

**BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS'  
WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

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# BLENDDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

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2. Descripción
<p>Tesis de grado en la que el autor propone implementar el uso de blogs como herramienta para potenciar las habilidades de lectura y, sobretodo, de escritura en inglés en estudiantes de nivel intermedio del Centro de Lenguas, en Bogotá. El uso de esta herramienta se lleva a cabo en el marco del aprendizaje combinado y se tienen en cuenta las facilidades con que cuentan los estudiantes para acceder a las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación, por lo cual las actividades e intervenciones se realizaron tanto dentro como fuera del aula de clases.</p>

3. Fuentes
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### **4. Contenidos**

El presente trabajo se compone de ocho capítulos. El primer capítulo presenta la descripción del contexto, tanto interno como externo, de la población en la que se llevó a cabo el trabajo

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

investigativo. A partir de dicha descripción, se realizó el diagnóstico social, cognitivo y cultural que permitieron formular la pregunta de investigación y los objetivos general y específicos.

El segundo capítulo presenta los principales fundamentos teóricos que soportan el contenido de la investigación. Se definen, por ejemplo, los conceptos de aprendizaje combinado, que consiste en la unión de un ambiente tradicional de enseñanza (aulas físicas) con ambientes virtuales apoyados en el uso de herramientas tecnológicas; blogging, que trata del uso de los blogs como plataformas digitales para fomentar la interacción entre los participantes escritores y lectores; y, finalmente, se define el concepto de habilidades de lecto-escritura descritas como una herramienta para hacerse participe de la toma de decisiones en una sociedad y que permiten, además, el desarrollo de la creatividad y la imaginación.

El tercer capítulo presenta el tipo de investigación en que se inscribe el presente documento: Investigación acción e investigación cualitativa. Se describe su naturaleza cíclica y reflexiva, así como la implicación total del investigador en el desarrollo de cada una de las fases investigativas. Adicionalmente, se describen los instrumentos empleados para la recolección de información y el método para analizar los resultados obtenidos.

En el cuarto capítulo se presentan las fases de la intervención pedagógica y el cronograma con cada una de las actividades a desarrollar en determinadas fechas. Así mismo, se describen las visiones de lenguaje, aprendizaje y tecnología y se refuerza el concepto del blog como instrumento para fortalecer las habilidades de lecto-escritura.

El quinto capítulo aborda el tratamiento de los datos y una descripción exhaustiva de las categorías e indicadores que orientan el desarrollo de las actividades, la recolección y el análisis de los datos.

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

Para dar mayor veracidad a dichas categorías e indicadores, se presentan otros sustentos teóricos que soportan la elección de los indicadores desde diferentes vertientes.

En el sexto capítulo se hace un análisis completo de los hallazgos y resultados obtenidos para cada uno de los indicadores anteriormente expuestos y las categorías a las que pertenecen. La presentación de dichos resultados se apoya en algunas fotografías que muestran el desarrollo de algunas actividades o los productos escritos que surgieron tras la implementación de las mismas.

Finalmente, los capítulos siete y ocho refieren a las conclusiones y recomendaciones que se sugieren para estudios futuros sobre el mismo tema. Se hace una descripción de los alcances que tuvo el uso del blog para mejorar las habilidades de escritura a través de aprendizaje combinado, así como también se describen las dificultades que surgieron al momento de desarrollar la investigación.

### **5. Metodología**

La metodología empleada en el desarrollo del presente estudio fue *investigación-acción* y se desarrolló en el Centro de lenguas de la Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, en su sede de Chapinero, calle 72, con un grupo de 25 estudiantes que cursaban el nivel intermedio. La investigación-acción supone la implementación de tres fases: pre-planeación, implementación/análisis y post-planeación, las cuales se llevaron a cabo cíclicamente mientras se llevaba a cabo el estudio. Para la recolección de datos se utilizaron varios instrumentos, tales como encuestas, diarios de campo y fragmentos de los textos escritos por los estudiantes.



## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

### **6. Conclusiones**

Tras realizar la investigación se puede concluir que el uso de blogs mejora las habilidades de escritura de los estudiantes a través de la interacción constante de los participantes en cada publicación. Además, se logró determinar que el aprendizaje combinado es un enfoque valioso a la hora de lidiar con limitaciones de tiempo dentro del aula de clase que no permitan el total desarrollo de los conceptos y contenidos que se deben abordar según el plan de estudios.

Finalmente, cabe también resaltar que las herramientas tecnológicas resultan siendo un gran aliado cuando se utilizan con fines educativos y el hecho de que las nuevas generaciones estén tan cercanas a su utilización, nos llama, a los docentes, a acercarnos también a ellas y promover una visión diferente de las mismas en los estudiantes. De este modo, las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación pueden jugar a nuestro favor durante el desarrollo de la actividad docente.

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<b>Revisado por:</b>	Nelson Mellizo

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# **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

## **Table of contents**

### **Chapter I**

Introduction.....	1
Context.....	1
Institutional context .....	1
Participants.....	2
Diagnosis.....	3
Problem statement.....	6
Justification.....	7
Research question .....	8
General objective .....	8
Specific objectives .....	9

### **Chapter II**

Theoretical framework and State of the art.....	10
State of the art .....	11
Theoretical framework.....	14
Writing .....	15
Writing as a product.....	16
Writing as creativity.....	16
Writing as a process.....	17
Blended Learning.....	17
Blogging.....	19
Literacy .....	20

### **Chapter III**

Research design .....	22
Type of study .....	22
Qualitative Research.....	22
Action Research.....	23
Data analysis methodology .....	25
Data collection Instruments .....	25
Unit of analysis .....	27

### **Chapter IV**

# **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

Pedagogical intervention.....	29
Teaching approach .....	29
Intervention phases .....	29
First (introduction).....	30
Second (Participation).....	30
Third term (Revision and post).....	31
Implementation .....	31
Vision of language .....	32
Vision of learning .....	33
Vision of technology.....	33
Resources... ..	34
Blog.....	34
Chronogram .....	34
Unit planning .....	37

## **Chapter V**

Data management.....	41
First category (Writing skills).....	42
Second category (Blogging).....	52
Third category (Blended Learning) .....	56

## **Chapter VI**

Findings.....	63
Writing skills.....	63
Blogging.....	64
Blended Learning.....	65

## **Chapter VII**

Conclusions.....	66
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## **Chapter VIII**

Recommendations.....	69
References.....	70
Figures, tables and annexes.....	75

# **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

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I express my warmest thanks to you all.

# **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper is a Qualitative Action-Research study whose main aim is to know how Blended Learning enhances EFL students' writing skills through blogging and face-to-face interaction. It was carried out at the Language Center in Bogota with children aged 11 to 13 years old. The problem emerged after seeing the lack of motivation and interest that students showed with regard to writing. The use of technology was determined as a means that facilitated and enhanced both motivation and interaction among students. They expressed in a survey that they really enjoy using some technological devices and consider them very useful when learning a new language. The research was oriented to the creation of texts that permitted analyzing their improvement while interacting on an online blog.

## **RESUMEN EJECUTIVO**

Este documento es un estudio de investigación de acción cualitativa cuyo objetivo principal es saber cómo el Aprendizaje Combinado (Blended Learning) mejora las habilidades de escritura de los estudiantes de inglés como Lengua extranjera a través de blogs y la interacción cara a cara. El estudio se realizó en el Centro de Lenguas de la Universidad Pedagógica Nacional en Bogotá con niños de 11 a 13 años. El problema de investigación surgió después de ver la falta de motivación e interés que los estudiantes mostraron con respecto a la escritura. El uso de la tecnología se determinó como un medio que facilitó y mejoró la motivación y la interacción entre los estudiantes, quienes expresaron en una encuesta que realmente disfrutaban usando algunos dispositivos tecnológicos y los consideran muy útiles para el aprendizaje de un nuevo idioma. La investigación se orientó a la creación de textos que permitieron analizar su mejora mientras interactuaban en un blog en línea.

# **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

## **Chapter I Introduction**

### **Contextualization**

This chapter presents the information about the place where the research took place as well as the description of the participants and the diagnosis carried out in order to set the problem statement, the justification and the main objectives.

#### ***Institutional context***

To begin with, the Language Center (LC) has four branches, two of them located in Chapinero. One is the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional on the 72<sup>nd</sup> street, where the study was conducted with a group of 25 eleven to thirteen-year-old students who were in advanced level and took classes on Saturdays from 8:00 am. to 12:00 m.

Students at the Language Center are taught through the Communicative Approach in which interaction is the most important means of learning. Besides, the lessons are mostly learner-centered in order to enhance their speaking on meaningful and real conversations. To guarantee this, every student has a textbook to work in the classes and in which there are some communicative situations covered in every session. The use of the book is mandatory since it is a requirement for students; therefore, it commits the teachers to work with it either in or out of the classroom.

Besides the book, there are several devices such as T.V's, CD or DVD players teachers can use to get ahead with the classes. However, these appliances are barely used since there are a few classrooms equipped with them.

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

### ***Participants***

The course where the research was carried out was composed of 7 boys and 18 girls. After applying the survey, the following information was gathered: from the total of students, 12% of them live in a monoparental family which includes their mother and siblings; 24% belongs to a monoparental family that also includes some of their extended relatives, like uncles, aunts and grandparents. The 64% remaining lives with their parents and siblings.

Additionally, when they were asked about people that they pass most of their time with, the 20% of students said they often gather with their friends; 32% mentioned a specific member of their family, such as siblings, mother, father or an extended relative; the 48% remaining pass most of their time with their parents, siblings, grandparents and extended members of the family.

This information allowed us to conclude that the family links that existed in the classroom were strong and it was an advantage since the kids were expected to work with their relatives' assistance when developing some of the tasks to be done online. Besides that, it is also important since the accompanying of children's relatives was determinant to succeed in the development of some activities that, within the framework of Blended Learning, needed to be done at home. Furthermore, most of the children were not allowed by their parents to surf the web or to use ICT's on their own, so, they constantly had to demand some assistance from their parents.

Finally, it could be seen that there were no students with any special cognitive condition that could rule them out of learning a foreign language or using ICT's. They are friendly, kind and are keen to learn. In addition, what was remarkable was that girls and boys hardly ever gathered, although there was a visible sense of comradeship once that they had to team up to complete an

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

exercise. This was an advantage if we take into account that they come to the Language Center only once a week.

### ***Diagnosis***

The diagnosis of the group was made taking into consideration the in-class performance, some interviews and the surveys that were administered to the students. Throughout this information, it was evidenced that most students took classes at the LC because they liked English and, some others because they wanted to improve their performance at school. It was evident, during the development of the classes, that students did not consider writing as a way to improve their skills at the target language. They were almost all the time willing to speak or even to read aloud, but, once that they were told to write, most of them seemed to have difficulties with concentration or with finding an accurate way to start a short text.

Besides the observations done, and to determine properly the goal of this research, the researcher measured the performance that students had regarding reading, grammar, listening, speaking and writing. This evaluation was done taking into account the results that they got in the first term exam.

Regarding the grammar component, none of the students got the maximum possible score that is 10. Only 16% of students got a score between 7.5 and 9.5; 33% was scored between 5.0 and 7.4; the remaining 41% was rated between 2.0 and 4.9. Nobody got a score lower than 2.0. In this section of the test, students were presented with some exercises to fulfil with the structure of simple past, past continuous and relative pronouns. Most of the mistakes were related to the use of the auxiliary verb *was/were* and the *-ing* ending in the past continuous statements as well as the conjugation of the regular and irregular verbs in the simple past.



## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

In regards to reading, students were given a text from which they had to answer some questions choosing *true*, *false* or *no information*. From the whole group, 16% of the students got the highest score (10); 58% got a score between 7.5 and 9.0; 8.3% of the students (2) got a 5, and only 1 student that is the 4.1% got a score lower than 4.0. This leads to say that most of the students had good reading comprehension skills since the 74% of the group obtained high scores.

When it came to listening, 16% of the students got the highest score (10); another 79% scored between 7.5 and 9.0 and only 1 student that represents 4.1% got a score lower than 7.4. According to these scores, students' best performance was regarding listening since 95% of them scored up to 7.5 points. The document they had to listen to was about holidays: there was an interview and some people talking about their favorite holidays. The audio was played three times and, based on what students listened, they had to answer 10 multiple-choice questions.

In regards to speaking, none of the students scored the highest punctuation (10) nor reached a score up to 7.5 points. 87.5% of the group scored between 5.0 and 7.0; 8,3% which is 2 students, scored 7.2 and, 1 student, that is 4,1% scored lower than 5.0 points. This section consisted of a conversation that students had to create in groups of three people, in which they could show their accuracy when using the grammar that was already mentioned in a natural way. Shyness, insecurity and lack of vocabulary were the main aspects that affected the students' performance.

Finally, with respect to writing only one student that represents the 4.1% of the group scored 10. 41.6% of the students scored between 7.5 and 9.0, while another 41.6% scored between 5.0 and 7.4. Finally, two students, which are the 8.3% of the group scored under 4.9 points. The task they had to fulfil was to write an e-mail to a friend overseas telling them about life in Colombia and ask some questions about life in the other country. The texts were evaluated taking into account the *task fulfillment*, *organization*, *grammar*, and *vocabulary*. Most of the students had

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

difficulties with the grammar and organization items. They seemed not to have completely understood the structure of the texts they were requested to write and some grammar structures to achieve such purpose. This led to think that students needed to improve their understanding in regards to writing structures and to the use of grammar in those texts.

According to these results, there is no relation between the reading and writing performance and the notion that students had on grammar structures. This is the number of students who got high scores in reading and writing did not necessarily have high scores in the grammar section. On the other hand, what could be stated is that the productive skills (writing and speaking) were weaker than the receptive ones (reading and listening).

In keeping with the previous idea, it is important to highlight that the exams administered at the LC are standardized. According to the Glossary of Education Reform, these kinds of exams:

“(1) require all test takers to answer the same questions, or a selection of questions from common bank of questions, in the same way, and they are scored in a standard or consistent manner, which makes it possible to compare the relative performance of individual students or groups of students.” (The Glossary of education reform, 2015)

Bearing this in mind, the skills of students can be measured in a standard rate, but without taking into consideration any external factors like motivation or willingness. Besides, according to Strauss (2017), these exams favor memory and secondhand information that students have in the moment of presenting the test, which does not necessarily leads to prove that that information they have in mind while presenting the exam was properly learned.

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

### ***Problem statement***

According to the Council of Europe, an independent user of English language is the one who is able to produce simple texts about topics that are familiar to them or related to personal interests. Equally, that user is expected to understand the main points of standard input, such as texts or speeches in the target language. From the class observations, I noticed that students did not have significant inconveniences recognizing standard input since they barely asked their interlocutor to repeat a speech, or a part of it, that was produced in English. Likewise, they showed their understanding when reading, and the only questions they had when reading a text had to do with some lack of vocabulary. Besides, bearing in mind the results of the exams, I perceived that the skill that the students specially needed to work on was writing since they did not show the fulfillment of the task previously mentioned: to produce simple texts related to their personal interests, which is against the principles stated by the CEFR.

Taking into account that literacy has been portrayed “as a basic vehicle for social and economic advancement as well as a means of enhancing individual lives and fostering equal opportunity” (Ferdman, Weber and Ramirez, 1994. p, 3 ), the lack of writing and reading skills can lead people, especially children, to a loss of participation in society’s concerns, which is a problem if we consider that we are living in an interconnected society that almost forbids us to miss any situation from daily life. Although literacy is described as a whole, the skill that we focused on is writing. It is important to mention that these two components are not roughly separated since we understand that both are developed simultaneously.

When it comes to the use of technology for educational purposes and, following Ng Wan (2015), we need to say that “the digital technology landscape in education has changed rapidly on the one hand, and stayed relatively constant on the other” (p,3) . This means that the use of

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

technology in the field of education has been increasing in such astonishing way that putting it apart in the teaching practice may lead, not only the teacher but also, and mainly, the students to a lack of involvement in today's world dynamics.

