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**Analyzing the Effectiveness of Blended-Learning in the Teaching of English as
a Foreign Language (EFL)**

Trabajo de titulación previo a la
obtención del Título de Licenciado
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Resumen

Este estudio es un análisis de la eficacia del aprendizaje híbrido en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera (TEFL) centrado exclusivamente en dos aspectos: (1) los efectos del aprendizaje híbrido en el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera y (2) los recursos utilizados en el aprendizaje híbrido para el desarrollo de las cuatro habilidades del idioma inglés. Como investigación bibliográfica exploratoria, se seleccionaron dieciséis estudios relevantes sobre el tema. El propósito de esta selección fue realizar una comparación exhaustiva de la literatura disponible y fomentar una discusión significativa entre los diversos hallazgos presentados por cada estudio. Al analizar estas fuentes elegidas, el objetivo es obtener información valiosa sobre el tema y comprenderlo desde múltiples perspectivas. Después de analizar todos los estudios utilizados en esta síntesis de investigación, se encontró un efecto positivo del aprendizaje híbrido en estudios experimentales. Además, se reveló que los *web-based* y *flipped classrooms* y *web blogs* son los recursos más utilizados en entornos del aprendizaje híbrido. Finalmente, se presenta las implicaciones en el campo de la enseñanza del inglés y se ofrecen recomendaciones para futuras investigaciones.

Palabras clave del autor: aprendizaje híbrido, EFL, efectividad educativa, recursos educativos y análisis educativo



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Abstract

This study analyzes the effectiveness of blended learning (BL) in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) focusing on two aspects: (1) the effects of on learning English as a foreign language and (2) the resources used in Blended Learning for developing the four English language skills. As exploratory bibliographical research, this study encompasses a selection of sixteen relevant studies on the topic. The purpose of this synthesis was to conduct a comprehensive comparison of the available literature in order to foster a meaningful discussion, gain valuable insights into the subject matter, and understand the topic from multiple perspectives. The results show a positive effect of BL on experimental studies. Furthermore, it was revealed that web-based and flipped classrooms, and web blogs are the most frequently used resources in BL. Finally, this study presents pedagogical implications as well as recommendations for further research.

Author Keywords: Blended-Learning, EFL, educational effectiveness, educational resources, and educational analysis



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DEDICATION

This graduation work is dedicated to my family, who has been my unwavering source of love, support, and encouragement throughout this academic journey. Their belief in me has been my greatest strength, and this achievement is as much theirs as it is mine. To all those who strive for knowledge, progress, and the betterment of our world. May our collective pursuit of understanding continue to illuminate the path forward.

Introduction

This research synthesis analyzes the effectiveness of Blended-Learning (henceforth BL), which can be defined as simple and complex in the context of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). According to Garrison and Kanuka (2004), BL is seen as simple because teachers can use this method to integrate synchronous (face-to-face) and asynchronous (text-based Internet) learning in the classroom by using different online resources and applications to acquire English as a Foreign Language. At the same time, BL is considered complex because of its implementation since it presents a variety of possibilities in its design and unlimited applicability in different many contexts.

A narrative research synthesis of some relevant papers that deal with the effectiveness of BL and the resources used during the application of this method is presented. In total, 16 studies were analyzed as well as the resources used in those works. Hence, a summary of relevant findings examining the relationship and effectiveness between BL and the traditional classroom is laid out.

Nowadays, the development of technology has influenced social, political, religious, and academic fields. Therefore, this research synthesis attempts to respond to the technological advancements, which can allow to identify the relationships and improvements that TEFL can have with the combination of technology and face-to-face classes.

In this research synthesis, a comprehensive exploration of the research topic unfolds across 5 chapters, each contributing to the overall understanding of the Effectiveness of Blended-Learning in the teaching of English as a foreign Language. Chapter 1 sets the stage for this graduation work, outlining the research problem, objectives, and significance. It delves into the background of the study, establishing the context and rationale for the research. In chapter 2 key theoretical definitions are presented as well as a comprehensive review of existing literature relevant to the thesis topic. The chapter synthesizes key findings from various sources, identifies gaps in the current knowledge that guides the research. It lays the foundation for the study by establishing connections between previous research and the current investigation. Chapter 3 explains the methodology used in the context of the research. The focus of chapter 4 is on presenting and interpreting the research results. It provides a clear and organized presentation of the data collected, using tables. The findings are discussed in relation to the research questions, and any patterns or trends are highlighted. Chapter 5 summarizes the key findings, contributions, and implications of the research. It reinforces the significance of the study in addressing the research problem and achieving the

stated objectives. In this last chapter, the limitations of the research and suggestions for further exploration are presented.

Chapter I

Description of the Research

1.1 Background

The importance of learning English has notably increased thanks to globalization, since the language has facilitated communication among people. Since long ago, English has been used as a lingua franca for several purposes such as business, tourism, education, or traveling around the world (Saud, 2020). In addition, schools, universities, and institutions around the globe have added English lessons to their curricula as it is considered an international language for communication par excellence. In the same line, Akbari (2016) states that English has been integrated into the curricula of schools and universities, receiving significant focus within our society due to several factors. To begin with, there is a need of a proficient command of the language to effectively comprehend and utilize the latest technological and scientific advancements. Additionally, the requirement to navigate the challenges posed by the information age and to utilize the Internet efficiently establishes English acquisition as a vital requirement. Lastly, a strong command of English aids in fostering cultural interchange between nations, further promoting the idea of intercultural dialogue among civilizations. Changes in society, economy, culture, and especially the rapid development of technology have had an impact on educational systems worldwide, and this requires well-equipped English instructors who meet the needs of the current society (Tosuncuoglu, 2019).

