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Improving English Lexical Knowledge in EFL Fifth Graders through the Implementation of a  
Blended English Course Designed in Moodle

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Improving English Lexical Knowledge in EFL Fifth Graders through the Implementation of a  
Blended English Course Designed in Moodle

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### **Abstract**

This action research project was conducted at the Santa Librada Public School in Bogotá, Colombia with fifth grade students. The purpose of this work was to improve the fifth graders' English lexical knowledge and increase their autonomy through the implementation of a blended English course designed on Moodle. Accordingly, the course was designed combining face to face instruction with technology mediated instruction and using Moodle as a technological platform to work on the students' language and cognitive needs. It was projected based on the students' linguistic weaknesses and their motivation to use technological resources. Data collection techniques used include questionnaires, surveys, journal for teacher's reflection and students' artifacts (taken from each one of the activities done on Moodle and the exercises done in the face to face sessions). The results showed that the learning strategies implemented by the teacher for the design of the blended English course focused on the improvement of the students' lexical knowledge, positively influenced the students' language learning process. Students improved their lexical knowledge, increased their motivation and enhanced their language learning experience through the implementation of virtual activities; improved their technological abilities, acquired lexicon and knowledge related to technology, and they are more autonomous (they managed their independent practice and developed cooperative and collaborative work abilities).

**Key words:** CALL, blended learning, learners' autonomy, lexical knowledge.

## Resumen

El presente proyecto de investigación-acción fue llevado a cabo en Santa Librada, colegio público de Bogotá, Colombia, con estudiantes de quinto grado. El propósito de este estudio fue mejorar el conocimiento de léxico en inglés de los estudiantes de grado quinto e incrementar su autonomía a través de la implementación de un curso mixto de inglés diseñado en Moodle. Por consiguiente, el curso fue diseñado combinando la instrucción presencial con la instrucción mediada por computador y usando Moodle como administrador de curso para trabajar en las necesidades cognitivas y de lenguaje de los estudiantes. Esto fue proyectado teniendo en cuenta la motivación de los estudiantes por el uso de recursos tecnológicos y sus debilidades lingüísticas. Las técnicas de recolección de información usadas incluyen cuestionarios, encuestas, el diario de la docente y los elementos que demuestran la producción de los estudiantes (tomados de cada una de las actividades hechas en Moodle y los documentos usados en las sesiones presenciales). Los resultados muestran que las estrategias de aprendizaje implementadas influyeron positivamente en el proceso de aprendizaje de la lengua de los estudiantes. Los estudiantes mejoraron su conocimiento léxico, incrementaron su motivación e intensificaron su experiencia de aprendizaje de la lengua a través de la implementación de actividades virtuales, mejoraron sus habilidades tecnológicas, adquirieron vocabulario y conocimiento relacionado con tecnología y, aún hoy, ellos son más autónomos

**Palabras clave:** Aprendizaje de lenguas asistido por computador (CALL), aprendizaje mixto, autonomía, conocimiento léxico en inglés.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

In the Santa Librada Public School, English is taught with scarce resources and minimum time for teaching (two or three hours per week). In consequence, this situation makes the implementation of the National Program of Bilingualism<sup>1</sup> complex.

The main aim of this study is to improve the language learning process at the Santa Librada School through the application of a blended English course, combining face to face instruction with technology mediated instruction and using Moodle as the technological platform to work on the students' language and cognitive needs. The main aim of this study is to develop students' English lexical knowledge and increase their autonomy through the implementation of technological resources and applications in face to face and virtual learning environments. It was projected based on the students' linguistic weaknesses and their motivation to use technological resources.

The research study is focused on the improvement of lexical knowledge in EFL fifth graders because it is an English language sub skill that influences the development of all the communicative abilities and language skills during the language acquisition process.

### **Preliminary Inquiry**

A blended English course based on Moodle for the improvement of students' lexical knowledge was implemented in an EFL learning environment with 29 fifth graders between 10 and 12 years old in a public school in Bogotá, Colombia. The students attended in the institution 5 hours per day and received three hours of English per week.