Considering these factors, technology in the classroom is essential to improve students' competence in the new world predicaments. This is possible through the use of literacy skills and also thanks to the technological ones that are enhanced both inside and outside the classroom. Taking the previous statement into account, students develop their perceptiveness to cope with today's challenges that require being literate both in regards to social practices and technology use. This leads us to Blended Learning as a way to stand behind the achievement of both literacies: social and technological ones.

### ***Justification***

Writing skills have been proved as an essential means for individuals to participate in social life. As well, having knowledge and proficiency when writing leads individuals to be more skilled at using their language, since "to write and to learn from writing at the same time develop metacognitive and meta-communicative skills that are necessary to develop to become a proficient language user" (Rijlaarsdam, et al, 2005, p. 27).

By the same token, to be literate in this time is important to the extent that nowadays, human beings are more connected than we have never been. Having the ability to make yourself understood by other people is crucial to guarantee useful interaction among a group. In addition, we have to assume that those (literacy) "skills and competences enable communication, spoken and written, in increasingly diverse ways and with increasingly diverse audiences" (Phillips & Lesaux, 2016, p. 3). Those diverse ways and audiences refer to the different means, and not only the skills, that we need to be literate in, and the people that we are spreading our message to.

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

Moreover, to be digitally literate implies that individuals are immersed in today-everyday activities and deal with them with ease; the interaction among peoples has become more and more necessary and evident through the use of technological devices and software that require persons who know how to deal with it. In order to guarantee that, schools are implementing some methodologies in which “educators are able to set up discussion forums on learning management systems or on blog sites, where learning becomes more transparent and can occur on a continual basis” (Wan, 2015, p.8).

Being that stated, one can conclude that working through technology is a way to enhance the development of writing, being considered as a literacy skill, in young learners who are coping with social situations that require them to be prepared and concern about.

### ***Research question and Objectives***

How might EFL intermediate students' writing skills be enhanced through Blogging and face to face interaction encouraged by the creation of a fictional story at the Language Center in Bogota?

### ***General Objective***

- To determine the effect of Blended Learning on the improvement of writing skills in EFL students through Blogging.

### ***Specific Objectives***

- To evaluate the influence of blogging in the enhancement of using conjunctions as linkers to make a text coherent.
- To characterize the impact of blogging in the improvement of writing skills.

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

- To define the pertinence of blended learning as an approach to encourage students' interaction and blogging.

# BLENDING LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

## Chapter II Theoretical framework

This chapter presents several studies and some research that has been done in regards to the study that was carried out at the Language Center. Besides that, it also portrays some definitions about the main constructs considered to develop the research, such as Blended Learning, Blogging and Writing. The following chart references the consulted studies.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Type of study, author &amp; year</b>
<i>A study on the effectiveness of Blended learning</i>	International study, Educational Action Research, Ajide & Chan.2009
<i>Blended learning in higher education institution in Malaysia</i>	International study, Proceedings of Regional Conference on Knowledge Integration in ICT, Azizan. 2010
<i>The Use of Blogs in English Language Learning: A Study of Student Perceptions</i>	International study, Profile: Issues in Teachers` Professional Development, Ahluwalia, Gupta & Aggarwal
<i>Fostering reading and writing skills in EFL classroom through a social network site as a Blended learning tool</i>	UPN'S study Parrada & Quinín. 2010
<i>The role of storytelling in fourth grade student's literacy process and its influence in student's engagement in the English classes</i>	UPN'S study Gil. 2009
<i>Blended learning as an instrument for explicit training on learning strategies for vocabulary.</i>	UPN'S study García & Puentes. 2009
<i>Literacy practices, texts, and talk around texts: English language teaching developments in Colombia.</i>	National study Giraldo, S. 2006
<i>Blogging: A way to foster EFL writing</i>	National study Quintero, Luz. 2008
<i>Writing Using Blogs: A Way to Engage Colombian Adolescents in Meaningful Communication</i>	National study Rojas, G. 2011

### **State of the Art**

After checking several sources among books, online articles and magazines, the following studies were chosen to support this research, since, in any way they are linked to it.

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

The first research, *A study on the effectiveness of Blended learning* leads to know how effective Blended Learning is when it is used in business studies guided through learning management systems (LMS). This study implemented with University College students with the purpose of having a tool to make up the time that was not enough in the face-to-face classes to cover all the topics on the syllabus. The main conclusion was that Blended Learning is effective to cope with the lack of time in the classroom and motivation of students since they were interested in this new methodology to improve their language learning. This research has a link to mine in the sense that blended learning is seen as an approach to cope with the lack of time in the classroom and to enhance students to work on their own to reach the goals determined by the academic program.

The second study, *Blended Learning in higher education institution in Malaysia* is aimed to portray the usefulness of blended learning as a mediator between traditional face-to-face classrooms in high education institutions in Malaysia and the ones who are fit to work as ICT's experience centers. The latter tend to become useless to the extent that there is not any interaction with an instructor to guide an educational process. The researchers conclude that through blended learning students and teachers are more concerned to their learning/teaching process. However, there is also the necessity to keep constantly looking for new ways to use technology as an innovative tool. This research has to do with mine since it considers the use of blended learning as a way to come up against the lack of technology in traditional classrooms and concludes that this approach offers the chance to enhance interaction, communication and collaboration among the groups that it is used with.

The following study, *The Use of Blogs in English Language Learning: A Study of Student Perceptions* aimed to the use of blogs in a language course of a college in India. It showed the



## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

efficiency that this online tool offers in order to foster autonomy and interaction outside the classroom when teaching a language. The main objective that this study pursues is to find out what the students' perception of learning a language through blogs is. The main conclusion of this study is that 66% of the students who participated claimed that, thanks to the use of blogs, their writing skills were improved. Its contribution is that it incorporates the use of blogs as a way to improve writing skills through the enhancement of students' creating and sharing some texts related to their in-class work.

To continue with, the research *Fostering reading and writing skills in EFL classroom through a social network site as a Blended-learning tool* focused on the study of social networks to motivate students and foster them to write and interact online. The main objective of this research was to use those sites within a blended learning approach to enhance students' writing and reading skills in a course at the Instituto Pedagógico Nacional (IPN). The conclusion is that online sites motivate students to learn a new language and use it when reading and writing. This also improved the students' writing and reading skills but highlighted the importance of face-to-face activities to guarantee better results. This project and mine are linked since they both appeal to the use of blended learning and web tools, such as blogs and social networks, as a strategy to enhance writing skills in students of a determined course.

In keeping with the next research, *The role of storytelling in fourth grade students' literacy process and its influence in students' engagement in the English classes*, it is aimed to identify the influence that storytelling has on the improvement of literacy skills as a social practice. The study concludes that, through the implementation of narrative activities, students not only did improve their reading, but also their writing skills when they had to write summaries and reports of the work they were doing in the classroom. Although this research is not highly linked to mine,

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

the conception of literacy is taken as a social practice, which means that both studies share the same connotation of literacy. Due to that, this research provides meaningful criteria to evaluate the possibilities to improve students' literacy skills when producing texts.

The next study, *Blended learning as an instrument for explicit training on learning strategies for vocabulary*, looks for implementing learning strategies through blended learning to support students' vocabulary acquisition and, as a result of it, improve their communicative practice. The researchers concluded that blended learning is a significant approach since it makes students be aware of their own process and it also helps to foster their learning once they leave a classroom and go home to review and practice the topics that are previously seen in their class. The link between this study and mine is that students' interaction is fostered thanks to the use of the same approach that enables students to be aware of their own process and to cope with both the lack of class time and the lack of technology-fit classrooms.

To continue with, the next research, *Literacy practices, texts, and talk around texts: English language teaching developments in Colombia* was carried out in two public schools in Quindío and its main purpose was to look for the relation that might exist between teachers and students around and about texts and how they both made sense of those texts. They concluded that there was a pressing need in public schools to improve the interaction between students and teachers inside the classroom around a determined text that also required being closer to students' contexts. This study is close to mine to the extent that it sought for the interaction that takes place in the classroom between teachers and students around texts, which is partially one of the interactions that this research seeks.

The next study, *Blogging: A way to foster EFL writing* was carried out in Bogota in a group of first year university students and the main objective was to find out how the writing process

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

could be improved through the use of online blogs. The results of the research were that the texts were done properly since students felt part of a community in which they could find people who shared their own interests. Additionally, it was highlighted that, besides sharing their texts, students found really motivating the fact of interacting online and during the classes at the university. This study is related to mine since it deals with the use of blogs in order to enhance writing skills, which is the main purpose that this research pursues.

The last research project, *Writing Using Blogs: A Way to Engage Colombian Adolescents in Meaningful Communication* executed in a public school in Bogota with 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. Its objective was to find the way to promote English communication and prompt the written production of the students both in the classroom and out of it. It was concluded that the use of blogs is an excellent tool to foster writing skill in students and to make up for the lack of time that they spend in the school to learn a second language. The relation between this study and mine is that both of them sought for an improvement of the writing skill in students by the use of technology, specifically a blog, while using this tool to make students have more time to be in contact with the second language.

### ***Theoretical framework***

This part of the document presents the different conceptions of the constructs that are the central axis of this research. To begin with, writing refers to the ability that students are expected to develop throughout this study. Then, we continue with Blended Learning, which is the framework that guides some of the methodological views in the research. Furthermore, we have Blogging, which is presented as the main tool that is used in the study to achieve the proposed results. To finish with, it is necessary to define literacy since it gives us a wider perspective of the importance of writing to enable individuals to participate in societies and to “exercise the

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

social practices which use writing” (as cited in Sanchez, M, Sáez, J, Withnall, A, Juncos, O and da Graca, M. 2005, p. 121).

### ***Writing***

Writing is one of the skills that we, as human beings, have to make communication possible and to guarantee the interaction among communities. Along history, ancient peoples left written messages carved or printed on stone to spread a little part of their perspectives or knowledge about the world; thanks to those representations we all know a bit more about our species. In fact, Powell (2009) claims that writing is a lens through which literate people abstract the world while they feel, hate, love or defy it, and imagine its changes. Besides, in the same book, the author provides a more structured definition of this skill, defined as “a system of markings with a conventional reference that communicates information” (p. 13). In conclusion, writing is, above all, a system understood by entire communities, which allows communication to be possible.

However, this system is far to be only a series of symbols to be read. Following Richard Kern (2006), our writing also reveals some information about ourselves, and we may represent our own identity based on what we write, the grammatical choices that we do, the spelling, the use of punctuation or the handwriting itself. This is important to remark since the pursued idea through the use of Blogging is not only improving the structural matters when writing, such as punctuation or paragraph structure, but also to give students the opportunity to interact among them while forming their own judgement before their classmates.

Now, in order to clarify what is writing assumed like, we need to have a look at some different approaches on the matter. According to Harris (2004), writing can be seen as a product, as creativity and as a process.

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

### ***Writing as a product***

Writing is seen as a product that arises from an activity previously carried out. As stated by Johnson "The writing product is a result of the writing process" (2016, p.12); it means that the stages of writing are essential to reach the purpose of having a final product which is the written text itself.

In order to have students elaborate, present, evaluate and share their products, they must be aware of the instructions they need to follow. Such instructions are in regards to the kind of product they are expected to present: a poem, a letter, a tale, a summary, among others. The teacher tells those directions, so that the students write a text that fulfills the pursued purpose. The final product that students had to write for this research was a short fictional story; in addition, they wrote a letter and some drafts for the creation of the final text.

### ***Writing as creativity***

Writing is seen as an art that allows subjects to express their individuality in a creative way. According to Healey (2012), creative writing allows students to produce literary works which also encourage the creation of fictional characters, associative thinking and storytelling. The author claims that, besides the artistic abilities that those skills develop, they "are also increasingly used in a wide range of jobs and activities beyond the making of poetry, fiction and other kinds of literature" (P. 52). Those jobs and activities, which Healey refers to, are in the field of creative economy, social media and digital technology. It means that creative writing does not only serve to enhance and improve artistic abilities but also to get individuals to develop social tasks and to be participants in society.

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

### ***Writing as a process***

From this perspective, writing is seen as a sequence of stages that take place when writing. D'Aoust (1996) argues that the process of writing follows these steps: Prewriting, writing, sharing, revising, editing and evaluating (P.9). Prewriting implies that students discover that they have something to say and then, in the writing step they develop and give form to that idea; next, they share their texts, which means that they seek an audience feedback that allows them to revise what they wanted to say. After that, an editing work takes place; in this step, the necessary corrections are done. The last step allows students to evaluate the final version of their texts and receive final feedback. These six steps are cyclic and to be repeated as many times as needed to get a final version that fulfils the requirements of the writing activity.

To conclude, this Research is guided by the three conceptions previously described, since the main idea is not to provide the students with mere information about grammar structures or punctuation, but also to enhance their own creativity and make them reflect on their texts. In addition, they presented a written product in which they developed their creativity to create a fictional story entirely imagined by them.

### ***Blended Learning***

According to Bonk and Graham (2006), Blended Learning is the blend between two kinds of teaching environments. On the one hand the traditional face-to-face environments, where the interaction takes place inside the classroom. On the other hand the one in which the interaction can go beyond and is facilitated by the use of technologies that let students and teachers interact in different spaces apart from the classroom (p.5) which is crucial to the extent that it proposes educational scenarios to go beyond from what they have commonly been considered: fixed and established places to impart knowledge.

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

Throughout the years, other different approaches have been tested to improve results in teaching practices and students' learning. With the arrival of technological devices to the field of education, teachers, in some cases, have been forced to use them to catch their students' attention and to introduce new methodologies in the classroom. This is what has been called Blended Learning or Blended E-learning.

As a consequence of this development, the technological devices we can find nowadays in society "are becoming ubiquitous and are very familiar to our students. The most recent innovations in social software are changing the ways we meet people and interact." (Allison Littlejohn and Chris Pegler, 2007. p. 2). This notion cannot be more important since our students are coming to the classroom with some knowledge about technological tools that, if used in a creative way, can be useful to catch their attention and to enhance interaction with educational purposes.

To conclude, Blended Learning, as an approach, is crucial in this research to the extent that Blogging and using computers inside and outside the classroom is the tool to interact with students and to evidence their writing performance during the research.

In addition, Blended Learning is important in terms of motivation, and it provides a tool to make students work on their writing skills not only at school but also in the different environments where they are immerse. Besides, as it is seen in the surveys administered at the LC, students find motivating the fact of working with technology as a different way to get closer to language learning. Finally yet importantly, the fact of having only three and a half hours to meet in the classroom during the whole week poses a problem to achieve all the goals properly; with the aid of Blended Learning, this disadvantage can be tackled and the possibilities to improve students' skills in the foreign language are higher.

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

### ***Blogging***

The interaction that takes place nowadays while using technology and media has changed the way people relate among them and the way in which the information is spread. As a result of that, several platforms are used as a means to express thoughts and to interact with others in virtual scenarios that allow people to be more connected. One of those platforms that have made this possible is blogs, which are defined like online pages that:

“allow a group of people to communicate with each other on one or more specific topics. This format allows individuals to create their own publishing space with information, links, and ideas they want to keep for personal reference or to share with others” (Heskett, T. 2009, p 3)

Considering this definition, we can focus on the fact that using blogs enables people to communicate with each other and to determine a specific topic to make that communication and interaction possible. It means that it is up to the participants to choose which scenario they would like to interact in and what people they would like to share their posts with. Considering this main aspect, Blogging is useful when trying to make interaction happen out of the classroom, especially when the time to share face to face is limited.

On top of that, blogging is not only a tool to enhance interaction. Stoller (2018) states that “the most important ramification of public blogging is that it makes you a better writer” (p. 18), which supports the main purpose of this research: improving writing skills by means of using a blog. The topics that this author proposes as possible to post about vary from personal (family relationships, trips or birthdates), social (comments on social issues like health or education problems or social movements), professional (related to the day-to-day activities at work), and political (the development of policies or the government performance). As this study targeted



## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

children, the main suggested topics were related to their personal experiences. Additionally, they also made up a fictional story as a final product to post on the blog. Through those activities, the interaction with and on the blog was guaranteed.