Decades ago, language learning focused on a teacher-centered process; however, research has put forth the role of the learner by introducing ideas such as self-direction and self-regulation, forcing teachers to go beyond traditional methods and adapt themselves to the new reality to better benefit learners (Del Toro et al., 2019). Consequently, many learning researchers and/or pedagogues have worked to find the best methodologies and strategies to teach efficiently (Shaykina, 2015). Recent advances in technology, for instance, have become a great help in the teaching and language learning process and both online activities and e-learning have continued to emerge as alternatives to traditional teaching and learning strategies (Shih, 2010).

Morales and Ferreira (2008) indicate that reading and listening skills, as well as grammatical rules have a greater focus in classrooms compared to writing and speaking which tend to be diminished. Further, the authors highlight that teaching writing and speaking in a new language requires dedication and time, which seems to be neglected. In addition, the researchers mentioned that, with the incorrect use of technology in a classroom, oral ability is

affected. For these reasons, they suggest the introduction of a method where both environments (face-to-face teaching and online e-learning) can be combined.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite the advances in English teaching methods and growing technological development, teachers and learners still encounter significant needs related to English learning and teaching such as the number of class periods assigned for learning the language, the lack of teachers' training, poor resources, uninteresting content, and teaching of new methods (Oeamoum & Sriwichai, 2020). Sun and Qiu (2017) stated that the model that prevailed for several years was teacher-centered and students only listened and repeated information (the traditional method). Similarly, Chun and Mingyue (2011) commented that through the traditional method, students had limited possibilities to improve their English proficiency level since there were not enough opportunities for interaction and practice, so students became passive and unable to produce the language even after years of studying.

Morales and Ferreira (2008), however, have pointed out that BL has become English learning easier. This model has created a more balanced learning since the knowledge delivered through BL is organized and each language skill has an optimal development. For instance, using the BL method teachers can enrich and strengthen learning content with the help of a forum or chat and face-to-face classes to exchange what has been learned. Likewise, BL helps to have direct contact between the teacher and students and between students themselves. In the same vein, Al Zumor et al. (2013) have stated that BL enables all learners to get better results through the use of appropriate learning technology since it adapts to any learning style. Also, teachers can use online resources and add them to their daily activities in the classroom; thus, involving students and helping them become more active and effective learners.

Overall, research has disclosed that supplementing English teaching with BL has a plethora of advantages, including ease of content access, variety of resources, development of personal and social skills, time and cost-effectiveness, and instructional richness. Hence, it is fundamental for teachers to understand how this method benefits learners in developing language skills and how to supplement their classes with it.

1.3 Rationale

It has been demonstrated that using BL helps compensate for various aspects such as the lack of interaction between teacher and students, pedagogical issues, access to knowledge, ease of revision, absence of exposure to the target language and the target

language community, and the adoption of inadequate learning strategies (Morales & Ferreira, 2008; Shaykina, 2015). Therefore, BL can improve students' proficiency while taking into account their educational needs (Klímová, 2015).

Researchers claim that introducing the BL method has many benefits in teaching a new language and helps increase interaction between students and teachers (Kocoglu et al., 2011; Ochoa & Flórez, 2011; Rovai & Hope, 2004; Sun & Qiu, 2017;). Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) state that BL can be beneficial for the following reasons:

1. Pedagogical richness
2. Access to knowledge
3. Social interaction
4. Personal agency
5. Cost-effectiveness
6. Ease of revision

Larsen (2012) has suggested that BL has helped students improve their English skills, and all the higher education institutions that decided to implement the BL model have been successful in teaching the English language.

Overall, this topic is worth investigating since in this modern society, the whole world is surrounded by technology, and previous research in the educational field has found benefits of using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the classroom, such as having more hours to practice English and external contact with the language outside the classroom. Therefore, the rationale of this work relies on the necessity of synthesizing what research works have found regarding the effects of BL and its resources to foster the development of the four English language skills so that teachers in the Ecuadorian context have information on how the English teaching-learning process is being complemented with the BL method. Also, teachers need to know about this method since it has highlighted the interactions between teachers and students, access to knowledge and external contact with the language, and optimized language acquisition (Nawaila et al., 2020; Hashemi & Si Na, 2020).

1.4 Research Questions

- What are the effects of Blended Learning on learning English as a foreign language?

- What resources are used in Blended Learning for developing the four English language skills?

Chapter II

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Introduction

This review seeks to synthesize the effects of the BL method in the classroom and the different resources used in the application of this method in the teaching of English as a foreign language. For this reason, it is necessary to define some terms that are of vital importance in this subject.

2.1.2 Definition of Blended Learning

The definition of BL has caught the attention of many researchers. One of those is Shaykina (2015) who has stated that the term “Blended Learning” appeared in the year 2000 for the first time, and it is associated with the use of self-study jointly with e-learning activities for the complementation of traditional learning in the classroom. In the same vein, other researchers have defined BL, or the hybrid method, as the easiest way to teach English as a foreign language since this combines face-to-face teaching and fully online e-learning. Furthermore, it is a type of multichannel method that incorporates tutor-led activities, images, videos, digital tasks, and face-to-face discussion (Kocoglu et al., 2011; Ochoa & Flórez, 2011; Rovai & Hope, 2004; Sun & Qiu, 2017).