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<sup>1</sup>The Colombian Ministry of Education designed the National Program of Bilingualism in 2004, in which they specified objectives and guidelines for its implementation throughout the country.

After observation and pedagogical work for eight months in the last term of 2011 and first term of 2012 with the research population, it was possible to identify certain difficulties in the students' language skills, deficiencies in communicating using the L2 and difficulties in understanding when the teacher explained in English and in comprehending simple expressions in L2. All of these difficulties permitted the identification of the main problem related to the students' lack of lexical knowledge. This finding was reinforced when the researcher provided vocabulary activities with the appropriate language input and observed some improvement in the students' abilities to express their ideas.

Part of the observation time in 2011 and 2012 was dedicated to the study of the curriculum of the institution, which revealed that the educational project (PEI-Proyecto Educativo Institucional<sup>2</sup>) of the Santa Librada School did not include a conception of an English curriculum for primary school based on the principles described in the school's mission, vision and pedagogical approach. In the Humanities area (Humanidades, defined in article 23 of law 115) there was no syllabus for English, parameters to follow, or the objectives to achieve for the area in the first grades. Teachers were working on the document construction.

The researcher during the observation step identified some of the challenges faced by English teachers, such as:

- large classes,
- students' apathy and passivity,
- limited contact with proficient speakers in a communicative environment,

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<sup>2</sup>The Colombian Ministry of Education defined educational project (PEI-Proyecto Educativo Institucional) as "the chart" of schools ("Es la carta de navegación de las escuelas y colegios"), which should contain the syllabus as part of the curriculum to comply the regulations established in the decree 1860 of 1994.

- insufficient materials,
- traditional educational systems,
- students' social problems,

After the preliminary inquiry, in May of 2012, the teacher began a reflective teaching process with the implementation of some language learning strategies. During the process the researcher noticed that the students felt comfortable using technological resources or applications to acquire the new language knowledge, and she realized that technological resources enhanced the students' language acquisition process. Accordingly, the researcher decided to design a blended English course on Moodle (an open source platform), to build a virtual environment for learning supporting the classroom instruction. In addition, she determined that the course focuses on the improvement of the students' lexical knowledge.

The previous considerations contributed to the construction of the main research question and the research objectives which are presented below.

#### **Research Question**

- To what extent does the application of a blended English course based on Moodle influence the improvement of lexical knowledge in EFL fifth graders?

#### **Research Objectives**

- ✓ To determine the improvement of lexical knowledge in EFL graders through the application of a blended English course designed on Moodle
- ✓ To increase the students' level of autonomy by means of the implementation of a blended English course based on Moodle.

This research project represents the students and teacher opportunity to enhance the language learning and teaching process in Santa Librada through the implementation of new pedagogical strategies and the use of technological resources. In addition, the students might improve their technological and cognitive abilities based on their motivation for the technology use, and increase their autonomy because they might manage their time of practice.

It was expected that the development and implementation of this action research project might benefit the institution because this strategy contributes to the achievement of the main goals of the National Program of Bilingualism and, therefore, it might promote the school's recognition on the local level. Finally, the project may be a significant factor in improving the quality of education provided at the institution. This project could become a model experience for further ELT investigations.

In the following chapter of this project are presented the theoretical support for the study and the state of the art related to the main constructs: *lexical knowledge, blended learning, CALL and learners autonomy*; chapters three and four provide a view of the research design and the pedagogical intervention including the type of study, description of the setting, participants, instruments, and all the processes that were carried out during the intervention; chapters five and six present the data analysis, findings, pedagogical implications and conclusions.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

