumming, 2011 in Manchón 2011). The subject curriculum for foreign languages level II (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2006) presents the following aims relevant for this study:

- use digital tools and other aids critically and independently
- express experiences, viewpoints and attitudes, wishes and emotions
- adapt the language to various communication situations
- use words, sentence structures and text connectors in a varied and appropriate way
- write cohesive texts in various genres
- use communication technology to cooperate with others, and to find and interact with authentic language
- discuss and elaborate on aspects of daily life, traditions, customs and ways of living in the language area in question and in Norway
- discuss and elaborate on aspects of living conditions and current societal relations in the language region
- elaborate on aspects of the language region's geography and history
- describe key aspects of the culture in the language region in question and express experiences connected to this
- discuss and elaborate on how language knowledge and cultural insights can promote multicultural cooperation and understanding

Blogging as a learning activity involves a great amount of writing as well as writing to potentially authentic readers. A blog is also a platform where the writer can express personal views and intentions, share experiences, reflect on cultural differences, increase the vocabulary and explore the language in a way different from traditional writing practices. That is why I suggest that these competence aims can be covered using blog as a learning tool.

Sarah Cushing Weigle (2002:1), Professor of Applied Linguistics at Georgia State University, has published research on the areas of assessment and second language writing. She claims that the role of writing is "...becoming widely recognized as an important skill" and further on "...writing has also become more important as tenets of communicative language teaching". Other researchers, such as Graham (2007), Swain (1985), Williams (2012) and Manchón (2011) emphasize the importance of writing in language learning due to the cognitive processes that differ from processes used in oral language production. Manchón (2011:3), Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics at the University of Murcia, Spain, makes a distinction between writing as a tool to learn content knowledge and writing as a tool to develop language knowledge and skills. Both of them are relevant for this study and can be directly related to the competence aims presented above. Swain (1995 in Lantolf, 2000), Professor in the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning department at the OISE at the University of Toronto, suggests that output of the language, such as writing, pushes learners to process the language more deeply, with more mental effort, enhancing language learning. A blog is a digital learning tool, and blogging is a learning activity that involves a great amount of writing about different topics on a platform that encourages communication. I suggest that the extensive and frequent writing, and the authentic communication situation blogging offers, may have positive effects on students' learning. Through blogging the students may obtain increased language skills, communicative competencies as well as a cultural competence important for the future. In addition, it is an excellent tool for both formative and summative assessment.

Quite a lot of research about blogging as a learning tool in second language education, such as English in Norway (L2), has been carried out, focusing on both concrete learning outcome and students' perceptions. However, to my knowledge, little research has been done about blogging as a tool for learning a third language (L3), such as French in Norwegian schools.

These are additional reasons as to why I find it important to examine blogging as a learning activity and its impact on learning French as a L3.

1.1.1 Blog as a literary genre

A blog can be defined as a multimedia diary, an archive, a log or a collection of different types of texts, which can be used for personal, public or educational purposes. It is regarded as an archive for writing and reflection, and as a tool particularly fitted to produce and communicate (Grüters, 2013). During the last decade, there has been increasing focus on digital skills in school, more precisely the practical use of digital tools, internet-based learning platforms and collaborative learning using digital tools. Blog is a literary genre that has been used for private purposes for some years already. It has also been discovered by educators to be used as a learning tool. Blog is also a genre that is already familiar to students and that many of them use in private, either in the form of reading blogs or blogging themselves. It is a genre that is accessible for most people regardless of their writing skills.

1.1.2 Blogging versus traditional writing

Blogging offers opportunities to produce writing in real-life situated contexts, which makes it different from traditional writing activities used in language classrooms. Traditionally, texts are mostly regarded as one-way communication where the author tells something to the readers without expecting any response to the text. Traditional writing tasks in school are mostly written for the teacher for assessment purposes. On the Internet, even personal texts become public (Haug, Jamissen, & Ohlmann, 2012), and are often available for immediate response from anyone who happens to come across them. In addition, texts on the Internet "appear to be dynamic, inconstant, unfinished, as opposed to the permanent, finished, and closed text of the book" (Schwebs & Otnes, 2006:25, my translation). Texts on the Internet change constantly and rapidly, contributing to build new knowledge in an interactive text community. "The new media gives us access to create text forms and reading forms that are practically impossible within the traditional text genre" (Schwebs & Otnes, 2006:27, my translation). A digital text, like a blog entry, is structured in a different way than a traditional text. It may include additional effects such as pictures, videos, hyperlinks etc., which may make the structure of a blog entry different from a traditional text. These effects make the text

more visible or real to the readers (Schwebs & Otnes, 2006), allowing them to find additional information, definitions of terms, and other perspectives for instance. Like this, a blog is a digital learning tool including both verbal and audio-visual forms of expression.

Grüters and Langseth (2009:114) define blog as a tool for communication and reflection. It is a place where the author invites the readers to interact, and where the continuous writing and the visual forms of expression stimulate creativity. Grüters and Langseth (2009:115) also emphasize the importance of encouraging and motivating the students to write in L3 even if they do not master the language well.

In addition to the arguments presented above, blogging is a continuously on-going writing activity that concentrates on the creation of the text rather than on the end product. At least it can be used as such. As an extensive writing activity, where feedback and revision play an important role, blogging may be an activity that enhances students' language skills in unexpected ways. Focusing on the process instead of the product, blogging may also provide the students with possibilities to develop skills they need in any writing later in life, such as planning, drafting, reviewing, and revising skills for instance. These skills can of course be developed with traditional writing as well, but it is the interactional and authentic context of blogging that makes it different from other writing activities.

1.2 From thought to hypothesis and research questions

I like to try out new approaches to learn and teach languages, and my pedagogical intention is always to create variety in teaching methods, to make it more interesting both for myself as a teacher and for the students. I am also interested in making learning as student-centered as possible. Blogging is an activity where students are actively engaged, and can regulate their own learning to a great extent. Since my personal experience of blogging as an educative activity triggered my natural curiosity to try things out, it was not a difficult choice to examine blogging as a learning activity in my master's thesis. It was my own studies of different language learning theories, my empirical experiences and the requirements in *The Knowledge Promotion* that made me reflect on blogging as a possible learning activity to improve students' language skills and increase their motivation to learn. These reflections led to the following hypothesis that this study is based on:

Blogging as a learning activity in foreign languages involves a lot of writing to potentially authentic readers. This may increase students' motivation to make an extra effort in the writing process regarding grammar and vocabulary. Additionally, this extra effort in the writing process may increase the quality of students' texts and lead to improved language skills in general.

The hypothesis was set to examining the students' perspective. To explore this I needed informants who had personal experience of blogging as a learning activity used in L3, and research questions that could shed light on students' perceptions. For these reasons I chose the following main research question for my study:

If and why may blogging as a learning activity be beneficial for learning foreign languages as perceived by the students?

I am also interested in finding out which particular advantages students experience to gain by blogging, which led to the following sub-research question:

1. According to the students, which specific benefits may blogging provide for them concerning their language learning?

This is significant for me as a language teacher to find out in order to consider blogging as a learning tool in my future teaching practice, as well as inspire other language teachers to do the same. If the students point out specific benefits, it will be easier to adapt the teaching practice to students' needs, encourage students to become self-regulated learners, as well as inspire others.

In addition to the pedagogical aspects of language learning and acquisition, I also chose to include a motivational aspect to the study defining the following sub-research question:

2. If and how may blogging in French promote students' motivation for learning the language?

I found this aspect important to examine, since many students experience writing French as challenging and their motivation to learn the language as low. The reasons for that might be many, for instance lack of training in writing in French, difficulties in understanding the grammar that often is very different from students' mother tongue, insufficient or inadequate

feedback from the teacher, or lack of meaningful experiences with the target language, just to mention some.

1.3 Limitations and intentions

The purpose of this study is not to measure a concrete learning outcome, nor to examine blogging as a phenomenon. The purpose is rather to shed light on the potentials of blogging as a learning activity. As mentioned earlier, I believe in using various teaching methods in instruction regardless of the subject, and suggest that blogging may offer an alternative to more traditional methods in foreign language instruction. This study attempts to find evidence that supports the statements about the coherence between established theories about language learning and the significance of writing in learning processes. The outcome of the study derives from a group of students' perceptions and experiences of blogging in L3, and their reflections of potential benefits with blogging as a learning activity including both literacy, as well as communicative and motivational aspects. Therefore the study does not give any universal answer as to how languages should be taught, but it presents ideas of how and why blogging may be used as a learning activity. My intention is to give language teachers an alternative or a supplement to their existing teaching methods as well as to inspire them to try blogging as a learning activity in their teaching practise. To ease the reader's understanding of the study, and to give concrete examples of how a blog may be used in teaching, I will present how the concrete process of blogging was carried out in this project, as well as present some examples of students' blog entries.

1.4 Methods and research design

Due to the nature of the study and with respect to the research questions, I have chosen a qualitative approach with phenomenology as a research design. This is an empirical study where I examine students' perceptions as a phenomenon. Phenomena in general are difficult to examine using quantitative methods only. I have chosen interview and questionnaire as methods for data collection, since I regard them as most adequate in order to get first hand information, and to better be able to answer the research questions. The more detailed description and the choice of methods are presented and clarified in Chapter 3.

I have chosen to carry out this research in a public Norwegian upper secondary school, because of the higher age and language level of the students as compared to students in lower secondary school. The class consists of 29 students, 10 boys and 19 girls. 26 of the students participated in the study. 25 of the participants are Norwegians and one participant is Russian of origin. Three of them are bilingual. The class has French as their L3 on level II (i.e. they have been studying French since 8th grade in lower secondary school, four years before the research period). I have used my own students as informants for practical reasons, an aspect which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

1.4.1 Carrying out the project of blogging

The students were blogging regularly in French during the autumn term. I assigned the obligatory tasks for the blogs, even though the tasks had somewhat flexible frames. Mostly I only gave them a topic or suggestions of possible topics, and asked them to write for instance in future tense. One of the tasks was to write about a picture that we had used as a pre-writing activity. In addition, the students were encouraged to write as much as they wanted about topics of their own choice. They wrote four to five obligatory postings individually, and two postings together with a co-student. The reason for not pushing them to write more often was that the students' language skills on this level are still somewhat limited, and writing in L3 requires a great amount of time and effort. I wanted the blogging in French to be an enjoyable experience, not an overwhelming necessity. The tasks were designed to complement the topics in the French course book, or grammatical concepts the class had learned recently. Many of the tasks encouraged the students to express their personal views and experiences. A relevant word-list and/or a writing frame were available for most of the tasks, and pre-writing exercises were done in class. Some of the tasks also had particular requirements, such as writing in future/past tense, expressing one's point of view, or writing a descriptive/narrative text. I will describe the tasks in more detail in section 1.4.2. Figure 1 shows the blogging-process from the beginning to the end. The pictures are representations of the topics in the blogs.

Most of the students completed the obligatory tasks, and a couple of them wrote additional postings of their own choice and about different topics. Some students explored different technical possibilities and functions adding pictures and videos to their blogs, but the majority

were content with simply accomplishing the obligatory writing tasks. The blogs were graded at the end of the semester to be used as an end-term assessment instead of an ordinary timed school test. Four of the students who had not managed to complete all the obligatory tasks had an ordinary test as an end-term assessment.

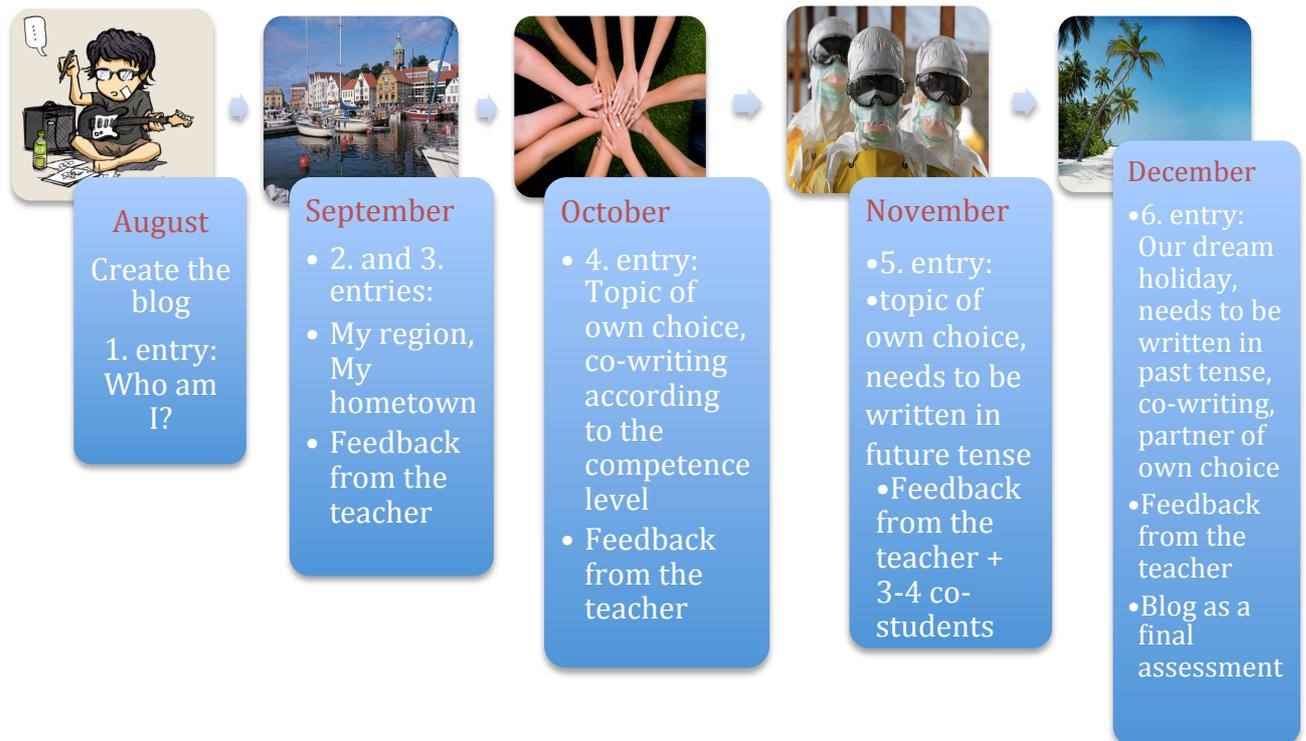


Figure 1 The time line of the class's blog project

1.4.2 The planning of the tasks

Normann emphasizes in an article on foreign language writing the importance of planning the writing tasks carefully and in accordance with effective writing practices (Normann, 2015). She also refers to Williams (2005) who presents the following questions relevant for planning writing tasks for students (my translation):

- Is the main purpose of the task to practice learned language structures and vocabulary?
- Does the task have a communicative objective? Which?
- Does the task offer a possibility to practice a specific genre? Which?
- Is it probable that the task will engage the students? Will they experience it as interesting and relevant?
- Will it be possible for the students to succeed with the task? Will they get enough assistance and support in the writing process? (ibid., p. 43).

In this project the tasks mainly followed the topics in the French course book. By doing it like this, the students always had access to adapted model texts and the possibility to find suitable vocabulary to support the writing process. Consequently, the purpose of the tasks was to practice learned language structures and vocabulary. In the first three blog entries the students presented themselves to the readers telling about themselves and about the place where they live. By writing about themselves, the students try to establish contact with the readers, referring to the communicative objective with blogging. A personal presentation like this also contributes to increasing and establishing vocabulary needed in daily conversations, which the students may encounter in real life. In addition, writing about oneself is easy since the topic is familiar. It is also engaging to write about oneself and gives the students great possibilities to succeed with the task. This shows that the tasks to a great degree followed the relevant questions presented above.

The design of the fourth task was meant to be interesting, giving the students a sense of having influence on their own learning situation. For the purpose of giving adapted instruction, I challenged the more competent students to use more advanced sentence structures, while the less competent students worked on different verb tenses for instance. To experiment with co-writing, this task was to be written in pairs. I had chosen pairs for the students according to the competence level, with regard to the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotskij & Kozulin, 1986), because I wanted all students to benefit from co-writing. In advance we worked on different pre-writing activities. For instance I gave pictures of different persons or situations to the pairs and asked them to write a list of words they associated with the pictures during two minutes. After that they changed pictures and wrote a new list, and so on. The words could be written either directly in French or first in Norwegian and later translated into French. Finally, they could use one of the pictures and the wordlist to write a blog entry about anything they liked. Like this, the pictures and the wordlist functioned as a source of inspiration, helping start the writing process. Since the students could choose the topic themselves, the writing task was much more interesting and engaging than it would have been if I had decided every topic. The pairs wrote about friendship, the Ebola outbreak, Rubik's cube, dating, being a student in upper secondary school, just to mention some of the topics. Students at a low and average competence level often chose easy and familiar topics like friendship, while students at a high level chose more complicated topics like the Ebola outbreak.

In November we worked on future tense and the students received a task where I asked them to use the future tense *le futur proche*¹. I gave them several alternative headlines they could choose between, such as:

- Vous avez gagné un million au loto. Qu'est-ce que vous allez faire? ²
- Vous êtes Premier ministre pour un jour. Qu'est-ce que vous allez faire? ³
- Vous organisez une fête pour 50 personnes. Qu'est-ce que vous allez faire? ⁴ Etc.

The last task was to write a text about an imaginary dream holiday using both forms of past tense (*passé composé/imparfait*). In this task the students would pretend to have been on a dream holiday and describe what they had seen and done. I also asked them to search for information about different holiday destinations on the Internet, find a suitable hotel and pleasant activities. Consequently, they had to use authentic texts, web pages of travel agencies etc. to be able to complete the task. This task was a co-writing task where the students could choose their partner, and as a consequence of students' choices the pairs were mostly not on the same competence level. I will describe the students' experiences of this in section 6.7.1. My intention with all the tasks was to provide the students with writing activity that enhanced creative language use and fostered engagement in the learning process.

1.5 Definition of terms

To allow the best possible understanding of the thesis it is necessary to explain some of the terms that appear frequently in the text. In international contexts, the trend is to refer to all other languages than one's mother tongue as L2 or foreign languages, but I have chosen to refer to French and other foreign languages as L3 throughout the text since this is the norm in Norwegian contexts (Haukås & Vold, 2012).

Throughout the text I refer to the entire project as *a study* or *a research project*, including the students blogging and my research. When talking about the students' blogging project, I use the definition *the class's blog project*. When referring to the informants in this study, I use several terms to clarify from which part of the data collection the results derive. Not all

¹ *Be going to do something*

² You have won one million in a lottery. What are you going to do?

³ You are the Prime Minister for one day. What are you going to do?

⁴ You organize a party for 50 people. What are you going to do?

students were involved in every part of the study. All students blogged, most of them answered the questionnaires, but only eight of them were interviewed. That is why I find it necessary to use different terms for the different roles students have in the study. I use the term *participant* to describe all the students who participated in the study. I use the term *respondent* when talking about data from the questionnaire and the term *interviewee* when referring to those eight students who I interviewed. The students I quote directly have been given pseudo names such as *Student 1*, or just *a boy at an average level*.

To ease the understanding of the theory and discussion part, I also want to clarify the difference between the definitions *self-efficacy* and *sense of mastery*. The first one refers to a student's mastery expectations and self-beliefs, while the second one refers to a student's experience of mastery without taking into consideration the expectations and self-beliefs. By *motivation* I mean a desire to learn (French) and a desire to make an effort to succeed in it.

1.6 Literary review

Blogging as a tool for learning languages is breaking fresh ground in the world of education, and is becoming more and more common in many classrooms. To my knowledge there is not much previous research about blogging in Norwegian classrooms in particular, but similar studies have been done in other parts of the world. There is also a lot of research on writing and its effects on language learning in general, that support the idea of blogging as a beneficial learning activity. I will briefly comment on these below.

Jessica Williams (2012:321), Professor of Linguistics, University of Illinois at Chicago, examines in her research the role of writing in L2 development, which can as well be related to L3 development. She presents three main features of writing that are seen to play a role in L2 development. Those are: 1) its slower pace 2) the enduring record that it leaves, and 3) the need for greater precision in language use. All the three features can be directly related to blogging as a learning activity. Blogging allows students to write at a pace that is comfortable for themselves, and gives them the possibility to revise the text and recall the thoughts that led to the product. Writing to authentic readers stresses the need for greater precision in language use, and requires that the students make use of their previous literacy and cultural knowledge in the writing process.

These statements are confirmed by Ruby Vurdien (2013) who has carried out a research in an advanced English as foreign language class in Spain, using blogging as a learning tool. His findings show that blogging taught students to plan the writing tasks effectively, which led to enhanced writing skills in general. Due to its interactive nature, blogging also led to increased motivation, and reflection on the content and language both in the planning phase and in the writing process. The students experienced peer feedback given through blogs as useful in order to improve their own texts. In addition, blogging made the students more confident in writing in a foreign language. Vurdien notes however, that the weaker students who lack editing skills need the teacher's guidance to ensure optimal participation in the tasks.

Ming Huei Lin, Ji-Jhen Li, Po Yi Hung and Hui-Wen Huang (2014) have carried out research that tested the effects of blogging versus writing with pen and paper in English as L2. Their research is rare in a sense that they used a control group to strengthen the reliability of the results, which is not the case in most of the other studies about the topic. The research results show that blogging helped the students achieve a greater improvement in their writing than did the control group. The students who were blogging also experienced significantly less anxiety in writing than did the control group.

Yu-Chin Sun (2010) has also explored blogging as a learning activity in English as a foreign language and points to the following results:

“... writing blogs could enhance participants' overall writing performance, promote participants' autonomous monitoring of their own writing, and promote positive attitudes toward foreign-language writing.”

Like Vurdien and Lin et al., Sun concludes that due to its online environment, blogging could improve learners' writing skills in general, enhance their motivation to write, and develop both learners' monitoring strategies and learner autonomy.

Päivi Tynjälä (2001), Professor at University of Jyväskylä, Finland, has made several studies on writing and its effects on learning, and suggests that current pedagogical thinking emphasizes learner centeredness, process and problem orientation and social interaction in the learning situation, aiming at knowledge transformation instead of knowledge telling (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). Her ideas are presented more thoroughly in chapter 2.

Many scholars in the field of educational research have pointed out that the cultures of schooling differ greatly from the cultures of "real life" and that this state of affairs has been detrimental to students' learning and the development of expertise (Gjørven, 2008; Simensen, 1998; Tynjala, 2001). Lack of real life experiences, meetings with the target culture and authentic language situations may hinder potential development of the language. I suggest that blogging as a learning activity increases possibilities to gain these authentic experiences both with the target language and culture. Blogging also allows reviewing and revising unlimited times. Postings can be responses to learner-centred problem-solving tasks, descriptions of phenomena, expressing one's own point of view, reflection on cultural phenomena etc., that all are different genres and require different knowledge to be solved. This will be discussed in Chapter 6.

2. Theoretical aspects

To be able to understand how writing may enhance foreign language learning, it is important to look at different theories about writing and learning in general. This chapter intends to shed light on the theoretical framings this study is placed within. I present some important theories of language learning in general. The main focus in this chapter is on the cognitive processes writing promotes, the Zone of Proximal development (Vygotsky), and effective writing practices. Writing and learning have long been understood as cognitive processes, but the picture changes considerably when they are also considered as social and cultural practices (Tynjala, 2001). That is why I have chosen to include the socio-cultural theory about learning in this presentation of relevant theory. Further on, I will present how this general theory about writing in language learning is transferable to learning foreign languages. Since the theory is based on the social constructivist approach to learning and the role of language in the learning process, I will start with presenting it briefly in section 2.1.