### ***Literacy***

Literacy is assumed as a social practice and an important means to facilitate peoples' inclusion in society. There have been minimal changes on the way it has been described "but, in general, historians did not give literacy a prominent place in their efforts to understand social relations or social change" (Kingten, E & Kroll, B & Rose, M. 1998, p. 95). The importance of literacy was especially regarding what people were able to do in real contexts: "literacy practices are more usefully understood as existing in the relations between people, within groups and communities, rather than as a set of properties residing in individuals." (Barton & Hamilton. 2000, p.7). From this quote, it is concluded that literacy is defined as a social practice that allows individuals to interact among them within a social context. At the Language Center, through literacy, students strengthen their links while interacting thanks to the use of their writing and reading skills that also allow them to get to know each other.

On the other hand, this conception differs from the one stated by Professor David Olson (2009) who claimed that literacy has nothing to do with social competence or individuals' intelligence. (p. 4). However, Olson highlights "the fact that literacy has played distinctive roles in such a wide range of social practices has given rise to the suggestion that we think of literacy not as a single basic competence but rather as a variety of distinctive literacies" (Olson, 2009). The distinctive literacies that Olson mentions are related to the access and the use of technology, the participation in the State policies, or the development of certain daily activities within a

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

determined context. It portrays the importance that lies on the proper acquisition of literacy skills to allow the individuals to live in society.

Despite the two definitions mentioned, the one taken as guidance to support this research is the one stated by Barton and Hamilton. Hence, what is expected from students to achieve is a bond that is possible through the enhancement of their writing skills. This implies the use of technology and the sharing of some texts written by them that portray a bit their reality and their attitude towards what they learn inside the classroom.

# **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

## **Chapter III Research design**

The type of study and the approach that led this research are presented through this chapter, as well as the data collection instruments, the procedures and the ethical issues. The study was tackled as a qualitative study framed in the approach of Action-Research. Next, the components that were chosen to develop the research are explained.

### **Type of study**

#### ***Qualitative Research***

Qualitative Research has been mainly carried out in the field of the social sciences, which is very useful and important to study the human group life. As stated by Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer (2011), this kind of research, “as contrasted with quantitative studies, places more emphasis on the study of phenomena from the perspective of insiders” (p. 2). Since both the participants and the researcher are immerse in the research, the latter cannot become separated from what takes place in the research as she or he study things in their natural settings. The researcher needs to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Therefore, this research was conducted under the parameters of qualitative research, since its main purpose is to determine the population’s writing performance while being guided by the researcher.

In order to obtain enough information to analyze under the parameters of qualitative research, the collected data is primarily non-quantitative. This data mainly consists of “textual materials such as interview transcripts, field notes, and documents like artifacts, video recordings and internet sites that document human experiences about others and/or one’s self in social action and reflexive states.” (Saldana, J. 2011, p.4.) The collection of those materials is crucial since it allows measuring the achievement of the study based on the findings before, during and after the

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

activities that the researcher proposes. As well, and regarding the outcomes of this type of research, Saldana claims that it permits to document and/or evaluate how effective a program or a policy is after checking the results product of an analytic synthesis. (p.5). The effectiveness of blogging in the achievement of improving writing skills is what is planned to be evaluated in the light of Qualitative Research.

### ***Action Research***

Action Research is a well-known approach that involves both the observation and participation of the researcher with the aim of proposing a modification in the field where the study is conducted. Bradbury (2015) points out that this type of research “is oriented to the creation of new knowledge co-created with, but not about people” (p.3). Besides, Action Research brings together action and reflection, as well as theory and practice to reach solutions to problems. The issue that this study deals with is the lack of interaction that students at the Language Center have with technology as a means to learn a foreign language. Through Blended Learning, it is possible to blend both online and face-to-face interaction with the aim of enhancing students' literacy skills. The objective of providing students with technological tools at the LC while learning a language implies that the researcher also knows how to use them efficiently to be able to blend online and face-to-face interaction and to bring the guarantees to make it possible.

Following the previous quotes, Action Research implies active participation of the researcher and, at the same time, it requires collaborative work with the population in order to offer any kind of change to a problematic situation that had to be identified previously. Besides that, theory is required to guide the steps to follow during the implementation of the study. Additionally, reflection based on the obtained results is relevant since it guarantees that the

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

researcher also assumes the results as a significant source of information to guide the development of the study.

This kind of research, from the perspective of Valcarcel (2009), is carried out following three phases: prestudy planning; implementation and analysis and, finally, poststudy action planning (p. 14). During the first phase, the researcher makes observations to find out improvable aspects and identify the subjects in the studied population. During this phase, the researcher has to be aware of every detail that arises during the observation, since it makes possible to postulate plausible research questions. In addition, it is substantial to reflect on the importance of the intervention that wants to be done to solve a problem; both the environment and the participants must be taken into account in this proposal.

To continue with the implementation phase, it is recommended to follow a data collection schedule that makes the collecting much more organized and trustworthy. This is so, to the extent that “a timeline illustrating activities from the beginning to end will keep the study on track” (Valcarcel, 2009). This stage demands the researcher to pay careful attention to every single action that occurs during the development of the activities, since it provides relevant and suitable information regarding the research problem.

The third and last phase comprehends the analysis of the findings to draw conclusions and design an action plan that gathers the main results gotten during the implementation. This is due to the fact that the three phases are cyclical, which means that once one of them is covered, the researcher might work on that again if necessary. After reflecting on the results of the observations, there is likelihood to have to plan again if they are not as expected.

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

### ***Data analysis methodology***

In order to get sufficient information to diagnose and to tackle the research problem, some methods are considered to collect data: field notes, surveys and written texts. To analyze the results obtained with each one of those methods, we triangulated them with the purpose of getting a more objective view of the problem. Triangulation has been widely discussed as a useful mechanism to interpret data collected around a common topic; it is described by Bryman (2004) as “the use of more than one approach to the investigation of a research question in order to enhance confidence in the ensuing findings” (p, 1142). The key for using measurement is that, once a concept is widely discussed and analyzed from three different approaches or methods, the uncertainty of this concept lessens; additionally, “it includes researchers taking different perspectives on an issue under study, or more generally in answering research questions” (As cited in Wang, 2018, p. 355). Those perspectives serve to the production of new knowledge based on the results obtained in every instrument. This contributes, Flick says, “to promoting quality in research” (ibid) since the results might be presented in a more objective way.

### ***Data collection instruments***

The instruments for collecting information for this study were field notes, surveys and written texts. To start with, Bailey (2007) claims that field notes “serve as the repository for the important and even not-so-important data of field research” (p, 113). These instruments also help us decide on what we want to write and “methodological decisions are made when writing field notes and they help maintain a certain amount of emotional stability” (ibid). It is essential, when collecting observations, to record as much as possible in order to keep the information the most faithful to what happens inside the classroom. This recording was done through some photographs taken during the class development and its purpose was to identify how students

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

performed during face-to-face interactions in the classroom when discussing their texts previously written and shared on the blog.

In regards with the surveys, they allow the researcher to get sufficient information from the participants of a study in regards with the issue that is being researched. When they are administered in an educational context, in which the participants are minors, “one of the most important duties of the researcher is maintaining confidentiality.” (Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle, 2006, p.160) The shared information has to be kept and gathered only for research purposes, and it is recommended not to spread it; this is important to the extent that it gives confidence to the participants to answer honestly about what they are asked.

In addition, surveys can be administered in several ways. The most traditional way to do it is by giving a paper to a group of people who fulfill the answer in person. They can be also sent by mail or email; it is essential for these two options that the researcher be aware of the reception of the answers following previous instructions given to the participants to assure a pertinent analysis with the gathered information.

Regarding written texts, Duke and Mallette (2011) claim that they “are of concern to literacy researchers because the ability to read and understand them is definitional to literacy, at least in Western culture” (p, 104). The importance of analyzing the texts produced by students in the classroom was to find out how good their performance and understanding were in relation to content and form. This is to observe, for instance, if students would write following the structure of a paragraph, or if their texts were coherent and, therefore, easy to understand for the reader. In addition to the texts written in the classroom, some excerpts taken from the blog were also analyzed. Those texts needed to be taken into account since they are one of the central axis to interpret the results. About blog's posts, Kelsey (2008) claims that since they were open to

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

anyone with an internet connection, “the general population was beginning to see the Web as a means for them to express themselves, and not simply something to read” (p, 847). This confirms that posting on a blog not only fosters interaction among students, but also increases their writing and reading skills; the latter is relevant in order to facilitate the evaluation phase of the written and posted texts.

### ***Unit of analysis***

With the purpose of illustrating the most relevant aspects to consider along this research, the next table was designed.

<b>Unit of analysis</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
Writing skills	Writing skills	1.1 Students write texts about their lives and express their feelings and likes.
		1.2 Students organize their texts in paragraphs and use punctuation marks to structure them.
		1.3 Students create a fictional story using conjunctions as linkers to join sentences and paragraphs.
	Blogging	2.1 Students post their texts on the blog following previous instructions and models on content and form.
		2.2 Students interact with their classmates through the blog and suggest some corrections to be done in each other's texts.
	Blended Learning	3.1 Students write text in the classroom after being explained a determined topic to guide their writing.
		3.2 Students check and correct their texts in the classroom as well as they clarify questions and doubts before or after posting them on the blog.
		3.3 Students check and comment on the material posted on the blog to follow up the explanations previously seen in the classroom.



## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

### ***Ethical issues***

As the participants of this study were underage children, it was necessary to have their parents sign a consent form in which they were explained about their children's participation in some activities aimed to develop the research. However, neither the participants nor their texts or opinions are presented under their real names since they are named as "student 1, 2, 3, etc." .The sample to carry out the analysis was chosen randomly and is composed of 14 students. This guarantees that the analysis contemplated varied results from the students' production.

# **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

## **Chapter IV Pedagogical intervention**

This chapter presents the visions of language, learning and technology in order to guide the reader to a better understanding of the principles that are followed in regards to these three main components. Next, the proposal of intervention is explained; it is linked to the visions of learning and language previously mentioned, and to the curriculum of the L.C.

### **Teaching approach**

The teaching approach pursued the purpose of enhancing interaction between students. Therefore, the Interactive Teaching Approach was selected. According to Wilga Rivers (2000), interaction is important since it permits students to develop and increase their language store. Besides, she claims that "Interaction involves not just expression of one's own ideas but comprehension of those of others" (p, 4). Achieving that level of comprehension is essential when it comes to interacting and recognizing other points of view that other people have. We could easily link this thought with the goal of interacting inside the classroom among students whose realities are different from each other, but not because of that, right or wrong.

Additionally, Wassermann (2017) argues that this approach allows teachers to help students "gain in self-confidence and in heightened personal autonomy" (32). Bearing in mind the little time to work with students in the classroom, improving their autonomous learning is very helpful in order to carry out the activities and to achieve the objectives traced by the LC. That is another reason why this approach was selected to guide this study, not only because of its link to the Blended Learning framework but also because of its utility for blogging, since the same author states that "we have to allow that classroom discussions are not for giving students information- for that is more easily acquired through multitudes of high- and low-tech sources" (Wassermann,

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

2017). This also implies the use of online blogs, through the one, for example, some contents from the class were shared for students to review or foresee the topics worked in the classroom.

### **Intervention phases**

#### ***Introduction (4 weeks)***

During this phase students were introduced to blogs and online content that they were not familiar with. The main purpose on this step was to get students to be familiarized with the different material they could find and share while using a computer or surfing the web. In addition, they were also expected to gain familiarity with some of the tasks that they carried out both in the classroom and in their houses through the use of blogging. To guarantee this, they were shown how to post on a blog and how the online interaction is eased with this tool.

Even though the skill expected to be improved through this research was writing, students also worked on reading, speaking and listening. This pursuited the purpose of getting enough information and resources to have them produce their own texts. The material they were given dealt with topics close to their own lives and contexts, such as technology, sports or environment and they were shared on the blog, so that students could start interacting with it and bringing their own questions or suggestions to the classroom.

#### ***Participation (6 weeks)***

To continue with this second stage, students were asked to start posting on the blog. Before sharing their texts online, they were checked in the classroom by the whole group. In order to enhance writing skills, the week before posting on the blog, there was a class to work on the use of punctuation marks and the paragraph structure. Students worked in groups to find out some

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

aspects to correct in their classmates' writings and to discuss why they had to be corrected, all of this based on the explanation previously received.

In addition, to provide students with ideas, they worked on the readings that the textbook contained which topics were closely related to students' contexts. Furthermore, the writing exercises included in the book were also assigned to be done at home and to be checked in the classroom as a way to promote the interaction not only on the blog but also in the LC.

### ***Revision and final post (5 weeks)***

As a final step, this stage consisted of the revision that students made on the texts that they wrote, corrected and posted on the blog. This revision was done online, and in the classroom as an essential tool to enhance interaction among students, who checked their classmates' texts before and after they were posted and suggested some corrections that were to take into account for the last version, which consisted of the creation of a fictional story.

It is necessary to clarify that the last two phases were cyclic rather than progressive. It means that, as students always wrote and checked their texts, both online and in class, they participated and revised their writing product constantly.

### ***Implementation***

This research was carried out during 17 classes that took place on Saturdays from August 4<sup>th</sup> 2018 to May 4<sup>th</sup> 2019. The systematic process that students followed was as continues:

First of all, and taking into account that at the LC students and teachers work with a textbook , the activities intended to be related to the that textbook syllabus. That is the reason why the topics chosen to write about were close to the grammar and the contents included in every unit of the book as a way to chain both the research with the LC program.

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

The first moment in the class was to check the book. Students made an overview to the contents they had to work on the respective pages the book had for that day and the situational examples presented as an introduction. Then, the researcher had students do some writing exercises in which they could relate those contents seen in the book and some basics on writing skills, such as punctuation, linking words and paragraph structure. A third step was to make them write some fictional and short texts in which they integrated both the syllabus content and the writing basics. Next, they corrected each one of their classmates' texts before publishing them. The final step was to publish them on the blog.

### ***Visions of language***

For this study, language is considered as a means to facilitate and to foster self-expression in children at the LC. According to Tudor (2001), cited by Vera, Chapetón and Buitrago (2018) "language is the means by which we build up personal relationships, express our emotions and aspirations, and explore our interests". (p. 45) Being this said, we can remark the importance of self-expression in the development of children's production at the LC since through blogging they made up several texts, most of the ones were mainly based on fictional and factual life experiences. Besides, they commented on their classmates' ones, which enhanced their participation in an online blog, and the interaction among them in the classroom.

In addition, language is seen as "culture and ideology" since the students represented their own view towards their own life experiences. Based on Vera, Chapeton and Buitrago, language "embodies and expresses elements of the world view and the culture of its speakers" (2018, in press). It means that even when the students write and read real life experiences they have lived, their point of view while writing and reading them, may differ from one to one. This is important

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

to highlight since not all the students are from the same social strata, or have the same chances to study in bilingual schools or travel abroad to get familiarized with English as a foreign language.

### ***Vision of learning***

This study traces the vision of experiential learning. According to Beard and Wilson (2006) this type of learning is defined as “the sense-making process of active engagement between the inner world of the person and the outer world of the environment” (p, 2). The authors emphasize the fact that every individual perceives their world in a singular and different way from each other even if they are in front of the same object or, there is an experience that has been lived by the same individuals.

Bearing that in mind, students at the LC posted some of their life experiences on a blog to share them with their classmates and discuss them together in the classroom. Some experiences were different even when their life conditions were similar; this facilitated interaction among students.

### ***Vision of technology***

Technology is seen as a tool to facilitate the interaction between students and the researcher-observer outside the classroom. As it was stated in the characterization, students at the LC find technology as a very useful tool for learning a foreign language. However, the access they have to it at the LC is very limited. They can go only once to the language laboratory where they interact with computers and web content. This is due to the numerous groups that have to share it during the semester.