2.1.3 Blended Learning in the EFL Classroom

Watson (2008) has stated that BL is a method that works with students in an anticipatory way; in other words, the teacher provides students with material that has to be checked before class. Then, students work autonomously to learn a topic without teacher guidance. Afterwards, students are capable of sharing what they learn with the class. Next, the teacher can provide students with feedback, create a debate, or ask them to write an essay, depending on the skill the teacher wants learners to develop.

To illustrate this method, two authors are considered. To begin, De Praeter (2010 as cited in Klímová, 2015) gave an example of how to use BL in teaching EFL where the teacher decides what activities are given. For example, listening comprehension and oral comprehension are given within the classroom because these skills need more control and support from the teacher. On the other hand, text-based activities will take place online outside the classroom such as reading comprehension and essay writing since the teacher could give feedback from a computer. Likewise, Klímová (2015) provided an example of academic writing where the teacher decides that all written works, such as essays, and all the additional

references like readings will be presented through the online course. Conversely, in face-to-face teaching, the teacher and students will discuss the difficulties of online work, and the teacher will give feedback about the mistakes the students make.

2.1.4 Language skills

Language skills are crucial for effective communication and understanding in various aspects of life. Husain (2015) has stated that it is essential to recognize that language should be regarded as a skill rather than a content-based subject such as Science, Social Studies, Business, Mathematics, and others. Unlike these subjects, which primarily focus on disseminating information and expanding knowledge, language proficiency involves the ability to communicate effectively. Consequently, language aptitude falls naturally within the psychomotor domain, encompassing skills and actions. In addition, language is a complex skill because it involves four skills which are reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

2.1.5 Reading Skill

Reading helps improve a person's vocabulary and understand the meaning of the information in written texts (Pang et al., 2003). In other words, reading comprehension has been defined as "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language" (Snow, 2002, p. 11). In a similar way, Woolley (2011) defined reading as a process of comprehension to give meaning to a text to obtain a general understanding of its complete context and not just get the meaning of isolated words or sentences.

In addition, Antoniou and Souvignier (2007) indicated some reading difficulties. The first problem students have in mastering reading is that they do not use reading strategies properly and do not know how to pace their reading process to reach a level of comprehension successfully. Additionally, Armbruster and Anderson (1988) reported that students have difficulty in reading because the texts have many chapters and each chapter has readings that are not interest or are irrelevant. Added to this, most of the readings have an unknown or new vocabulary for the students that does not allow learners to improve their reading.

2.1.6 Writing Skill

Writing has been used for a long time and today is considered one of the most essential skills to learn a new language. Hossain (2015) has stated that writing is a productive skill. In other words, people who use this skill have to put into practice all the rules learned and produce the language in a structured way. Similarly, Sapkota (2012) claimed that writing is a process where graphic symbols present a language and are used to transmit a message or

some meaning from the writer to the reader. Additionally, Iftanti (2016) has defined writing as a frequently-used tool in people's lives to write letters, send messages, or post something on social networks with the main goal of communicating a message. Finally, Fareed et al. (2016) considered writing as a difficult skill for students since they face multiple challenges such as misuse of grammar, organizing ideas, and lack or inappropriate use of vocabulary.

2.1.7 Speaking Skill

Speaking skill is often considered one of the most important language skills due to its direct impact on communication and interaction. Speaking is the ability that learners have to express themselves orally, coherently, fluently, and appropriately in a meaningful context, using correct grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, and respecting all the pragmatic and discourse rules of spoken language (Torky, 2006). Hughes (2006) defined speaking as the main way in which language acquisition occurs since people have to undergo speech acts every day, making this skill the ultimate goal of language learning since communicating orally is fundamental.

Meanwhile, Rao (2019) has stated that for foreign or second-language English learners, speaking seems to be the most difficult skill to develop because speakers feel that they have to produce sentences, and at the same time they have to be aware of not making grammatical errors and using appropriate vocabulary. That is, English learners have many problems trying to master this English skill since students try to create sentences without grammatical errors to communicate correctly with others, and this results in an unavoidable low proficiency in English speaking skills. Likewise, Alhmadi (2014) showed that even university students face a myriad of problems related to the development of speaking skills, and this is due to several factors such as the focus of the class; poor encouragement in the classroom resulting in low motivation; little time invested in class for speaking practice; reticence; and anxiety.

2.1.8 Listening Skill

Listening is part of the four skills used in the English language besides reading, speaking, and writing. Mubarok (2015) has defined listening as the ability to receive and interpret messages in a communication process, becoming a key to all effective communication. In addition, without the ability to effectively hear the message, the person who sends the information can become frustrated or irritated causing messages to be easily misunderstood. Furthermore, Downs (2008) has defined listening as the process where a person makes the effort to listen or pay attention to something, clarifying that listening is different from hearing since it is the process of absorbing sound waves and transferring them

to the brain. In other words, people need hearing for listening because listening is much more than processing sounds since without good listening skills it is difficult to understand the message.