2.1 The social constructivist approach

Social constructionism encourages us to question all taken-for-granted understanding of the world. “It invites us to be critical of the idea that our observations of the world unproblematically yields its nature to us...” and “...cautions us to be suspicious of our own assumptions about how the worlds appears to be” (Burr, 2003:3). Within the frames of a classroom it means that teachers’ didactical assumptions about effectiveness of certain learning activities do not necessarily match students’ experiences or the actual learning outcome. In other words, a teacher’s views are constructions that may not necessarily agree with the students’ perceptions. This perspective is essential for understanding this study and I hope that this brief presentation will help the reader to look at the study from the social constructivist perspective.

According to social constructionism, nothing is objective. “All knowledge is derived from looking at the world from some perspective or another, and is in the service of some interests rather than others” (Burr, 2003:6). My constructions of the world of the classroom are bound up with my experiences and didactical views of how people learn languages. It is not necessarily wrong, but it only tells one perspective of the phenomenon. That is why it is

important to hear the students' voices in the process of building new knowledge about the topic of this study.

2.1.1 The role of language in knowledge construction

According to social constructionism, people construct an understanding of the world between them through daily interactions in the course of social life. "When people talk to each other, the world is constructed" (Burr, 2003:8). It emphasizes the role of social communication, by means of language, in a process of knowledge construction. It is the language used in the interaction that constructs our conceptions of the world, and "Knowledge is therefore seen not as something that a person has or doesn't have, but as something that people do together" (Burr, 2003:9). When looking at this study from a social constructivist perspective, the knowledge gained from the research derives from interactions between the teacher and the students. The students tell the teacher about their perceptions by means of language. In other words, I as a researcher and the informants by means of language construct new knowledge about the effectiveness of blogging as a learning activity.

2.2 Writing in language learning

As pointed out in the introduction, the potential role of writing in language learning has long been underestimated in many educational practices. However, recent research shows that writing may play an important role in language learning due to the cognitive processes it requires, which are different from speaking. Writing "is an essential part of a learning process based on a presupposition that it is a tool for recalling thoughts, develop and structure them" (Dysthe, Hertzberg, & Hoel, 2010:63, my translation). Dysthe et al. claim that processes our brain go through when we write have features that are relevant for developing thoughts and learning. This section presents some theoretical perspectives that support this idea.

2.2.1 Writing as a cognitive activity

Writing requires different cognitive processes that help us to gain new knowledge or establish our existing knowledge. Including reading and writing in the work on a subject enhances

learning (Tynjala, 2001). Compared to oral skills, more time can be spent on cognitive activities such as planning, revising and information retrieval in writing, an aspect also confirmed by the research presented in the introduction. Williams (2012:324) supports this statement saying: "During revision, learners are able to access their explicit knowledge of L2 and notice the gap between it and their first draft production." Further on she refers to several other studies (Ellis and Yuan 2004, 2005) that show that learners express themselves more fluently and use more complex and varied forms in their production when they have time to plan their writing. Writing allows us to go back to the text, recall the cognitive processes we used when writing and develop them. In other words, it allows us to analyze our own development of thoughts (Dysthe et al., 2010:63-64). Dysthe et al. refer to this as retrospective structuring, which is often necessary for cognitive development. They explain this with the extreme pressure the brain is exposed to in the writing process that activates the unconsciousness to a great degree.

Tynjälä (2001) presents several cognitive theories that emphasize the role of writing in the learning process. I will present some of them here having focus on meta-cognitive awareness, critical reflection and collaborative learning. These three focus areas are significant regarding the research questions for this study.

Tynjälä presents Piaget's notion of cognitive conflict, where it is assumed that "...when an individual realises that her thoughts or ideas are inconsistent with other people's views or new information this internal conflict leads the individual to reflect on her thinking and may serve to initiate conceptual change" (Tynjala, 2001:9). The role of writing may be important here. Since writing allows rereading and revising of the text unlimited times, it may initiate meta-cognitive awareness in terms of noticing conflicting conceptions in the written expression. This indicates that active processing of the text and comparing new information with the prior knowledge activates meta-cognitive awareness that will either establish or change previous conceptions. This process is presupposed to lead to improvement of the text. The new information may be a new conception gained from a model text, or a new understanding gained from feedback for instance. Tynjälä (2001:10) suggests that through journal writing, a learner may engage in an internal dialogue, where the learner critically reflects on his/her own text and revises it according to eventual new conceptions that are gained through cognitive processing. Analysing the results of her own research, Tynjälä suggests that the use of writing as a learning tool can provide important general skills, such as abstraction, communication

and collaboration skills, systemic and critical thinking, just to mention some (Tynjala, 2001). Schoonen et al. (Schoonen, Snellings, Stevenson, & Van Gelderen, 2009:80) also support these ideas saying that

“The (results of the) writing process and its sub-processes can be monitored by the writer applying (metacognitive) knowledge to judge appropriateness of the writing, and this monitoring may lead to revisions at different levels of the text.”

In this sense, blogging as a learning activity may be an excellent tool to engage meta-cognitive awareness and critical reflection, pushing the writer to engage in different cognitive processes and focusing on possibilities (and requirements) of revising the texts.

To sum, writing involves several cognitive processes different from speaking, such as planning, revising, translating thought into text, and taking into account the audience (Tynjala, 2001; Vurdien, 2013; Weigle, 2002; Williams, 2012). These factors are significant to this study since blogging involves lots of writing. Blogging is a constantly on-going process of writing and rewriting, particularly when used for educational purposes. The writer has never-ending possibilities to revise his/her texts, receive feedback from readers, teacher and co-students, and revise it again. As presented in the introduction, previous research on blogging as a learning tool shows that it has positive effects on learning, due to the cognitive processes it requires, as well as the interactional aspect of blogging. These cognitive processes are essential on the way to becoming a good writer. Talented writers rewrite texts several times, analyze them and revise them before writing the final draft. The problem in school is that the students' knowledge is often measured with timed tests that are usually pure knowledge telling with little cognitive reflection. Since in blogging the focus is on the process rather than on the product, it could be an excellent tool to promote knowledge transformation enhancing cognitive reflection.

2.2.2 From knowledge telling to knowledge transformation

Anyone can learn to write, but not everyone can write well. To become a good writer requires more complex cognitive skills than just to write anything that comes to mind. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) make a distinction between knowledge telling and knowledge transformation. Knowledge telling can be compared to spontaneous speaking acts that involve

very little planning and hardly any revising. It is a kind of ‘natural’ writing without reflection or implicit use of the knowledge. Knowledge telling can also be regarded as an act of reproducing and memorizing ready-made information.

Knowledge transformation on the contrary requires complex cognitive processes of which reflection and revision are an essential part. To obtain the ability of knowledge transformation it is necessary to put much effort and practice into the learning process. Knowledge transformation involves cognitive processes to a great extent, and makes learning “... a constructive and creative process, where a learner constructs meanings and transforms ideas” (Tynjala, 2001).

Knowledge telling and -transformation involve different dimensions that need to be defined more precisely here. Normann (2015) refers in her article to writing about topics that are familiar to the student as knowledge telling, since in such tasks students re-tell personal experiences that require little reflection and explicit knowledge. Hence, her definition embraces the content dimension to a great degree. Another dimension is the linguistic one, focusing on various linguistic knowledge students need to process to be able to produce a text in a foreign language. From this perspective, even writing about familiar topics can be regarded as knowledge transformation. In this study the focus is on the latter dimension, and the written production of a foreign language, regardless of the topic, is regarded as knowledge transformation.

When considering learning as a creative and constructive process, the teacher should assign tasks that encourage knowledge transformation rather than knowledge telling. From my pedagogical point of view, blogging may be a learning activity that encourages knowledge transformation. Blogging in a foreign language requires complex elaboration of linguistic, content-based, cultural and communicative knowledge, which in turn may promote better understanding of the language structures and use. It involves extensive writing that provides students with possibilities to use the explicit knowledge of the language in a context they create themselves. While blogging, students cannot rely on ready-made texts, but instead need to construct texts of their own using their previous knowledge of the topic, the target language and the world in general. This can of course be transferable to other writing activities as well, for instance writing a personal journal. However, as argued earlier, blogging offers an

alternative communication platform outside of the walls of a classroom, which may encourage and inspire students in a different way than do more traditional writing activities.

2.2.3 Writing as a social and cultural activity

As presented above, according to social constructionism, language plays an important role in learning being a tool for communication between people. In a social context, cultural features are involved to a great degree, which applies also to writing as a learning tool. Tynjälä (2001:9) states that

“cognitive theories provide an important basis for understanding writing processes, but the picture of writing to learn changes considerably when writing and learning are considered not only as cognitive processes, but also as social and cultural practices.”

According to Vygotsky, learning takes place primarily on the social, interpsychological level (Vygotskij & Kozulin, 1986). This means that knowledge is not automatically internalized, but the process of internalization needs language as a mediating tool as well as a social context. In other words, social processes allow the language to become a cognitive tool for the individual (Lantolf, 2000:54). That is why the ideal state of learning is what Vygotsky called the Zone of Proximal Development. That is the notional gap between the learner’s current developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving ability and the learner’s potential level of development as determined by the problem solving ability under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. In the ZPD the learner is not yet capable of independent functioning, but can achieve the desired outcome given relevant scaffolded help (Mitchell & Myles, 2004:195). Vygotsky emphasized the role of the teacher or a co-student, who provides a kind of “scaffolding” for the learner in relation to the ZPD.

The socio-cultural approach to learning is inspired by Vygotsky’s thought about learning as a social activity. In addition to the social aspect, it claims that learning takes place in a cultural context through language. When looking at development of L3 from a socio-cultural perspective, communication in the target language is essential. This can be either written or oral communication. Through communication in L3, students gain knowledge of the language patterns, grammar structures and intonation just to mention some. Through communication, they also gain knowledge of cultures where the target language is spoken. This view is transferable to writing as a learning activity. Weigle suggests that writing should be viewed as a social and cultural act which is individually and socially purposeful (Weigle, 2002:19).

Further on she emphasizes the importance of the social aspect of writing saying: “the ability to write implies an access to a discourse community” (Weigle, 2002:22). Regarding blogging as a learning activity, it might increase learner’s motivation to write and learn L3, due to the access it gives into an authentic and social discourse community, which the Internet offers. Writing in L3 on the Internet offers unique authentic communication situations that seldom are possible to create within the physical environment of a classroom. On the Internet, there are almost unlimited different social discourse communities the writer can choose to be a part of. Blogging as a tool for learning L3 is like bringing the international world into the classroom.

Lev Vygotsky’s theory of the Zone of Proximal Development emphasizes the role of collaboration and interaction in a learning process. Also Williams (2014) support the idea of collaborative writing tasks in order to enhance L2 knowledge. She refers to several studies that show that writing can facilitate knowledge creation, especially when participating in scaffolded or collaborative tasks. Reasons she presents include that students can together reflect on and consult their explicit knowledge in making composing decisions. Collaborative tasks also allow pooling of knowledge from several sources, as well as interactional moves that are thought to facilitate language learning. Like this, collaborative activity is a more effective way to create new knowledge than solitary activity (Williams, 2012:325). When used in a L3 classroom, blogging may encourage collaborative writing in different ways. It is easy to organize learning situations where learners can help each other both in the writing process and in the form of peer-feedback for instance. Blogging can also be considered a collaborative writing activity in a sense that anyone can give response to a blog immediately when the text is published, which in turn gives the writer a possibility to improve either the language or the content of the text. Like this, there is a potential immediate interaction and collaboration between the writer and the reader, which is not the case with traditional literary genres.

Hayes (1996 in Weigle, 2002: 25) suggests that “specifically, a writer’s goals, predispositions, beliefs and attitudes, [...], may influence the way a writer goes about the task of writing.” Concerning blogging as a learning activity, it might be appropriate to emphasize the motivational aspect here. When writing for the authentic audience instead of for the teacher, the writing task may feel more purposeful and the writer, in this case a student, may be willing to put more effort into the writing process. This in turn may lead to more reflection on

the task in the planning phase, and better accuracy of the language when writing. Grütters and Langseth (in Otnes, 2009:116) support the idea of the blog as a motivating learning tool because of the access it gives to authentic communication situations and wider audiences. A blog has the potential of opening up for dialogue with people you do not know in the past, which may be a motivating factor. Another interesting aspect with regard to motivation is, that a personal blog may promote a sense of ownership to the learning tool. A blog may also enhance the feeling that students are given control over their own learning, including decision-making. The blog becomes a personal project to them, where they can to a great degree decide the content, the appearance and how much effort they want to put in it, i.e. the learning outcome. The feeling that things are not always done on the teacher's terms, but that students are given a possibility to influence their own learning process, may increase their motivation to learn.

2.2.4 What are effective writing practices?

As presented above, research from various studies supports the idea of potentials of writing in enhancing learning. What are then effective writing practices? Steve Graham, who has carried out several studies about writing, points out that ...”the road from novice to competent writer is paved by changes in students’ writing knowledge, motivation for writing, strategic behaviors and basic writing skills” (Graham, 2008). Some of the practices he suggests that may have implications for my study are:

1. *Dedicate time to writing, and involve students in various forms of writing over time.* Here he emphasizes the importance of frequent and sustained writing. Blogging offers an opportunity for frequent writing, which can be sustained by teacher or co-students, depending on the choices made for the writing task, environment, and purposes with writing. As supported writing, blogging can be placed within the ZPD of the learner. Graham also underlines the need for students to write for multiple purposes, such as communicative, informative, persuasive, entertaining, reflecting, responding and demonstrating purposes. As for blogging as a learning activity, it offers a platform for writing for any purpose.

2. *Foster students’ interest, enjoyment, and motivation to write.* Here the focus is on writing assignments that serve a real or meaningful purpose, such as writing to a real person.

Additionally it is important to connect the writing assignments to students' interests and their life outside of school. Due to its free genre, blogging may increase students' motivation to write. In their blogs they can write about anything of interest, and even the teacher-decided assignments are easy to adapt to the different interests or abilities of the students. As for writing to a real audience, a blog is a real communication platform encouraging authentic communication.

3. *Help students to become strategic writers.* Graham encourages teachers to set up a predictable writing routine where students are expected to plan, revise and share what they write. Like this, they are more likely to see how the strategy improves their writing and feel ownership of their text. Blogging offers an opportunity to constantly revise the texts, get feedback, review and revise them again, which may foster the students' ownership of it and hence lead to more self-regulated learning.

Graham points out that an especially important aspect of writing assessment is to identify students who need extra help and frequently adapt the task to better meet the needs of individual students. This is also a benefit of blogging as a learning activity, since it allows each student to write on his/her level of proficiency, at the same time giving opportunities for constructive feedback.

2.3 Writing in a foreign language

Previous notions of writing as a tool for learning are transferable to second and third language writing, even though the focus in foreign language, or L3 writing, is rather on language patterns than content. Weigle (2002:36) points out that writing in a foreign language tends to be "more constrained, more difficult and less effective than writing in a first language". Lacking language proficiency may distract the process of encoding internal representations into written text, and therefore, the focus on the L3 writing process is often different from L1. It may also affect negatively the motivation to write. Lacking language proficiency when writing in L3 underlines the great need for using time on learning relevant vocabulary and necessary sentence structures before the writing process. The Norwegian Centre for Writing Education and Research ⁵ (2014) divides the writing instruction into four phases, namely

⁵ Skrivesenteret

1) pre-writing 2) writing 3) revision and 4) editing. In a pre-writing process activities such as press-writing, word cards, crossword puzzles, word family tables etc. may be used (Nation, 2008). In a writing phase ready-made writing frames may be helpful to get started with writing. Writing frames may also help students to create coherence in the text. In the revision phase, the teacher needs to be active and supportive giving feedback on the text. The last phase, editing, deals with correcting linguistic errors and making the final polish on the texts. In addition to explicit learning, extensive writing, such as blogging, may lead to implicit or incidental learning of vocabulary, and ease the writing process later on. Kringstad & Kvithyld (2013) support the usefulness of extensive writing saying that becoming a good writer requires lots of writing. Furthermore they say that when writing in different subjects it is important to have in mind the different premises of each subject. In foreign languages the premises often deal with being able to express oneself in a comprehensible way, including learning vocabulary and necessary grammar patterns. The focus is then more on language and communication than factual knowledge.

Schoonen et al. (2009) suggest that even though adolescent writers (like in this study), bring some metacognitive knowledge and writing experience from their L1 to L3 writing situations, the limited linguistic knowledge of L3 can hinder the use of it. Hayes (1996 in Weigle, 2002: 25) supports this saying that “on the individual level, writing involves interactions among four different components: working memory, motivation and affect, cognitive processes and long-term memory.” This can be related to the cognitive load, which refers to the working memory and long-term memory’s capacity to process and retrieve information (Paas, van Gog, & Sweller, 2010; Sweller, 1988). The cognitive processing capacity may be sufficient for the accomplishment of the task, but if there is cognitive overload, it may hinder learning from the processing. Cognitive overload occurs when the brain has to process too much information at the same time, blocking the use of previous knowledge stored in the memory. Hence, it may lead to decreased self-efficacy⁶ and motivation (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015:31). Cognitive overload is more likely to happen when writing in a foreign language than when writing in L1, since due to lacking language skills, a learner needs to use a lot of his/her cognitive capacity to create comprehensible sentences. Hence, there is not much capacity left for processing of content knowledge, or other aspects of writing.

⁶ Skaalvik & Skaalvik use a term *academic self-concept*, instead of *self-efficacy* that is used in this text. I choose to use the term *self-efficacy* throughout.

These limitations in foreign language writing change the focus from the content to linguistic patterns of the language, such as grammar, appropriate vocabulary, sentence structures and spelling. Considering particularly L3 writing in Norway, such as French, lacking knowledge of vocabulary and language structures often disturbs focusing on content, and forces the focus to a greater degree on to language accuracy. That is why the revising of the texts written in L3 happens primarily on sentence level. In general, writing seems to demand a greater level of precision than oral production of the language. However, this is slightly different when talking about blogging. Concerning blogging as a literary genre, the language accuracy is of course important regarding the communicative function of a text, especially when used to educational purposes. At the same time, blogging is a genre relatively free from specific conventions, as compared to academic writing for instance. In blogging, interactive issues with readers are involved to a great degree. Blog-entries often allow an understanding of the message even though the language is not accurate, and may encourage the writer to write even more regardless of his/her lacking language proficiency.

As presented in the introduction, blogging differs from traditional writing activities in several ways. A blog may include additional effects such as pictures, videos, hyperlinks etc., which make the structure of a blog entry different from a traditional text. Concerning the communicative aspects of blogging these additional effects may strengthen the communication of the text. Like this, the relation between language accuracy and communicative competence in blog-writing is weaker than in other genres.

Swain (2000) has developed the Output hypothesis, according to which production of the target language plays a major role in learning. She argues that with output, the learner is in control and production of the language can stretch his/her interlanguage to meet communicative goals. She says further that to produce, they “need to create linguistic form and meaning, and in so doing, discover what they can and cannot do.” According to this hypothesis, foreign language production “...really forces learners to undertake complete grammatical processing, and thus drives forward most effectively the development of second language syntax and morphology”. Swain believes that the activity of producing the target language may 1) push learners to become aware of gaps and problems in their current second language system, 2) it provides them with opportunities to reflect on, discuss and analyse these problems explicitly, and 3) it provides them with opportunities to experiment with new structures and forms (Mitchell & Myles, 2004:174-175). This confirms the theories presented

above, about learning as a cognitive activity, where reflection, awareness of one's current conceptions and strategies to change them are central. Manchón (2011:70) has analysed several studies in the field and presents the following conclusion :

"...writing – especially collaborative writing- fosters a type of linguistic processing with potential learning effects. Furthermore, the conclusion needs to be qualified by the observation that such linguistic processing is more likely to take place in written than in spoken collaborative tasks".

These perceptions of language learning are also appropriate regarding L3, and transferable to blogging as a learning activity. Blogging in L3 forces the learners to produce a great amount of the language and to use their knowledge for communicative purposes. It pushes them to create meaningful texts about different topics, and this process may help them to discover the gaps in their skills, and hopefully encourage them to act to fill the gaps.

Furthermore, Roca de Larios et al. (Roca de Larios, Manchon, & Murphy, 2006) have found in their research, that when generating their texts, the writers often need to engage in decision-making and problem solving behaviour, that requires twice as much time in L2 (L3) than in L1 writing processes, regardless of proficiency. Also, their research support the ideas presented above, that when writing in a foreign language much attention is devoted to sentence construction and finding appropriate words, which requires cognitive processes different from spoken production of the language. The time aspect is often mentioned as the greatest disadvantage with writing. However, Norbert Schmitt (2000:120) suggests that despite the fact that explicit learning of vocabulary gives the greatest chance for its acquisition, incidental learning that may occur when using language for communicative purposes gives a double benefit for time expended. This may also be the case when blogging is used for educational purposes. As a communicative learning tool involving extensive writing practise, especially when combined with pre-writing activities, it may contribute to increased vocabulary, and hence make the writing easier and less time consuming later on.

Supporting the ideas presented above, Susan M. Gass and Alison Mackey (2006) present the Interaction Hypothesis, that deals with input, interaction, feedback and output in second language acquisition. According to this hypothesis, the interaction including input, feedback and output facilitates the process of acquiring a language as it provides learners with possibilities to receive modified input and explicit and implicit feedback. This in turn may

draw learners' attention to problematic aspects of their interlanguage and push them to produce modified output. The Interaction Hypothesis may be connected to blogging as a learning activity in a sense that the process of blogging involves both input, interaction with others, feedback and especially a great amount of output. Since a blog is a tool for communication and a channel for expressing oneself, the learners will most probably meet situations in the writing process where they cannot express what they desire to express, consequently noticing that there are gaps in their interlanguage (Swain, 2000). In addition, both oral and written input in- and outside the classroom provides the learners with native-like models of target language. Comparing their own language skills with the model language may reinforce the awareness of the gaps in their language skills. Concerning the feedback, it may direct learner's attention to the same or other gaps and lead to modification of the output, which in turn may enhance acquisition of the target language. The great amount of output blogging involves helps to promote automaticity in writing, which refers to routinization of the language use (VanPatten & Williams, 2007:180).

2.4 Chapter summary

As presented above, different language learning theories support the idea that language learning requires complex cognitive processes, and takes place in social and cultural contexts. In the learning process, the learner activity, and the role of writing as a form of producing target language are emphasized. Blogging fits naturally into these contexts, since it offers an interactive and authentic way of producing the target language. Regarding the Zone of Proximal Development, blogging offers many possibilities to collaborative learning assisted either by peers, teacher or both. Blogging also involves several aspects that may draw learners' attention to the gaps in their interlanguage.

3. Methodological approach

The focus of the study has been on students' metareflection on the use of blogging as a learning activity in relation to language learning and motivation. In addition, the intention has been to get the respondents to point out specific benefits they eventually feel have gained through blogging, concerning the process of learning a foreign language.

3.1 Description of methods

Despite the fact that I have used both qualitative and quantitative methods, the main focus is on the qualitative part of the research. This is because the research questions have a qualitative character and make this study mostly a qualitative study where quantitative methods primarily are used to strengthen the credibility. The methods and the process of analysis are described in Chapter 4. The whole process is described in as much detail as was necessary for the purpose of understanding the study in its entirety. The decisions about method are made on a reflective level, based on knowledge of the topic of the study, the methodological options available and ethical implications. The study is based on a social-constructive approach to learning.

3.1.1 Choice of method and research design

A qualitative design with phenomenology has been chosen for this research topic as my research design. Triangulation of methods has been used both in the data collection phase, where a qualitative interview and questionnaire stand as equals, as well as in the process of analysis. The questionnaires ask for explanations or reasons for the answers in many places, which gives them a qualitative character. For this reason, my study can also be defined as qualitative dominant mixed methods research (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). Since qualitative methods refer to *what kind* and quantitative methods to *how much of a kind* (Kvale 2007), using triangulation of methods allows the transferability of the results to a greater extent than when only using qualitative methods.