In line with that reality, according to Ivers (2003), “technology can increase students’ achievement across a variety of subject areas, including mathematics, science, social studies, writing and reading.” (p. 38). Besides, the same author claims that technology is a useful tool to

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

increase motivation, self-confidence and self-esteem, which turn out to have students more successful and motivated to learn.

### **Resources**

#### ***Blogging***

An accurate definition for this research about Blogging is given by Hudson in his book *Blogging* (2007), where he states that “Blogs are online journals or diaries in which individuals can post entries about the subjects that interest them most” (p, 11). Based on the information obtained from the survey administered during the preliminary phase of this study, students do like reading, playing video games, traveling, watching T.V. and surfing the web. However, they consider that using these strategies for learning a language is not being well done enough. What we proposed is to have students post their entries on a blog taking into account some experiences closely related to them. Then, their entries had to deal with the creation of a fictional story in which they could show what they had understood during the in-class time.

The blog as a methodological resource was useful since through its use, students got more aware of what their and their classmates' writing process was like and it helped them identify their weaknesses when writing to work in their improvement. In addition, they also shared with other people some of their interests and likes in regards with several aspects related to their lives. It allowed the blend between the contents to be taught in the classroom and the work to be done in their houses.

#### ***Chronogram***

According to the Language Center's policies, the classes are guided by a textbook which contents must be covered. Therefore, there were some classes in which, due to time limitations, it

## BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

was not possible to apply any activity related to this research. The activities were carried out as follows in the next table which contains the class development during a period of two semesters.

Activity	Learning objectives	Online objectives	Indicators	Resources
<p><b>Getting acquainted</b> August 4th 2018 Students ask their classmates for some information to know them better.</p>	To break the ice and to meet each other in the classroom.	N/A	N/A	N/A
<p><b>Time to take your pencil.</b> August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018 Students write some questions with their answers based on the grammar already explained.</p>	To start writing in the classroom based on an in-class explanation.	N/A	3.1	Paper, pencils/pens.
<p><b>What does it take to write?</b> August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018 Students write a first text on a free topic using punctuation marks.</p>	To write a first draft to share with classmates.	To recognize the platform and get ready to post the first text.	1.1 2.1 3.1 3.2	Paper, pencils/Pens, blogger.
<p><b>Let's make some corrections</b> August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018 Have students make some pair corrections to be aware of their own mistakes.</p>	To share the first drafts with classmates and suggest some corrections to be made on them before posting on the blog.	To post the first text already corrected in the classroom.	1.1 2.1	Paper, pencils/pens, blogger.
<p><b>What did we post?</b> September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018 Students make corrections on the texts that have been already posted.</p>	To check in the classroom the texts that were already posted on the blog	N/A	3.2	Copies, pencils/pens, projector, board, markers.
<p><b>Blogging feedback</b> September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018 Students ask questions to clarify possible doubts they might have regarding the blog exercise.</p>	To reinforce students' knowledge regarding the exercise they are doing on the blog.	To guarantee the appropriate development of the exercise proposed on the blog.	3.2	Computer, projector, paper.
<p><b>Blogging to review</b> September 29<sup>th</sup> 2018 Students watch a video in their house regarding the topic we are working on in</p>	To review the structure of a grammar topic previously seen in class.	To use the blog as a tool to get useful information regarding what	3.3	Computer, blog, notebook.



## BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

the classroom.		is been worked in class.		
<p><b>Picking the final topic</b> November 3<sup>rd</sup> 2018 Students decide on the topic they want to write about for their final text to be posted on the blog.</p>	To identify a personal experience to write about in which students can integrate what they have learned in the course.	To take advantage of the blog as a way to share a text in which they express their experiences.	1.1 2.1 3.1	Computer, blog, notebook, paper, pencil, pen.
<p><b>Time to present my text</b> November 10<sup>th</sup> 2018 Students present their final texts before their classmates.</p>	To talk about life experiences, likes, dislikes or memories using a second language	To use a blog as a digital platform to enhance interaction both online and in the classroom.	1.1 1.2 2.1 2.2 3.2 3.3	Computer, projector, blogger.
<p><b>What is a story made of?</b> February 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019 Students recognize the components of a story and identify them in a short tale.</p>	To recognize the different elements that a fictional story has and their function in a text.	To create the profile of a fictional character that the students wrote about.	1.2 1.3 2.1 2.2	Short tale, blog, computer, paper, pencil.
<p><b>Let's correct</b> March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019 Students see their posts on the blog with the aim of checking possible mistakes to correct.</p>	To recognize capitalization rules, correct spelling and punctuation marks and how to use them in a text with a correspondence in verbal tenses.	To interact on the virtual blog in order to make a metacognition process	1.1 1.2 1.3 2.1 2.2 3.2 3.3	Computer, video beam, blogger, notebook, textbook.
<p><b>Exploring writing horizons</b> March 9<sup>th</sup> 2019 Students interact with a new tool to enhance and stimulate their writing skills which is <i>Storybird</i>.</p>	To create a coherent story by following a sequence of actions in which some characters interact.	To use a web page as a tool to enhance writing skills	1.1 1.2 1.3 3.1	Computer, video beam, storybird.
<p><b>Defining my own fictional character</b> March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019 Students create the profile of their own character by defining their main characteristics.</p>	To create a coherent story by following a sequence of actions in which students' own characters interact.	To post, correct and receive comments on students' own texts posted on the blog.	All indicators.	Computer, video beam, blogger.

## BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

<p><b>Checking what we have written</b> March 30<sup>th</sup> 2019 Students revise some texts that they had already started to write in which they had to use adjectives to describe people.</p>	<p>To use adjectives to describe people and to talk about their future plans and perspectives in life.</p>	<p>To take advantage of the blog as a way to share a text in which students express their plans.</p>	<p>1.1 1.2 1.3 2.1 3.1 3.2</p>	<p>Computer, projector, blogger.</p>
<p><b>Time to correct</b> April 6<sup>th</sup> 2019 Students correct the texts written by them following some categories proposed by the teacher.</p>	<p>To come to an understanding on the mistakes that students commit in their texts under this categories Grammar (Gr), spelling (Sp), Plural disagreement (Pl), Capitalization (C), or punctuation (P)</p>	<p>To post a text already corrected in the classroom as a way to share students' corrections and their second text about their characters.</p>	<p>All indicators</p>	<p>Computer, video beam, blogger.</p>
<p><b>My character's experiences</b> April 13<sup>th</sup> 2019 Students make a drawing in which they represent one experience lived by their character and describe it using the present perfect tense.</p>	<p>To use present perfect to describe life experiences.</p>	<p>To use the blog as a platform to share the exercises that they do in the classroom.</p>	<p>1.3 2.1 3.1 3.2</p>	<p>Blogger, paper, color pencils, pens.</p>

### ***Unit planning***

As it was already stated, during the development of this research, it was also necessary to accomplish the LC objectives and program. To do so, it was necessary to distribute the in-class time in order to cover the units from the book Live Beat and the research activities. Even though the skill to work on was writing, it was needed to work on reading and speaking too, since the LC approach is Communicative which demands teachers to enhance communication in the classroom. The following lesson plan portrays the stages that were followed during the classes and the activities related both to the syllabus from the L.C and the research activities to improve writing skills through blogging within the blended learning framework.

## BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

Date: February 23 <sup>rd</sup> 2019. Length of class: 3 ½ hours Level: Advanced.				
Class profile		This group is composed of 25 students, who are in advanced level, and are aged between 11 and 13 years old.		
Time table fit		In this class students will work on some tenses to make a review on the topics they worked on in the previous level. They are expected to produce basic statements related to the past and the future.		
Terminal objective(s)		To talk about both future and past plans and express certainty regarding future activities.		
Stage and time	Aim	Anticipated problems and solutions	Procedures	Interaction and materials
Grammar checking 40'	Get students to be familiar again with some topics they had been working on during the previous level.	<p>P. Students might have forgotten some basics related to the structure of tenses.</p> <p>S. Have students who remember those structures clearly explain what they remember and correct what might be wrong.</p> <p>P. Students might be doubtful about the difference between the several tenses to refer to the past and the future.</p> <p>Q. Provide them with some examples where they can notice the difference between the different tenses in a given context.</p>	<p>Write on the board some prompts to be completed by students including <i>present and past continuous</i> as well as <i>going to</i> and <i>will</i>.</p> <p>Make students notice the main differences between the different tenses when it comes to the structure.</p> <p>Have students notice why the tenses are different when used in a determined context.</p>	<p>Teacher/students</p> <p>Pen, pencil, notebook, textbook, board.</p>

## BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

Textbook checking 30'	Have students check the dialogues and the readings that are provided by the textbook and make them complete the given exercises.	P. Not all the students will have the book. S. Students will be working in 5-people groups, so that they can share the books among them.	Have students check the conversations that are provided by the textbook and make them focus, specially, on the structures that they just saw. Work on the vocabulary and the exercises the book contains.	Teacher/students Students/students Board, markers, textbooks.
Activity 70'	Get students to represent some activities in order to have their classmates describe what they were doing and predict what they will do after.	P. Students might be shy and shameful to act before their classmates. S. The teacher will show them first an example of what they are expected to do to make them feel confident enough with the ease that the activity represents.	Show students the representation of an activity that the teacher commonly does. Once he stops doing it, they will brainstorm some ideas they have about what he was doing, for example: The teacher was cooking dinner/making breakfast/chopping some onions, etc. Have students predict what I will do next, for example: the teacher will eat alone/won't go to a restaurant/will invite someone to have lunch, etc. Have all students represent something and participate by writing or telling their statements using the past and the future structure.	Students/students Students/teacher Markers, board and notebooks,
Creative writing. 40'	Have students recognize the elements of a tale: characters	P. Students might be anxious due to the previous activity. S. Get them to be relaxed and to sit down making a circle in the middle of the classroom.	The teacher will arrange all the students in a circle and will read a tale taking into account intonation, cadence, punctuation and emphasizing on the characters that are presented in the story, what they do and what is told about them. Once that the story is finished, have students share their opinions. Ask about the most important elements they consider related to	Teacher/students Markers, board, notebooks, textbooks and computers.

**BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

			<p>the characters. Show them the reading exercise that is proposed in the textbook and tell them it will be their homework for next class. They will have to read the interviews about <i>music festivals around the world</i> and the assignment to make up a profile of the 3 interviewed, taking into account their possible likes, dislikes, professions, and their daily routine. This exercise will be the first one to be shared on the blog this semester.</p>	
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# **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

## **Chapter V Data analysis**

This chapter presents the analysis done from the data gathered. Such analysis was done by providing a sample of some texts written by the participants, which were commented in light of the indicators that guided the study. Also, this chapter does not only tackle the positive outcomes that blogging had in the improvement of writing skills, but also the negative ones. As well, it portrays some situations that took place along the study and the research development.

To start with, it is important to mention that all the texts that were posted can be found on the following link: <https://ourenglishhideout.blogspot.com>. Apart from this, for the study, sample excerpts of 13 participants were selected. It is necessary to mention that, due to the low scores during the first semester, there were 3 students who did not continue in the same group for the next level, so there were 3 new kids in the course for the second part of the research; this situation did not affect its development, since there were enough students from the previous course to create the sample.

Secondly, using smartphones in the class to facilitate the blogging activities development was not possible since only a few students had one but with no connection to the Internet. Taking that into account, the posting exercises were entirely demanded to be done at home. Nevertheless, some corrections, which were part of the revising stage, were done in the classroom with the aid of a projector and a laptop. Thanks to those tools, it was possible to project the posts on the wall and to work, as a group, in the respective corrections of the texts that were posted. Thus, we could turn a negative factor into a positive one that favored interaction in the classroom.

Finally, as positive outcomes, the whole group was involved in the activities proposed to be done either in the classroom or on the blog. In addition, they were open to share some of their life experiences with the group and were respectful when discussing some of their differences

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

regarding their preferences. It showed that the proposal of having students motivated while working on an online platform was well addressed and received. Also, the parents' commitment with the development of the activities was substantial. Their help and assistance to their children was crucial to the extent that they were all the time attentive to their children's performance and their participating on the blog. In conclusion, this proposal showed to be a solution for the lack of time dedicated to writing in the classes since participants got used to it and utilized the blog to go further with the contents covered at the LC.

### **Category 1: Writing skills**

This first category represents the communicative ability to be improved along the research. First, it sought after motivating students to share some aspects of their lives in a written form for discussing them in the classroom. The main reason for doing it this way was to get students to assume themselves as members of a society in which, thanks to their writing skills, they can participate. Besides, it was not only focused on the sheer writing, but also writing in a coherent way that allows the reader to understand what they are reading. Finally, this category wanted to raise writing as a tool to express children's creativity when making up fictional stories later expressed in written texts. The reach of those aims is measured through the indicators that were proposed for each category.

#### **Indicator 1.1 Students write texts about their lives and express their feelings and likes**

The main objective this indicator pursued was to have students get closer to writing as a vehicle of expression and portray their likes and feelings. This was also the first approach to the blog, so it was demanded to the participants to post a text on the blog in which they had to write about themselves. The indicator was accomplished by the students to the extent that they succeed

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

both at writing a short text in which they shared some things about themselves and they were correctly posted on the online blog.

The main concern of this indicator was to look upon students' identification of writing as a skill that enables them to participate in society. Following Stevens (2010), it was significant since "writing is a powerful means of self and social expression, potentially communicating to an increasingly wide audience through a formal or informal publication, easy and quick copying" (p. 32). It means that both writing a text and having a recipient become important. Both of those actors implied in the writing process were visible in the blogging exercise, in which there was a writer as well as a reader. This was the first indicator to cover since it was expected that students could recognize themselves within a group and, through writing, they could know each other and assume themselves as active members in an online community.

One of the factors we needed to consider, when doing the activities in the classroom or on the blog was that the LC contents had to be developed. Therefore, for the first exercise, students were asked to write a text about themselves in which the use of the grammar structure we had been working on had to be used; some of them did so, as it can be seen in the student #1 post; however, some others did not. As it was the first posting about them, and the idea was to let their classmates meet each other, the focus was not entirely on the grammar, but on the ability to communicate some of their personal information and likes.

### **TEXT**

I live in Bogotá | Colombia, this country is too big, what I like the most is that it has the best amount of parks and commercial centers, the only thing I don't like is that there is a lot of trash because we do not take care of the planet and there are too many thieves.

*Figure 1. Post #1; student #1. Blogger. Writing activity: Students' neighborhood.*



## BLENDING LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

i live in ciudad verde, there are three schools there arent a hospital that isnt good but a thing that is good enough is that there arent any trafic. its a place that is peaceful enough.  
how i tell you the thing that isnt so good is that there arent hospitals !!! you need to go a hospital that is too far, i hate it. and the thing that is good enough is that there arent traffic and that is so peaceful.

*Figure 2. Post #1; student #2. Blogger. Writing activity: students'*

As it can be seen in the second student's post, she showed to be aware of the problems that there are in the place where she lives and takes a position in terms of what she likes and what she does not about her neighborhood.

Although the first texts they posted were not long, the second exercise they posted showed more confidence when sharing information about themselves. This is evident if we take into account the details they included in their texts, but, specially, due to the extension they have. As well, the texts they wrote had to do with their likes, but also with their emotions and feelings since they said how they felt when traveling or watching a movie; what they liked and hated of their neighborhood and what their emotions are when talking about their personal memories.

MY FAVORIE MOVIE ☺

My favorite movie is Suicide Squad that is a DC's movie that was released on 03/08/2016 in Colombia it is about a squad that is comformed by Dead Shot (Will Smith), Harley Quinn (Margot Robbie), Capitain Boomerang (Jai Akinnuoye-Agbaje). They must fight with a witch that is called Enchantress (Cara Delevigne) that is six thousand years old, their leader is Rig Flag (Joel Kinnaman) that is a soldier.

This movie is called the worst movie of DC's comic but for me is good enough to be my favorite movie.

In this movie the squad was imprisoned but when Rig Flag need them they can reduce their sentences only if they win that fight (that hapenned) but it was too difficult for them. They have done a deal with the government, with this deal they won things that they want like a TV a coffee maker or can see his daughter. The most important villains (that arent in the Suicide Squad) are The Joker whose gilfriend is Harley Quinn and the enchantress' brother.