Tran and Duong (2020) have remarked that English learners commonly present some problems with the development of their listening skills since they often misunderstand other people's ideas due to the pronunciation of vowels and words, omission of letters, lack of vocabulary, and even because of the speech speed. All of these factors make comprehension of listening texts challenging. Similarly, Alzamil (2021) has added that English learners struggle to grasp the intended message conveyed by the interlocutor because some topics are unfamiliar to them which results in misunderstandings. Factors such as student's anxiety and poor vocabulary are also found to influence the development of listening skills. That is why intensive and extensive listening has been suggested, not only inside the classroom but also outside of it.

2.2 Literature Review

The topics which have been discussed in the Theoretical Framework will be now analyzed by making use of empirical studies. These studies will deal with the effects that the use of BL has in the teaching of English in the four skills in a classroom, and then, with aspects regarding the relevance of using this method in the teaching of the English language. Likewise, these empirical studies and resources used in this method during the teaching of English will be analyzed in detail.

2.2.1 Blended Learning in Reading Comprehension

Considerable research of both descriptive and experimental nature has been conducted to examine the effects of Blended-Learning on the reading skill in EFL. The ones described in this section used an experimental design; in other words, they all utilized a control group and an experimental group. One of these experimental studies was carried out by Behjat et al (2012). They evaluated the performance of 107 Iranian intermediate-EFL students through traditional face-to-face instruction and those who used a BL method. Control and experimental groups worked with reading lessons in traditional face-to-face classroom instructions; however, for the out-of-class activities, the control group worked with traditional printed reading comprehension to study or make summaries while the experimental group worked with different Web-based activities. They determined that the experimental group outperformed the control group and the combination of the BL method benefits learners since it helps them improve their reading comprehension skills and encourages them to go beyond the activities done in class.

In the same research line, Yang (2011) assessed the impact of a Blended-Learning remedial reading program for 108 EFL Taiwanese students with English reading problems. The participants were divided into experimental group and control group. The researcher used two modules; the student and teacher interface. This student's interface had four functionalities: a dialog box, a discussion forum, a chat room, and finally, an explanation tool. After the intervention, Yang argued that there was a significant difference between these two groups' performances, supporting the effectiveness of BL for improving students' reading proficiency. He also discovered that the implementation of Blended-Learning in a traditional classroom had three factors that helped students take control of their reading skill development. For example, access to online reading activities without limitations of time and location, development of metacognition, and enhanced social interaction in the classroom since students had more opportunities to talk about their reading difficulties during group discussion and get feedback from other classmates.

For their research, Bataineh and Mayyas (2017) integrated BL (Moodle) in a traditional classroom to analyze its effect on EFL students' reading comprehension and grammar skills at Jordan University of Science and Technology. The control group worked with in-class instructions whereas the experimental group worked with in-class instruction and Moodle supplementation. These scholars compared a reading and grammar pre and post-test and found that the experimental group had better results in both reading and grammar skills compared to the control group. Researchers concluded that the use of BL in the classroom was a useful tool to improve the English language in the students and their academic performance in general.

Similarly, Kheirzadeh and Birgani (2018) corroborated the effects of BL on the development of reading skills. This study aimed to apply a BL method in a traditional classroom and identify its effects on the reading comprehension performance of 60-intermediate-Iranian-English Foreign Language college students (control and experimental groups) The instruments used were pre-reading and post-reading in both groups, and only the experimental group used the website nicenet.com at home, in which they attended virtual classes and received the material, instructions, and feedback from the teacher online. Moreover, the control group received the passages, reading activities, and feedback with traditional classroom methods using a traditional classroom. Since the experimental group outperformed the control one, researchers concluded that implementing BL in a traditional classroom has a positive effect and a positive perception from students towards learning reading comprehension.

2.2.2 Blended Learning in Writing Skills

Some researchers have found the BL method is effective not only for reading skills but also for writing skills. For instance, Miyazoe and Anderson (2010) analyzed the effectiveness of three different online writing activities: forums, blogs, and wikis at a university in Tokyo, Japan. All the participants were part of the experimental group and enrolled in the same BL course where they received face-to-face instruction and out-of-class online writing activities. The author used surveys that revealed students' positive perceptions toward a blended course and interviews that analyzed the performance of students in each activity. Forums were used in topical discussions with topics from the course textbook. Blogs were used primarily for free writing activities, while wikis were used mainly to conduct a collaborative translation from English to Japanese. Miyazoe and Anderson (2010) suggested that BL (forums, blogs, and wikis) had a positive effect on all students, and it enhanced their writing skills. They emphasized that BL can become a powerful tool to teach and learn a new language and another subject in general only if it is applied correctly.

Likewise, Ghahari and Ameri-Golestan (2013) investigated the impact that BL and traditional methods had on 29 intermediate-EFL Iranian learners' writing skills, the method the EFL learners preferred, and which method had better results in enhancing the learners' writing performance. The participants were placed in an experimental group and a control group. The students who participated in the experimental group received traditional teaching methods for writing in the classroom, but the materials and feedback were presented through ICTs. On the other hand, the participants from the control group received only traditional teaching methods for writing. The authors used the Oxford Placement Test as a pre and post-test and Brown and Bailey's (1985) categorical scoring instrument to evaluate the performance and writing skills of the students. Ghahari and Ameri-Golestan (2013) concluded that only the use of technology and the elimination of the on-site class is not a good option for the teaching of EFL. Nonetheless, it is much better if these two methods, BL and traditional teaching are integrated to help learners perform better in any of the skills and sub-skills, especially in writing.