The focus on students' perceptions determined the methodological choices. Quantitative methods were hence used to find out *if* (to what extent) students experience blogging as beneficial and *if* (to what extent) it promotes their motivation for learning French. Qualitative

methods were used to find answers to questions as *why* (reasons) blogging may eventually be beneficial, *which specific benefits* it may provide for the students, and *how* it eventually promotes their motivation.

Another reason for using qualitative methods was the flexibility it offers regarding the research project. Even though the point of departure is the research questions, the researcher can move to and fro between the different phases of the project. In other words, the researcher has a possibility to revise both research questions and research design during the process. Like this, creating research questions, gathering data, analyzing and interpreting it, are in progress parallel to each other (Thagaard, 2013:31, Repstad 2007:113). This movement between the parts refers to a hermeneutic approach.

As to this study, the process started with a hypothesis that blogging as a learning activity will enhance learning of L3. This assumption developed into a hypothesis, and awakened a desire to try to confirm it. During the process, the research questions were revised as new observations and data were collected, new theory was found, and new interpretations were made. This way a new understanding of the whole was established by reference to the individual parts. A hermeneutic approach emphasizes that there are no absolute truths, but phenomena are understood in different ways (Nilssen 2012:72, my translation). This study focuses on the participants' personal experiences and reflections, and my understanding of the phenomenon, gained through interviews and questionnaires, which underlines the fact that it in no way tells the absolute truth. However, it may give some indications of the phenomenon that might be important to be taken into consideration when planning teaching of L3.

One can both have an inductive and a deductive approach to the research (Thagaard, 2013:197, Kvale 2007:38). In qualitative research, there is often an interplay between inductive and deductive approaches (Ragin 1994:57-75 in Thagaard, 2013:198). The understanding the researcher develops of the phenomenon is both based on his/her theoretical perspectives and his/her interpretation of the empirical data. Concerning this study, it means that I had based the research questions and the hypothesis on theoretical perspectives on language learning through writing. Analyzing the data, new understanding and new perspectives were additionally developed. In other words, both inductive and deductive approaches were included in the process.

When interpreting the phenomenon it must be understood in the same context as where it is created, because trying to understand a phenomenon outside its original context is impossible (Johannessen, Tufte, & Christoffersen, 2010:83, Nilssen 2012:41). Repstad underlines that qualitative research attempts to get insight into the actor's point of view, his/her understanding of the reality, ways of thinking, motives etc, and as loyally and authentically as possible (Repstad, 2007:19). Since this study has a phenomenological approach and is based on social constructionism, we need to understand and interpret students' experiences and perceptions within this frame. It means that students construct their understanding of the reality in a social context, and the researcher must be a part of this context to be able to interpret the meaning in students' answers. This study attempts to find connections between blogging as a learning activity and its eventual advantages/disadvantages regarding the learning process, as perceived by the students who are participating in the study. To be able to carry out this study there must be a context where blogging takes place, and which the participants are a part of. Through blogging the participants gain experiences of this learning activity and construct an understanding of its impact on their learning. Participating in the process, I tried to gather information about these experiences and make an understanding of the phenomenon.

I participated in the process both as a teacher and as a researcher. The teacher's role was to provide the students with possibilities to develop their linguistic and digital competence through blogging in French. The teacher's role also involved giving enough help in the different phases of the writing process, promoting scaffolding. As a teacher it was my responsibility to give feedback throughout the process, and be conscious about using blogs for educational and assessment purposes, not only for fun or serving the purpose of the research. My role as a researcher included reading the blogs from the students' perspective, looking for potential challenges, development, and changing of attitudes for instance, in the writing process. As a researcher I observed the students' behaviour in the classroom when they were writing blogs, noticed the nature of the questions asked, challenges they met, collaboration in the classroom, how they responded to the feedback etc. Despite my attempts to separate the two roles, when being in the teacher's role, I had my research questions in mind. This made me alert to indications that might be of interest for the study, leading to incidental overlapping of the roles. Even though observation was not included in my methods of data collection, the observations made during the project were nevertheless an essential part of my role as a teacher, enabling me to better understand the whole process the students were going through.

3.1.2 Qualitative interview

The objective of a qualitative interview is to secure extensive information about how other people experience a phenomenon, and which perspectives they have on topics that the interview deals with (Thagaard, 2013:95). The goal for the researcher is to come to an understanding of a phenomenon and try to describe it by the reference to the context and the research questions. I have chosen qualitative interview as a source for gathering data, since it seemed the most appropriate way to get answers to the qualitative part of the research questions. A qualitative interview is often more like a dialogue where knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Johannessen et al., 2010:135; Kvale, 2007:1) and it appeared to be a useful way to get insight into the students' experiences of blogging as a learning activity. An advantage with an interview is that communication between the interviewer and the respondent is both visual and auditory. This allows a flexibility in the communication situation that is not possible when using survey (Ringdal, 2013). Due to this flexibility, an interview also allows clarification and expanding of the answers and perspectives. However, this depends on the interviewer's competence in following up leads that show up in the interview situation, which is emphasized by Kvale (2007:60) who says that "The interviewer's ability to sense the immediate meaning of an answer, and the horizon of possible meanings it opens up, is decisive." This clarifying of confusing answers or assuring on the spot interpretations of the statements is not possible when using questionnaires. Kvale (2007:5) describes an interview as an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of common interest, aiming to obtain systematic knowledge. Through interviews, I tried to gain this systematic knowledge about the interviewees' experiences of blogging.

3.2 Credibility of a qualitative study

The following section focuses on the credibility of this study. It presents perspectives on the researcher's role in the research project as well as gives arguments for the study's reliability and validity. I find it necessary to give a detailed account for the whole process, as well as to discuss and reflect on different aspects and parts of the process separately.

3.2.1 Reliability

In qualitative studies the nearest possible relationship between the researcher and the respondents is regarded as an advantage and an ideal (Repstad, 2007:18). However, a researcher always enters the field with his/her prejudices, which to some extent will affect the analysis and interpretation of the data. These prejudices do not only consist of theoretical perspectives the study is based on, but also the researcher's previous experiences, values, knowledge and attitudes (Nilssen, 2012:68). According to Thagaard (2013:37), the researcher's scientific approach is significant for what kind of information he/she is looking for, and creates a point of departure for the understanding of the phenomenon. A researcher must be conscious about this fact, as well as alert to its eventual consequences for the interpretation of the results.

In this study, I had my own prejudices and pre-conceptions of the phenomenon. More precisely, the pre-conceptions were based on my personal experiences of the phenomenon, the social-constructive perspectives on learning, as well as on theories that support the idea of the importance of writing in L3 learning. For these reasons it is important to discuss the researcher's position in relation to respondents. Regarding this study, I had already known the participants over a period of six months being their French teacher. This implies that I had knowledge of the participants' level of proficiency, motivation, attitudes, and eventual learning difficulties for instance, before the project start. This can be regarded as an advantage in a sense that the background knowledge enabled me to get deeper insight into the phenomenon and the impact of blogging on individual students. On the other hand, it can also be regarded as a disadvantage in a sense that I had two roles at the same time, a role as a teacher and a role as a researcher, which might have influenced the results. Even though it was clearly stressed in the beginning that participation in the research project would not influence their grade or relationship to the teacher in any way, the student-teacher relationship might have awakened emotions in the participants that may have influenced their answers. For example they could have felt a strong need to answer correctly, instead of telling what they really feel or think.

Kvale (2007:122) says that reliability in interview research pertains to the consistency and trustworthiness of research findings. A questionnaire was used prior to carrying out the interviews both to get a trustworthy basis for representative selection of interviewees, and also

as a support to the findings from the interviews. The interviews were also coded in quantified categories, which strengthens the reliability of the study (Kvale, 2007:121). Combining the data from the questionnaires with the interview transcripts, hypothesis and the research questions, I engaged in “The constant comparative method”, which involves inspecting and comparing all the data fragments that arise in a single case (Silverman, 2011:377). Doing so, I could ensure my own understanding of the phenomenon.

3.2.2 Validity

To strengthen the validity in qualitative studies, it is important that the researcher is familiar with the context, to be able to make a distinction between relevant and non-relevant information. Triangulation of methods is commonly used for validation purposes, as is the case in this study. Webb suggests (in Johnson, Onwuegbuzie et al. 2007) that “Once a proposition has been confirmed by two or more independent measurement processes, the uncertainty of its interpretation is greatly reduced.” Triangulation of methods was chosen to examine this research topic, because using both qualitative and quantitative methods gives a larger amount of and richer data, which in turn will strengthen the validity of the study.

In addition, I have tried to answer the following questions throughout the whole process: Are the data valid representations of the phenomenon? Do the data confirm the existing theory about the phenomenon? Are the questions in a questionnaire/interview guide relevant to the phenomenon that is examined? Do the data explain the phenomenon in question and not something else? Also, Kvale (2007:123) emphasizes the importance of continually checking, questioning and theoretically interpreting findings throughout the investigation, to ascertain the validity. I have searched for explanations of the potential coherence between actual theory and the data/results, as well as tried to present the constructions that are the main objectives for this study as thoroughly as possible throughout the whole process. These constructions are the student’s experiences, perceptions, motivation and attitudes. I have also tried to thoroughly explain the choice of methods, as well as to demonstrate why the results are valid representations of the phenomenon. In the next section, I will present and explain the choice of questions in the questionnaire/interview guide.

Johannessen, as well as Thagaard present a conception of *generality*. This concept states that a qualitative research is valid if it succeeds in establishing descriptions, constructions and explanations that are transferable to other similar phenomena. This study may be considered as valid if the results can be transferred to other foreign languages for instance. Regarding the qualitative part of this study, the conception of generality is an objective in itself, and will furthermore strengthen its validity. According to Widerberg (2011:164), a qualitative research distinguishes itself if it succeeds in giving a new understanding of a phenomenon. This study aims to give a new understanding of the phenomenon “blogging as a learning activity in L3”, as well as to be transferable to other similar phenomena.

3.3 Data collection

This section presents the process of data collection in its entirety. I will describe and explain the selection and recruiting of the participants, as well as the preparations of the interviews and questionnaires.

3.3.1 Questionnaires

To get background information on the respondents’ attitudes, experiences and motivation regarding the learning of French, the whole class was asked to fill in the first questionnaire at the beginning of the project. They were also asked to fill in a new questionnaire at the end of the project. The aim with the second questionnaire was to gather data as a support to the data from qualitative interview and vice versa. The intention was also to get quantitative data in order to find out to what extent respondents eventually experienced blogging as beneficial. The questionnaires were in Norwegian, because the questions deal with topics that may be very difficult to express in another language than one’s mother tongue. Both questionnaires consisted of questions that were categorized according to the research questions, and included both open and closed questions (See Appendices 4 and 5). These choices were made to enable a better understanding of the responses and to get a deeper insight into students’ perceptions. This also allowed comparisons between the data collected from the interviews and the data collected from the questionnaires. So, due to the qualitative character of the research questions it was necessary to use open questions, or ask for definition of the answers. There were also questions that were not directly connected to the research questions, but gave an

impression of the respondents' general attitudes and thoughts about French and language learning. This information was useful when selecting candidates for the interviews. Another aim with the second questionnaire was to compare students' answers in the beginning and at the end of the project, and like this search for eventual changes in their experiences of, attitudes toward and motivation for the French language. To be able to compare the answers of the individual students, the questionnaires were not anonymous. For instance, when choosing students for the interviews I read both questionnaires looking for potential changes during the class's blog project. In the analyzing phase, students were given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

3.3.2 Designing the interview-guide

To begin with, I designed a sketch where the different aspects of the phenomenon were categorized. I made the sketch on the basis of the research questions, and I used it both to create the questionnaires and the interview guide, which appeared to be very helpful. With the help of the sketch I could be sure that I had not forgotten any significant aspect. To help the interviewees feel as secure as possible, and to give the interview situation the most natural character possible, it is beneficial that the interview guide is not very detailed (Repstad, 2007:78). That is why I chose to make the interview guide simple. It contained a couple of warming up questions, the main categories with two to five questions each, and a couple of general questions to summarize the interview. The questions were categorized into the following categories: 1. *Experiences of blogging as a learning activity in French as L3*. 2. *Attitudes, motivation and sense of mastering*. 3. *Authentic writing* (see Appendix 3). Another reason for the simple form is that when carrying out a test-interview, I noticed how occupied I was with the interview guide and its questions, and how that negatively affected my ability to listen and follow up the leads.

3.3.3 Recruiting

As this study focuses on a specific learning activity on a somewhat narrow subject area, it was natural to look to schools to recruit informants. Since I teach French as L3 in an upper secondary school myself, this study was carried out in my own French class for practical reasons. Advantages and disadvantages with the participation of the researcher in the process will be discussed in section 3.3.4. Before involving the students in the study, I had informed

the principal of the school about my intentions in an e-mail where I presented my project plan, and to which she gave her approval. Since the students were below eighteen years of age at the time this study was taking place, their parents were also informed about the project and gave their consent to participation.

3.3.4 Carrying out the interviews

After having analyzed the questionnaires at the end of the project, eight students were selected to the interview. This selection was made with regard to gender, level of proficiency and attitudes (positive/negative/ambivalent) towards blogging as a learning activity. These choices were made to get as heterogeneous and representative group of informants as possible. Six of the interviewees experienced blogging as a positive and beneficial learning activity, one interviewee experienced it negatively, and one was ambivalent about his experiences. The reason why the interviewees with positive experiences were overrepresented is that the research questions search for **benefits** of blogging as a learning activity, which in itself has a positive tone. To find answers to the questions *why* blogging may be beneficial, *which benefits* it may imply and *how it may increase* the students' motivation, I needed respondents who, according to the questionnaires perceived it as beneficial, and who could tell me reasons for that. This selection may seem subjective, but as mentioned, since the research questions search for benefits of blogging, it was necessary to interview students with positive experiences. I chose two interviewees who had not clearly positive experiences to find out if they, regardless of their negative or ambivalent experiences, had gained benefits from it, and in that case which benefits. I found this important to get a deeper insight into different experiences, not only positive, to get the best possible understanding of the phenomenon as a whole. I chose these two interviewees as representatives for the group of students with negative or ambivalent experiences. Their explanations and statements are similar to the questionnaire answers of the minority that did not have clearly positive experiences of blogging as a learning activity, and may like this be regarded as transferable to the rest of the students with negative/ambivalent experiences. In addition, many questions in the questionnaires required explanations, which gave me a good understanding of the phenomenon in its entirety, including both positive and negative experiences and the reasons for them. Through the whole process I have tried to be aware of my position as a researcher

and its potential impact on the results. Hence, I have tried to be as objective as possible throughout the study.

A qualitative semi-structured interview is very much like a daily conversation between two persons who exchange or construct knowledge by interacting with each other. In contrast to the quantitative method, an interview study does not follow any set rules, but rests on the judgements and the competence of the interviewer. Kvale (2007:49) describes it in the following way: “The interviewer is the research instrument, and the quality of the knowledge produced in an interview depends on the skills, the sensitivity and the subject knowledge of the interviewer.” In an interview there are many on-the-spot decisions to make - for example whether to follow new leads that show up in the interview situation or to stick to the interview guide (Kvale, 2007:34). Therefore, strong demands are put on the competence of the interviewer. I would say that I had good subject knowledge about the topic before starting the interviews, and also the data collected from the questionnaires helped me to get an understanding of the phenomenon in advance. However, I had only limited experience of interviewing, and for that reason I chose to make a test-interview with a student outside my own group of students, who also blogged in L3. The test-interviewee did not participate in the study, and L3 for her is Spanish. Through the test-interview, I wanted to ensure the quality of the interview guide and test my own competence of interviewing. What I noticed during the test-interview was that I was way too dependent on the interview guide, which hindered my attention to follow up the leads that appeared in the conversation, which is totally the opposite of what Kvale (2007) describes as a necessary competence of the interviewer. It must nevertheless be taken into account of my lacking experience and competence at interviewing that some of the leads may not have been followed up or that some of the information has been overlooked. I also used so called respondent validation, which is taking the findings back to the participants asking them to verify them (Silverman, 2001:233). I used respondent validation in cases where there was doubt about my understanding of the answers.

The interviews were carried out right after having ended the class’s blog project, because I wanted the respondents to have the experiences freshly in mind. The interviews were carried out in a meeting room at the school, so that the interviewees would be comfortable with the surroundings. I prepared for the interviews by reading both questionnaires answered by the actual interviewee, right before the interview situation. Like this I had a fresh impression in my mind about his/her perceptions and experiences, and could easily ask for more thorough

explanations. It was a good way to follow the tracks from the questionnaires. If the questionnaires indicated any apparently significant changes, I asked the interviewee for explanations. The interviews were carried out using the interview guide as the point of departure, but I tried to make it as much like a natural conversation as possible, being alert to responses and asking follow-up questions to get a clearer definition or to verify my understanding of the statements. In the end of each interview, I made a brief summary of the main contents of the responses, and asked the interviewee to approve or disapprove my understanding.

The interviews took 25 minutes on average. They were recorded and I transcribed them myself. The interviews were transcribed and coded immediately after the interview situation. Silverman (2001) says that transcripts are always decontextualized conversations, and need to be treated as such. That is why it is important to start the analysis already in the interview situation, and not wait until the final transcripts are in hand. Since I had a previous impression of the interviewees' perceptions, I could start the analysis already in the interview situation. Like this the interviews were used more or less to confirm the interpretations I had from the questionnaires, in addition to getting deeper insight into the interviewees' perceptions.

Another issue that needs to be discussed is the relationship between me as an interviewer, and the interviewees. Being their French teacher, the interviewees and I knew each other quite well already. A reliable and confidential relationship can be an advantage in a sense that it makes the situation more relaxed. I assume that it was easier for the interviewees to engage in the conversation on a deeper level since they knew me, than they would have with a total stranger. On the other hand, the teacher-student relationship may have influenced their answers, for instance making them feel that they should not give "the wrong" answer, or hurt my feelings. To minimize such effects, I emphasized in the beginning of each interview that they should be as honest as possible and not think about what I would like to hear. After having become quite familiar with the transcriptions, I have an impression that the answers express their true and honest experiences and perceptions. It was also very beneficial to have an opportunity to ask the interviewees to confirm my understanding of their answers any time afterwards if I was in doubt.

Silverman (2001:113) underlines the importance of discussing a methodological issue, which is whether interview responses are to be treated as giving direct access to the 'experience' or

as actively constructed 'narratives'. I would say that in this study they gave partly direct access to students' experiences in addition to being constructed narratives. I experienced the interviewees as honest in their answers that gave me access into their experience. At the same time the responses were narratives told by students who had been blogging in French because they had to. However, looking at the research interview from a constructivist perspective, we need not hear the interview responses simply as true or false reports on reality, but we can rather treat them as displays of perspectives (Silverman, 2001:112). This perspective is in total accordance with the objective of this study, which is not to give an absolute answer, but to get insight into students' perceptions.

3.4 Chapter summary

The choice of research design fell on phenomenology, since this study examines a phenomenon and students' perceptions of the phenomenon. I argue that since I used triangulation of methods, this research can be regarded as reliable, even though the interview responses are to some extent constructed narratives that may show signs of my presupposition. I hope that my previous arguments of my true intentions of objectivity are satisfying with regard to the reliability of the study. Additionally, the large amount of data collected from the quantitative part of the research, as well as appropriate methods of analysis will strengthen the reliability and increase the value of transferability of this study.

4. Analysis

This chapter presents the process of analysis in its entirety. Each part of the analysis is described separately. In preparation for the coding process, both the transcriptions of the interviews and the responses in the questionnaires were categorized into thematic units. The first questionnaire was analyzed before creating the second one and the interview guide. The point of departure for the categorization was both the theory this study is based on and the research questions. New units or categories were created during the process of analysis, when new information was found and new knowledge constructed. The units were analyzed in relation to each other as well as in relation to the research questions.

4.1 Analysis of the questionnaires

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the questionnaires were named in order to allow comparison of the answers at the beginning and at the end of the project. The aim of this comparison was to find potential changes in students' perceptions and attitudes towards French as a subject and towards writing in French in general. I arranged the questions in both questionnaires according to the research questions to ease the categorization and analysis of the answers. Afterwards, I coded the answers to the open questions in the questionnaires digitally. In addition I quantified the answers to the closed questions. Tables 1 to 5 illustrate the analysis of the open questions, and give examples of statements from the students with both positive and negative experiences. I have gathered the coding and categorizing of all qualitative data (both from the open questions in the questionnaires and data from interview transcripts) on the same table for practical reasons.

I collected all the answers on the same document to ease the analysis. This way I could see how many of the respondents had generally negative experiences and how many had generally positive experiences. I could also compare all the answers and find either similarities or contradictions, as well as compare the answers of respondents on different competence levels.