*Figure 3. Post# 2. Student # 2. Blogger. Writing activity: What is your favorite movie?*

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

To conclude, it can be stated this indicator was achieved thank to the excerpts presented to support it. Students were able to use writing as a social skill to express themselves and to gain familiarity within a group. Besides of that evidence, we take into account the third field note on August 18<sup>th</sup> 2018 (annex 1) in which students showed their commitment to write something about their likes and how to share their texts with their classmates. It allows us to claim that the indicator was finally developed.

### **Indicator 1.2 Students organize their texts in paragraphs and use punctuation marks to structure them.**

This second indicator focuses on the students' recognition of punctuation marks and on how to structure their texts and organize them in paragraphs. It is important to the extent that structuring a text in paragraphs by using punctuation marks, makes it easier to be read and understood by the reader. As stated by Whitesmok, (2014), punctuation marks help the reader understand much more clearly what the writer means, and it also permits to avoid confusion when constructing meaning from a written text. The author also points out that those marks are useful to the writer to transmit more effectively the gist of their text.

As the writing process not only took place online, but also in the classroom, students were asked to write a text in which they were expected to show their understanding in punctuation marks. Therefore, they had to watch a video in which the basics of punctuation were explained; this video was an additional tool to reinforce the research they were said to do in their houses about the use of the *comma, period, colon, semi-colon, exclamation point* and *question marks*.

After watching the video, they worked in groups in order to discuss the information they had researched and to compare or complement it with the one from the video. Once that they said not

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

to have any questions they were demanded to write a text which topic was decided by them: crime. They had to use punctuation marks to structure the texts in paragraphs. It was noticeable that after the explanation seen in the video and in class, they did not write isolated sentences, but that they connected them by means of using commas and periods. Now, and in order to guarantee a clearer definition on what a paragraph is, Hogan (2012) claims that a paragraph is “a group of related sentences about one focused idea. Visually, it is a block of solid writing with an indented first sentence. It can vary in length depending on the writer’s purpose and assignment.” (p. 25). In terms of visual distribution, we could claim that students succeed at structuring the texts in paragraphs. (See annex 1).

In addition to the visual concern, the texts written on this attempt showed that the punctuation marks, to be mentioned, the periods and commas, were used to help with their organization although there were some omissions, served to the purpose to separate sentences within the same paragraph or to divide the whole text into several paragraphs that also had a similar extension.

Nevertheless, there were some repeated words that students still used to link different paragraphs; the student #4, for example, introduced the paragraphs with variations of the verb *happen*. Besides, the conjunction *and* is used to link the succession of events mentioned in the story, instead of using commas to separate them. It can be concluded that the only trace of punctuation in this text is the use of the period and the full stop at the end of the paragraph with the corresponding capital letter used after it, to start a new sentence. Even though there were still some errors at using punctuation marks, we highlight the fact that, as writing is seen as a process, students were said to write another text in which they could correct the mistakes that were identified after the teacher's feedback and the whole class revision. This text had to be published on the blog, and the improvement was significant:

## BLENDING LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

My favourite series:

My favourite series is "stranger things" because it has special effects, I also like it because its actors are interesting. My favourite actress is "eleven" because i like her drama. In the first chapter of the second season, she was eating waffles in the middle of the forest and then Hopper comes there and he takes she to his house. After taking she to his house, many problems happened. Some parts I get scared when Will remember the upside down.

This series has too many fiction. My favourite scene its when Bob said:"im here",and then the monster eats him, that was awesome. I think all those special effects, the places e.t.c was too expensive. Some scenes are hard enough. This has never said bad words yet. Im actually waiting for third season, I read some advances, so I think it will be better than the first and second season.

Figure 5. Student 3. Writing activity: punctuation. Attempt 2

In regards with the exercise done by the student #3, the use of a wider range of punctuation marks such as *colon*, *quotation marks*, *periods* and *commas* is noticeable. The text is divided into two paragraphs that are easy to read and which idea is understandable for the reader. However, there are still a few mistakes, for example the use of quotation marks to refer to the title of the series *Stranger things* and the character on it. But, on the other hand, they were correctly used after colon to introduce a quotation, proper of the direct speech.

### Final Project

Last Christmas I went to Cartagena to visit my aunt.

There, I spent my time visiting the most famous places, such as San Felipe castle, Boca Grande beach, old walled city, white beach, San Diego square, San Pedro square, and the Oceanarium.

The Oceanarium was the most interesting place I visited, because it has too many marine species I didn't know before, such as stingrays, sea lions, crocodiles and seals.

I'm traveling again to Cartagena next January, so If I want to know more places and attractions, I will need to create a schedule and include all my relatives in my activities.

Figure 6. Student 4. Writing activity: punctuation. Attempt 2

In sum, this indicator was achieved since students could improve their structuring texts in paragraphs rather than in isolated sentences with no link between them. Even so, there were a

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

few mistakes regarding to grammar which were corrected later on, but the understanding of the texts as a whole was guaranteed.

### **Indicator 1.3 Students create a fictional story using linkers and conjunctions to join sentences and paragraphs.**

This indicator happens to be similar to the previous one since they both deal with paragraph structure; even so, this one sought for the use of linkers and conjunctions rather than punctuation in order to structure the content of the texts. Further, this indicator is addressed to the creation of a fictional story instead of the writing of personal experiences as was demanded during other stages.

To start with, this indicator was the one that took more time to achieve. It was due to the process of writing that we decided to go through. It is true that time is not enough at the LC; however, this exercise was built up step by step in order to evidence the progress and to provide students with enough tools to succeed in their writing exercise. Consequently, students were demanded to write a first draft about a fictional character. Initially, some aspects such as the name, the gender or the origin of the character were given to the students, but they demanded to be allowed to make up the whole character, which implied to imagine all those previous details and even their character's shape (some made up with fictional characters that were animals or inanimate objects). They were permitted to do so, since, as it was claimed by Linder and Means (1998) "when students are enthusiastic about the subject, they are more interested in learning technique" (p.12) and it was proved to be like that: students were so creative and delighted while imagining what their characters were going to be like or what their names were going to be; it eased the writing process since students were much more interested now.

## BLENDING LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

Firstly, students were demanded to write a short text in which they introduced their characters; then, they wrote another text presenting some memories that their characters had; and finally, they wrote another one expressing some goals and future plans their characters had as well. In consequence, we could cover the three main tenses and started to shape a chronological story. The first introduction of the character was posted on the online blog as can be evidenced.



Figure 7. Student # 6. Writing activity: character introduction. First excerpt

The first text of the fictional story was posted on the blog since, as Means and Linder (1996) suggest, publishing some of the students' writings is useful to enhance their motivation, to keep track on their process and to have more chances to practice their writing before having a final product. Alternatively, some of the other components of the final story were written in the classroom before being posted with some corrections suggested by another classmate. This can be also visible in the first field note from February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019 (annex 4) in which students expressed their interest in writing a fictional story and clarify some doubts in the creation of a fictional character.

The following fragment was a text in which a specific grammar topic was used together with some coordinating conjunctions such as *and*, *but*, *or*, *for*, and subordinating ones such as *since* and *because*. Before doing the text, students were explained on the cases in which those

## BLENDING LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

conjunctions were used; it was true, and can be seen in the first drafts, that they already had an idea about it; but there was not a solid knowledge about structuring a paragraph by means of using either conjunctions or linkers. Hence, to do so, and to have students gain awareness on the paragraph structuring by the means of using conjunctions, they wrote the texts according to the previous indications.

To conclude the analysis under this indicator, it can be said that it was achieved since the students showed progress at structuring a paragraph while using conjunctions to link sentences and paragraphs in a suitable way, which is in Dona Young's words (2009) what conjunctions are used to, since they "focus the reader on key points, making writing clearer and easier to understand" (p.66), this is conjunctions are used to guide the reader through the writer's intention and help arrange the texts in organized paragraphs, which was reached by students as can be seen next:

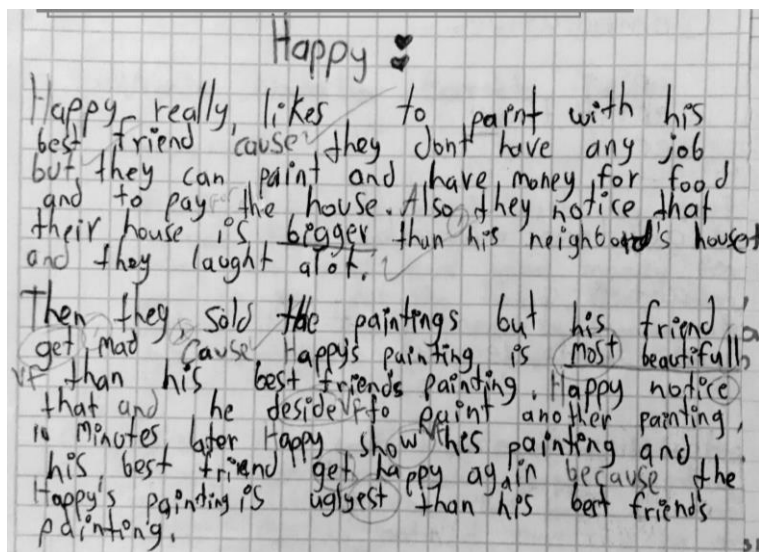


Figure 9. Student # 5. Writing activity: character introduction. Second excerpt

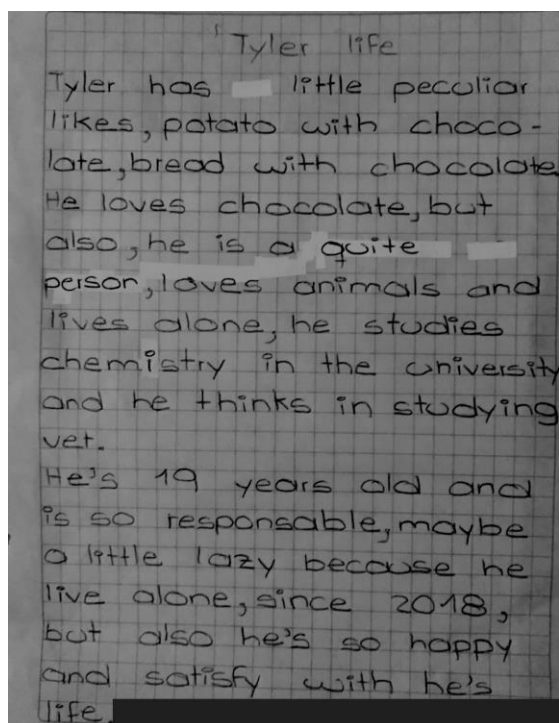


Figure 10. Student # 7. Writing activity: character introduction. Second excerpt

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

### **Category II: Blogging**

As it was previously mentioned, blogging is one among several technological tools to be used to enhance learning. The reason to select this category was to find out how effective the use of blogs is for improving writing through the merge of inside and outside-classroom classes. The platform chosen to work with was Blogger, which is one of the biggest payment-free online platforms and it is also easy to access and to interact in it. In addition, it also explores the scope of online interaction as a means to offer feedback and revision of written material.

#### **Indicator 2.1 Students post their texts on the blog following previous instructions and models on content and form.**

To start with, the main purpose of this indicator was to determine how effective the online interaction through a blog is to facilitate students writing as a means for improving their writing skills. In order to do so, students were always commanded to post following a previous instruction to guide their entries in the blog. Having in mind the group performance and participation in the blog, there are grounds for believing that this indicator was achieved.

First of all, students were said to post their entries but also to correct their classmates'. As a result of that, interaction was guaranteed and the revision of their texts was not an individual task to be done separately. Some other times, students were asked to posts their texts only after being corrected in the classroom and, finally, students were demanded to post following a model previously written and posted by the teacher.

A condition to be taken into account in this indicator was the students' age. It was so, since students were all minors who did not have enough age to create their own blog under their own name. As suggested by Heskett (2009), students joined to a blog created by the teacher and with



## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

their parents' permission and surveillance, participated on it, sometimes only commenting but others posting as administrators thanks to an invitation sent by the teacher to their emails. (See annex 5).

In brief, it can be claimed that this indicator was achieved by the students since all of them could access the blog and participated on it either writing their texts or revising their classmates'. There were no major problems to do so in relation to the lack of time or technology, because the postings were made from their houses, where, according to the survey initially administered, all of them had a computer connected to the Internet.

In addition to the posting that had to be done in their houses, students also checked each one of their texts in the classroom as seen in the field note corresponded to the class on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019 (annex 6)

<p>Then, we started to check the blog and it was so involving for them: Some stood up from their chairs and went to the board to point out at the mistakes they saw and to suggest a possibility to</p>	<p>It was really motivating to see students' involvement not only in the exercise they had to do on the blog, but also with the second step that</p>
<p>correct them. As well, there were some others that, from their seats, started to shout when they found an error and explained why it was so. But what most surprised me was that even the shyest students, a boy and a girl, were attempting to participate and to tell me what mistakes they found. At the beginning, they were too shy to</p>	<p>was checking and correcting, respectfully, their possible mistakes and give feedback to their classmates. They were taking notes and some went to the board to show all of us what needed to be corrected. The ones that received the corrections agreed and took notes on the things they needed to correct for their next</p>

*Figure 13. Fragment of field note on March 2nd*

This information recorded in the field notes, allows us to claim the achievement of this indicator, since the posts and the records done after carrying out the activities oriented to its development, present the participation of students in the blog and the correction done of the text in the classroom.

## BLENDING LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

**Indicator 2.2 Students interact with their classmates through the blog and suggest some corrections to be done in each other's texts.**

This indicator deals with the online interaction based on the contents worked in the classroom and the step-by-step progress that guided the writing process along the study. Initially, it must be remarked that “self-expression and social interaction have become the dominant motivations for blogging” (Pedersen, 2010, p.44). Besides that, the author claims that the desire of reaching self-expression is a motivation that, linked to the need to articulate thoughts and feelings through writing, is, noticeably, an indispensable element in blogging.



*Figure 14. Students' posting and suggestion to correct their classmates' texts.*

Being that said, it was evident that the students did not only correct the uploaded texts, but also interacted to express their likes and feelings regarding some of their life experiences, and

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

suggested certain possibilities to improve their classmates' texts in that way. The interaction, moreover, was not only students-students but also students-teacher; some of them received the comments made by the latter as feedback to improve their texts and to achieve a greater performance when posting again.

The students' confirmation of the usefulness of the corrections made online and the advantages of interacting online through the blog, were stated by some of them in the survey carried out at the end of the research. When they were asked about their participation in the blog, student #4 claimed that she could "interact with the comments of her colleagues and participate with her contributions" (annex 7), which meant that they were aware of their and their classmates' participating on the blog and the advantages it had for their learning.

In conclusion, this indicator was fulfilled to the extent that students did not only take responsibility when writing their posts, but also when they were asked to revise their classmates' in order to suggest them a better way to express themselves.

### **Category 3: Blended Learning.**

This category was chosen to be the approach that makes possible the interaction between students and teachers when the in-class time is limited. As it was already mentioned before, Blended Learning (BL) requires a blend between face-to-face interaction and the one that takes place in online environments through technological devices. With the course at the LC it was possible to set this interaction with the students thanks to their parents' guidance and commitment from the two parts involved.

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

**Indicator 3.1 Students write texts in the classroom after being explained a determined topic to guide their writing.**

In order to achieve this indicator, it was necessary to have students be committed with the blog to check it without pursuing a writing task, but with the intention to reinforce certain topic that had been already explained in the classroom. Due to the little time to fulfill the research objectives and the LC syllabus simultaneously, BL offered a solution both to get students to review and to foresee some of the topics that already had gone or were about to be explained in the classroom.