Furthermore, Milad (2017) found clear support for the use of BL for the improvement of writing skills of students registered in an Academic Writing course. The scholar used the Computer Skill Analysis Questionnaire (CSAQ), Reading Research Skills Inventory (RRSI), Writing Research Skills Inventory (WRSI), and a Pre/Post Test. Statistical analysis revealed a large effect on developing and improving the target students' academic writing by integrating reading and writing research skills. At the end of this study, Marine Milad found that the application of the BL course had a positive effect on developing and improving students' writing and reading skills. Additionally, the BL course helped students improve their vocabulary and recognize syntactic and morphological relationships at the sentence level. The author also claimed that BL cannot only improve writing and reading skills but it can also improve other skills such as speaking and listening.

As a complement to the previous study, Banditvilai (2016) conducted research in which the implementation of BL and the interaction of the teacher in the traditional classroom was shown to improve the four language skills (reading, speaking, writing, and listening). The statistical analysis showed a significant difference between the scores of the control and experimental groups. Thus, Banditvilai (2016) stated that BL helped enhance the English skills of the students since it allowed them to practice their English outside the class without the limitation of time and/or location.

2.2.3 Blended Learning in Listening Skills

Apart from focusing on the results of BL in reading and writing skills, many researchers have shown that the method is also beneficial for listening skills. Permana (2017) investigated

the impact BL had in teaching listening and argued that listening like the other skills had the same importance because students who study EFL not only need to hear but also, they need to understand and interpret the meaning of the conversation. The participants of this research studied under the BL method since they received instructions through virtual classes and activities uploaded to the Edmodo platform. By comparing the results obtained in the pre-and post-questionnaire, the researcher found out that the implementation of BL for teaching listening had a positive effect on students' listening skills. Additionally, the results showed that BL could not only improve the students' listening skills, but at the same time their speaking skills. She said that if BL was applied correctly, it could improve the other skills as well.

In line with this, Abdulla (2015) aimed to investigate the effect that the Blended-Learning strategy had on 26-EFL intermediate students from El Cairo University. The participants had a two-hour session in a traditional classroom receiving classes, and after that, they were enrolled in a BL classroom using the Web-based Checklist program. The instruments used in this study were: 1) the listening comprehension Checklist program to identify the most important listening comprehension skills, 2) a pre-post listening comprehension test to identify the level of mastery that participants had in listening comprehension sub-skills, and 3) a BL retrospective questionnaire to collect feedback from students about the method. In the end, the findings indicated that BL had a positive effect on the development of listening comprehension and in the teaching of EFL. According to the author, several factors such as face-to-face classes, e-learning units, and Blended-Learning in general helped in students' progress.

In addition to the previous studies, Mubarak (2015) developed research in the same field of listening comprehension using BL to investigate the effects of it on students' aural comprehension, how EFL learners could improve their listening comprehension through the BL method, and what the reaction of the students towards it was. First, the participants worked in a Flip model using different Web-based where they did different activities the day before classes. Second, they had traditional classes where the lecturer gave instructions and emphasized the material uploaded online (Facebook). After that, the participants did different activities in the classroom (Lab Rotation). After analyzing data, the researcher suggested that this type of BL, the "Flip model and Lab Rotation model," could be implemented with positive results in a traditional classroom since they improved the students' comprehension in the listening class.

Similarly, Kavaliauskienė (2011) conducted research to discover the difficulties students had in the development of listening activities, supply students of English for specific purposes with appropriate cooperative listening practice, and analyze the performance of

students through a listening test. The research worked with 75 students of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. Data collected showed a significant difference in students' performance. The researcher claimed that the application of BL in ESP proved to be effective and beneficial for students since it helped them improve their listening comprehension skills and students acquire new vocabulary, as well. Besides, all the participants supported the implementation of a BL program in the classroom.

2.2.4 Blended Learning in Speaking Skills

As the most recent researchers presented, BL is an effective method for the development of reading, writing, and listening skills when learning and teaching EFL. In the same way, some researchers have asserted that BL is an effective method for the development of speaking skills. For example, Kırkgöz (2011) said that BL is an advisable method to improve speaking skills. The researcher developed a project whose objective was to create a speaking course implementing face-to-face instruction and the Blended-Learning method using videos. Data were collected through a pre-post-course speaking task, students' video recordings of speaking tasks, informal weekly interviews, and a written end-of-year course evaluation survey. The results obtained suggested that BL had a considerable influence on each student's speaking performance, showing that this method had a positive effect on the improvement of oral communication skills and the participants had a positive perception towards it, too.

Similarly, Ali and Abdallaabdalgaane (2014) conducted a study where BL instruction together with a traditional classroom was implemented. The objective of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of BL on 40 university students' speaking skills and the attitudes that teachers and students had toward the method. Results showed that 90% of students and teachers supported BL instructions and had positive attitudes toward the use of technology and hybrid methods. Additionally, the results of the pre and post-tests indicated a significant difference between them, confirming that BL enhanced the oral competencies of the students.

In line with this, Ginaya et al. (2018) developed a study in which they implemented the BL method to examine what effects BL had on students' speaking ability and if there was an improvement in students' speaking between experimental and control groups. The experimental group did WebQuest project tasks which consisted of communicative activities, practices, and presentations, whereas, the face-to-face group received the traditional teaching model only. In the end, the researcher found that the implementation of BL had a positive effect on speaking and writing skills. Furthermore, the researchers asserted that the correct use of BL can improve the student's learning motivation and interest.