Table 1 Benefits of blogging: a meaningful activity

Category	Student statements		Subcategory / Theme
Benefits of blogging	From students with generally positive experiences	From students with generally negative or ambivalent experiences	Beneficial learning activity
	<p>Student 9: “Jeg lærer mye mer av å skrive tekster der jeg tar i bruk grammatikken vi lærer, enn ved å løse oppgaver.”</p> <p>Student 11: “Man må tenke for å skrive blogg.”</p>	<p>Student 15: “Kan ha vært positivt for noen.”</p> <p>Student 13: “Har merket at jeg klarer fortere å tenke når jeg skal skrive franske setninger.”</p>	
	<p>Student 1: “Jeg lærte å bruke språket istedenfor å bare kunne grammatikk og gloser”</p> <p>“...det var nyttig måte å lære fransk på, pga at du måtte skrive tekster og ikke bare fylle inn oppgaver med bare ord, og i tillegg at andre kunne lese det så ble det sånn skikkelig, at vi fikk bruk for selve språket, fransken. For til nå så føler jeg ikke at vi har hatt bruk for det på en måte, annet enn å fylle inn oppgaver. Så det var veldig kjekt å få brukt det. Men det var tidskrevende da.”</p> <p>Student 9: “Har blitt mer bevisst på hvordan man former setninger og å faktisk bruke grammatikken vi lærer til annet enn oppgaver.”</p>	<p>Student 7: “Men det som er veldig bra med blogg at vi bruker jo alt i et, og du kjenner på hvordan det er, at først når du har satt alt sammen så ser du hvordan det virkelig blir. <u>Det er det som er ekte skrivning</u>, det er ikke tilrettelagte setninger som det er i oppgaver”</p>	Use language for something purposeful

Table 2 Benefits of blogging: linguistic skills

Category	Student statements		Subcategory / Theme
Benefits of blogging	From students with generally positive experiences	From students with generally negative or ambivalent experiences	Increased language skills
	<p>Student 12: <i>“Føler jeg har blitt bedre på å skrive setninger og hele tekster og har fått litt større ordforråd.”</i></p> <p>Student 14: <i>“På grunn av bloggen har jeg skrevet fransk mye jevnere enn før og har derfor lært mer om hvordan språket er bygget opp og hvordan det skal settes sammen.”</i></p> <p>Student 1: <i>“jeg lærte å bygge setningene selv og så finne disse her småordene som binder dem sammen, og skrive en hel tekst som er sammenhengende, og som har en mening gjennom hele teksten, og ikke bare sånne forskjellige setninger. Med innledning og helst avslutning og.”</i></p>	<p>Student 8: <i>“Lærer å skrive sammenhengende tekster, lære ord, eventuelt grammatikk og forståelse”</i></p> <p>Student 16: <i>“Lærer litt av ord og setningsoppbygging.”</i></p>	
	<p>Student 1: <i>“Jeg har fått mer forståelse for større sammenhengende tekster ved å selv skrive mye av det.”</i></p> <p>Student 13: <i>Har fått mye mer forståelse for språket og har lært mer ord.”</i></p>	<p>Student 7: <i>“Men det som er veldig bra med blogg at vi bruker jo alt i et, og du kjenner på hvordan det er, at først når du har satt alt sammen så ser du hvordan det virkelig blir. Det er det som er ekte skrivning, det er ikke tilrettelagte setninger som det er i oppgaver”</i></p>	Better understanding of the language

Table 3 Benefits of blogging: attitudes and motivation

Category	Student statements		Subcategory / Theme
Attitudes, motivation and sense of mastery	From students with generally positive experiences	From students with generally negative or ambivalent experiences	Motivation and the feeling of development
	<p>Student 3: <i>“Det føltes som jeg endelig fikk til noe som ingen i klassen trengte å se/dømme... Jeg skrev mye frivillig og følte at jeg ble flink.”</i></p> <p>Student 5: <i>”...den gangen (før bloggen) var jeg ikke så motivert for jeg følte ikke at vi lærte så mye nytt og at jeg ikke fikk bruk for det jeg kunne, men nå føler jeg at vi har lært så mye nytt at jeg kan ta det til et nytt nivå på en måte og lære mer.”</i></p>	<p>Student 18: <i>“Det ble mye å gjøre og når jeg ikke oppnådde det jeg ønsket, minsket motivasjonen.”</i></p> <p>Student 8: <i>“Jeg merker ikke at jeg har blitt mye bedre i faget selv om jeg sikkert har blitt bedre... det er kjedelig og veldig tiltak å skrive blogg på fransk. Jeg har blitt mer lei av faget pga bloggen.”</i></p>	
	<p>Student 2: <i>“Det er en annerledes måte å lære på. Ikke like kjedelig som å sitte med oppgaver hele tiden.”</i></p>	<p>Student 16: <i>“Motivasjonen økte bittelitt siden jeg kunne bruke språket, men ble også lei av det.”</i></p>	Increased motivation related to blogging as a learning activity
	<p>Student 1: <i>“Det var vanskelig å skrive noen ganger, men føler større mestring av å skrive en selvprodusert tekst enn å fylle ut gloser i en oppgave.”</i></p> <p><i>”det er jo litt sånn god følelse når du skriver en lang tekst på fransk i forhold til enn vanlig oppgave. Da er det ikke sånn ”wow jeg fikk det til”. Men når du har skrevet en tekst selv så er du litt mer stolt av den på en måte. For da føler du at du kan mye mer, eller at du kan en helhet på en måte.”</i></p>	<p>Student 8: <i>“...man gjør noe man ikke vil og kan, men får det til allikevel.”</i></p> <p>Student 19: <i>“Føler ikke at jeg mestrer språket noe bedre, men det kan bare være at det er jeg som ikke legger merke til det.”</i></p>	Sense of mastery related to blogging as a learning activity

Table 4 Benefits of blogging: authentic writing

Category	Student statements		Subcategory / Theme
Authentic writing	From students with generally positive experiences	From students with generally negative or ambivalent experiences	Authentic context
	<p>Student 1: <i>“man følte en form for kommunikasjon som er et stikkord i fremmedspråk.”</i></p> <p><i>”...det var på en måte det at du bruker språket til kommunikasjon, selv om du visste at ingen leste det, men det var en sjans for det”</i></p> <p>Student 7: <i>”Det var faktisk litt kult at innleggene ble publisert på internett.”</i></p>	<p>Student 8: <i>”Var ikke så veldig annerledes.”</i></p> <p>Student 7: <i>”... og så når det kom ut på bloggen så er det mer ekte, for andre folk kan gå inn og se hva du har skrevet”</i></p>	
	<p>Student 9: <i>”Jeg ble mer nøye på hva jeg skrev, at språket skulle være korrekt og innholdet interessant.”</i></p> <p>Student 3: <i>”Det var litt skummelt men samtidig spennende og ble enda mer motivert på en slags ubeskrivelig måte, men tenkte ikke så mye over det etter en stund.”</i></p>	<p>Student 10: <i>“Har ikke tenkt over at jeg skrev til potensielt ekte mennesker.”</i></p>	Awareness of authentic readers

Table 5 Benefits of blogging: new categories

New categories	Student statements		Subcategory / Theme
The role of feedback	From students with generally positive experiences	From students with generally negative or ambivalent experiences	Feedback as playing an important role for learning
	<p>Student 3: <i>"Feil jeg hadde gjort lenge opp gjennom årene ble oppdaget og jeg fikk en bedre forståelse."</i></p> <p>Student 14: <i>"Responsen pekte ut feilene og det som manglet i teksten, og da får jeg muligheten til å se hva som mangler i teksten og så lærte jeg av egne feil."</i></p> <p>Student 2: <i>"Det var jo den (responsen) som var mest nyttig, det virker som en underveisvurdering hele tiden."</i></p>	<p>Student 10: <i>"Tilbakemeldingen har vært til stor hjelp da jeg skulle rettskrive blogginnleggene mine."</i></p> <p>Student 15: <i>"Det var lettere å se egne feil etter responsen."</i></p> <p>Student 8: <i>"Hvis jeg ikke hadde fått noe respons så hadde det nok vært mye verre å finne ut hva vi gjorde feil. For når jeg skrive en tekst så virker det som at det er sikkert rett eller kan ikke gjøre mye bedre, men når man får påpekt feil så er det lettere å lære utfra den feilen."</i></p>	
"Forced" writing	<p>Student 6: <i>"Siden vi fikk så mange innlegg å skrive i lekse, ble jeg vant med å skrive franske tekster istedenfor å bare fylle inn grammatikk."</i></p> <p>Student 3: <i>"Når fransk plutselig ble et fag man jobbet med hjemme også...ble det lettere å ta seg tid, lære og jobbe med faget..."</i></p>	<p>Student 17: <i>"Det er positivt at man skriver ofte og får tilbakemelding på det man skriver."</i></p>	To push students to write is positive
Blog as an assessment	<p>Student 1: <i>"det synes jeg egentlig var ganske greit. Vi fikk god tid til å gå gjennom og tenke over teksten på en måte. For på en prøve, matteprøve for eksempel må du skrive og så når du må gå gjennom det etterpå er du sliten og trøtt og overser ganske mye."</i></p>		Slower pace of writing is beneficial

4.2 The analysis of the interviews

As mentioned earlier, the interviews were recorded and transcribed right after the interview situation. Following the conventions of the analysis of a qualitative research interview as described in Kvale (2007), I interpreted the responses to a certain degree during the interview situation in order to be able to ask “check-up” questions when something was ambiguous. Afterwards I read through the transcripts of the interviews in order to get an overview of the content (Widerberg, 2011). I then reviewed the transcripts several times to sort out statements relevant to the research questions, and to confirm or disconfirm my previous interpretations. I tried to avoid common errors when analyzing conversations, pointed out by Silverman (2001:177), such as trying to make sense of a single line of transcript or utterance in isolation from the surrounding talk. I did this by first interpreting and analyzing the interviews in their entirety, and afterwards categorizing the responses in relation to the research questions.

After having transcribed the interviews, I started coding them digitally by placing relevant statements into different categories. The examples of the coding are presented in Tables 1 to 5 where relevant answers from the interviews are gathered. This kind of coding also allowed later quantifications, if desired. Most of the categories were developed in advance taking into account the hypothesis and the research questions, but also new categories were created during the analysis. According to Kvale (2007:105), categorizing can provide an overview of the transcripts and facilitate comparisons and hypothesis testing.

Yet another method I used was making profiles of the interviewees (Widerberg, 2001), such as “a boy at a high competence level, an eager blogger, experiences strong learning effects, positive attitudes toward French, no remarkable changes in attitudes”. I made the profiles on the basis of the statements they gave in the interviews, as well as on the basis of my knowledge of their competence level, attitudes and eventual learning difficulties that I had gained from previous teacher-student conversations as well as from the questionnaires. The profiles helped structure the data, and are also important regarding eventual new knowledge this study provides. The profiles are to some extent representations of a group of students and this group’s experiences and reflections. That is why it was important to select interviewees on different competence levels, both male and female students, and students with different experiences. One of the aims with these profiles was for instance to find potential links between the interviewees’ statements and their competence level. Potential links and

similarities could be of interest when making the final analysis. For instance an assumption had arisen from the empirical data and from reading the blogs, that the students at a high competence level would perceive blogging beneficial to a greater degree than students at a low competence level. Due to the profiles this assumption was disproved. The profiles are presented in Chapter 5.

These methods for analysis were chosen due to their appropriateness with regard to the research topic and the nature of the research questions. By choosing different methods in the process of analysis, I wanted to secure my understanding of the phenomenon, as well as strengthen the validity of the study.

4.3 The final analysis

Having collected data both from two questionnaires and interview transcriptions, I finally engaged in data triangulation (Johnson et al., 2007) in order to ensure the validity of the study, and to get as deep an understanding as possible of the phenomenon. First, I compared the results of the first and second questionnaire to find similarities and changes in students' perceptions and attitudes. Second, I gathered the answers in quantitative units, which I transferred into tables and diagrams (See Chapter 5). Like this it was easy to analyze the results. Third, this account was contrasted and completed with the qualitative data from the interviews, and from the open questions in the questionnaires. To make sure that my understanding of the data was correct, I read through both questionnaires and the interview transcripts several times till I felt I knew the data well enough to make interpretations and draw general conclusions. The outcome of this analysis is interpreted in Chapter 5.

5. Presentation of the results- students' reflections

This chapter presents the findings from the collected data. It gathers the findings from both the quantitative and the qualitative data, which are presented side by side. The results from the questionnaires are mostly presented in percentages because of the large number of the respondents. Since there are only eight interviewees, the results from the interviews are presented using the number of similar answers, for instance “Seven of eight say...”. The chapter starts with the portraits of the interviewees, who are presented as “student 1, 2, 3” etc. and referred to as “he” to ensure the participants' anonymity. The statements are translated into English from different Norwegian dialects and might therefore lack some nuances, or the translations can be slightly different from the originals. This is because it is often difficult to translate statements directly from one language to another, especially when the statements are expressed in a dialect. I have emphasized the message of the statements more than a direct translation, because I regard it as more important to get the message right considering the understanding of the results. The original statements are added as footnotes. The quantitative results are presented in the form of diagrams and tables. These are supported and explained by the qualitative data right after each diagram/table. I have tried to keep in mind the responsibility of objectivity implied in my role as a researcher, and tried to find as objective and neutral solutions as possible when bringing out the students' voices.

The results presented here may appear subjective and may appear to reflect my enthusiasm for the topic. I therefore want to emphasize that my research questions search for **potential benefits** of blogging as a learning activity. This is why I have tried to give as strong arguments as possible to defend my true and honest intentions of objectivity. There are of course also disadvantages and negative statements presented in the data material, but since they are minority and do not answer the research questions, I have chosen to present and discuss them more thoroughly in Chapter 6.

5.1 Profiles and narratives – Who are the students?

Student 1 says that

*“It was a beneficial way to learn French, because you had to write texts and not just do fill-in-words exercises. In addition, anyone could read it so it was like...real. That we could use the language itself, French. I feel that until now we haven't had any use for it in a way, except from filling in exercises. So it was very nice to use it, even though it was time-consuming.”*⁷

Student 1 is at a high competence level and ambitious regarding school and grades. He regards French as culturally and internationally important, a language that is good to know, but he has not always been very motivated to learn it. He has previously experienced it only like studying grammar and vocabulary, but never getting any use for the language. By blogging in French, his motivation increased remarkably, and he says that he finally could use the language in a meaningful way. He also says that blogging significantly improved his understanding of the language as a whole. In addition, he felt increased sense of mastery. He says that when reading through his texts he felt he was proud of them. By blogging he could use the language at a higher level and learn more than what had been the case earlier. He says that:

*“It is a good feeling when you write a long text in French. ...when you have written a personal text you are kind of proud of it, because then you feel that you know much more, or you know an entirety in a way. Yeah, you can show what you know, almost everything... The positive thing with blogging is that you have to write coherent texts and like that learn and communicate.”*⁸

Student 1 says he had a sense of authentic communication when blogging on the open Internet, which made him feel that he should write in a way that foreigners could understand him. This awareness made him make an extra effort in the writing process. He also says it was useful to write complete texts, because then you needed to pay attention to not only grammar, but also to the structure and content.

⁷ “Det var nyttig måte å lære fransk på, pga at du måtte skrive tekster og ikke bare fylle inn oppgaver med bare ord, og i tillegg at andre kunne lese det så ble det sånn... skikkelig, at vi fikk bruk for selve språket, fransken. For til nå så føler jeg ikke at vi har hatt bruk for det på en måte, annet enn å fylle inn oppgaver. Så det var veldig kjekt å få brukt det. Men det var tidskrevende da.”

⁸ “Det er jo litt sånn god følelse når du skriver en lang tekst på fransk ... når du har skrevet en tekst selv så er du litt mer stolt av den på en måte. For da føler du at du kan mye mer, eller at du kan en helhet på en måte. Ja, du får vist det du kan, alt nesten... det positive er jo at du lærer å skrive sammenhengende tekster og lærer å bruke språket og kommunisere”

Student 2 is at a high competence level, self-regulated in his learning, and thinks that French is interesting and challenging. His attitude towards French has changed positively because of the blog. He says that:

“I think it is very good, because the most difficult thing in French is to construct sentences, and it’s exactly what you have to do when you’re blogging....you can practise creating sentences and at the same time you have to conjugate verbs and all that. Yes, it was a great change from just sitting there and conjugating verbs all the time, which became soon boring. Blogging you can choose the topic yourself so you can write about something interesting.”⁹

He feels that he has improved his language skills when it comes to creating sentences and it has become more natural for him to write in French. The feedback from the teacher has played an important role in the process, in order to know where he can make improvements. He has learned a lot from the feedback. He also feels increased sense of mastery and motivation to learn because of the blog. He says that:

“The positive thing with blogging is that I’ve become better in constructing sentences, and that we get frequent feedback. Also the fact that you are forced to write quite long texts pushes you to challenge yourself....You become better in conjugation, because you have to make sure that things match each other in the sentences, so you need to pay attention to quite a lot of things. You can also go more deeply into a specific topic and learn words you usually wouldn’t learn.”¹⁰

Concerning authentic communication, Student 2 did not experience blogging any different from writing texts to the teacher. He thought that it was just the teacher who would read it all the way.

Student 3 is at an average competence level and did not work much with French earlier. He had a negative attitude toward French and found it difficult. His motivation was low. About blogging he says that:

⁹ *“Jeg synes det var veldig bra for det vanskeligste i fransk er jo å kunne formulere setninger, og det er jo det du må gjøre når du blogger... du får jo øve på setningsstrukturer og samtidig så må du bøye verb og alt det der. Ja, det var jo veldig stor forskjell fra å bare sitte og bøye verb hele tiden for det ble veldig fort kjedelig. Mens her er det sånn at du kan velge tema selv, så du kan ta noe som interesserer deg.”*

¹⁰ *“Det positive, så er det at jeg har blitt bedre på å skrive setninger, og at vi får mye tilbakemelding, og at du blir pushet til å skrive ganske langt av og til, så du må faktisk utfordre deg selv...du blir jo bedre til å bøye verb og, for du må se hva som passer i forhold til setningen så da må du passe på ganske mange ting....du kan utdype deg på forskjellige tema på fransk også, sånn ...lære ord som du vanligvis ikke hadde lært.”*

” It felt like I wrote the blog for my own sake and not for others’. Because of that I did it as well as I could, and sat often hours learning grammar unconsciously.”¹¹

He experiences significant increase in language skills, feels increased sense of mastery and motivation, and has written several blog entries on a voluntary basis. He clearly notices development in his language skills and this notion has inspired him to learn even more. He also says that it was good to be “forced” to produce texts. To create whole texts from the beginning to the end was motivating and beneficial, since he had to use all the knowledge in one place. It was especially beneficial to get frequent feedback and like that learn to notice one’s own errors. Blogging has increased both his motivation and self-efficacy regarding French.

Student 4 is at a low competence level and has learning difficulties, meaning that he learns new things at a slower pace than most other students. He has been struggling with French a long time and at the beginning of this project most of his sentences were incomprehensible. Now he writes both longer texts and more comprehensible sentences, even though there still are lots of errors. He has been motivated for learning French to some degree all the time. He tells that

“I am able to better understand sentence structure and see my own errors. I’m still in doubt if I liked blogging or not, but since I have become better in French it is obviously very positive. Regarding French, it has become better, and I have gotten a better understanding of it.”¹²

He says that the feedback has played the most important role in his learning through blogging.

Student 5 has dyslexia and has not worked much with French for a long time. He has not been motivated, apparently because of his challenges with dyslexia. He has also had low sense of mastery in French, but experiences that the blog is one of several factors that has

¹¹ *“Det følte som jeg skrev bloggen for min del og ikke andres. Dette bidro til at jeg gjorde så godt jeg kunne og ofte ble sittende noen timer og leste meg opp på grammatikk ubevisst.”*

¹² *“Jeg klarer å forstå mer om hvordan setningen er bygd opp. Det er en enklere måte å finne svakhetene sine og da kan jeg jobbe med det. Jeg er fortsatt litt usikker på om jeg likte blogging, men siden jeg har blitt bedre i fransk så er det jo veldig positivt. I forhold til fransken så har den blitt bedre, jeg har fått bedre forståelse for det.”*

inspired him to make an effort in the learning process and that has increased his sense of mastery. He says for instance that he has learned to better understand the language and its structures.

*“Due to the blog I have noticed what I need to learn. I don’t learn only from writing. It’s when you write and get to know your errors and what you should work on, is when you learn... It was more that, when you know what you need to work on, that....that was good with the blog... I think that this (the blog) impacted it (motivation) A LOT, that we were forced to write things. But the thing I felt was a turning point for me, or that I came closer to learning French in a way, was that we didn’t only get feedback but we were forced to write.”*¹³

In addition, he says that

*“I have been marking time quite a long so... Now I can see the development in my blog, how it was at the beginning and at the end...yes, now I feel that ‘I can do this’.”*¹⁴

Student 6 is at a high competence level, and like student 1, feels that his motivation to learn French increased significantly. Student 6 says that blogging made writing in French more natural for him, and helped him to understand the language in its entirety. He feels increased sense of mastery because of the blog and the feedback students received on their texts. According to him, blogging as homework is much more motivating than just ordinary grammar exercises.

Student 7 is at a high competence level, has always been extremely motivated for learning French and desires to study French at the university, maybe even live in France for a period of time. He has a great understanding of grammar and learns new things easily. He does not perceive blogging as very beneficial for his learning of French, but says that writing on the Internet felt more real and made it more inspiring. He also says that he has learned to use grammar in a context since you see the entire text and need to use all your knowledge in one

¹³ *”Som følge av bloggen så har jeg jo sett hva jeg måtte lære. Jeg lærer ikke bare av å skrive. Det er å skrive og så få vite hva som er feil og hva jeg må jobbe med, at man lærer... Det var mer med det at du vet hva du skal jobbe med som gjorde ...som var bra med bloggen... Dette (bloggen) hjalp VELDIG på (motivasjonen) syns jeg, at vi ble tvungne til å skrive ting. Men det som jeg følte, at det som var vendepunktet for meg, eller at jeg kom sånn et skritt nærmere til å lære fransk på en måte, var at vi ikke bare fikk respons, men at vi var tvunget til å skrive.”*

¹⁴ *“jeg har på en måte stått litt sånn på stedet hvil ganske lenge så Nå kan jeg se forskjellen utover bloggen, hvordan det var først og hvordan det er nå... ja, nå føler jeg at jeg får ting til.”*

place. Because of the feedback he became aware of the things he still needed to learn, which in turn increased his motivation to actually learn them. Other positive effects of the blog were, according to him, that the tasks were quite free and you could write about anything you liked. He feels a kind of ownership of the blog and it has become his personal project, which made him make an effort for it. He also perceives the feedback as the main factor that helped him to gain learning effects from blogging.

Student 8 is at an average competence level, understands the language to a great degree and does not have any difficulties to learn new things. He has negative experiences of blogging as a learning activity, mostly because it is so time consuming. He experienced to become very stressed when he had a deadline to finish the texts. The amount of writing became overwhelming for him. Probably due to the stress, he has not worked with his texts to the desired degree. However, he says that he has learned to write coherent texts as well as grammar in general. He experiences the feedback as useful. He has apparently low self-efficacy concerning French, since he says that

*“But it is weird that I actually have written a whole text in a language I do not really master, or did not master earlier. It’s a bit weird to think about...The negative thing for me is that I’m not that good so it was not at the level where I feel I learn something. I worked more like to be done with it.”*¹⁵

However, concerning the sense of mastery he says that:

*“I felt increased sense of mastery, because you do something you don’t want to and feel you don’t master, but succeed in it anyway.”*¹⁶

In this section I have summarized the essential parts of the interviews by presenting profiles of each interviewee. The intention with the profiles has been to help the reader to “get to know” the interviewees in order to better understand the results of the study. Through the profiles I have tried to shed light on the different points of departure the individual students

¹⁵ “Men det er jo rart å se at jeg faktisk har skrevet en hel tekst på et språk som jeg egentlig ikke kan eller ikke kunne før. Det er litt rart å tenke på... Det negative for meg er at jeg er liksom ikke så flink så da ble det ikke på det nivået at jeg føler at jeg lærer noe særlig. Jeg jobber liksom mer for å bli ferdig”

¹⁶ “Jeg opplevde større mestring, fordi man gjør noe man ikke vil og kan, men får det til allikevel “

may have, and that might influence their abilities to learn as well as the experienced learning outcome.

5.2 What do the students see as the potentials of blogging as a learning activity?

I will now present the main findings of the study. To make it easier for the reader to follow the track, the presentation proceeds in the same order as do the research questions in the introduction, and the categories in the interview guide.

5.2.1 If and why may students experience blogging as a learning activity beneficial for language learning?

All in all, 81% of the respondents say they have positive experiences of blogging as a learning activity in general (question number 23 in the second questionnaire. See Appendix 5). Findings from the questionnaire show that 79% of the respondents perceive blogging as a learning activity beneficial, at least to some extent. Figure 2 shows that 18% experienced that blogging has increased their general language skills to a large degree, 61% experienced that blogging has increased their general language skills to some degree, while 21% experienced that blogging has not increased their general language skills significantly.

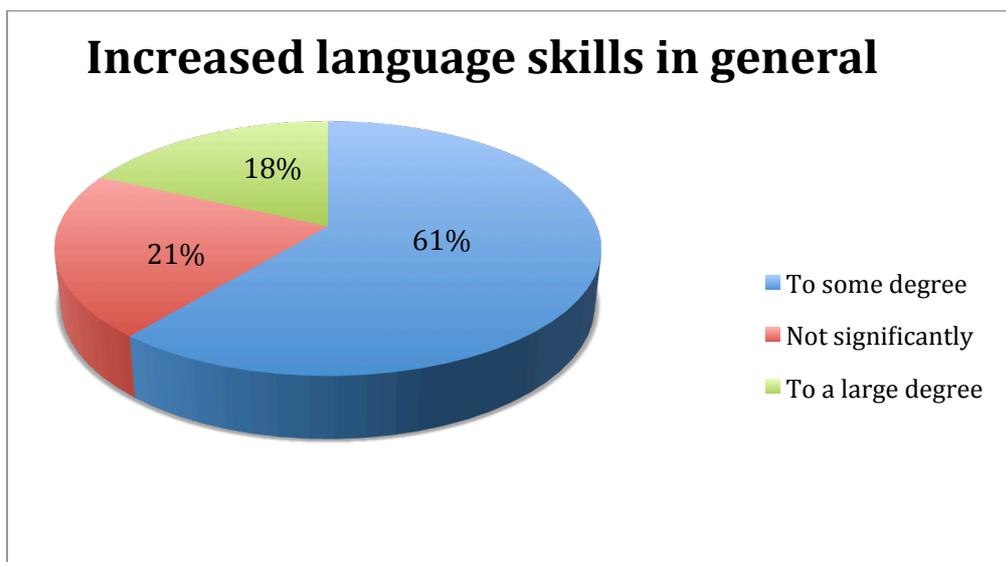


Figure 2 Increased language skills in general

The respondents point out the frequent feedback from the teacher as the most beneficial factor regarding the writing process and learning outcome. 64% said they learned some French because of the feedback, 20% said they learned a lot of French because of the feedback, and 16% said they did not notice any significant learning effect because of the feedback (See Figure 3).