The nature of this decision is supported by Allan (2007), who states that BL refers to the use of several technological platforms or tools in order to support a traditional course. Even though she did not mention blogs, it was proved to be a useful tool in order to enhance virtual interaction that makes possible to gain or to make up some time from the in-person classes, which was also confirmed by students in the survey (annex 7). To do so, students were, from time to time, demanded to watch some videos posted on the blog; sometimes with the purpose of foreseeing the next class topic, but others with the intention of having students review a topic that could not have been sufficiently explained or practiced in the classroom. To sum up, once they had watched the video, they sometimes had to post an exercise as a comment on the blog, or, most of the times, to do it in the classroom; so that the blend was assured.

Some difficulties that had place while doing this exercise were that some students did not take notes about the video content, therefore, when they arrived in the classroom for the class, they had forgotten almost everything from the videos. Sometimes, we could watch the video again in the classroom, but others, we could not due to the lack of time. However, it was not that bad since students started to team up in order to work on the activity.

## BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

There was a post done to have students watch two videos related to comparative adjectives and comparisons with as...as (See annex 1). With the videos, there is also a brief introduction in which it was presented the instruction to follow with the posted material.

The exercise to be done in the class after posting this video was to compare items or people in a written text:

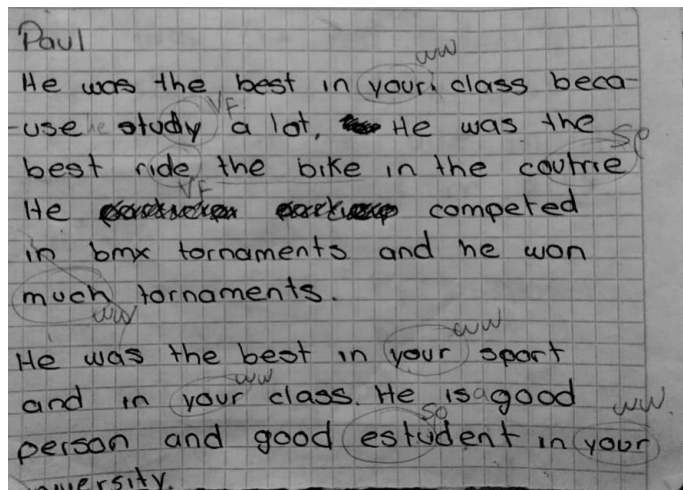


Figure 16. Student # 8. Writing activity: blended text. First draft.

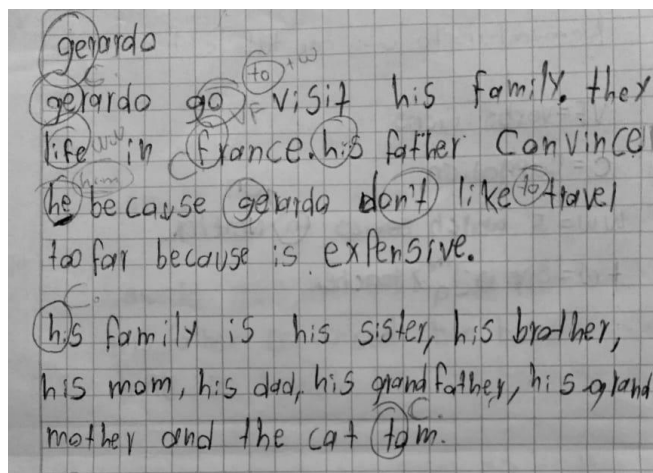


Figure 17. Student # 9 Writing activity: blended text. First draft.

Students are aware of the purpose of these posts, and they expressed it in the survey (annex 7) when they were asked if they considered that a blog could be a complement for the in-person classes. Their answers supported this conception (see annex 7)

On the whole, the results allow us to claim that this indicator was properly achieved and that its purpose was fulfilled.

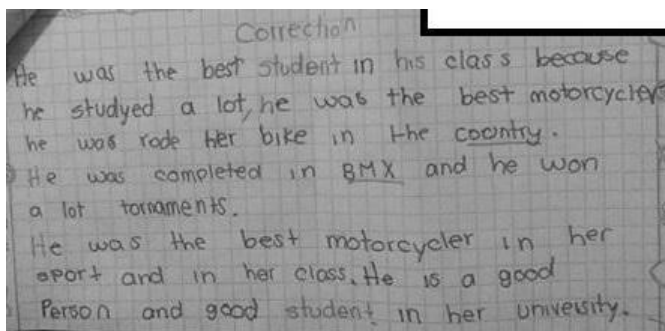
**Indicator 3.2 Students check and correct their texts in the classroom as well as they clarify questions and doubts before or after posting them on the blog.**

As a complement to the indicator mentioned above, this one also deals with a final product resultant of the blend between online and face-to face interaction. Equally important, it is to say

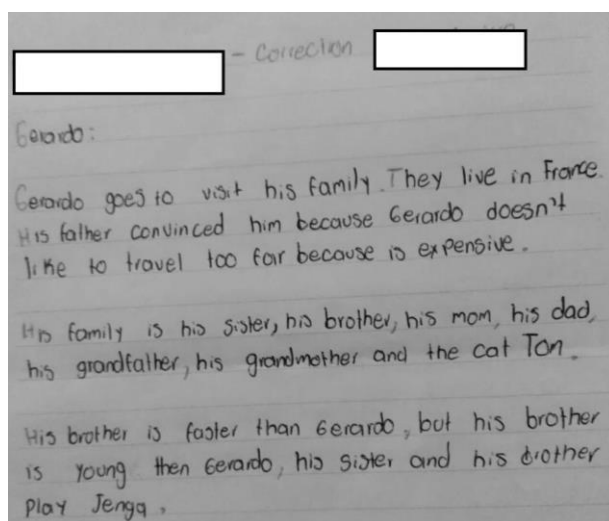
## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

that the interaction that took place in the classroom proved to be effective, since the participants were very committed to check each other's texts. (See annex 1)

Students worked in groups to find out the errors and to propose a correction for them. Besides correcting the errors, some of them asked some questions with regards to the posting task and the instructions to follow for the next exercise on the blog. It was registered on the field note from August 11<sup>th</sup> 2019 (see annex) to be used as proof of the students' commitment with the assignments to be done online and in class.



*Figures 18 and 19. Correction proposed after deliberating in groups in the classroom.*



As a way to conclude this indicator, it can be evidenced that students also succeeded in its achievement thanks to their commitment and interest in the activities that took place inside the classroom. Finally, the indicator was achieved by students.

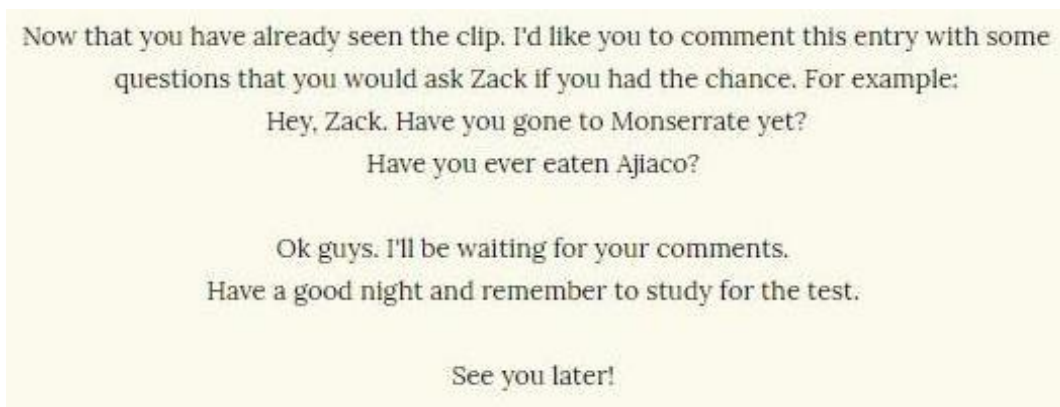
### **Indicator 3.3 Students check and comment on the material posted on the blog to follow up the explanations previously seen in the classroom.**

This last indicator on Blended Learning, unlike the previous two, was oriented to the online interaction that students had after being in an in-person class. It means that this indicator went backwards in regards with the other two on this category.

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

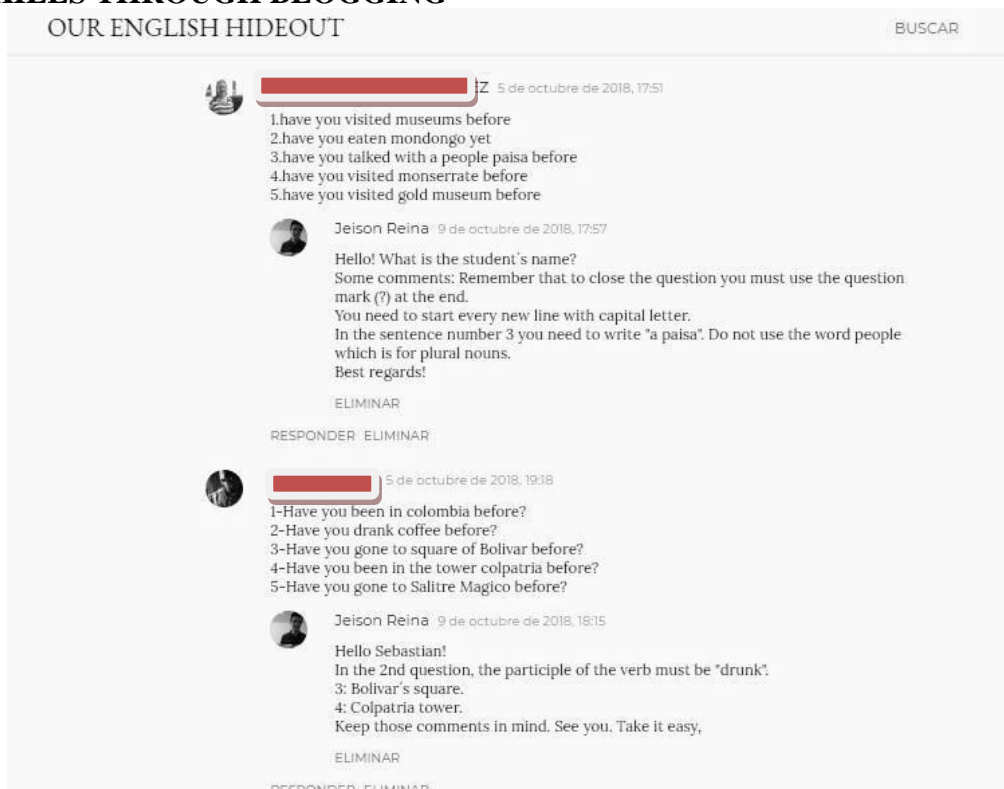
Following the Blended Learning principles, students did not review a topic that had been already seen in the classroom. They watched a video and, based on it, they had to post some questions with the structure of the *present perfect*, which was the topic we had worked on in the previous class. Students' performance was according to the expectations and showed that the interaction that BL enhances, can vary, starting first in the class or online. This order did not affect the development of the activities and the use of BL as the approach to make up the time at the LC.

Thereupon, some evidence of students' commenting on the blog is displayed as the evidence of students commenting and participating in it.



*Figure 20. A student comments on the blog following the explanation previously had in the classroom.*

## BLENDING LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING



*Figure 21. Students posted some question with the present perfect following the indication previously given.*

The development of these activities was also done in the classroom with the aid of printed fragments from the last entries that were given to the students to comment on and check them in the classroom. It is evidenced in the description made in the field note on March 16<sup>th</sup> 2019. (See annex 8).

To finish with, it is claimed that the achievement of this indicator was initially guaranteed since the first two indicators were also successfully fulfilled. This is due to the correlation they have among them and the similarities they share in the expected result.

In conclusion, the objectives set for this study, supported in the categories with their respective indicators, were properly accomplished. Consequently, students' writing skills showed to be improved through the use of a blog and even the perception that they shared on the survey



## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

(see annex 7) pointed to the same conclusion, and BL proved to be effective when the conditions of time for teaching were not enough.

# **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

## **Chapter VI Findings**

This chapter contains some conceptions related to the results obtained in light of the categories initially presented to guide the analysis.

### **Writing skills**

In regards with writing skills, it is possible to conclude that once the process of writing was finished, students showed more competence and knowledge in what had to do with the paragraph structuring and the use of some basic linkers and conjunctions to do so. This was remarkable, if we bear in mind that at the beginning of the study, most students considered writing a text as the writing of isolated sentences written in a row without any kind of link among them. Beyond that, students were inconsistent when structuring a paragraph and deciding the number of lines to compose it. This was, however, overcome with the aid of the constant practice and revising that we did both in and out the classroom.

Furthermore, students gained wider comprehension in regards with the differences between fictional and non-fictional stories and the phases that they include, such as beginning, climax and dénouement; all this in regards with the content. However, when it comes to the form, there were still several grammar mistakes to work on in order to avoid confusion in the reader, but also in the same writer of the texts.

To conclude, students recognized themselves as active members of a social group in which they could play a role in determined situations and assumed it as theirs. It was possible thanks to the confidence that was deposited on them when giving the opportunity to be responsible for their writing and to express themselves before a virtual community that later became a real one.

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

### **Blogging**

Blogging was demonstrated to be a significant tool to foster students' writing and social interaction. Its main advantages were to be easily accessible and understandable, as well as the opportunities it offers to innovate in the content that is shared online and to interact with other people's posts with meaningful purposes.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to portray that due to the lack of technological sources in the classroom, such as T.V's, computers and/or projectors, it was not possible to work more time on the appreciation of the posts made by the students during the week. Although this meant more commitment from the students, since they had to work, some, under their parents' guidance, but others had to do it by their own.

Furthermore, the exercise of blogging could have been much more meaningful and significant for the kids if they had had the chance to open their own blog to upload their own content and to modify the layout as they would have liked. It was not possible since the students are all minors and their parents did not want them to be exposed to inappropriate content on the Internet, which is totally comprehensible and reasonable. Additionally, the fact of the teacher being the one in charge of the activities that took place on the blog eliminates the sense of autonomy from students as they are waiting for the teacher to post or to send the invitations for them to post, or to start checking each one's texts.

To conclude, blogging proved that through online platforms it is possible for teachers to expand their boundaries when it comes to teaching and having students learn enthusiastically. Besides, it is also a good strategy to share content constantly with students in order to have them

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

involved in their process of learning a foreign language or any other subject by encouraging them to do it autonomously.

### **Blended Learning**

In regards with Blended Learning, it was especially useful since the in-class time at the LC was minimal. It proved its effectiveness thanks to the fact that students had access to computers, laptops, tablets or smartphones connected to the Internet in their houses. This allowed me to share some content for it to be accessed through those channels.

This approach seemed also appropriate to me since it makes students be aware and conscious of the world where we live. Nowadays, the time for studying in an in-person class is becoming more and more reduced due to the multiple options we have access to now, that facilitate intercommunication and education.

Moreover, it is also necessary to make children understand the possibilities they have in their hands when using a smartphone. Those devices should not be only used to play games, but also to access to multiple platforms in which a world of possibilities will be presented to them.

Equally important, BL served as a really useful ally in the task of covering both the syllabus of the LC and the traced objectives of this research. Thanks to this approach, the short time of classes was an opportunity to try doing different tasks in order to achieve both a teaching and a learning result that finally, proved to be doable.

To conclude, being a teacher implies to be open to every possibility that may mean a profit in terms of knowledge for our students. Adaptability has to be a must when it comes to teaching, since it permits us to adequate to several conditions that, depending on our capacity to adapt, would be meaningful or meaningless.

# **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

## **Chapter VII Conclusions**

This chapter includes the conclusions that arose from this study based on the specific objectives initially traced. These objectives intended to establish a parallel among the three main conceptions that this research dealt with: Writing skills, Blogging and Blended Learning. The conclusions are as follows.

In regards with the first specific objective, it sought to evaluate the influence of blogging in the use of conjunctions to write coherent texts. Blogging demonstrated to be used as a tool to enhance students' writing to have them be aware of the structure of a paragraph. It was evident that most students' texts were, initially, isolated lists of sentences that were not linked among them and did not show any narrative sequence at all. However, after having explained the use of conjunctions to organize and structure their texts, students started to write more complex sentences and to link them in paragraphs with the use of conjunctions and punctuation marks.