In addition, Yang et al. (2013) investigated the effectiveness of BL for learning about Critical Thinking while combining (online instruction) and face-to-face instruction. A BL course that contained a virtual learning environment and feedback was implemented. The participants had one hour of virtual classes, one-hour of receiving instructions in a traditional class, and one hour of online feedback. The results determined that the use of Blended- Learning in the experimental group enhanced intermediate and advanced learners' English-speaking proficiency. Finally, the researchers found that the implementation of BL and critical thinking helped to improve students' speaking and reading skills.

Chapter III

Methodology

The process of collecting and analyzing data followed the characteristics of a research synthesis, which is “the conjunction of a particular set of literature review characteristics” (Cooper & Hedges, 2009, p.6), which are later analyzed under some inclusion parameters. For this study, the studies to be analyzed had to be conducted in an EFL context to study this model’s effects and the resources used in the BL method. Also, the studies that were considered had to include participants with an intermediate level of English, or A2-B1 and B2. Additionally, participants in the research synthesis had to be enrolled in higher education institutions since BL was applied more at this level of English and in universities. Besides, the studies had to be written in English or Spanish.

It is worth mentioning that the selected empirical studies could adopt a quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approach since this study conducts bibliographical research, looking for studies from 2005 until now, without a fixed research approach for reviewed papers. These studies had to be empirical. The empirical research studies must be from scholarly journals databases from ERIC and SciElo. In addition, the terms used as keywords through this research synthesis were: Blended Learning (BL), Cooperative Approach, ICT, face-to-face classes, virtual learning, and EFL classroom. The research studies were carefully revised to check if they fulfilled the inclusion criteria. Otherwise, those studies were rejected.

Chapter IV

Results

4.1 Data Analysis and Results

In this section, the studies described in the literature review are used to synthesize the effects of BL on learning EFL and the resources used in BL for the development of the four English language skills. All of the included studies complied with the criteria and characteristics detailed in the methodology.

Before looking at the effects of BL and its resources, it is important to point out the interest for researching BL during almost a decade and the language skills that this methodology embraces.

Table 1. Years of publication of Primary Blended-Learning Studies.

Author(s)	Year of publication	Number of studies	Percentage
Bataineh & Mayyas (2017); Banditvilai (2016); Ginaya, Rejeki, & Astuti (2018); Kheirzadeh & Birgani (2018); Permana (2017); Milad (2017)	2016-2018	6	40%
Ghahari & Ameri-Golestan (2013); Abdulla (2015); Mubarak (2015); Ali & Abdallaabdalgaane (2014); Yang, Chuang, Li, & Tseng (2013)	2013-2015	5	30%
Behjat, Yamini, & Bagheri (2012); Yang (2012); Miyazoe & Anderson (2010); Kavaliauskiénė (2011); Kırkgöz (2011)	2010-2012	5	30%

N= 16

Table 1 indicates that almost 40% (n= 6) of the 16 BL studies examined in this research were published between the years 2016 and 2018. This suggests that BL research is a relatively young field of inquiry and that it is gaining momentum. Previously, 5 studies were published between 2013 and 2015.

Table 2. Number of Studies per Skill

Author(s)	Skill	Number of studies	Percentage
Behjat, Yamini, & Bagheri (2012); Yang (2012); Bataineh & Mayyas (2017); Kheirzadeh & Birgani (2018)	Reading	4	25%
Miyazoe & Anderson (2010); Ghahari & Ameri-Golestan (2013); Milad (2017) Banditvilai (2016)	Writing	4	25%
Aji (2017); Abdulla (2015); Mubarak (2015); Kavaliauskienė (2011)	Listening	4	25%
Kırkgöz (2011); Ali and Abdallaabdalmane (2014); Ginaya, Rejeki, & Astuti (2018); Yang, Chuang, Li, & Tseng (2013)	Speaking	4	25%

N=16

To accomplish the aims of this investigation, the author has chosen 16 studies carried out in the EFL context. Table 2 indicates that each skill has been addressed by the same number of studies; in other words, four studies for each skill. Thus, demonstrating that the BL method can work in all the four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) in the learning of the English language or any language. This method has also been suggested by Milad (2017) to help students improve the learning of English language in the four skills, giving the students the opportunity of practicing English inside and outside the classroom. In the same way, Banditvilai (2016) showed that this method gives no limitations regarding time and location.

4.1.1 What are the Effects of Blended Learning on Learning English as a Foreign Language?

In order to provide an answer to the first question of this research synthesis. Table 3 presents a summary of empirical studies exploring the effects of BL on learning EFL. BL refers to the integration of traditional face-to-face classroom instruction with online and digital learning activities. The studies examined various language skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking, to assess the impact of BL on language proficiency. The columns provide essential information about the studies,