In the questionnaire, the respondents explained the positive effects of both teacher and peer feedback in the following way: the feedback and response pointed out errors they had made along the way, they got a better understanding of the language, and learned to notice their errors and weaknesses. The feedback provided them with continuous formative assessment on their language skills, something that both helped them and motivated them to learn. The fact that they became aware of the gaps in their language skills, and got to know specific things they needed to work on, made learning more concrete.

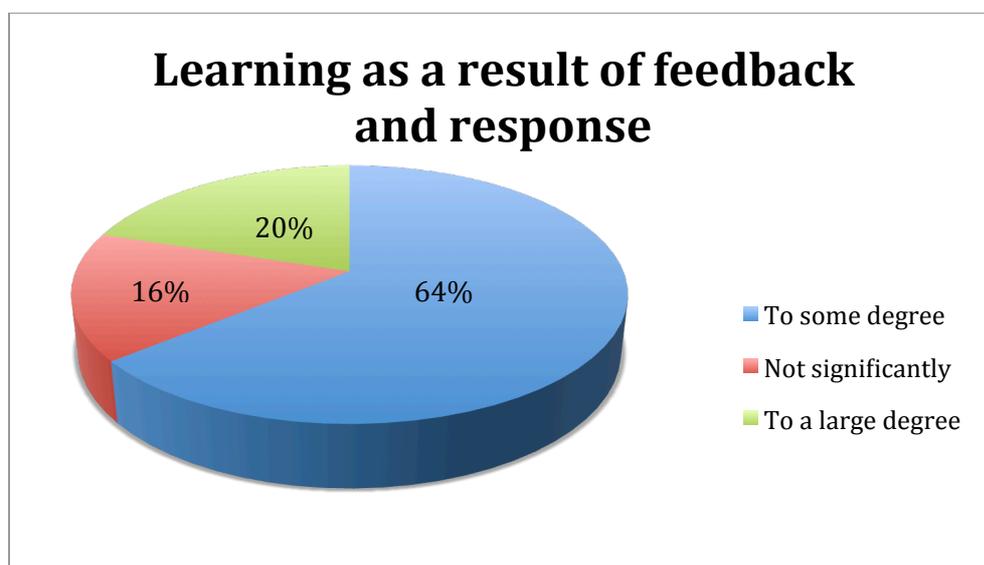


Figure 3 Learning as a result of feedback and response

5.2.2 Other reasons students give for perceiving blogging as a beneficial learning activity

In the following, I will present other reasons given for advantages of blogging. These are based on the explanations and answers to the open questions in the questionnaires, and are therefore not specifically quantified. Some of the reasons were given in the interviews. The amount of responses in the parentheses shows how many of the respondents gave similar

answers. These answers were not given verbatim, but the message was undoubtedly the same. Therefore, the following statements are my generalizations of several similar statements, expressed in various ways by different respondents. Examples of this are shown in Tables 1 to 5 in Chapter 4.

- You learn to write an entire text (more than ten respondents)
- It is nice when you have a complete product to present (one respondent)
- The tasks are free and it is motivating to write about things that you are interested in (more than ten respondents)
- You learn a lot of grammar and can use it in a context (more than ten respondents)
- You have to *think* when you write a blog entry (three respondents)
- You get a better understanding of the language (more than ten respondents)
- The context you write in is more real and you feel a kind of communication (eight respondents)
- You are pushed to write a lot (six of eight interviewees)
- Blogging gives you an opportunity to actually use the language (more than ten respondents)
- It is a good way to maximize your learning of a language (more than ten respondents)

One factor that several interviewees have emphasized as beneficial is that they were pushed to produce a great amount of text. They say that blogging “forced” them to work with the texts at home to a greater degree than ordinary homework, and it also pushed them to repeat grammar rules and pay attention to several aspects of the language at the same time.

Another factor several of the respondents express as having been influential is the sense of mastery (Question nr 7 in the second questionnaire. See Appendix 5). This is pointed out as one of the reasons why the respondents experience blogging as a beneficial learning activity. 40% of the respondents say that their sense of mastery increased to some degree because of blogging. 20% say that their sense of mastery increased to a large degree because of blogging, while 40% say that it did not increase significantly (See Figure 4). Altogether, 60% felt that their sense of mastery increased at least to some degree. Several interviewees say that they either felt proud of their texts, they saw the development in their writing skills or they felt success when they saw that they actually had been able to write a complete text in French. Some of them express clearly that they felt an increased sense of mastery when blogging in

French, because they did not believe themselves to be able to write as much in a language they felt they did not master.

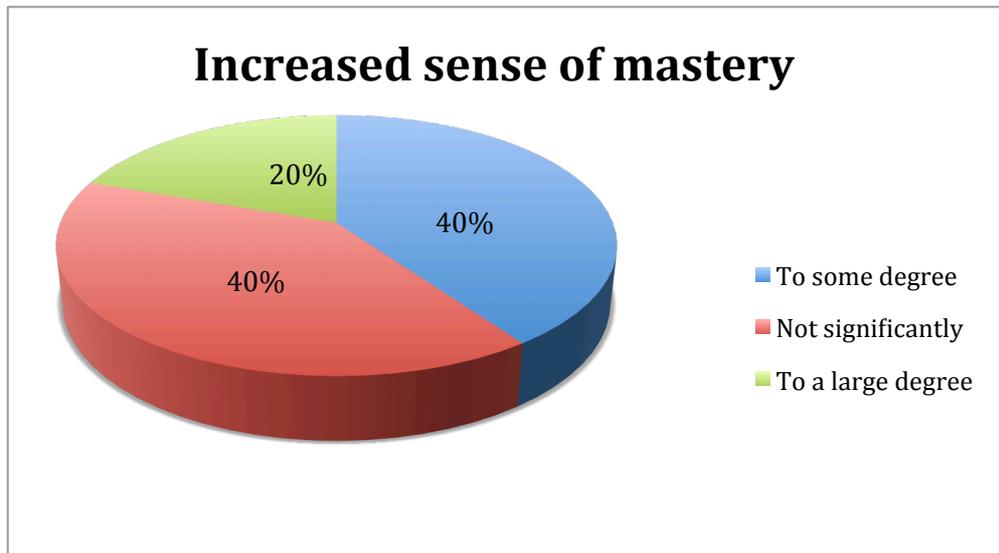


Figure 4 Increased sense of mastery as a consequence of blogging

In the questionnaire respondents were also asked to give reasons for their answers concerning sense of mastery. Here are some of the reasons given:

- I feel that I master French better because of the blog, since I have learned to make comprehensible sentences all by my self. *(Girl at an average level)*
- Things were not so scary anymore, things like *imparfait* and other grammar rules. It was fun to be able to produce own texts without too much help. *(Boy at a low level)*
- Sometimes it was difficult to write, but I feel that I master the language much better when I produce texts myself than when I fill in words in an exercise. *(Boy at a high level)*
- I felt an increased sense of mastery because we get continuous training in writing and continuous feedback on what we write. *(Girl at a high level)*
- I felt an increased sense of mastery when blogging, because you do something you don't want to do and you are not able to do, but you still succeed in it. *(Boy at an average level)*

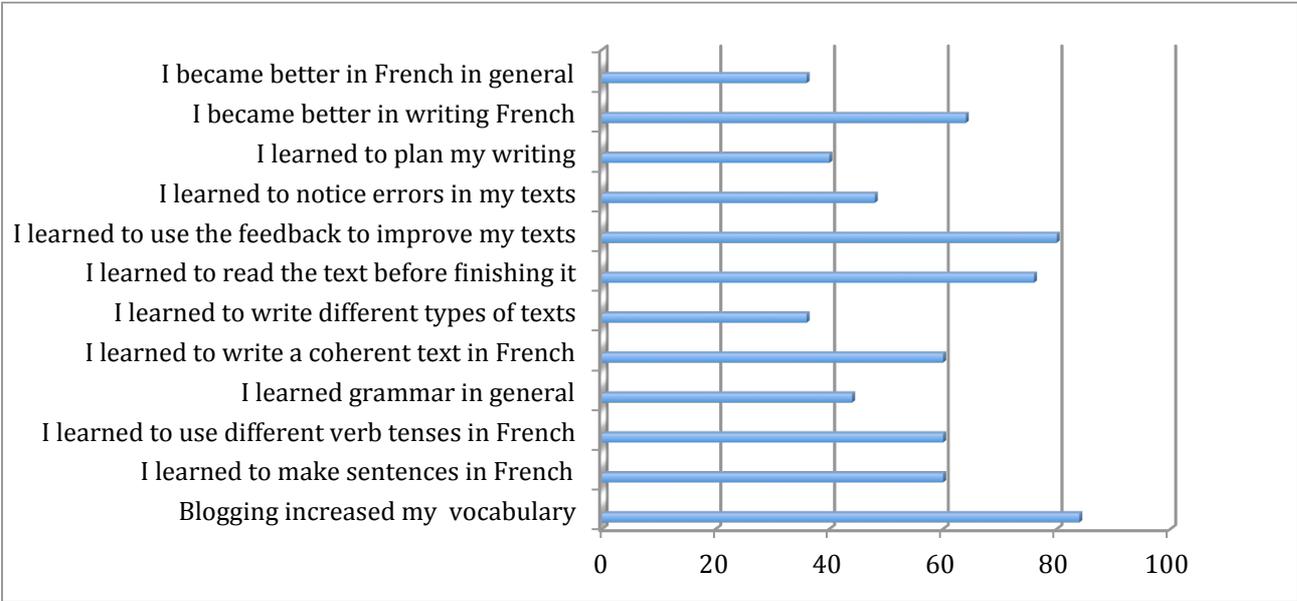
As can be seen above, most of the students perceive blogging as a learning activity beneficial because of different reasons. They bring out both increased language skills and motivational

aspects due to the frequent feedback and response as main reasons for their statements. To sum up the main findings concerning the main research question, this group of students experience blogging as a beneficial activity. Due to its free form and the great amount of writing it implies, it is motivating and they can see the development of their own language skills. The frequent feedback to their blog entries helps them become aware of their own errors and inspires them to make the texts even better. Blogging increases their motivation because it offers a more real context where students feel they can use the language in a purposeful way. It helps them to feel sense of mastery because they realize that they are actually able to write a longer, self-governed text in French. Since blogging implies extensive writing, and especially when used as an end-term assessment as was done in this case, it pushes the students to work with French more than is the case with for instance fill-in exercises with specific linguistic focus. The participants perceive the extensive writing practice blogging offers as beneficial.

5.2.3 According to the students, which specific benefits may blogging provide for them concerning their language learning?

Table 6 is a summary of the responses to question number 6 in the second questionnaire, where different alternatives were given (See Appendix 5). It shows the specific benefits respondents perceive to have gained through blogging and what percentage of the students selected the same answer. The students could select several alternatives in the list if they regarded them as appropriate.

Table 6 The degree of experienced specific benefits



These specific benefits were more thoroughly explained in the interviews. The factor that was brought up again and again was the important role of feedback and response from the teacher, concerning learning effects and motivational aspects. As mentioned earlier, the feedback helped them to notice their errors and pointed out things they needed to work on. It also encouraged them to write, since they suddenly felt that they mastered the language. Another important benefit that several respondents bring up in the questionnaire is that they got a new and better understanding of the language in its entirety. Blogging helped them to understand how things are related to each other and they learned to write coherent texts in French. Sentence structure was also mentioned as a concrete learning outcome they have learned from blogging. Yet another benefit was that they needed to use all their language knowledge in one place, which helped them in understanding the language as a whole. Also *using* the language was mentioned several times. Several respondents say they felt that until they started blogging they had only learned grammar and words, but by blogging, they finally could use the language in a meaningful way and use the grammar and words they had learned for a real purpose.

5.2.4 If and why may blogging in French promote students' motivation for learning the language?

The second sub-research question concerns motivational aspects. The results from the questionnaires show that 19% felt that blogging increased their motivation for learning French to a large degree, 39% felt that blogging increased their motivation for learning French to some degree, while 42 % say their motivation did not increase significantly because of blogging (See Figure 5). The results show that the impact of blogging on motivation for learning is not strong. However, there are still implications that it plays a role, since 58% at least to some degree felt increased motivation, which they connect directly to blogging as a learning activity.

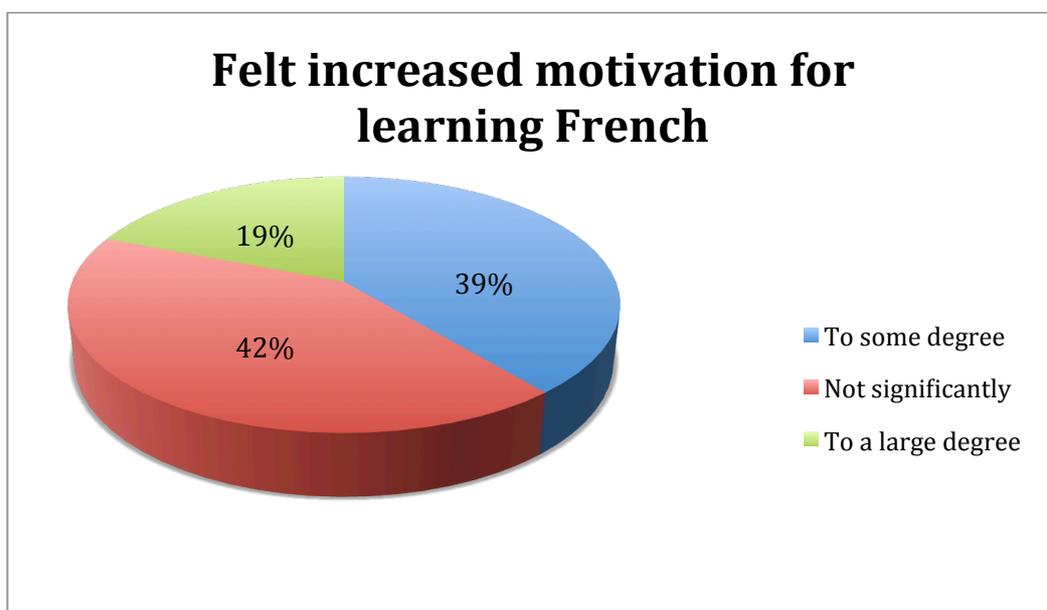


Figure 5 Feeling of increased motivation as a consequence of blogging

Seven of eight interviewees say that blogging increased their motivation for learning French, but they gave different reasons for that. The interviewees at a high competence level experienced increased motivation because blogging was challenging, they had to think, and they felt that they could use the language in a real context. In other words, blogging made learning meaningful, since it opens up for communication outside the classroom. The fact that they could/must use all their language skills in one place and that they learned to write coherent texts in French was also motivating according to the interviewees at a high and average level. The interviewees at a low competence level felt that their motivation increased, because when blogging, they felt mastery and motivated them to learn even more. Eight of the

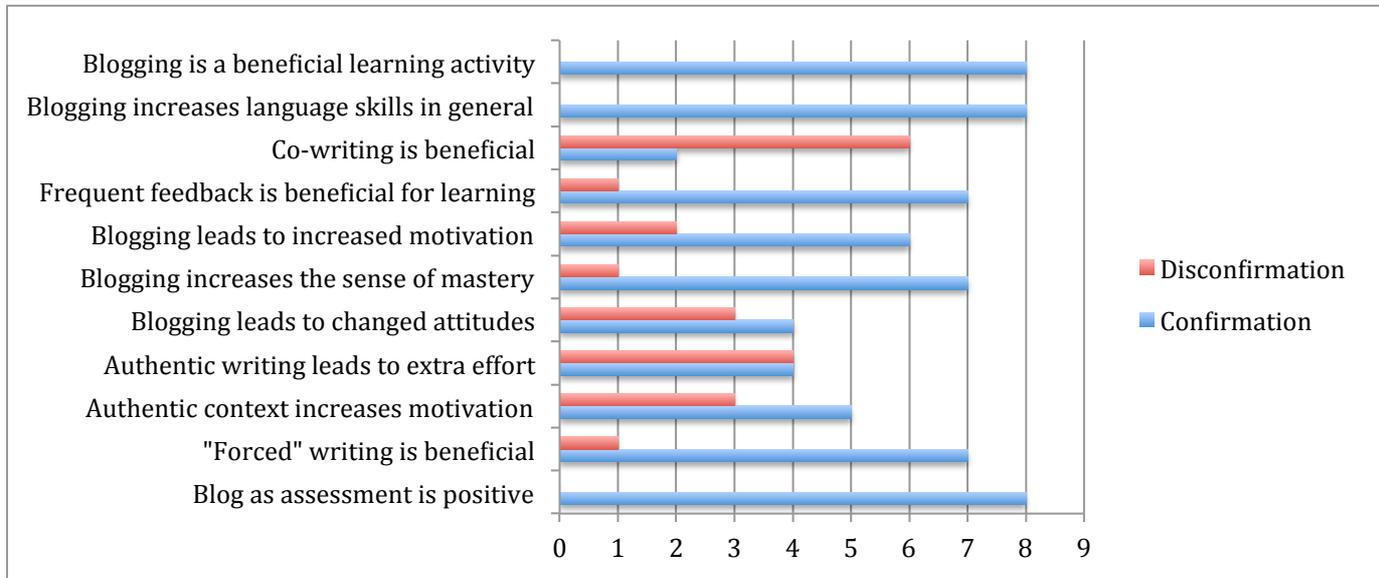
respondents express in the questionnaire that they experienced it as motivating to write to authentic readers.

Here are some of the explanations the respondents gave for increased motivation in the questionnaires:

- When I see how different it is to write a whole text compared to grammar exercises, I feel a desire for learning more. *(Girl at an average level)*
- When I started to understand how the language is built up and how you use it, I felt a desire for learning even more and become even better. *(Girl at an average level)*
- It felt like I finally succeeded in something no one in the class needed to see/judge. It (blogging) was a safe way to learn. I wrote a lot voluntarily and felt that I became better. *(Girl at an average level)*
- It was motivating because I felt that I learned *(Three girls at a high/average/low level)*
- It was motivating because I learned to use the language instead of only knowing grammar and words. *(Boy at a high level)*
- My motivation increased, since I could use the language. *(Two boys at a low/average level)*

The results of the interviews are gathered in table 7. The table shows both original categories as well as new categories that were created during the study. It shows to which degree the statements in different categories were confirmed/disconfirmed by the eight interviewees.

Table 7 The categories after the analyses and their confirmation/disconfirmation



5.3 Chapter summary

The findings show that most of the students perceive blogging as a beneficial learning activity that influences their language skills, motivation and understanding of the language. However, there are individual differences in the extent to which they perceive blogging as beneficial, as well as in their reasons. I will discuss the findings in the next chapter.

6. Discussion

“In terms of skills, producing a coherent, fluent, extended piece of writing is probably the most difficult thing there is to do in language” (Nunan, 1999:271). After having been blogging in French for six months, my students can certainly agree with this statement. This project has involved lots of writing, repetition of grammar, receiving feedback, revising, writing even more... leading to both joy and feelings of success, as well as frustration and discouragement. Writing in L3 is an enormous challenge for all students regardless of competence level, and requires many different skills and cognitive processing. Despite the challenges and frustration, writing in L3 may provide the students with several benefits concerning language skills, content knowledge, as well as cultural, collaborative and communicative competencies, which I will discuss further in this chapter.

According to social constructionism, which the study is placed within, our understanding of the world is the product of social processes that are historically and culturally bound, and there cannot be any determined or given universal truth (Burr, 2003). Therefore, this study does not give any absolute answer to the question about the effectiveness of blogging as a learning activity, but can still give some indications of its impact on a process of learning foreign languages. Black and Wiliam (2009:7) state that “the teacher is responsible for designing and implementing an effective learning environment, and the learner is responsible for the learning within that environment.” As teachers, we often have little impact on students’ willingness to learn, but on the contrary have lots of possibilities to create effective, motivating and authentic learning practices. Whether learning takes place depends on different factors, but a teacher’s knowledge about *how* learning may take place is important for providing students with possibilities for learning. The point of departure for the discussion is the following hypothesis, which was presented in the introduction:

Blogging as a learning activity in foreign languages involves a lot of writing as well as writing for potentially authentic readers. This may increase students’ motivation to make an extra effort in the writing process regarding grammar and vocabulary. Additionally, this extra effort in the writing process may increase the quality of students’ texts and lead to improved language skills in general.

The following discussion will embrace different aspects of blogging as a learning activity connecting relevant theory and previous research to the findings of this study. In addition, I have chosen to support the discussion with my own experiences and observations during the actual project. My personal experiences are of course subjective, but may still contribute with interesting aspects. It needs to be emphasized here that most of the findings of the study are transferable to traditional writing in language classrooms. However, it is the interactional aspect of blogging, as well as its digital form and authentic context that make blogging different from traditional writing activities (Otnes, 2009; Schwebs & Otnes, 2006).

I will start with presenting overall findings, and thereafter bring out the most important of them, braiding them with the theory. The findings are not discussed in a certain order, but are dealt with in places where they can be naturally connected to relevant theory. The discussion will follow the same order as the theory is presented in Chapter 2. In section 6.2 I will discuss blogging as an activity that may initiate meta-cognitive reflection. Section 6.3 deals with blogging as an activity that may enhance self-regulation. In section 6.4 I discuss the decisive role of feedback for learning. Section 6.5 deals with knowledge transformation when blogging is used as a learning activity. Section 6.6 presents blogging as an effective writing practice, and further, I will discuss blogging with regard to social and cultural aspects in section 6.7. Section 6.8 embraces the theory and the findings with regard to writing in a foreign language. Further, section 6.9 deals with motivational aspects. Due to the positive tone of the research questions, this discussion will mostly have a positive tone. However, to create a more balanced picture of the topic, I will also bring out some of the disadvantages with blogging as a learning activity in section 6.10. In addition to the issues discussed in the main part of the discussion, I find it important to briefly present some other factors influencing learning, doing so in section 6.11. Even though the topics for the discussion are closely connected to the research questions, it is in Chapter 7 that I will review them specifically.

6.1 Overall findings

Previous research presented in Chapter 1 points out the following benefits with blogging as a learning tool: Blogging 1) enhances self-reflection, 2) allows writing at a slower pace, 3) develops an increased awareness of the audience, which leads to critical consideration of one's own text, 4) encourages creative and reflective writing, 5) encourages disclosure of

their own self and personal growth when reflecting on their postings, and 6) builds up their confidence in writing. All of them, except number three, are clearly confirmed by this study, which I will show examples of and discuss below.

The analysis very often involves analytical generalizations, which means “a reasoned judgement about the extent to which the findings from one study can be used as a guide to what might occur in another situation” (Kvale, 2007:127). This is also the case with this study. The findings are analytical generalizations, that originally occur in a relatively small group of students, but that can be transferable to other similar groups and situations. I argue that I have made a reasoned judgement about the reliability and transferability of the findings that may be useful for other language teachers, and will now present the results of my analysis. In my study on blogging as a learning activity in L3 I found that:

- The majority of the students experienced blogging as a learning activity as positive and beneficial, regardless of the level of proficiency. The negative experiences can be connected to motivational aspects as well as students’ attitudes and beliefs, and have no connection to the level of proficiency.
- Blogging in L3 may improve students’ general language skills, but the improvements in their skills depend to a great degree on students’ own efforts and engagement in the learning process, i.e. their ability to self-regulate learning.
- Frequent and appropriate feedback plays a significant role for learning. However, learning as a result of feedback depends on students’ ability and willingness to use the feedback effectively to improve their texts, and consequently draw benefits from it.
- When noticing the development in their language skills, blogging may increase students’ sense of mastery and motivation for learning the target language. The realization that they are able to produce an entire text in their third language, generated a feeling of success.
- Blogging provides students with possibilities to gain specific benefits in language learning such as increased vocabulary, increased planning and revising skills, better understanding of the language structures, better understanding of grammar, and automatization of writing. These benefits depend on students’ attitudes and motivation to make an effort for learning.
- In general, the awareness of potentially authentic readers did not affect the students’ writing significantly. Some of the participants express that this awareness affected

their writing and even motivated them to write better texts. These participants say they feel a kind of communication when blogging.