In addition, the fact of interacting in the blog constantly helped students gain familiarity with writing as a process. Hence, the achievement of this objective required teacher's feedback and pair revision. It also made students strengthen their links among them. Besides, not only online interaction, but also face-to-face, was guaranteed in the achievement of this objective.

To conclude, it can be stated that students' notion on building up paragraphs in a text was minimal before carrying out this research and there was not a strong sense of linking sentences through the use of conjunctions to create coherent written products. Thus, the blog showed its effectiveness as a tool to get students to be aware of the importance of coherence when writing in order to be properly understood by others. In this way, the understanding of students' texts is easy for their readers.

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

Concerning the second objective whose aim was to characterize the impact of Blogging in the improvement of writing skills, it was observed that students acquired an understanding of their role in society through the roles they had in the blog. It implied self-recognition as an actor in the chain of communication as a writer and reader, and even, as a reviser. It lets us link this self-recognition with the one that is expected to be developed through literacy skills.

Following the notion of writing as a process and as a skill that allows individuals to be literate, it can be argued that through blogging, students were given the instrument to participate in a social group. Besides, they were literate at writing and used technology as a means to facilitate their interaction in a group. Their writing skills were developed to the extent that the students could recognize themselves as members of society, where they had something to express and there was someone to receive that message.

In conclusion, writing skills were proved to be developed through the exercise of posting, revising and correcting a text that made students aware of their writing performance and its importance to be recognized as a member of a social group. Students were conscious of the scope of their language use when interacting with others in-person or online.

To conclude with the third objective, Blended Learning was demonstrated to be pertinent and useful in order to encourage students' interaction. It was so, since technological strategies were successfully used to take the class contents away from the classroom and move them to other spaces where interaction was essential and necessary, such as the blog.

Moreover, it is important to highlight as an advantage, that all the students from the course had access to a computer or laptop in their houses which made it possible to guarantee the online interaction through the proposed platform. In addition, the use of a projector and a computer in

## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

the classroom, made it possible to bring inside the classroom what was being done online, so that the two main axis of BL regarding interaction were developed and carried out satisfactorily.

In sum, Blended Learning was a really useful approach to the extent that it encouraged students to interact around foreign language learning and became a great ally to cope with the minimal time we had to work in the face-to-face sessions. It also made it easier for students to work outside the classroom without perceiving that work as something stressing or away from their reality, since the proposed topics to work on were also proposed by them.

# **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

## **Chapter VIII Recommendations**

This chapter presents some recommendations in regards with the pedagogical implications that working with blogs under a Blended Learning approach might have for future research. As well, it states some proposals to take these tools into account when working in educational contexts both inside and outside a classroom.

To begin with, it is essential, as a teacher, to be aware of the multiple new strategies and tools that are being developed in the field of education. It requires us to be up to date when it comes to new material or strategies whose main purpose is to enhance some of the learning processes that take place in the school. It is mandatory to do so, since our students are coming to the classrooms with huge amounts of information to be discussed, clarified or simply to be shared with an interlocutor in the school. Teachers have to take advantage of those new tools in order to establish links with the students and to foster their autonomous learning, especially now that we are immerse in the era of technology which implies rapidness to get sufficient information about any concern in a matter of seconds.

Besides, this study claims for the usefulness of online platforms to accomplish educational and academic purposes without losing the spirit of teaching and learning at all. It means that using new strategies that involve the use of technology to interact with classmates and teachers, ranging from blogs to other more popular social networks, does not imply a waste of time or a misconception of the principles that have guided the teaching profession along history. On the contrary, what it implies is the ability to be ready to face new challenges that will allow teachers to be adapted to the new approaches that will guide our profession in the oncoming days.



## **BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING**

In relation to the LC, it is recommended to continue working under a communicative approach. This encourages students to show their competence in a foreign language throughout real situations that require students to be aware of their context and to be constantly interacting with others. Besides, it is also necessary to improve the use of digital platforms as a means for making autonomous learning possible without being forced to work on it; the spirit of students can be awakened towards the recognition of their own responsibility when leading a learning process within a social context. That becomes imperative since we are facing times where in-person links between individuals are becoming weaker and need to be strengthened and evidently, education plays an important role in the achievement of that purpose.

In regards with writing, it is recommended to teach it as a tool that enables people to participate in making societies' decisions and to assume themselves as members of a social group. Being able to write eases the performance of several everyday activities that we need to deal with. And, last but not least, writing qualifies us to be active members in today's enormous communication nets that also allow us to interact with different people around the world.

In conclusion, for upcoming research, I recommend to continue working on the use of digital platforms as a means to improve writing competence and guarantee interaction links between active members in the educational field. This will enhance further research and findings in regards with new strategies to do teaching and to improve students and teachers' results in this concern.

# BLENDING LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

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# BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

## Annexes

### Annex 1

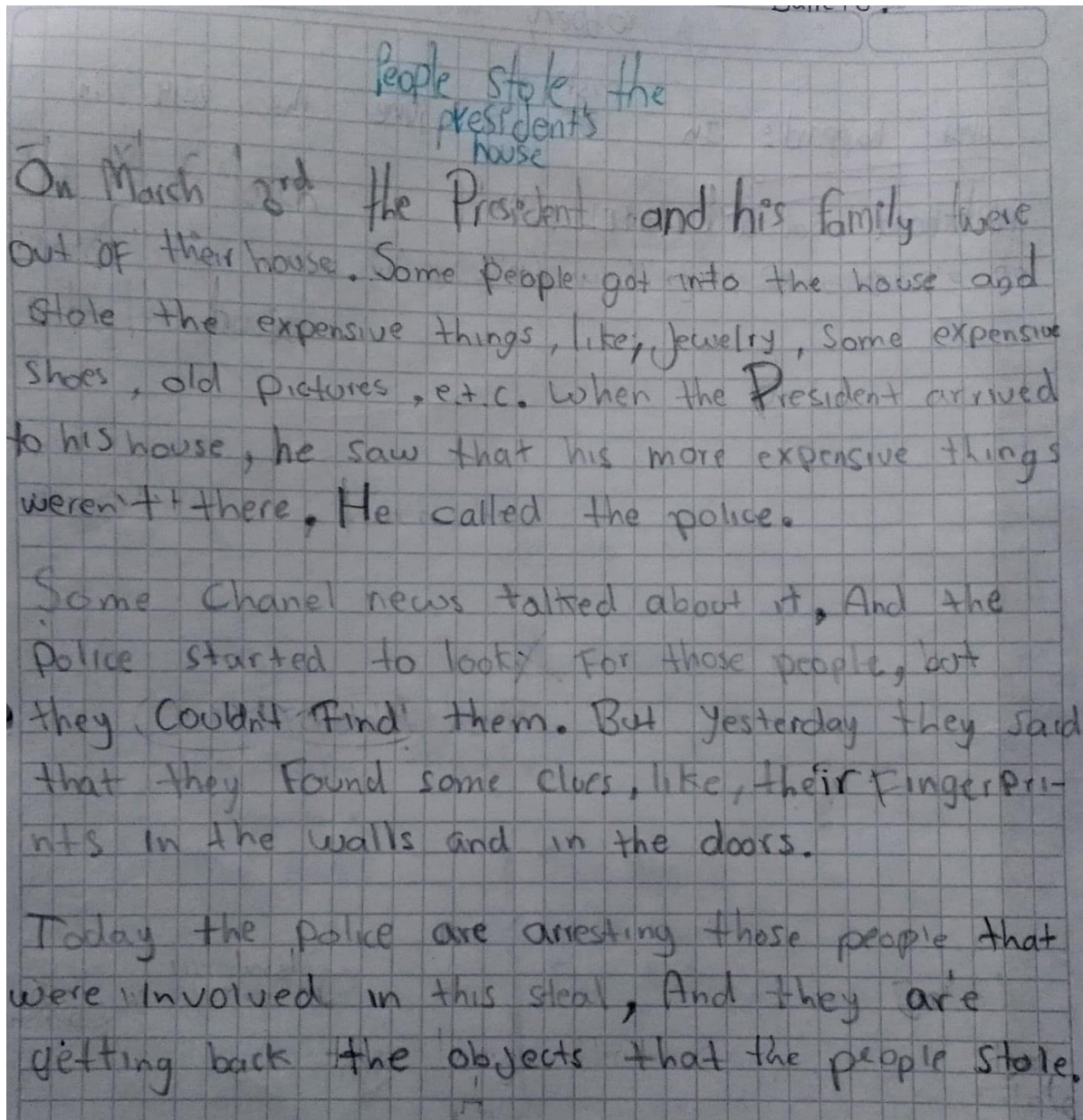


Figure 4. Student 3. Writing activity: punctuation. Attempt 1

# BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

## Annex 2


Hello guys!

As I told you, I am posting some videos for you to review what we were working on the last class.

Remember, we were working on comparative and superlative adjectives, as well as comparisons using as...as


Don't forget to take your notes and to bring your questions or doubts to the next class.

AS...AS



The video thumbnail features a woman with glasses holding a yellow pear in her right hand and a green apple in her left hand. The text 'Comparar usando AS ... AS... en Inglés' is overlaid on the image. The video player interface shows a play button in the center.

COMPARATIVES



The video thumbnail shows two cartoon characters, Miss Lee and Mr Green, standing on a green background. Miss Lee is on the left and Mr Green is on the right. The sentence 'Miss Lee is nicer than Mr Green.' is written below them, with 'nicer than' highlighted in red. The video player interface shows a play button in the center.

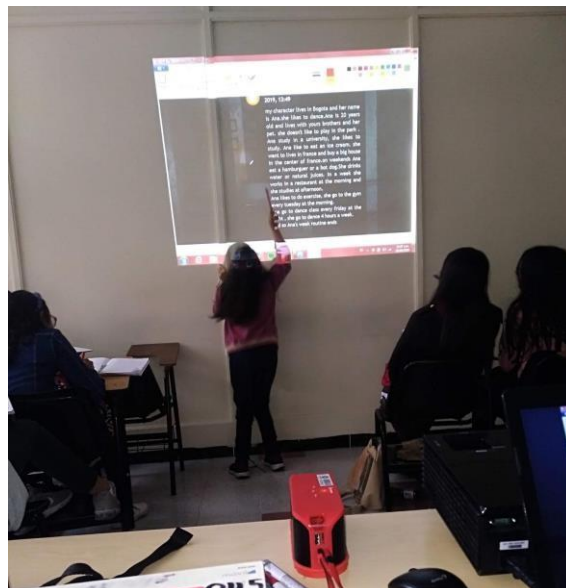
*Figure 15. Videos posted on the blog to have students review the topics from the previous class.*

## BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

Annex 3:



*Figure 16. Students revising mistakes of their posts in the classroom.*



*Figure 17. One student is pointing at some correction to be done on a post.*



## BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

### Annex 4

Field note #1 School: Centro de lenguas	Grade: Advanced	Date: February 23 <sup>rd</sup> 2019
Room teacher: Jeison Reina		
Number of students: 25	Number of students with special needs: 0 There are 2 students who are repeating the course.	
Observation	Interpretation	
<p>Today, as a first activity to bring some knowledge back, students are expected to share with the whole group what they remember about present and future tenses (simple and continuous). When they were asked to say what they remembered, some of them raised their hands to speak first and to read some notes they had on their notebooks. Some started speaking and immediately some others began replying to support or to correct what they were listening from their classmates. The ones who were doing this have shown they are kind of shy. A group of students, especially some girls that were together in the last course and seem to have become friends, feel confident enough to speak without being afraid or ashamed before their classmates.</p>	<p>This first icebreaker shows that when students feel afraid or ashamed of speaking, they find motivation in their classmates who are willing to participate and to share their opinions with the class.</p> <p>It also shows that the relationships they are creating among them ease their performance in the classroom and give them more confidence when it comes to speak or to participate in the class.</p>	
<p>Once that this exercise was done, we started to work on the textbook..</p> <p>The conversations that are presented in the book were covered by making students roleplay the script, once that I asked who wanted to be any character in the dialogue, they started raising their hands and crying to be chosen and to read a part of the script. It was the same in every conversation we had in every lesson from the book.</p>	<p>The fact of having a textbook to work with makes necessary to manage the time in a proper way so that we can cover all the contents and, at the same time, have students work on different activities that increase their motivation to learn.</p> <p>It shows that there is a huge feeling of partnership in the group and that they have gotten closer along the classes they've been taking together.</p> <p>Students' motivation is on a high level and this is very useful since they are willing to do any activity that they are proposed to. As well it is important to mention that there is not a feeling of</p>	

## BLENDING LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

	<p>obligation to do something, but that they are the ones that participate by their own and without being forced to do so.</p>
<p>After doing this activity, we wrote on the board some of the things they were saying. Right away, I told them about the project for the end of the semester, which is to write a tale and to publish on the blog. They were really surprised and interested. Before I could continue telling them more, they asked me questions about the plot, the characters or the story they could write about. I told them that today we would start by defining the main character, which was going to be taken from three people that were presented in an exercise proposed in the book. However, they wanted to know if it was possible to create their own character, if it could be an animal or a monster, if they could name it as they wanted, or if it had to be necessarily one of the names that were on the reading exercise from the book. When I saw how concerned they were to the exercise, I told them they could create that character as they wanted and the description had to be shared on the blog following one example I would post. They agreed with that and showed their excitement among them when started to tell each other what their character would be like, and wanted to know if they could upload the description today. Once that I clarified all their doubts, they left and wished well each other.</p>	<p>The involvement that students are shown regarding the exercises that I propose them is very motivating. Besides of being willing to work inside the classroom, now they also show their willing to work on the blog and to write, in this case a tale. This kind of texts seems to have caught more their attention than the texts about their routines or experiences they posted the last semester.</p> <p>It is important to seize this attitude they have right now towards this exercise and to motivate them more and more to write their own fictional story by providing them with some examples of short stories that might be interesting for them to check some structural details by getting immersed in them.</p>

# BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

## Annex 5



Figure 11. Entries on the blog made by Students # 6 and # 9

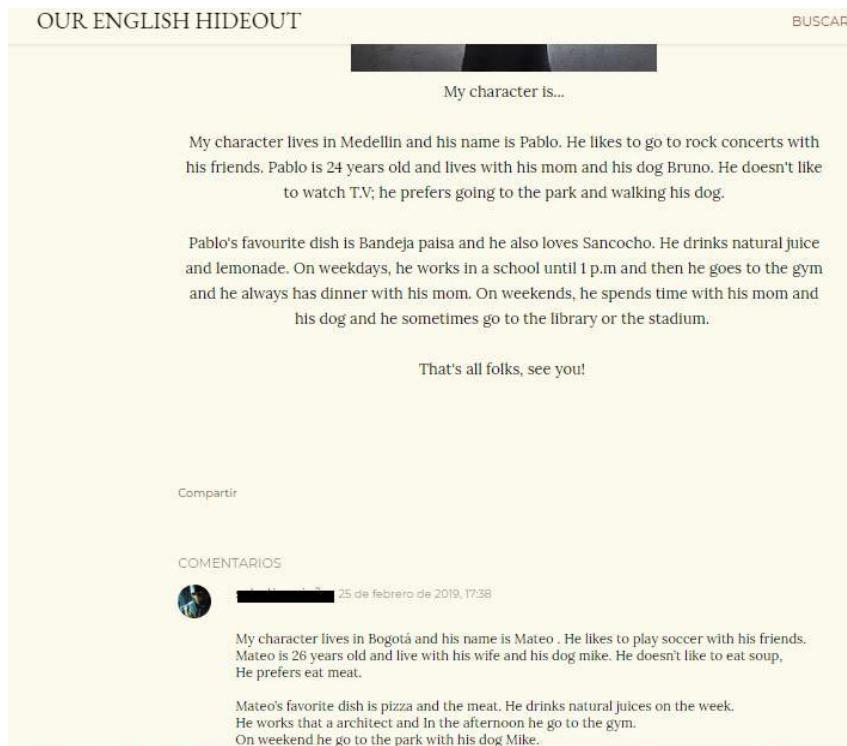


Figure 12. Students commented on a publication made before by the teacher and following his model.

## BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

### Annex 6

Field note #1 School: Centro de lenguas	Grade: Advanced	Date: March 2 <sup>nd</sup> 2019
Room teacher: Jeison Reina		
Number of students: 25	Number of students with special needs: 0 There are 2 students who are repeating the course.	
Observation	Interpretation	
Today, before starting the class, as soon as I came into the classroom, students were discussing among them about the exercise they did on the blog to create a character for the tale they will publish at the end of the course.	It was interesting to see that student were really into this exercise; they enjoyed doing it and wanted to share their experience with their classmates to know how each other else's was.	
Students went to their break but some of them, who had had some issues with the post on the blog, went to me to ask why they could not post and what they would do. They showed me their texts written on the notebook for me to see that they had done the exercise. One of the girls that asked me that was Monica, one of the new students in the group; her mom and she were also writing to me on WhatsApp during the week to confirm what the exercise was like and how they could do it. Likewise, there were other parents that were constantly asking on the same social network, about the assignment and because they wanted to confirm that it had been done correctly. I told Monica how to do the activity and showed her how to post on the laptop; she took some notes to do it once she'd have gotten her house. On the other hand, another girl, María José, who is also new in the group, went to ask me how to do the exercise since neither her mom nor her sister told her anything about the instructions I shared with them on the WhatsApp group, so she couldn't do the exercise as it was expected. I explained her and asked why her sister did not tell her anything, she told me that their relationship was not so good and that they seldom speak with each other, and her mom was almost always working and did not have time to	Sharing some events of their lives, made students feel that they had several aspects in common and that through the discovery of some experiences they have had they could also find some similarities between their lives and others'.  Another factor that has been really important and so good regarding this exercise and this course, is the involvement that these kids' parents have and the commitment they have showed so far with their children's performance and learning, they are good allies since we only have 3 ½ hours to meet during the week, so that is so helpful to have this support from the group of parents.  Regardless the lack of attention that some other kids might have from their parents, they show that they are also willing to work and that the exercise on the blog caught their attention and wanted to do it as well by their own. However, this is not the best scenario for the kids, so I will have to meet with this student's mom to recommend her to be more involved in her process.	

## BLENDING LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

<p>talk with her.</p> <p>When they came back from their break, I gave them 30 more minutes to finish the exercise of the interview to start checking the posts on the blog. Some of them had already done it, so I checked their work and made some corrections that they corrected immediately. When all the exercises were checked, we arrange next Saturday to perform the interviews and started to check the blog with a video beam and a laptop, so that everybody could participate in the corrections.</p>	
<p>Before checking the posts, I showed students a pair of short clips with the purpose of identifying the main character and the main actions that took place in the video. I wanted to do this because, basically, it is almost what they are expected to do with the tale they will write. They answered some questions about the videos, specially related to the characteristics of the characters.</p> <p>Then, we started to check the blog and it was so involving for them: Some stood up from their chairs and went to the board to point out at the mistakes they saw and to suggest a possibility to correct them. As well, there were some others that, from their seats, started to shout when they found an error and explained why it was so. But what most surprised me was that even the shyest students, a boy and a girl, were attempting to participate and to tell me what mistakes they found. At the beginning, they were too shy to speak aloud, but later they felt more comfortable and started to raise their voice to participate and make the corrections they consider necessary. During the class, we couldn't check all the posts, so the homework they will have for the next class is to make the correction that they consider necessary on their classmates posts on the blog, this will be following the example of what we did in the classroom and make the comments directly on the blog.</p> <p>Finally, students left the classroom and some of them asked me some questions about the exercise and the due date to complete it.</p>	<p>Students like to be shown some videos and it showed that this is a good tool to have them speak in English since I made them summarize and make some comments about what they saw, and they did it with no problem or hesitation. Besides, it was also useful to make them relate the stories of these videos with the ones that they will write and post on the blog.</p> <p>It was really motivating to see students' involvement not only in the exercise they had to do on the blog, but also with the second step that was checking and correcting, respectfully, their possible mistakes and give feedback to their classmates. They were taking notes and some went to the board to show all of us what needed to be corrected. The ones that received the corrections agreed and took notes on the things they needed to correct for their next compositions. The kids were kind and respectful when they were commenting the errors and seemed to enjoy doing an exercise that could be exhausting and boring since it has to do with grammar and with correcting.</p> <p>Doing this activity encourages me to keep working on it and to provide students with more tools to be able to revise their own understanding and help among them to improve their abilities in the foreign language.</p>

## BLENDING LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

For annexes 7 this is the link for the survey taken by the students and their answers:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dbsJ3ZlXpGGuBqjV3YNIQgKtprM6o4WQw2tf\\_B229Kg/edi](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dbsJ3ZlXpGGuBqjV3YNIQgKtprM6o4WQw2tf_B229Kg/edi)  
[t#responses](#)

### Annex 8

Field note #1 School: Centro de lenguas	Grade: Advanced	Date: March 16 <sup>th</sup> 2019
Room teacher: Jeison Reina		
Number of students: 25	Number of students with special needs: 0 There are 2 students who are repeating the course.	
Observation	Interpretation	
<p>Today, we had the second parents' meeting in order to inform the results on the first term exam and some information regarding students' progress, so the time for the class was a bit less.</p> <p>To start with, students seemed not to be willing to speak. I asked them some questions about their week, their mood, and only a few answered but in a monosyllabic way. So, I asked them to stand up and make a circle in the middle of the classroom. Then, I told them we were going to do an exercise for them to speak that required them to make up a story and to continue the plot as long as it was each one's turn, which was decided when the kid that was speaking would throw a ball to the person they wanted to continue the story. I started by stating the first elements of the story: main character, location, time, and the situation that the plot was going to be about. After that, I passed the ball to one student who continued it by adding more events and passed the ball to another classmate and so on. As long as the story was being developed by them, they were more enthusiastic and willing to continue with it. Some were even asking their classmates to pass the ball to them because they wanted to add or to change something. More characters were included and some changes in</p>	<p>The first contact that we, as teachers, have with the students in the classroom is necessary to foresee how the activities we have planned for the class would result. It is not a secret that in some cases, more than expected, our plans can be affected in some or other way due to the students' mood. That is the moment when we have to plan again or reorganize the class if necessary.</p> <p>After doing this exercise, which was not planned exactly as it was done, I could notice that students really enjoyed making up a story and that it was a really useful and effective way for them to practice and to use the foreign language in an authentic communicative situation, since they had to be attentive to what their classmates were saying to add, change or continue with the story as they wished to.</p> <p>It was also interesting to see how students, even some that have not shown to be really participative in class, were into the activity and</p>	

## BLENDING LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

the plot that led to prolong the story. In some cases, while some kids were speaking, other started raising their hands to say that there were missing elements their other classmates were not considering and that they wanted to clarify in order to get back on track and not to lose the thread.

The purpose of this exercise was to have students to work on the grammar they had scheduled for today, which was future tense. However, besides of being working on it, they were also using the Past to tell some events related to the characters' memories.

Despite there were some mistakes in regards with conjugation or with coherence, the exercise was carried out in a meaningful way. This was even highlighted by the L.C coordinator who was observing the exercise.

Once we had to come to an end, several students wanted to finish it. So I gave the chance to two of them in order to have 2 possible endings and, finally, the whole group raised their hands to decide which of the 2 possibilities they agreed more with. It was a tie.

Once that the exercise was over, I asked them to take their textbooks to work with them. They were not as enthusiastic to do this as they were with the previous exercise. We had a look at a poster that was presented to introduce future tenses and comparatives. The poster showed some information about a talents' contest, so I asked them which talents they had. Students started to share some of their talents at drawing, painting, singing, dancing or practicing a sport. I had them share some sentences including future tenses and those talents they had, such as: The next week I will paint a painting for my mom, or tomorrow I am going to my dancing class.

When the interventions were finished, we took a look at a conversation on the book and then students went out for their break.

were also following the thread not to be lost once they had to speak out.

Grammar was not explained as something to deal with in isolated situations, but it was practiced in a given situation for them to identify the best way to apply what they have been learning.

Interaction among students was guaranteed as they were working together as a group and were following the same story their classmates started. The purpose that this exercise also had was to make them notice what the main elements in a story are, and how it can be started, developed and ended. It is essential for the exercise that they will do on the blog which consist of publishing a story that will be created, corrected and posted by them on that platform.

Students' attitude regarding the textbook working showed that they were enjoying more to be talking and making up the story they were told to. However, when they were asked to talk about their talents, all of them said something and shared with their classmates what their skills or talents were. Besides, when they were commanded to take a roll in the conversations given on the book, they were also willing to participate, some raised their hands and asked for a chance to read one of the scripts.

## BLENDING LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

After they came back from their break, we started working on one activity related to the blog. First, I played a video in which they were explained the use of main connectors and conjunctions in English, some students were taking notes, while others were repeating the given examples or making up some new ones. Then, when the video was finished, I asked them to say some examples from their own, using the connectors and conjunctions *and, but, or, when, wherever, because* and *since*. They said some examples that were appropriated so that I could be sure of their understanding.

After, I gave to each one a printed entry from the ones they had posted during this week on the blog. The instruction was for them to make the required corrections and also, organize the sentences by using the connectors previously checked.

They were working in couples and from time to time they asked me to clarify some doubt they had about possible mistakes.

When the corrections were made, the instruction was for them to comment those corrections on the blog during the week.

Students like to watch videos in the class since they are exposed to a new resource that catches their attention easily and fast. However, it is important to be careful with the videos so that they are not so long, because at the end it can cause disorder in the classroom.

Having students in the classroom is very useful since the interaction can be face to face and it makes them work together in the purpose of the exercise, which consists of correcting and commenting their classmates' entries on a virtual blog. This exercise promotes their team-working and improves their skills and their knowledge. Students also feel more confident when making corrections since they can consult with a classmate or even with the teacher immediately.



## BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

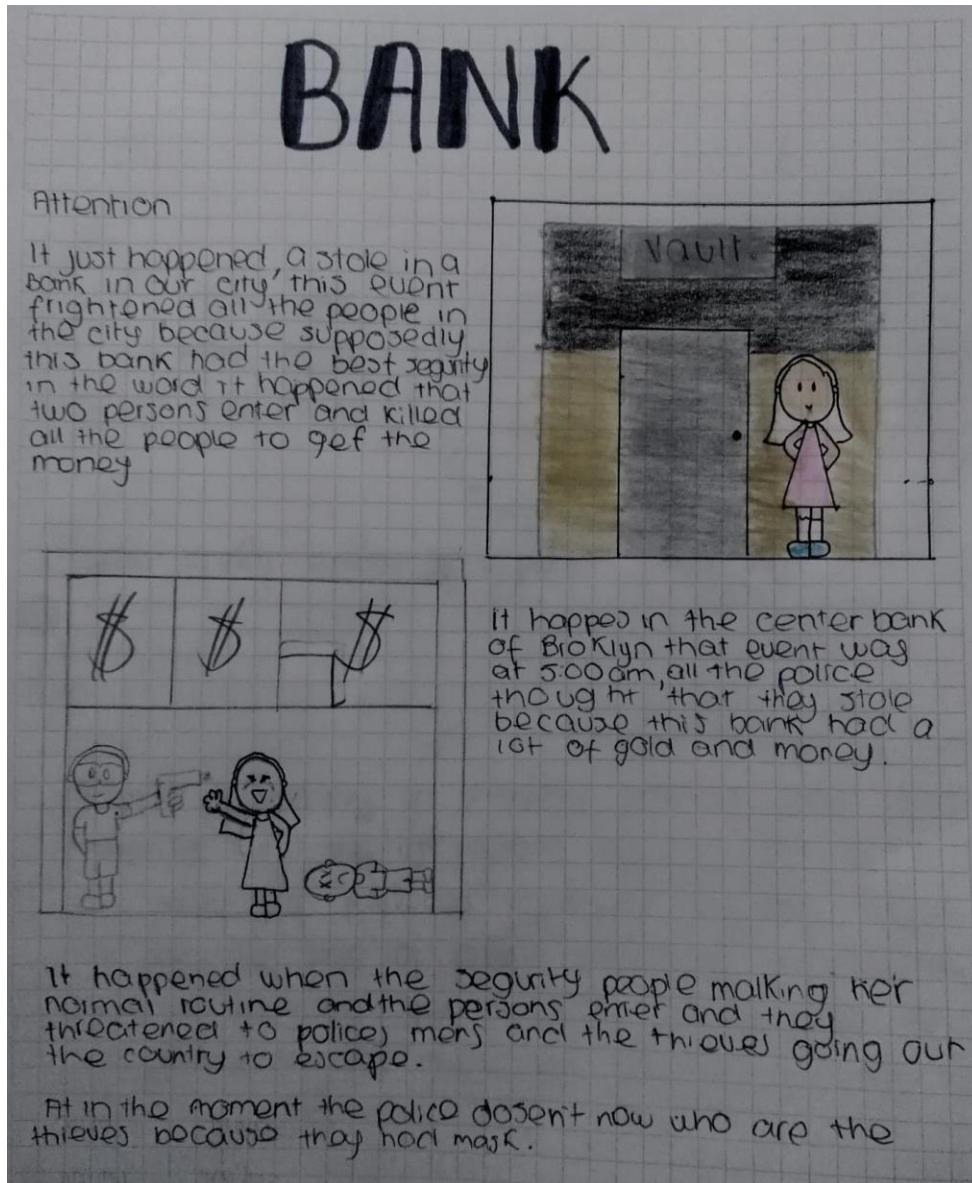
Field note # 3 School: Centro de lenguas	Grade: Intermediate I	Date: August 18 <sup>th</sup> 2018
Room teacher: Jeison Reina		
Number of students: 24	Number of students with special needs: 0 There is one student who was promoted from the previous level due to her good performance.	
Observation	Interpretation	
We start today's class with some students asking some questions they had on the exercise we were doing on the previous week. They want to know if their answers were ok or if they had some mistakes. Some of them want to write on the board, which I allow to be done and to seize that chance to clarify some doubts they could have.	Students show their commitment with the class and with the program we follow during the class. It seems to be a little time for them to study, so they want to have some time at home to practice their English too.	
After answering and clarifying some questions that students had, we start working on today's topic which is relative pronouns. Some students are demanded to write on the board the name of some places they know in the city, some people they live with and some objects they use daily. There are some girls that offer to volunteer and write what is demanded. After writing that, I explained, by writing some sentences on the board, when we use <i>who, which and where</i> . There are some examples on the book that we also check, but students are willing to say more of their own examples.	In the classroom it seems that girls are more participative than boys and are less shy when it comes to participate and to write on the board.  Even though they work on the book, students like more to have a look at their own context and to relate what they are learning with their own lives.	
After doing some practice exercise, students are demanded to write a text. The purpose of it is to have them link relative pronouns with the past continuous tense that was seen the last week. They have to write about a movie they like or a video game they play often; they describe it and then, they write something they were doing the last time they interacted with that material and describe the people they were with while playing the game or watching the movie. Some students have questions that are answered by some other classmates who show to be willing to help their classmates understand.	Some students were brainstorming about the possibilities they had for writing the texts and trying to get their classmates to correct what they were saying by looking at them and nodding. They discussed about the video games they play and the movies they had seen recently.  There is a sense of collaboration among the group that makes the concept of cooperation visible while learning a foreign language.	

## BLENDED LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH BLOGGING

Once that the class is about to finish, student ask again if they will have homework. They will have to post their texts on the blog, but only the ones that have already been checked and corrected. They ask if it is possible to upload pictures or videos to the blog with the text they will post. I say that it is possible but that there is no enough time to explain them how to do it. However, they will try to do it by their own.

The idea of working in their houses as a way to complement what is done in the classroom is very amusing for the students and the fact of doing it through an online tool seems to be very attractive for them since they are immerse in technology. Furthermore, they propose other options to make it much better and enjoyable.

Additional excerpts:



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