Table 3: Effects of Blended Learning on Learning English as a Foreign Language

Author(s)	Results	Number of	Percentage
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		Studies	
Behjat et al. (2012); Kheirzadeh & Birgani (2018)	BL combined with traditional classroom instruction improves reading comprehension skills.	2	12.5%
Yang (2012)	BL (Moodle) improves EFL students' reading comprehension and grammar skills.	1	6.25 %
Bataineh & Mayyas (2017)	BL remedial program improves English reading proficiency and metacognition	1	6.25%
Miyazoe & Anderson (2010); Ghahari & Ameri-Golestan (2013)	BL (forums, blogs, wikis) has a positive effect on students' writing skills.	2	12.5%
Milad (2017)	BL improves academic writing, reading, and vocabulary skills	1	6.25%
Bamditvilai (2016)	BL improves reading, speaking, writing, and listening skills.	1	6.25%
Permana (2017)	BL enhances students' listening and speaking skills.	1	6.25%
Abdulla (2015); Mubarak (2015); Kavaliauskiene (2011)	BL positively affects listening comprehension in EFL students.	3	16.7%
Kirkgoz (2011); Ali & Abdallaabdagane (2014); Yang et al. (2013)	BL improves pre-service teachers' speaking skills.	3	16.7%

Ginaya et al. (2018)	BL enhances English speaking and writing skills in students majoring in Travel and Tourism.	1	6.25%
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N= 16

The first study conducted by Behjat et al. (2012) involved 107 Iranian intermediate-EFL students who were divided into two groups, one using traditional face-to-face instruction, and the other using a BL approach for reading comprehension. The study found that the combination of BL and traditional instruction led to improvements in students' reading comprehension skills. Similarly, Yang (2011) evaluated the impact of a BL remedial reading program for Taiwanese students with English reading difficulties. The experimental group using BL demonstrated significant improvements in reading proficiency compared to the control group receiving only traditional instruction.

Another study by Bataineh and Mayyas (2017) integrated BL (Moodle) into a traditional classroom for Jordanian EFL students. The results revealed that the experimental group achieved better reading comprehension and grammar skills compared to the control group. In addition to reading skills, BL has also shown positive effects on writing proficiency. Miyazoe and Anderson (2010) investigated the effectiveness of BL through forums, blogs, and wikis for writing activities. The study showed that BL had a positive impact on students' writing skills.

Furthermore, the table highlights the positive effects of BL on listening and speaking skills. Permana (2017) found that the implementation of BL improved students' listening and speaking abilities. Abdulla (2015) and Mubarok (2015) both reported positive outcomes in enhancing listening comprehension through BL. In terms of speaking skills, studies by Kırkgöz (2011), Ali and Abdallaabdalgaane (2014), and Ginaya et al. (2018) indicated that BL contributed to improved speaking performance and positive attitudes towards learning. Moreover, Yang et al. (2013) demonstrated that BL enhanced intermediate and advanced learners' English-speaking proficiency.

Overall, Table 3 demonstrates that BL is an effective approach for promoting language learning and the development of various language skills. It offers a flexible and interactive environment that complements traditional classroom instruction, fostering positive outcomes in EFL students' language proficiency and promoting their engagement and motivation in the learning process. These findings emphasize the potential of BL as a valuable tool for language educators seeking to enhance their students' language abilities and create a dynamic and effective language-learning environment.

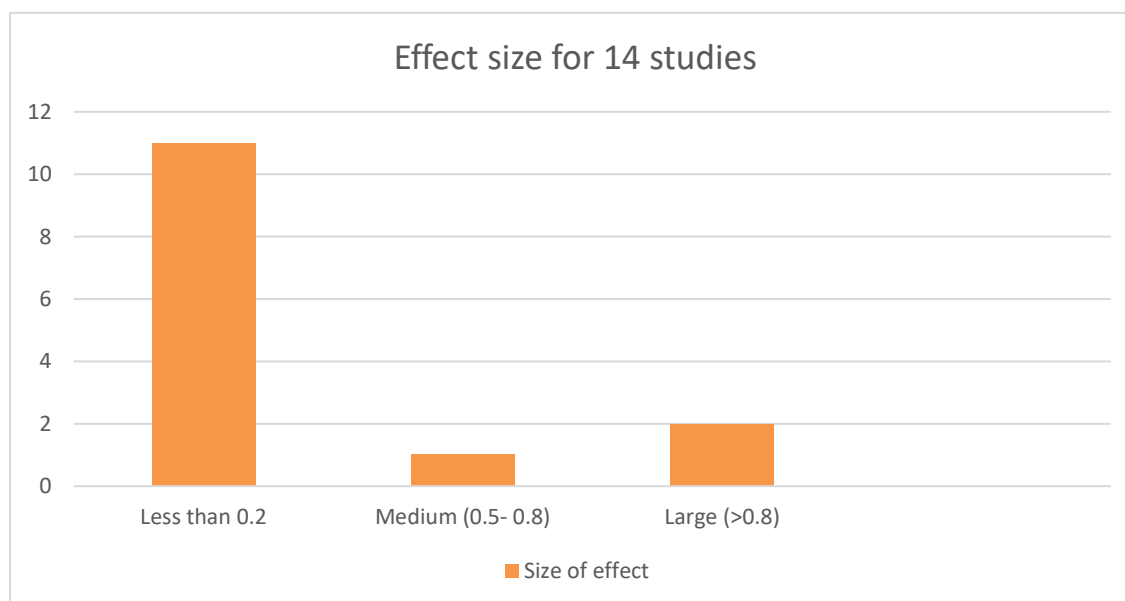
Table 4 Effect Sizes of Studies with Pre-test to Post-test Comparisons

Study Sample	Contrasts	Effect Size	Number of studies
Behjat, Yamini, & Bagheri (2012); Bataineh & Mayyas (2017); Banditvilai (2016); Ginaya, Rejeki, and Astuti (2018)	Pre-Post	0.05	4
Yang (2012)	Pre-Post	0.005	1
Kheirzadeh and Birgani (2018)	Pre-Post	0.02	1
Miyazoe & Anderson (2010); Permana (2017)	Pre-Post	n/r	2
Ghahari & Ameri-Golestan (2013); Milad (2017); Abdulla (2015); Kavaliauskienė (2011); Kırkgöz (2011)	Pre-Post	0.001	5
Mubarok (2015)	Pre-Post	0.9	1
Ali And Abdallaabdalgaane (2014)	Pre-Post	0.56	1
Yang, Chuang, Li, and Tseng (2013)	Pre-Post	1.60	1

Note: n/r = not reported.