In the following discussion I intend to build a bridge between these findings and the theory this study is based on. Through examples I try to concretize the theory, and emphasize the most important factors necessary for understanding how and why blogging may be beneficial for learning foreign languages. To shed light on a few unforeseen aspects taking place during the research project, some theoretical perspectives not previously introduced will be used in the argumentation in this chapter.

6.2 Blogging as a learning activity that may initiate meta-cognitive reflection

Rosa Manchón (2011:70) has examined the potential learning effects of writing and states that a learner is engaged in several learning processes during writing, such as “generating and assessing linguistic options through the use of explicit and implicit knowledge and via cross-linguistic comparisons; and metalinguistic reflection”. As presented in Chapter 2, several other researchers such as Williams, Swain and Tynjälä support this idea that writing develops students’ meta-cognitive awareness and reflection. This may include both reflection on the language and reflection on the content and structure.

Manchón refers to several other studies that show that the linguistic processing is much more likely to take place in writing than in speaking (Adams 2006; Adams and Ross Feldman 2008; Niu 2009; Ross-Feldman 2007 in Manchón 2011). Regarding the meta-cognitive reflection on language, or the linguistic processing, the findings of this study show positive indications. Several participants express that they need to think and use all their knowledge of both grammar and vocabulary in “one place” when they blog. They also say that they need to pay attention to many things at the same time and be alert to create coherence in the texts. Several participants express this need for meta-cognition, both on the questionnaires and in the interviews. They say that they had to “think”, “use the language” and “pay attention” to a greater degree when writing entire texts in French, which may indicate reflection on and meta-cognitive analysis of own text production. However, the meta-cognitive reflection and potential learning outcome do not happen automatically. Manchón (2011:74) states that they “crucially depend on the depth of processing that takes place while engaged in text-generation

processes.” In turn, the depth of processing depends on students’ attitudes and skills, which are significant factors for all learning. The impact of students’ attitudes and beliefs in my study are discussed in section 6.11.

Concerning the content, a blog is also a tool of reflection in a sense that the writer can express his/her personal thoughts and opinions in public (Langseth in Otnes, 2009). Blog-entries written by the students in this study give empirical evidence of that aspect. Several students refer to their personal experiences or opinions in their texts, even though these reflections do not go to great depth, but rather touch the topics on surface level. This can be explained by the students’ low proficiency in the target language in which the blogs were written.

As presented in Chapter 2, several researchers emphasize the important role of revising possibilities that writing opens up. The results of my study show that the feedback and response, in addition to the extensive writing practice, played the most significant role for learning, according to the students. Several participants express that receiving feedback and revising their texts made them aware of their own errors and hence that they learned to make improvements. This is comparable to retrospective structuring (Dysthe et al., 2010:63-64). The following statements indicate that it is the slower pace of writing, the frequent feedback and the possibilities for revising the texts that enhance learning, according to the participants.

“I think it was good that we did not have too much to do, but only one blog entry at a time. Like this I didn’t have to hurry, but I could concentrate on getting the grammar right.”

- a boy at a low level

“I received feedback without a grade and used time on revising the texts to improve them before handing them in. The errors I had made in the past were discovered and I got a better understanding.”

- a girl at a high level

“The feedback you receive on your work gives you a deeper insight into what you know and what you still need to learn. When I used the feedback for correcting my errors I learned.”

- a girl at an average level

It is likely that the feedback and revising encourages meta-cognitive awareness and reflection, since the feedback points out patterns that need improvements, and helps the students to notice the gap between their own production of the language and the desired outcome. This is related to Piaget's ideas of cognitive conflict. According to my understanding and interpretations of the data, several students express that the feedback initiated conceptual changes in their thinking and the practical process of writing. An interesting and supportive notion here is that several students, regardless of competence level, express the same. The statement that "I have gotten a better *understanding* of the French language as an entirety by blogging" is repetitive. Using the word "understanding" can be interpreted as meta-cognitive reflection. It can be understood in a way that the participants, even the students at a low competence level, employ several cognitive processes when writing, and reflect on what they actually have learned from blogging and how it has changed their thinking.

6.3 Blogging as a learning activity that may enhance self-regulated learning

Meta-cognitive reflection is closely related to self-regulated learning. Carrying out the study, self-regulation appeared as a new dimension and an important consequence of blogging. For this reason I regard it as important to briefly clarify this concept here, even though self-regulation is not presented specifically in Chapter 2 along with the other theoretical perspectives.

Self-regulated learning involves three main characteristics that are awareness of thinking, use of strategies and sustained motivation (Paris & Winograd, 2003). The first one is related to meta-cognitive reflection leading to effective problem solving. The second one deals with students' ability to apply appropriate strategies in learning processes, and the third one deals with motivational aspects of learning, which I will discuss in more detail in section 6.9. Pintrich and Zusho (in Wigfield, 2002) define self-regulated learning as

"...an active constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation and behavior, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features of the environment."

Self-efficacy is the most important condition for self-regulation to take place (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015:25). When self-regulating, learners need to make decisions concerning for

instance the perceived difficulty of an activity and value of the task. They need to consider if they have the abilities needed to accomplish the task, and the potential benefit of success or liability of failure (Paris & Winograd, 2003:6), which refers to self-efficacy. Like this, learning becomes intentional. Even though students at this level are not necessarily conscious of this process, even less able to express it with words, we can see characteristics of cognitive, motivational and behavioural aspects of self-regulation in their responses. The findings of my study indicate that the students, regardless of competence level, experienced blogging as a motivating learning activity that pushed them to work with the language. Due to the insight into their own language skills the frequent feedback gave them, the students either unconsciously or consciously set goals for themselves. These goals and the motivational factors influenced their behaviour in a way that they used more time on the writing tasks, and worked with the language more than they had done earlier, which can be interpreted as an indication of self-regulation. In addition to the statements presented in the previous section, the following statements support the ideas of self-regulation:

"It felt like I wrote the blog for my own sake and not for others'. Because of that I did it as well as I could, and sat often hours learning grammar unconsciously."

-a girl at an average level

"When I started to better understand how the language is constructed and how you use it, it gave me a desire to learn more and become even better."

- a girl at an average level

I suggest that the context in which the learning takes place in this project plays an important role for self-regulated learning, which I will discuss in section 6.7.

6.4 The decisive role of feedback for learning

Feedback as such was in no means an objective for this study, but rather a natural consequence of blogging as a learning activity. Interestingly, it appeared to be decisive for the experienced learning outcome, and therefore requires a thorough discussion. Formative assessment and feedback can help students to take control of their own learning, and should be used to empower students as self-regulated learners (Nicol & Macfarlane - Dick, 2006).

Formative assessment for instance in the form of frequent feedback from the teacher, as was the case in this project, can help students generate an understanding of their individual learning processes as well as notice the gap between their current level of performance and the desired level. This is in full accordance with the ideas of Swain, Piaget, and Gass & Mackey presented in Chapter 2. Of course, the benefits gained from the feedback depend on what kind of feedback students receive.

John Hattie says that “feedback is among the most common features of successful teaching and learning” (Hattie, 2012:129) and gets support from Dysthe and Hertzberg (2012) who say that feedback has a great impact on students’ performance. The feedback functions as a continuous formative assessment that helps the students observe the gaps in their skills. It points out the specific errors and stresses the most urgent improvements needed, and eventually how to make the improvements. Depending on the feedback, it may also have an encouraging effect that increases the motivation. The student statements presented in section 6.2 and the following extract from an interview confirms the ideas above:

How did you experience the feedback?

- *It was the most useful thing with the blog...because you say “check this up or you need to learn that”, so it functions as a constant formative assessment.*

In what ways did the feedback help you?

- *It’s that I get to know what I need to learn, and when you point out the errors, I know that I need to look at those rules. When I’m writing I write what I think is correct, but I can’t see when I make mistakes. So when you say that I have to look at this and that, I have to check the rules, go back to the text and then I notice: “Oh, here it should be like this”*

(From an interview with a girl at a high competence level)

According to Hattie, feedback can capture the person’s attention and help him/her to focus on succeeding with the task; it can direct attention towards the process needed to accomplish the task; it can provide information about ideas that have been misunderstood; and it can be motivational so that students invest more effort or skill in the task. The findings of this study are in full accordance with the potential effects of feedback pointed out by Hattie. Several participants say that the feedback made them feel success in writing in French. One participant says that the feedback helped her to correct errors she had not been aware of (misunderstandings), and others say that the feedback motivated them to put an extra effort to

the task, and find out how they could improve the texts. Student seven says that the feedback inspired him to know the grammar properly, because it was annoying to need to stop writing to check up grammar rules.

Since many participants repeatedly brought the role of feedback for learning to light, it therefore appears to occupy a central role in the findings of this study. The extent to which students actually gain the benefits from feedback is of course dependable on the teacher's ability to give appropriate feedback, as well as other affective factors like the learner's attitudes, beliefs and goals (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010). That is why I find it important to explain more explicitly what kind of feedback I gave to the students. My feedback practice derives from my pedagogical studies as well as my previous experience of teaching. In my feedback practice I am inspired by Hattie (2012), Sadler (1989), and Black and Wiliam (2009), which I will explain in more detail here. In short, the principle is to tell students 1. where they are going 2. where they are right now and 3. how to get there. In this project, I tried to give both encouraging and corrective feedback, paying attention to always starting with pointing out some positive sides of the students' texts. The corrective feedback pointed out either errors in specific sentences or general repetitive errors. I did not correct the errors directly, but instructed the students to find out the answers themselves. The reason why I did not correct the errors was mainly to make the students learn how they could find out things by themselves, and partly because the blogs were used as an end of term assessment, they needed to be as original as possible. In other words, with the help of feedback, I intended to help the students to become self-regulated learners (Pintrich and Zusho in Wigfield, 2002). This method showed to be useful for most of the students, because like this they were forced to repeat grammar rules or check up words in a dictionary again and again. Students, regardless of the competence level, say this was a good way of formative assessment. This kind of feedback pushed them to work with the language and increased their language learning, according to themselves. Of course there are individual differences to what degree this kind of feedback was experienced as beneficial. For some students it was a strain to find correct answers, which again decreased the motivation, while for some students the feedback increased their desire to learn leading to increased motivation.

In the beginning I had a presupposition that the feedback would be most useful for the students at a high competence level, because they seem often to be more self-regulated, but this showed not to be true. Several students at a low and average level, including the student

with dyslexia, experienced the feedback as useful. The student with dyslexia pointed this out both in the questionnaire and in the interview situation. Several students say that without the frequent feedback they would not have gained so much benefit from blogging in French. The students who experienced feedback as useful also have generally positive attitudes towards blogging as a learning activity. This obvious connection between attitudes and learning outcome supports Storch & Wigglesworth's idea of the decisive role of affective factors for learning to take place. I will explain and show examples of this in section 6.11.

An important issue to bring up here is to what extent the students actually use the feedback to improve their texts. In the second questionnaire I asked the students to what extent they used the feedback to improve their texts, to what extent they experienced that the feedback was useful, to what extent they learned from the feedback, and to what extent they made an effort to improve their texts (questions number 10-12, 19. See Appendix 5). As the result of the comparisons I made between the answers it becomes clear that the students who made an effort and actually used the feedback to make improvements also experienced learning effects to a greater degree than the students who did not use it for improvements. This finding underlines the aspect of formative assessment described by Black and William (2009), as activating students as the owners of their own learning. Also Ruby Vurdien (2013) found this in his study concluding "Regardless of how frequently they write, improvement may not always be noticed if students do not invest sufficient time in planning and composing their texts conscientiously."

If the students do not take the responsibility for their own learning, they do not gain the potential learning effects, regardless of how professional the teaching might be. This can also explain a somewhat unexpected finding, that less than 50% say they learned grammar in general from blogging (Figure 2). Since I did not directly correct the errors in the texts, several students did not make much effort in correcting them themselves, i.e. they were not active owners of their learning. Could it be that the weak results in learning grammar in general from blogging, may be caused by the students lacking the effort to learn? If so, it supports Manchón's statement that the possible connection between feedback and learning appears to be influenced by the degree of explicitness of the feedback and **the depth of processing of the feedback received** (Manchon, 2011:74).

6.5 Blogging as a learning activity that encourages knowledge transformation

As argued earlier, the problem in school is that the knowledge of the students is often measured with timed tests that usually are pure knowledge telling with little cognitive reflection. According to Manchón (2011), a learner generates and assesses linguistic options through the use of explicit and implicit knowledge and via cross-linguistic comparisons. Doing so, the learner transforms the existing knowledge to serve the intended purpose. Another problem in schools is that the tasks students work on in L3 are often ready-made sentences or fill-in exercises that require only knowledge telling, not knowledge transformation. As explained in Chapter 2, knowledge telling can be regarded as an act of reproducing and memorizing ready-made information, while knowledge transformation is a constructive and creative process, where a learner constructs meanings and transforms ideas (Tynjala, 2001). The focus in my argumentation is mostly on linguistic aspects of knowledge transformation. Blogging requires cognitive and creative processes of writing. There are no ready-made texts or sentences the blogger can use, nor is asked to use. He or she has to create the text in its entirety by him-/herself. The process of creating a blog entry involves other type of knowledge than traditional writing does. Due to its multimodality blogging engages the students' creativity and digital skills, as well as cultural and communicative competence in a way that is different from traditional writing. In addition, when producing a whole text in a foreign language where the communicative aspect is essential, students need to process different types of linguistic knowledge. When all these aspects are taken into consideration, we are talking about knowledge transformation to a great extent.

Even though the students in this project received a topic for most of the tasks, they had to decide the content and create the sentences by themselves, which can be regarded as knowledge transformation. The following statements of the participants indicate this: *“I have become more conscious of how to construct sentences and can actually use the grammar we learn for something else than only exercises”* and *“I learned to **use** the language in stead of only knowing grammar and words”*. The expression that the students learned to **use** the language indicates that they did not retell grammar rules or vocabulary explicitly, but used them both implicitly to construct new sentences and create new, personal texts. The statement that *“..can actually use the grammar for something else than only exercises”* may be interpreted as an indication of knowledge transformation. This may be interpreted in a way that fill-in exercises this student refers to, is only knowledge telling, since in such exercises

they often need to fill in only a correct form of a verb or a correct article for instance. In other words, they use a learned grammar rule to fill a gap in a ready-made text. When producing a whole text by themselves, the students use several learned grammar rules and vocabulary to create new sentences. Writing on an authentic communication platform using digital tools, the students used all their knowledge, both linguistic and content knowledge as well as communicative, cultural and digital knowledge to produce texts in L3. There are of course individual differences in the extent to which they used this knowledge. Reading the blog entries it is easy to see that students at an average and high competence levels pay more attention to the content, as well as structural and communicative aspects in their texts than is the case with students at a low competence level. For the students at a low competence level it is often enough to construct comprehensible sentences.

The frames for the blog entries were not very specific, but rather flexible, and often asked for the students' personal experiences or thoughts. The blogs are expressions of the students' personal opinions, perceptions and interpretations of the world, and do not ask for explicit content knowledge. Expressing themselves through writing, the students not only put their reflections in written form, but also explored the linguistic options for constructing comprehensible texts. Consequently, they had to construct the texts using knowledge transformation, both concerning the language and the content.

Below are examples of two blog-entries written by two students. The first one is a student at a high competence level, and the second one is a student at a low competence level (student six/student five in "Profiles and narratives" in Chapter 5).

Qui suis-je?

SEPTEMBER 2, 2014 ~ KAMILLAHALAND

Bonjour! Je m'appelle Kamilla. Je suis une fille de 17 ans, et j'habite en Norvège. Je suis lycéenne et j'étudie l'art dans un lycée au sud à Norvège. J'ai le français comme le langue étrangère, c'est pourquoi j'écris ce blog en français.

J'habite avec tout ma famille dans une petite ville en Norvège. J'ai une sœur et un frère. Je suis le plus vieux d'entre nous. Nous habitons dans une maison avec une grande jardin. Ici, nous cultivons des fraises. En été, c'est beaucoup des bonnes fraises.



J'aime le sport. J'aime les deux regarder le sport à télé et jouer le sport. Je préfère jouer au handball. En plus de cela, j'aime cuire. Je cuis des gâteaux, des petits pains et des biscuits. Cuire, c'est amusement, mais nettoyage, c'est ennuyeux.

C'était un peu de moi.

A MON L'ÉCOLE DE JEUNE.

🕒 5. DESEMBER 2014 👤 TOTALLYSPEAKFRENCH 💬 LEGG IGJEN EN KOMMENTAR

J'étais 13 ans dans 8. classe.

J'étais très heureux sur cette l'école. J'ai eu beaucoup de amis, et tout le monde étaient gentil. J'ai eu deux amis meilleurs, qui je peux parler avec si tout. Ils étaient une famille pour moi. Toute la bande. Nous jouons le Pc, le playstasjon et un peu X-box.

Nous mangeons très beaucoup de glace. Nous étions une tradition drôle où nous mangeons deux liter avec "trois-glace", chaque fois que nous avons un test. Pour supplément, nous boirons très beaucoup de limonade. Sprite était mon favorite.

**Qui, C'était tout pour mon traditions sur mon l'école jeune.
Au revoir mon blog.**

The blog entry shows that the student at a high competence level has structured her text by dividing it into sections and the language is comprehensible to a great extent. There is a clear message that is followed throughout the text. As to communication and audience, the text is clearly addressed to the readers. She writes in a personal way, which makes it easy to get to “know” her through her text. She has also added a picture to make the blog-entry more attractive.

The student at a low competence level struggles with constructing sentences and getting the grammar right. Many of his sentences are incomprehensible, even though one can get an idea of what the text is about. He writes less compared to student six and does not pay much attention to the communicative aspects of the text, even though he finishes the blog entry by saying “good bye”.

As argued above, blogging is a learning activity that may encourage knowledge transformation. Students use both their explicit and implicit knowledge to construct a blog entry, which is often based on their personal experiences and perceptions as well as on their language skills. They need to involve different aspects in the process, such as structural, linguistic and communicational aspects, keeping in mind the authentic communication situation. This is an active learning process initiating knowledge transformation, and should be an objective for all teachers.

6.6 Blogging as a tool for effective writing practices

Even though the discussion above points to several potential benefits that blogging may provide for students, writing in itself does not necessarily enhance learning. The potential learning effects depend on effective writing practices. As presented in Chapter 2, Steven Graham suggests for instance the following strategies to foster competent writers:

1. Dedicate time to writing, and involve students in various forms of writing over time.
2. Foster students’ interest, enjoyment, and motivation to write.
3. Help students to become strategic writers by encouraging them to set up a predictable writing routine where students are expected to plan, revise and share what they write.

Using blogging as a learning activity these three strategies are covered. The findings of this study support the presupposed effectiveness of the strategies. Several participants point out that they experienced the great amount of writing over time as beneficial. They also say that it was motivating to have free writing tasks where they could write about a topic that they were interested in. Using digital learning tools and the communicative aspect of blogging increased the enjoyment of working with the task. Concerning the third strategy suggested by Graham, the findings show that the frequent feedback the students received taught them to revise their texts and as time progressed become more strategic writers.

6.7 Blogging as a social and cultural writing activity

A blog is a communication tool that offers a platform for communication either with friends, co-students, the teacher or strangers. Due to its personal character, a blog may also give students a feeling of ownership of a personal project, which at the same time is shared with the whole class. One of the interviewees says that the blog became a personal project for her, and another, that “*it felt like I wrote the blog for my own sake and not for others’.*” It is not unlikely that this is the case with several participants, even though they did not express it directly. Blogging was both a personal project and something the whole class did together, which gave them a greater sense of community.

In his study, Vurdien (2011) found that blogging promotes an awareness of larger audience, that to a great extent affects students' writing. He also found that blogging encourages interaction and collaboration between peers. The results of my study oppose his findings to some extent, showing that only a minority of the students thought about their audience and let this awareness affect their writing. There was not much collaboration between the peers, except the two obligatory co-writing tasks. This can be explained by the fact that the students in this study did not share their blogs with others much. Some shared their blogs with the closest classmates, in addition to the obligatory feedback-task where the students were asked to read and give feedback to each other. Consequently, there was not much online communication or collaboration between the students. The reason may be for instance that the students were not confident with sharing their texts with each other due to the lacking language skills, or that they simply had enough to think about producing texts in L3, and did

not have capacity for intense collaboration. Hence it can be discussed if I as a teacher should have been more active in encouraging them to use blogs for collaborative purposes.

As suggested in Chapter 2, blogging gives access to an authentic and social discourse community, which is different from the constructed learning environment of the classroom. This authenticity may be both motivating and discouraging. As to the hypothesis, I had expected that the students would experience a need for making an extra effort for the blog entries, due to the possibility of authentic readers. Interestingly, I found that this was not the case to as great degree as I had expected. Only a few of the respondents say that they paid extra attention to the language when blogging compared to other writing tasks. They felt that the texts should be comprehensible because there was a chance that a foreigner would read them. Only thirteen of twenty-six say that they had in mind that anyone could read their blogs. Nine of these thirteen say that the awareness of authentic readers made them make an extra effort in the writing process. In other words, half of the respondents did not think at all about whom they were writing to. They say that blogging on the open Internet was not different from writing to the teacher.

Even though the students in this study did not obtain any visible cultural exchanges by blogging, some of them say that they were aware of the possibility for it, as presented above. This awareness made them reflect on their writing differently than they would have if the blogs had been closed (without public access). One respondent says for instance that she felt she needed to explain things that are obvious for the Norwegians to a greater extent when blogging, in case a foreigner would read it. This indicates that she had a consciousness of cultural differences when blogging. It supports the idea that blogging offers possibilities for cultural exchanges, as well as enhances meta-cognitive reflection. One respondent at a high competence level says she felt that her texts needed to be perfect before she could publish them on the blog, which made blogging a strain. Due to this feeling of discouragement, blogging became less and less motivating for her, even though she understood the potential benefits she could gain. This is also an indication that blogging creates an awareness of authenticity, which in this case unfortunately had a decreasing impact on motivation.

I had promised my students that we would use some of the lessons for blogging, because then it was easier for me to help them, they could help each other and because many of the students found the writing at home very time consuming. The writing in French lessons

created a positive learning atmosphere in the class. There were eager discussions about different grammar rules, suitable vocabulary and appropriate content. The students let each other read their sentences in order to secure the comprehensibility. Despite the fact that the blogs were not used to collaborate online, they led to collaboration in the classroom. There were also frustrated sighs and exclamations about the difficulty of French and about how time consuming it was to write in L3. Like the delight and success, also the frustrations were shared with others, which is an example of the social context blogging offers. Even though the awareness of everyone having access to everyone's blogs did not effect their writing much, it may have given a feeling of belonging to a social discourse community. This was everyone's writing project, including the challenges and delight it implied, which supports the ideas of writing as a social activity.

6.7.1 The importance of the Zone of Proximal Development and its role when blogging is used as a learning activity

Two of the postings were written together with a co-student, which was an experiment on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development. The students were allowed to decide the topic, even though I gave them some examples. Some pairs started to write right away, while others struggled with finding a suitable topic. For the first of the two co-writing tasks, I had decided the pairs beforehand according to the competence level. I had put the students at a similar competence level together. For the second co-writing task, the students could freely choose their companion. I made these choices, because first, I assumed that they would gain more benefits from working in homogenous groups, which appeared to be true. Second, I wanted to give them some influence on their own learning situation and let them choose their partner for the last co-writing task. The choice fell in many cases on the one they knew best or the one who sat next to them. Interestingly, according to the data, the students at a low competence level found co-writing useful to a greater degree, than students at an average or high competence level. The high and average level students say that there was no significant difference in writing alone compared to writing together. However, some of them note that when writing together it is important that the companion is at the same competence level as oneself. This notion is a direct agreement with Vygotsky's theory about the ZPD, and is reinforced even more by this statement of a student at a high competence level:

“Co-writing is fun and beneficial regarding to learning, but it depends on who you write with. If I write with someone who is better than me, I learn from it. If I write with someone who struggles more than me, BUT is curious about why the sentence is constructed like it is, I learn from explaining.”

This statement brings to light other important aspects of co-writing with regard to the ZPD, namely the students’ attitudes and curiosity to learn. In a situation like this, the ZPD works both ways, in other words, both students gain benefits from working together.

An interesting finding concerning co-writing is that 89% say they learned from the writing process when they **wrote alone** to some or to a large degree, while 76% say the same about **writing together** with a co-student. The numbers indicate that some of the students experienced both writing alone and co-writing as beneficial, but the majority of the students prefer writing alone. This can be explained by individual differences, such as student’s ability to self-regulate learning, ability to concentrate on writing when working together with a co-student, or different individual goals with the final product. Especially students at a high competence level say that, when working with co-writing tasks, they did not get the desired personal touch on their text, but had to adapt it to the partner’s choices. This statement may indicate that students at a high competence level are more likely to master self-regulated learning compared to students at an average or low competence levels.

It is also interesting and important to bring up that students at a low level experienced co-writing as more useful than students at average and high levels. It is likely that since students at a low level naturally need more support in their learning, they feel that they can get this support from co-students in addition to the teacher, when working together. In the questionnaire, I asked them to give reasons for their experiences of co-writing, and here are some of them:

“It’s easier. I can ask for help and we can learn from each other.”

“ It was useful and I learned from it. I felt that we succeeded in it”

“ It was easier to come up with ideas to the text and we could help each other”

In this section I have tried to argue that blog offers a social and cultural communication platform that may open up for authentic communication, or at least promote a feeling of it. Due to the possibilities for communication a blog offers, it differs considerably from an

ordinary learning environment of the classroom, and like this may enhance students' motivation to learn. However, the feeling or awareness of authentic communication cannot be generalized to concern all students. The awareness of authentic readers that blogging may promote, may also have a discouraging impact on a student's learning process and it may feel scary to reveal oneself to the entire world.

6.8 Blogging in a foreign language

As presented in Chapter 2, both Weigle, Swain and Schoonen et al. argue that writing in a foreign language forces the students to undertake complete grammatical processing, which often is more difficult and less effective than writing in L1. This implies that the focus in L3 writing tends to be more on sentence level than on content level. Interestingly, the findings of this study support these statements. Several students express that they needed to use all their language knowledge "at the same time" when producing texts from the beginning to the end by themselves. They also say that they needed to pay attention to many things at the same time, which can be interpreted as an indication of grammatical processing, as well as cognitive reflection. Observing the writing processes in the classroom and reading the students blogs, I noticed that the students at an average and low competence levels mainly put effort into getting the grammar right, while the students at a high level paid attention to the content, structure and communicative aspects to a greater degree (as can be seen in the examples of blog-entries above). This was an interesting observation, even though it is quite natural since the high level students do not need to put so much effort into language accuracy and are often more conscious of additional aspects of writing than only the language. As presented in Chapter 2, the process of encoding internal representations into written text in a foreign language requires much cognitive effort, which may lead to cognitive overload. Concerning the observations presented above, lacking language proficiency of the students at a low and average level may have distracted this process of encoding, enabling them mostly to concentrate on language accuracy.

Swains statements presented in Chapter 2, that activity of producing a target language may 1) push learners to become aware of gaps and problems in their current second language system, 2) provides them with opportunities to reflect on, discuss and analyse these problems explicitly, and 3) provides them with opportunities to experiment with new structures and

forms, may be confirmed by the findings of this study. The results show that blogging, as a form of target language production, made the students conscious of the gaps in their language skills, gave them opportunities to reflect on and analyse these problems, and provided them with opportunities to correct the errors as well as to learn new knowledge about the language.

Weigle (2002) claims that writing in a foreign language may be less effective than writing in a first language. The most important disadvantage with blogging in French according to the students is that it is time consuming. Many students, regardless of their generally positive perceptions of blogging as a learning activity and regardless of the competence level, say that it was time consuming. They had to look up grammar rules and appropriate words all the time, which made the writing less effective. Roca de Larios et al. also point out the time perspective, as presented in Chapter 2. Trying to ease this trouble, I allowed the students to use some of the French lessons on writing blogs. Most of the students experienced it as positive, since this meant they did not need to use so much time on it at home and they could get immediate assistance if needed.

6.9 Motivational aspects of blogging in a foreign language

Writing in L3 imposes huge cognitive, linguistic and social demands for the learners, which for many students may become overwhelming. These demands may cause a feeling of not being good enough and a desire to give up learning. Especially French as L3 in Norway, where the grammar so much differs from one's own mother tongue, is by many students experienced as a strain, which can again be related to the cognitive overload. In the beginning of the project, the students complained that they could hardly create any sentences in French. They found writing in French very difficult and their motivation was low. Many of them expressed clearly that the idea of blogging in French sounded like a mission impossible due to their lacking language skills. At the same time, some stated that it was a good idea and might even increase their motivation to make an effort for learning. Everyone was willing to give it a try.

Even though I asked the participants about motivational aspect of blogging, it is a bit problematic regarding generalisation of the results. Motivation is a quality that is impossible to observe or measure directly (Ellis, 1985; Lightbown & Spada, 2006). In addition,

motivation is such a large topic that there is no room to discuss it in detail here. However, I will touch the topic on surface level. The results of this study are only representations of students' subjective experiences, which should be kept in mind when reading further.

In this study I found that 60% of the participants felt that their sense of mastery increased and 58% felt that their motivation increased as a result of blogging as a learning activity. The reasons given are that they saw the development of their writing when reading previous blog entries and comparing them to the more recent ones. Hence, noticing that they actually were able to produce an entire text in L3 by themselves, they felt success, which in turn led to increased sense of mastery and motivation. I suggest that blogging provides the students with opportunities to experiment with and explore the language in a different way than ordinary fill-in exercises or translation of ready-made sentences. I suggest that this makes learning more exciting and allows the students to influence their own learning situation to a greater degree, which may have a motivating impact. As discussed in section 6.3, blogging may enhance self-regulation, including self-efficacy and motivational aspects.

Despite the generally positive indications, not all students felt that their motivation increased. On the contrary some of the participants say that they even lost the little motivation they ever had for learning French. When blogging they noticed how little they actually knew of the language, and since blogging required so much more language skill than they felt they had, it made them feel inability instead of success. The following statements of the participants indicates decreased motivation and sense of mastery:

"It was hard to sit down and try to produce a text in a language I don't master."

- a girl at a low level

"I suddenly noticed how difficult it was for me to produce simple sentences, and my motivation decreased."

- a girl at a high level

To examine differences between different competence levels was not a direct objective of this study, but since the results show interesting issues regarding these differences, I will discuss them briefly here. As seen, the statements above derive from students on totally different levels of proficiency, which supports my interpretation of the results in a sense, that the

results are the same regardless of the level of proficiency. Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2015) refer to research (Liu 2010, Suárez-Alvarez & Fernández-Alonso in press) that shows strong relations between motivation and students' self-efficacy, indicating that students with high self-efficacy are also motivated to a higher degree than students with low self-efficacy. The findings of this study do not confirm this relation. On the contrary, they show to some extent the opposite. Interestingly, the student at a high level who obviously has succeeded in her language learning and probably has both skills and strategies for learning, as well as high self-efficacy, experienced blogging as discouraging. On the other hand, a student at a low level who struggles with dyslexia, has experienced much failure in his language learning, has only put little effort in it, and has low self-efficacy, experienced blogging as motivating. This may indicate that neither previous success in language learning nor high proficiency automatically leads to increased motivation, but it is the feeling of development and sense of mastery that are decisive factors. This can be seen in relation to the value students put on blogging as a learning activity. Realizing either a value of interest, a utilitarian value, a personal value, or all of them, and comparing this or these to the effort and time accomplishment of the task requires, may either increase or decrease students' motivation (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). It is likely that the student at a low level realized the value of blogging regarding his language learning to a greater degree than did the student at a high level.

For some students, important factors for increased motivation were the authentic context and the feeling of using the language for something meaningful. Examples of this are presented in Tables 1 to 5 in Chapter 4. Additionally, it is possible that the fact that the students never had been blogging for learning purposes before, may have affected their experience of it as an unusual and exciting learning activity, leading to increased motivation. Also the aesthetic, communicative and multi-modal aspects blogging involves may encourage the students' creativity influencing the motivation. The possibility a blog offers to add images, videos and hyperlinks for instance may make blogging an exciting and creative activity.

6.10 What are considered as disadvantages of blogging as a learning activity?

In this study, a minority of the students have negative experiences of blogging. The results give indications of connection between negative experience of blogging in French, the students' low self-efficacy in French and decreased motivation for learning the language. This

can, again, to some extent be related to the cognitive overload, as the following statement shows:

“It’s the fact that I don’t master it (French) properly, so I feel that I do it (write a blog) in vain...If I had been better in French I think it could be fun.”¹⁷

The students who have negative experiences of blogging in French, explain it saying that they noticed how difficult the language really is and how little French they actually know. These remarks confirmed their probable low self-efficacy and led to decreased motivation. These remarks also support the theory of the cognitive conflict in a sense that the extensive writing and frequent feedback blogging involves apparently helped even the weaker students to notice the gaps in their language skills. This remark caused a counterincentive that made blogging and language learning even less interesting. This confirms Swain’s suggestion presented in Chapter 2, that the production of a target language pushes learners to become aware of gaps and problems in their current second language system (Mitchell & Myles, 2004).

The negative students in my study generally say that they felt that blogging in French was overwhelming and they used lots of time on writing without obtaining any visible success, which was discouraging. They also say that in addition to being time consuming, they experienced it as a strain to produce a whole text in French. Due to the great amount of effort blogging required, they lost the motivation and became tired of French. Some say that even though they always have regarded French as difficult, blogging made it seem even more difficult and they felt for giving it up. Several of the students with positive experiences also point out, that the negative thing with blogging is the great amount of time it requires.

6.11 The role of other affective factors for learning

When learning is placed within the frames of social-constructionism, it is conceptualised as a process whereby students actively construct their knowledge and skills interacting “with subject content, transforming and discussing it with others, in order to internalise meaning and make connections with what is already known” (Nicol & Macfarlane - Dick, 2006). Despite fancy, well-planned and adapted learning activities, and even with an ideal learning environment, a teacher can never force learning to take place. The learners are individuals

¹⁷ ”....det er det at du ikke kan det skikkelig, så jeg føler at jeg gjør det forgjeves...hvis jeg hadde vært bedre i fransk så hadde det nok vært kjekt.”

with different skills, attitudes and qualifications, which play an important role in the process of knowledge construction. Previous negative experiences may also affect the conditions for learning.

Research shows that there are several affective factors that may hinder learning, such as the learner's attitudes and beliefs, aptitude for learning, intelligence and personality, learning strategies and group dynamics (Ellis, 1985; Lightbown & Spada, 2006). In addition to individual differences regarding skills, character, and strategies, Krashen (1981) presents the hypothesis of the affective filter that may hinder learning. As a starting point he uses the Input hypothesis, according to which exposure to comprehensible input enhances language acquisition. However, exposure to comprehensible input only is not sufficient for learning to take place. According to the Affective Filter Hypothesis, a learner "in a less than optimal affective state will have a filter, or a mental block, preventing them from utilizing the input fully for language acquisition" (Krashen, 1981:74). I suggest that this affective filter may also influence other forms of language acquisition than exposure to comprehensible input. Related to my study, it may for instance decrease learner's capacity to use the received feedback constructively. As to the findings, they show that students who actually used the received feedback to improve their texts experienced increased learning outcome to a greater degree than did the students who did not use the feedback for improvements. The students in this latter group may have been in a mental state, for instance due to the cognitive overload, that prevented them from using the feedback constructively.

Further on Krashen suggests that for instance motivational factors may function as a mental block that hinders the input to enter "the language acquisition device" (Krashen, 1981:74). In my study there is a clear relation between the students' motivation, attitudes and experienced learning effects. I will give examples that support this statement below. Depending on their mental state, in addition to the other affective factors presented above, they learned the language to different degrees when blogging.

Below, statements from two participants are presented supporting the ideas above. The first student is at a high competence level and felt she gained great benefits from blogging, both regarding language learning and motivation. About co-writing she says:

“Co-writing is fun and beneficial regarding to learning, but it depends on who you write with. If I write with someone who is better than me, I learn from it. If I write with someone who struggles more than me, BUT is curious about why the sentence is constructed like it is, I learn from explaining.”

It is clear that this student has positive attitude toward learning French and desires to gain benefits even from working with someone who is at a lower level than herself. She also used the feedback effectively and credits the frequent feedback for the experienced learning outcome from blogging. I suggest that due to her positive attitudes and aptitude for learning French, she managed to gain benefits from it.

Another participant says: *“My motivation decreased, because learning French is so boring and difficult, and the blog didn’t make it any better.”* This student is at an average level and several of his statements indicate that he has low confidence in own skills, low motivation and negative attitudes toward both blogging and learning French in general. Surprisingly, despite of low motivation and negative attitudes, he felt increased sense of mastery: *“I felt an increased sense of mastery when blogging, because you do something you don’t want to do and you are not able to do, but you still succeed in it.”*

Both statements above indicate negative attitudes toward learning French, which is likely to affect his motivation and willingness to make an effort for learning. He experienced blogging as a strain, mostly because of the amount of time it required, and because he struggled with getting on with writing. I suggest that his negative attitudes and low motivation functioned as an affective filter that hindered learning to take place.

I have tried to give examples here that support the arguments of factors affecting the desired language acquisition and learning. As presented in section 6.4, the extent to which the students in my study experienced learning effects from blogging depends on the extent to which they actually used the feedback to improve their texts. This can be related to the theory of affective factors presented in this section. The examples above also reinforce the following statement by Storch and Wigglesworth (2010) that whether learning takes place or not always depends on the learner’s engagement in the learning process, where he/she is guided by his/her own goals. The positive attitude increases motivation, which leads to greater engagement in the learning process. Further, the engagement helps students to become more self-regulated in their learning processes teaching them to set their own goals, that in turn

leads to better learning effects. The experience of drawing advantages from a learning activity and feeling of development naturally leads to increased motivation. To conclude, learning is like a circle where different, continuously changing factors influence each other, and depending on the degree and direction (positive or negative) of the influence, result in different degrees and types of learning outcome.

6.12 Chapter summary

In this discussion I have tried to shed light upon the findings that I find most important, as well as find reasons for that. I have discussed the findings from different perspectives, which are all related to research questions and the hypothesis. Even though the findings in general point to several benefits with the blogging and feedback, it did not encourage everyone to learn French.

7. Conclusions

In this study I have tried to find out if and why blogging in L3 may be beneficial for language learning using different research methods. I have tried to link my arguments and findings to previous research and actual theory of language learning to support the reliability of this study. I will now conclude the study answering the research questions and arguing for their significance and transferability.

As I suggest in Chapter 1, the role of writing is often underestimated in language instruction, where oral production has been the priority. However, the role of writing has in recent years become a more and more relevant issue both in scientific research and in debates. Searching for support for the significance of this study, I refer to Jessica Williams' statement that "it is increasingly apparent that the act of writing may also promote general proficiency in ways that have not always been acknowledged" (Williams 2008 in Manchon, 2011). As a general conclusion of the study, I argue that writing plays an important role in foreign language learning. What I noticed during the project was that among the participants the threshold for writing in French decreased remarkably during the five months they blogged. Even though the texts in the blogs contained lots of errors, the students managed to express themselves in an acceptable way in L3. Even the weakest students made an effort to write, and wrote texts of their own choice in addition to the obligatory ones. I also observed that when blogging, students produced much more text than in traditional writing tasks. Blogging also led to a greater engagement in the process and helped them to produce longer texts the more they wrote. The length of the texts increased toward the end of the project, from 50-80 words at the beginning to 300-600 words in the end. The possibility to look back to earlier postings and notice the potential development was greatly motivating for the students.

Most of the participants in this study experienced blogging as a beneficial learning activity, enhancing their language skills in general. There is no significant difference between the experienced benefits and the level of proficiency. Four of seven students at a low level, four of five students at a high level and thirteen of fourteen students at an average level experienced blogging as positive. However, they did not perceive that the improvements in their language skills appeared because of the authentic writing, but because of the **frequent writing** and **frequent feedback** received on the texts. It was neither the awareness of potentially authentic readers that motivated them to write or to improve their texts, but it was

rather the increased sense of mastery they felt when they saw themselves able to produce a whole text in a language they did not feel they mastered. Only a few of the respondents say that they felt a need for making an extra effort in the writing process, since they wrote on the public and authentic platform. Another factor that increased their motivation to write blogs was the feeling of development they got when looking at the feedback and correcting the errors. Several of the participants pointed out that because of the feedback on the texts they learned to better notice their own errors, and in correcting them, they learned the language. Another advantage that was pointed out by several participants was that, writing a blog they needed to use all language knowledge they have in one text and like this, they could use the language in its entirety. Several students described this as “real communication”. They felt that writing a self-governed text from the beginning to an end was motivating, challenging, and gave them a feeling of mastery since they felt they were able to *communicate* in French.

The findings of this study do not automatically give blogging in L3 all the benefits for increased language skills. The blogging itself may as well be beneficial, but this study shows only, that systematic planning of different and adapted writing tasks and especially frequent and adequate feedback are the decisive factors. In this project blogging is used as a tool for extensive writing, and does not exclude that other tools and practices for extensive writing might have had the same results. Even though the focus here has been on blogging as a learning tool, it still is the extensive writing and feedback that play the most important role. The same results could be achieved using other tools. However, blogging differs from traditional writing in ways that may influence the motivation to write positively. It also needs to be taken into account, that when all is said and done, all learning, despite the activities or methods used, depends on the learner’s efforts and attitudes toward learning.

7.1 Revisiting the research questions

Concerning the main research question *If and why may blogging as a learning activity be beneficial for learning foreign languages as perceived by the students?* the data shows interesting and to some extent unexpected results. As we can see in Chapter 5, most of the students perceive blogging as a beneficial learning activity, even though to different degrees. The main reasons students point out are frequent feedback, increased understanding of the language as a whole, increased sense of mastery and motivation, and the opportunity to

actually **use** the language in its entirety. As discussed in Chapter 6, the frequent feedback is decisive to gain benefits from blogging (or extensive writing). Most of the students used the feedback to revise their texts and said that they experienced it as useful. The responses in the questionnaires show that the students who consciously used the feedback to improve their texts experienced blogging as a useful learning activity to a greater degree than did the students who did not use the feedback to revise their texts. The notions above indicate a positive answer to the main research question. Blogging **may** be a beneficial learning activity, mainly because of the frequent feedback initiating meta-cognitive reflection, and the possibility it offers to revise the texts. These benefits are available for the students **if** the feedback is used consciously to revise and improve the texts.

7.1.1 Sub-research questions

Concerning the first sub-research question *According to the students, which specific benefits may blogging provide for them concerning their language learning?* the findings show that the main benefit the students perceive to have gained was increased vocabulary (see Table 6). The tasks for the blog entries had different topics, which forced the students to use words they did not necessarily know from before. Since they wrote entire texts, they needed often repeat words, or find other ways to express themselves. Like this, they acquired new vocabulary, often unconsciously. In addition to the increased vocabulary, the feedback is again pointed out as an important factor. The students say that blogging taught them to use the feedback to improve their texts. Blogging also made them aware of how important it is to read through one's text before finishing it, which may be regarded as a result of the feedback.

The students also say that they became better in writing French in general, in constructing sentences and in using different verb tenses. These results can be regarded as a natural consequence of the extensive writing practice that blogging involves. The more you write, the better you become in writing. They can also be regarded as a result of adapted instruction, for which blogging provide excellent possibilities. As mentioned earlier, I challenged the more competent students to use more advanced sentence structures, while the less competent students worked on different verb tenses for instance. The tasks were also assigned in a way that required practicing verb tenses or other grammar issues. At this point, I can say that the

tasks fulfilled the intentions, since the students actually experienced that they had become better in verb tenses for instance.

The conclusion is, that blogging *may* help students to learn to use the eventual feedback constructively, depending on their willingness to make an effort for learning, and depending on the appropriateness of the feedback. Due to the extensive writing practice it involved blogging *may* increase the vocabulary and it *may* provide students with increased understanding of grammar and language in general. These potential benefits may make writing in a target language more fluent promoting a greater awareness of different aspects of writing.

I will now argue for the motivational aspects of blogging answering the second sub-research question *If and how may blogging in French promote students' motivation for learning the language?* The results show that 58% felt increased motivation. 60% say that they felt increased sense of mastery as a result of blogging. These concepts of motivation and sense of mastery are defined in Chapter 1. According to my interpretations of the results, blogging may promote students' motivation for learning the target language, at least to some degree. The reason for that may be that, since many of the students say they felt increased sense of mastery when blogging in French, it increased their self-efficacy, which led to increased motivation. Noticing that they actually were able to create a whole text in French from the beginning to the end gave them a new understanding of their language skills. This remark may have disconfirmed their previous impression that their language skills were far from satisfactory. Also here the feedback plays an important role. Many of the participants explain their increased motivation saying either that the positive feedback encouraged and motivated them to write more, or that the corrective feedback helped them to notice the gaps in their skills and motivated them to learn the language properly.

7.2 What about the hypothesis?

Blogging as a learning activity in foreign languages involves a lot of writing as well as writing to potentially authentic readers. This may increase students' motivation to make an extra effort in the writing process regarding grammar and vocabulary. Additionally, this extra effort in the writing process may increase the quality of students' texts and lead to improved language skills in general.

The results of this study partly confirm, partly disconfirm the hypothesis. Regarding the part that concerns consciousness of writing to potentially authentic readers and its impact on the quality of the text, it can be regarded as disconfirmed. Only 32% of the respondents say that the consciousness of authentic readers pushed them to make an extra effort in the writing process and made them feel a need to get it right. 35% said that they did not really think about it at all, and 33% of the answers did not give any significant indications either way.

The results show that blogging indeed influenced the students' motivation to learn French, but it was not due to the awareness of authentic readers that was the main or direct reason for it. As seen, many of the participants give credit to the feedback for their increased language skills. They also point out the fact that they felt they finally could **use** the language in its entirety both as motivating and efficient for language learning.

7.3 The transferability and significance of this study

The intention of this study has been to gain insight into the students' perceptions of blogging as a learning activity in L3. Even though this study is carried out in a small group of students, this actual group may be regarded as representatives for all foreign language students in upper secondary school in Norway. This study can be carried out in other schools, other language classes, and by other researchers. If done so, I will argue that the results would be approximately the same, even though individual differences need to be taken into account. I argue that the clear connections between the relevant theory, previous research and results of this study allow generalizing the findings, and make the study transferable to other similar situations. There are of course differences between schools and classes, as well as individual differences between the students. However, I suggest that blogging used as an activity for language learning provides students with several benefits, both with regard to language skills and motivation.

This study is important for future language teaching in a sense that it shows how and why blogging can be a useful tool in language instruction covering several competence aims in the *Knowledge Promotion*. Since blogging involves using digital tools, it might be a step away from readymade texts in the subject curriculum and toward providing students with authentic communication situations and extensive writing practice in language instruction. Hence, I

hope that this study will inspire other language teachers to try out blogging as a learning activity in their classes. For further research on the topic, it could be interesting to find out how the language teachers experience blogging as a learning activity and to what extent the teachers notice the same benefits as the students in this study felt they gained. Another interesting topic to explore could be the connection between blogging as a learning activity and self-regulation.