N= 16

Table 4 shows the 16 pre-to-post-test effect sizes in the four English skills in the following order: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. It is noted that there is a difference between the pre-test and post-test performance of the experimental group. To recognize the effect size of each study, Cohen's d effect size scale (Cooper & Hedges, 1994; Lipsey & Wilson, 2001) has been used as a reference. Cohen's d effects indicated that a **d-value** is considered a small effect size when it equals 0.2, a 0.5 d-value is considered a medium effect size, and a 0.8 d-value is considered a large effect size. It is important to keep in mind that the effect sizes shown in Table 4 were taken from the papers that were analyzed in the literature review.

Figure 1. The general magnitude of effects for post-test comparisons¹

To make a comparison, a bar chart was created in Excel to simplify the data detailed in Table 4. Figure 1 shows that from the 14 studies, there were 11 in which the BL method had an effect of less than 0.2, zero studies using the BL method had a small effect, there was one in which the BL treatment had a medium-sized effect and two in which the BL treatment had a significant effect. Although the majority of the studies had an impact of less than 0.2, it does not mean that the method did not have any impact on the learning process; on the contrary, there was a minimal improvement that sheds light on the benefits of the BL method as a way to enhance students' English learning.

4.1.2 What Resources are Used in Blended Learning for Developing the Four English Language Skills?

Table 5. Resources Used in Blended Learning for Developing the Four Skills

Author(s)	Skill	Resources	Number of studies
Behjat, Yamini, & Bagheri (2012); Bataineh & Mayyas (2017); Kheirzadeh & Birgani (2018)	Reading	Web-based	3

¹ There were not reported effects in two studies.

Yang (2012)		Moodle	1
Ghahari & Ameri-Golestan (2013); Banditvilai (2016)		Web-based	2
	Writing		
Miyazoe & Anderson (2010); Milad (2017)		Forums, Blogs, and Wikis	2
Mubarok (2015)		Web-based	1
Aji (2017); Abdulla (2015)	Listening	Flipped classroom	2
Kavaliauskienė (2011)		Web blogs	1
Ali And Abdallaabdalgane (2014)		Web blogs and forum	1
Ginaya, Rejeki, and Astuti (2018); Yang, Chuang, Li, and Tseng (2013)	Speakin g	Web-based	2
Kırkgöz (2011)		Video Recording and interview	1

N=16

To answer question two, Table 5 presents the results of the different resources used in BL papers with the four skills. It is shown that web-based is the most frequently used type (n=6) among the skills. In second and third place, web blogs (n=4) and flipped classrooms (n=3) are positioned. Lastly, the least used type is a forum (n=1). In other words, BL has a

variety of resources not just a specific one that can be used to improve the language proficiency of English learners.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The results of this research synthesis suggest that BL is a worth-implementing method that has a positive impact on the English learning process in an EFL context. The feasibility of this method relies on the correct use of online sources and the well-management of instructions in and out of the classroom, especially the use of technology and e-learning. Adding to this, it is worth highlighting that this method is relatively new, helps students develop language skills, and is currently gaining more relevance in the field of education.

When learning a language, it is necessary to develop the four skills known as reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and the BL method has been proven to be an effective way to work with students either individually or as a group. To illustrate this, it has been shown that BL has helped learners develop listening and speaking skills or reading and speaking at the same time. Additionally, since all skills are integrated when learning a language, all of them could be developed and enhanced at the same time, helping learners master them and enabling them to communicate in a foreign language.

Similarly, language skills are developed through the resources employed in BL. In other words, using the BL method for teaching EFL, teachers can make use of several resources such as wikis, forums, web bases, Moodle, recording videos, and interviews. These resources help increase students' engagement and give students more opportunities to interact with teachers and classmates while enhancing learners' proficiency in the English language. Students who participated in the studies analyzed in this research project showed an improvement in their English skills. A comparison of the results obtained by the participants in the pre and post-tests demonstrated that in all the studies, BL had an effect on learners' performance independently of the size effect.

5.2. Recommendations

Lastly, after analyzing a series of studies addressing the effectiveness of Blended-Learning in the teaching of EFL context, it could be suggested further research on this topic in Ecuador or in the Latin American context where English is taught as a foreign language, as well, since the system of education in this context is different. Indeed, more research should be conducted in our country today since according to the Ministry of Education, English is conceived as an important subject within the curriculum. Even though BL research is

increasing in the last years, this is not observed in our context, so further research should be done here.

More research which considers other technological tools, such as the ones including in gamification, could be carried out. In addition, further research on the role and perceptions of teachers and how they should use BL in teaching English is also necessary. This would make teachers aware of the value and importance of learning English more autonomously and entertainingly.

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