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Appendix 1: The permission from The Norwegian Social Science Data Service to collect data for the study

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



Harald Hørlagres gate 29
N-5007 Bergen
Norway
Tel: +47-55 58 21 17
Fax: +47-55 58 96 50
nsd@nsd.uib.no
www.nsd.uib.no
Org.nr. 985 321 884

Anita Normann
Program for lærerutdanning NTNU

7491 TRONDHEIM

Vår dato: 28.08.2014

Vår ref: 39435 / 3 / HIT

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 12.08.2014. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

<i>39435</i>	<i>Learning languages through blogging</i>
<i>Behandlingsansvarlig</i>	<i>NTNU, ved institusjonens øverste leder</i>
<i>Daglig ansvarlig</i>	<i>Anita Normann</i>
<i>Student</i>	<i>Hanna Opedal</i>

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 20.06.2015, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Katrine Utaaker Segadal

Hildur Thorarensen

Kontaktperson: Hildur Thorarensen tlf: 55 58 26 54

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: Hanna Opedal hopedal@gmail.com

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

Appendix 2: Information letter to the parents and the consent to participation in the study

Hanna Opedal
Mastergradsstudent ved
Program for lærerutdanning ved NTNU
e-post: hopedal@gmail.com
Tlf 95177512

Sola 10.8.2014

Til foresatte for elever med fransk II på Vg2

Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjektet

I forbindelse med mitt mastergradstudium i Fagdidaktikk i engelsk og fremmedspråk ved NTNU ønsker jeg å gjennomføre et forskningsprosjekt med følgende overordnede tema: *Opening gateways to the world- learning foreign languages through blogging*. Jeg er spesielt interessert i å finne ut hvordan elevene selv opplever blogging som arbeidsmåte i forhold til å lære fransk, og på hvilke måter denne metoden eventuelt hjelper dem i deres språklæring.

Forskningsarbeidet vil basere seg både på den *kvalitative og kvantitative metode*, og jeg ønsker å bruke elevenes blogger som en del av mitt datagrunnlag. I tillegg ønsker jeg å innhente data ved bruk av spørreskjema, samt intervjuet et representativt utvalg av elever i gruppen, anslagsvis 6-10 elever. Hvilke elever som skal intervjues er det ennå ikke tatt stilling til. Nærmere informasjon om utvalg av elever for intervju sendes til de aktuelle foresatte når dette er klart.

Hvert intervju vil ta ca 45 min. og jeg vil ta lydopptak av intervjuet. Disse opptakene, samt all innsamlet data vil bli slettet etter at arbeidet er fullført. Alle opplysninger som kommer frem i undersøkelsen er konfidensielle og lagres på privat datamaskin som er beskyttet med passord og brukernavn for å forsikre uvedkommen tilgang. Elevene vil bli anonymisert i den endelige masterteksten. Det er kun jeg som forsker og min veileder ved NTNU som vil ha tilgang til innsamlet data. Det er mulig for foresatte å få se spørreskjema/intervjuguide på forespørsel.

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og du kan når som helst trekke ditt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn. Dersom du trekker deg, vil alle opplysninger om din sønn/datter bli slettet. Jeg vil understreke at deltakelse i dette studiet på ingen måte vil påvirke din sønns/datters karakter i faget fransk, eller ha noen betydning for hans/hennes forhold til faget eller skolen for øvrig.

Rektor er informert om mitt arbeid og har gitt sitt samtykke til innsamling av data. I tillegg er prosjektet mitt meldt inn til Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste (NSD) i henhold til retningslinjer for forskningsetikk og personvern. Min veileder på Program for lærerutdanning ved NTNU er Anita Normann.

På bakgrunn av dette ber jeg altså om tillatelse til:

- å gjennomføre en spørreundersøkelse om elevenes forhold til fransk som fag og blogging som metode og deres refleksjoner rundt begrepene læring og motivasjon
- å bruke bloggene din sønn/datter skriver som datagrunnlag for mitt mastergradsarbeid
- å eventuelt intervjuer din sønn/datter om arbeidet med bloggen
- at innhentet informasjon kan bli brukt i mitt mastergradsarbeid

Oppstart for forskningsprosjektet er 19.8.2014 og selve mastergradsarbeidet beregnes avsluttet 10.6.2015.

Dersom du har spørsmål til studien, ta kontakt med meg via e-post: hopedal@gmail.com

Vennlig hilsen

Hanna Opedal

Samtykke til deltakelse i studien

Jeg gir tillatelse til at min sønn/datter deltar i denne studien på betingelsene nevnt i skrivet som presenterer studiet.

Forutsetningen for tillatelsen er at informasjonen som fremkommer gjennom studiet blir behandlet med respekt og anonymisert, og at prosjektet ellers følger gjeldende retningslinjer for forskningsetikk og personvern.

Jeg har snakket med min sønn/datter om dette og han/hun har også gitt sitt samtykke til å delta i studiet.

- Jeg samtykker til min sønns/datterens deltakelse i spørreundersøkelse om faget fransk og bruken av blogging som læringsmetode.
- Jeg samtykker til at Hanna Opedal bruker min sønns/datters blogg til sin mastergradsforskning ved NTNU/PLU 2014/2015.
- Jeg samtykker til at min sønn/datter blir intervjuet om blogging som læringsmetode.

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studiet, og er villig til å delta.

Elevens fulle navn: _____

Sted: _____ Dato: _____

Underskrift av elev: _____

Underskrift av foresatt(e): _____

Appendix 3: The interview guide

Intervjuguide for master-prosjektet "Learning languages through blogging"

Problemstilling:

If and how may blogging as a learning activity in French be beneficial for language learning as perceived by the students?

Forskningsspørsmål:

1. If and why may students experience blogging as a learning activity beneficial for language learning?
2. According to the students, which specific benefits may blogging provide for them concerning their language learning?
3. If and how may blogging in French promote students' motivation for learning French?

Hypothesis: *Blogging as an activity in foreign language learning involves a lot of writing as well as writing to potentially authentic readers. This increases students' motivation to make an effort in the writing process regarding grammar and vocabulary. Additionally, extensive writing will increase the quality of students' texts and lead to improved language skills in general.*

Kategorier for intervju:

1. Blogging som læringsaktivitet
 - opplevelser av blogging som læringsaktivitet i fransk
 - eventuelle opplevelser av læring av fransk gjennom blogging
 - > mer spesifikt: hva opplevde eleven at han/hun lærte (grammatikk, nye ord, lage setninger, planlegge skriving, revidere egen tekst...)?
 - å skrive alene v. å skrive sammen
 - > hvilken av delene var mest lærerikt? Hvorfor?
 - respons underveis -> opplevelsen av respons i forhold til språklæring, nyttig/ikke nyttig? Hvorfor?
2. Holdninger, motivasjon og mestringsfølelse
 - eventuelle endringer i holdninger til faget
 - eventuelle endringer i motivasjon for faget
 - eventuelle endringer i mestringsfølelse knyttet til faget fransk gjennom blogging

3. Autentiske mottakere

- opplevelser knyttet til skriving til autentiske mottakere

Oppvarmingsspørsmål:

- Hvordan opplever du det er for deg å lære språk generelt?
- Kan du fortelle noe om hva du tenker om faget fransk?
- I hvilken grad opplever du at du har nytte av å kunne andre språk enn engelsk?
Hvorfor?

Kategori 1: Blogging som læringsaktivitet

- Hva er dine erfaringer om blogging som læringsaktivitet for å lære språk?
- Fortell meg om dine erfaringer med å bruke blogg som læringsaktivitet i fransk.
- Hva lærte du og hvorfor?
- Du har skrevet noen innlegg alene og noen sammen med en medelev. Kan du fortelle hvordan du opplevde det å skrive alene sammenlignet med å skrive sammen?
- Dere fikk respons underveis i skriveprosessen. Hvordan opplevde du den?

Kategori 2: Holdninger og motivasjon

- I hvilken grad og hvordan har dine holdninger til fransk-faget forandret seg på grunn av blogging?
- I hvilken grad opplever du at din motivasjon for å lære fransk har endret seg på grunn av blogging? Hva er det som gjør at din motivasjon for faget har endret seg?
- I hvilken grad opplever du endret mestringsfølelse i fransk-faget i denne perioden? I hvor stor grad tenker du at din mestringsfølelse har endret seg **på grunn av blogging?**

Kategori 3: Skriving for autentiske mottakere

- Hvordan opplevde du det å skrive på åpent internett (for potensielt ekte fransktalende mennesker)?
- Har bevisstheten av at ekte fransktalende mennesker kan lese bloggen din påvirket din innsats for å skrive bedre blogginnlegg? Hvis ja, hvordan?

Oppsummering:

- alt i alt, hva syns du er positivt og negativt med å skrive blogg på fransk?
- Ønsker du å bruke blogging som læringsaktivitet i fremtiden? Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke?

Appendix 4: The first questionnaire (at the outset of the project)

Spørreskjema til elever ved oppstart av prosjektet

August 2014

Hanna Opedal

Mastergradsstudent ved Program for Lærerutdanning ved NTNU

Overordnet tema for forskningsarbeidet:

Opening gateways to the world - learning foreign languages through blogging

Til eleven,

Formålet med denne undersøkelsen er å få litt generell bakgrunnsinformasjon om dine tanker om faget fransk, og hvordan du opplever at blogging på fransk eventuelt hjelper deg i din språklæring. Det som kommer frem her skal brukes som en del av forskningsmaterialet i forbindelse med mitt mastergradsarbeid i faget *Didaktikk for engelsk og fremmedspråk*. Spørreskjema besvares med navn, men vil bli anonymisert i den endelige masteroppgaven, og all data vil bli slettet etter at forskningsarbeidet er ferdig.

Jeg vil at du tar deg god tid til å lese og tenke gjennom spørsmålene før du svarer. Det er svært viktig at du svarer så ærlig som mulig, uten tanke på hva medelever svarer, og uten tanke på hva du tror at læreren ønsker at du skal svare. Det er ingen «rette svar» her, det er kun din personlige mening jeg er ute etter.

BAKGRUNNSINFORMASJON

Navn _____ Alder

Studieretning _____

SPØRSMÅL 1:

Beskriv franskfaget med tre ord som sier noe om din opplevelse av faget.

SPØRSMÅL 2:

Hva syns du er de største utfordringene ved å lære fransk?

SPØRSMÅL 3:

Hvordan vil du forklare hva det å lære noe egentlig er? Hva betyr det for eksempel for deg å lære noe? Svar så utfyllende som mulig.

SPØRSMÅL 4:

På hvilke måter opplever du at du lærer best i faget fransk? Sett kryss.

1. Når læreren forklarer noe og skriver på tavlen.	
2. Når jeg jobber i grupper (enten i form av oppgaver eller et prosjekt).	
3. Når jeg jobber alene med oppgaver.	
4. Når jeg jobber alene med et prosjekt.	
5. Når jeg får snakke på målspåket.	
6. Når jeg leser tekster/bøker på målspåket.	
7. Når jeg skriver på målspåket.	

Andre måter: _____

Begrunn svaret ditt:

SPØRSMÅL 5:

Tenk at du selv fikk velge arbeidsmåte til et tema i fransk. Hvilken arbeidsmåte hadde du valgt da og hvorfor?

SPØRSMÅL 6:

I hvor stor grad synes du at det brukes varierte undervisningsmetoder i fransk-faget per i dag?

I liten grad I noen I stor grad

SPØRSMÅL 7:

I hvor stor grad synes du at du lærer noe i fransktimene per i dag?

I liten grad I noen I stor grad

SPØRSMÅL 8:

Hvor godt synes du selv at du behersker fransk per i dag?

I liten grad I noen I stor grad

SPØRSMÅL 9:

I hvilken grad er du motivert for faget fransk per i dag?

I liten grad I noen I stor grad

SPØRSMÅL 10:

Hva er det som motiverer deg til å lære fransk? Sett kryss. Du kan sette flere kryss.

Når jeg får gode karakterer.	
Når jeg opplever at jeg behersker fransk (f.eks når du forstår når noen snakker fransk, når du forstår det du leser på fransk, når du klarer å snakke med noen på fransk, når du klarer å skrive noe på fransk...)	
Når jeg jobber med interessante oppgaver.	
Når jeg får oppmuntrende tilbakemeldinger fra andre elever, lærer...	
Når jeg opplever at jeg har nytte av å kunne fransk.	
Andre ting? Hvilke?	

SPØRSMÅL 11:

Blogger du nå, eller har tidligere erfaring med blogging? Sett kryss.

Ja, på skolen.	Nei, ikke på skolen
Ja, privat.	Nei, ikke privat.
Ja, både på skolen og privat.	Nei, verken på skolen eller privat.

Hvis du har svart **ja, på skolen** på spørsmål 11, fortsett med spørsmål 12.

Hvis du har svart **nei** på spørsmål 11, fortsett med spørsmål 14.

SPØRSMÅL 12:

I hvilke sammenhenger har du brukt *blogging* som arbeidsmåte på skolen? Sett kryss ved de fagene der du har brukt *blogging* en eller flere ganger. Hvis du har brukt *blogging* i tverrfaglige prosjekter, krysser du av for **I tverrfaglige prosjekter.**

Norsk		Fremmedspråk	
Engelsk		Kunst-og håndverk	
Matte		Gym	
Samfunnsfag		Musikk	
Naturfag		I tverrfaglige prosjekter	
RLE		Andre fag, hvilke?	

SPØRSMÅL 13:

Opplevde du at du lærte noe når du blogget i et skolefag? Sett kryss. JA NEI
 Hvis JA, hva lærte du? Beskriv.

SPØRSMÅL 14:

Har du noen gang skrevet noe på fransk til autentiske fransktalende mottagere, dvs ekte fransktalende personer? Sett kryss.

JA NEI

SPØRSMÅL 15:

Når du skriver på fransk: Hva skriver du? Sett kryss på bokstaven. Du kan sette flere kryss.

- a) Enkelte setninger for å svare på oppgaver
- b) korte sammenhengende tekster om det læreren har bestemt
- c) korte sammenhengende tekster om selvvalgt tema
- d) hilsener, korte brev/ e-poster
- e) korte kommentarer på chat
- f) Lange tekster, f. eks. fortellinger, artikler, essay, lange brev/e-poster
- g) jeg skriver ikke på fransk

SPØRSMÅL 16:

Når du skriver på fransk: Hvem skriver du til? Sett kryss på bokstaven. Du kan sette flere kryss.

- a) Læreren
- b) Franske slektninger/venner
- c) Ukjente ekte personer (f. eks. på chat)
- d) Oppdiktete personer (slik som i mange skoleoppgaver)
- e) For meg selv
- f) For medelever.

SPØRSMÅL 17:

Hva er det som hjelper deg mest i din skriving av fransk? Sett kryss. Du kan sette flere kryss.

1. Når jeg jobber sammen med en annen.	
2. Når jeg får bruke digitale verktøy i skriveprosessen.	
3. Når skrivingen foregår på skolen istedenfor at vi må skrive hjemme.	
4. Når jeg får hjelp av lærer.	
5. Når jeg får hjelp av medelever.	
6. Når vi har jobbet på forhånd med å lære oss viktige ord vi trenger i skrivefasen.	
7. Når vi har jobbet med mentortekst i førskrivingsfasen og kan bruke denne som støtte i egen skriving.	
8. Når vi kan få tilgang på skriverammer for å lettere komme i gang med skrivinga.	
9. Når vi kan få respons på teksten før ferdigstilling.	
10. Andre ting? Hvilke?	

SPØRSMÅL 18:

Hva er det som motiverer deg til å skrive på fransk? Sett kryss på bokstaven. Du kan sette flere kryss.

- a) Jeg blir motivert av å tenke på hvor mye jeg lærer av å skrive på fransk.
- b) Jeg blir motivert av å skrive til autentiske mottagere (dvs. ekte mennesker).
- c) Jeg blir motivert når jeg får gode tilbakemeldinger fra læreren/medelever på det jeg skriver.
- d) Jeg blir motivert når jeg tenker på hvor god trening det er for meg å skrive til oppdiktete personer.
- e) Jeg er ikke motivert og skriver aldri noe på fransk.
- f) Jeg er ikke motivert til å skrive på fransk, men gjør det fordi læreren sier at det er bra for min egen språkutvikling.

- g) Jeg er ikke motivert til å skrive på fransk, men jeg gjør det for å unngå å få anmerkning for ”ikke gjort lekse.”
- h) Jeg er ikke motivert til å skrive på fransk fordi jeg synes det er vanskelig.

SPØRSMÅL 19:

Hva synes du er positivt med å skrive på fransk? Beskriv.

SPØRSMÅL 20:

Hva synes du er negativt med å skrive på fransk?

SPØRSMÅL 21:

Har du noen forslag til å øke motivasjonen din til å skrive på fransk?

Tusen takk for at du ville delta i spørreundersøkelsen!
Hanna

Appendix 5: The second questionnaire (at the end of the project)

Spørreskjema til elever ved slutten av prosjektet

Januar 2015

Hanna K. Opedal

Mastergradsstudent ved Program for Lærerutdanning ved NTNU

Overordnet tema for forskningsarbeidet:

Opening gateways to the world - learning foreign languages through blogging

Til eleven,

Formålet med denne undersøkelsen er å få litt generell informasjon om dine tanker om faget fransk, og hvordan du opplever at blogging på fransk eventuelt har påvirket din språklæring. Det som kommer frem her skal brukes som en del av forskningsmaterialet i forbindelse med mitt mastergradsarbeid i faget *Didaktikk for engelsk og fremmedspråk*. Spørreskjema besvares med navn, men vil bli anonymisert i den endelige masteroppgaven, og all data vil bli slettet etter at forskningsarbeidet er ferdig.

Jeg vil at du tar deg god tid til å lese og tenke gjennom spørsmålene før du svarer. Det er svært viktig at du svarer så ærlig som mulig, uten tanke på hva medelever svarer, og uten tanke på hva du tror at læreren ønsker at du skal svare. Det er ingen «rette svar» her, det er kun din personlige mening jeg er ute etter.

BAKGRUNNSINFORMASJON

Navn _____ Alder

Studieretning _____

SPØRSMÅL 1:

Beskriv franskfaget med tre ord som sier noe om din opplevelse av faget per i dag.

SPØRSMÅL 2:

Opplever du at ditt syn for faget fransk har forandret seg på grunn av blogg-skriving?

JA NEI

Beskriv HVORFOR/HVORFOR IKKE og eventuelt HVORDAN.

SPØRSMÅL 3:

I hvor stor grad opplever du at blogging på fransk bidro til å øke dine språkkunnskaper?

I liten grad

I noen grad

I stor grad

SPØRSMÅL 4:

Hva syns var vanskelig/lett med å skrive blogg?

Vanskelig, fordi: _____

Lett, fordi:

SPØRSMÅL 5:

Hvor opplever du at du fikk mest nytte av å skrive blogg?

HJEMME

PÅ SKOLEN

Begrunn svaret ditt:

SPØRSMÅL 6:

Hva lærte du av blogging som læringsaktivitet? Sett kryss. Du kan sette flere kryss.

Jeg lærte nye ord på fransk.	
Jeg lærte å lage setninger på fransk.	
Jeg lærte å bruke ulike verbtider på fransk.	
Jeg lærte mye grammatikk generelt.	
Jeg lærte å skrive en sammenhengende tekst på fransk.	
Jeg lærte å skrive ulike typer tekster på fransk. For eksempel: informative, fortellende, overbevisende tekster, uttrykke min mening/synspunkt...	
Jeg lærte hvor viktig det er å lese gjennom sin egen tekst før ferdigstilling.	
Jeg lærte å bruke responsen jeg fikk til å forbedre teksten min.	
Jeg lærte å bedre oppdage feil i min egen tekst.	
Jeg lærte å bedre planlegge skrivingen min.	
Jeg ble generelt bedre på å skrive på fransk.	
Jeg ble generelt bedre i fransk. (Lese, skrive, forstå, snakke...)	
Andre ting? Hvilke?	

SPØRSMÅL 7:

I hvilken grad opplever du at blogging økte din mestringfølelse når det gjelder fransk-faget?

I liten grad

I noen grad

I stor grad

BEGRUNN svaret ditt.

SPØRSMÅL 8:

I hvilken grad opplever du at blogging økte din motivasjon til å lære fransk?

I liten grad

I noen grad

I stor grad

Beskriv HVORDAN og HVORFOR?

SPØRSMÅL 9:

Ville du valgt blogg-skriving som en arbeidsmåte for å lære språk en annen gang også?

JA

NEI

Hvorfor? /Hvorfor ikke?

SPØRSMÅL 10:

I hvor stor grad opplever du at du hadde nytte av responsen du fikk på bloggen underveis?

I liten grad

I noen grad

I stor grad

SPØRSMÅL 11:

I hvor stor grad brukte du responsen du fikk til å forbedre tekstene dine?

I liten grad

I noen grad

I stor grad

SPØRSMÅL 12:

I hvor stor grad opplever du at du lærte mer fransk av responsen du fikk?

I liten grad

I noen grad

I stor grad

BEGRUNN svaret ditt:

SPØRSMÅL 13:

Hvor godt synes du selv at du behersker fransk per i dag?

I liten grad

I noen grad

I stor grad

SPØRSMÅL 14:

I hvilken grad er du motivert for faget fransk per i dag?

I liten grad

I noen grad

I stor grad

SPØRSMÅL 15:

Hvordan opplevde du det å skrive for potensielt ekte fransktalende mennesker? Sett kryss. Du kan sette flere kryss.

Motiverende	
Lærerikt	
Spennende	
Morsomt	
Flaut	
Vanskelig	
Skummelt	
Tidkrevende	
Annet? Beskriv.	

SPØRSMÅL 16:

På hvilken måte synes du det var annerledes å skrive til potensielt ekte mennesker sammenlignet med å skrive til oppdiktete personer eller læreren?

SPØRSMÅL 17:

Hva synes du er positivt med å skrive blogg på fransk? Beskriv.

SPØRSMÅL 18:

Hva synes du er negativt med å skrive blogg på fransk?

SPØRSMÅL 19:

Hvordan vil du vurdere din innsats med blogg-skriving når det gjelder:

Min innsats har vært	GOD	MIDDELS	DÅRLIG
tidsbruk; jeg har brukt mye tid på bloggen.			
retting av grammatikk			
gjennomlesing av egne innlegg			
revidering av egne innlegg generelt; struktur, innhold...			
bruken av nye ord			

SPØRSMÅL 20:

Du har skrevet noen innlegg alene og noen sammen med en medelev. Hvordan opplevde du det å

a) skrive alene? Hvorfor?

b) skrive sammen? Hvorfor?

SPØRSMÅL 21:

I hvor stor grad opplevde du at du lærte noe av skriveprosessen når du (sett kryss)

Skrev alene: I liten grad I noen I stor grad

Skrev sammen med en: I liten grad I noen I stor grad

BEGRUNN svaret ditt:

SPØRSMÅL 22:

I hvor stor grad har du brukt Google translate eller lignende retteprogrammer? Sett kryss.

Ikke i det hele tatt	
Noen ganger og kun for å sjekke enkelte ord.	
Mye, men kun for å sjekke enkelte ord.	
Noen ganger for å sjekke at setningen jeg skrev er riktig.	
Jevnlig for å oversette setninger.	
Jevnlig for hele teksten for å sjekke at den er riktig.	
Mye, for å oversette hele teksten jeg skrev fra norsk til fransk.	

Gi en forklaring på HVORFOR du har brukt Google translate istedenfor vanlig ordbok.

Hva må til for at du i fremtiden vil bruke vanlig ordbok istedenfor Google translate?

SPØRSMÅL 23:

Alt i alt, opplevde du blogging som aktivitet for å lære fransk positivt eller negativt? Sett kryss.

Positivt Negativt

Tusen takk for at du ville delta i spørreundersøkelsen! Hanna