In recent decades, many researchers and language teachers have studied the importance of technology (as a resource) in the improvement of the language teaching process, as well as the influence of technology on the learners' autonomy and their language learning experience. Experts such as Tsai and Ernst (2009), Garrison (2008), Chapelle (2001-2008), Bonk and Graham (2006), Dillenbourg (1999 - 2002), Hubbard and Levy (2006), and Blin (2005) have reported important findings related to the use of technology in the language teaching process and to how it influences students' language acquisition or language learning process. Accordingly, the analysis of their theoretical approaches becomes a key issue for the development of this project. Exploration of the studies of Harmer (2007), Brown (2007), Nunan (2001, 2010), Hedge (2000) and Richards (1999-2005) is an essential step in the course design and the implementation process because they highlight relevant concepts related to the teaching strategies to use in the language learning process. Some recognized experts on lexical knowledge whose work is useful for the present investigation are Coady and Huckin (1997), Read (2000), Nation (2008), Meara (1980), Stahl and Nagy (2006) and Thornbury (2002).

Hence, the researcher focused her attention on the specific constructs of CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), blended learning, learners' autonomy and interaction, lexical knowledge, and teaching English strategies in this literary review.

### **CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning)**

As Chapelle (2001) highlights, the first use of computer assisted instruction was carried out in the 1950s but it is not until 1960s when researchers and teachers showed interest in

documenting their insights about CALL through investigations. In those CALL projects, as is documented by Chapelle (2001), researchers tend to establish pedagogical principles based on the behaviorist and audio-lingual paradigms. Consequently, researchers pinpointed meaningful aspects for the design of a course using the computer; some of them are: the importance of selecting the appropriate pedagogical strategy to apply, to develop communicative competences through technological interaction, to provide language input or knowledge required for the practice, and a meaningful aspect to give feedback. Even today, those features are considered essential for the design and implementation of a computer-assisted language learning course (Chapelle, 2001).

In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, researchers focused their attention on the design of technological applications to use in the teaching and learning process. For example, they improved the system including audio to provide language input for learners, added graphics and the analysis of the students' responses. Considering Chapelle's (2001) words, it is possible to highlight some new important aspects for the implementation of computers as teaching resources such as: including activities to diagnose students' levels, using new systems to value the students' language performance (testing), using games for learning, and ensuring that the language learning is focused on the appropriate acquisition of language knowledge to use in students' interactions (communication is relevant).

On the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, researchers focused their attention on new patterns of interaction in learning, because a new resource appeared, "Internet". They included expressions such as collaborative work (Dillenbourg, 1999), autonomy (Blin, 2005), and computer mediated communication, virtual activities, and on-line, synchronous and



asynchronous mode (Garrison, 2008; Chapelle, 2001-2008; Bonk and Graham, 2006).

Accordingly, the use of computer technology for language learning underlies forms of communication responsible for increasing language contact and globalization. In many parts of the world people increased their language communication using technological tools because they present the opportunity to talk in real time with peer native speakers about interesting topics for learners or to have access to the culture of the second language, becoming a fascinating communicative experience for learners and teachers (Bonk and Graham, 2006). Therefore, in these centuries as Chapelle (2008) pointed out, technology offers different kinds of elements or tools to use in the educational field, which have been invented to make the teaching a process of construction of knowledge and development of values such as responsibility, autonomy and respect.

On the practice side, technology prompts some fundamental changes in the way that second or additional languages can be taught and learned. In many places in the world today it is difficult to discuss language pedagogies without considering the options offered by CD-ROMs, accompanying text books, electronic resources such as dictionaries and corpora, the communication and information offered on the Internet, and online learning materials and assessment (Chapelle, 2008, p. 585-586).

According to Chapelle (2008), computer-assisted learning materials supply controlled opportunities for linguistic input for students and real or systemic interaction. Through systemic or computer interactions, the learner receives immediate feedback about his responses or help in comprehending the language. This kind of interaction is beneficial for language learning.

Likewise, online learning materials provide diagnostic activities, assessment, and direct control

of the process. Thus, the application of computer mediated resources help in the construction of autonomous learning environments because teacher can apply self-access, self-directed and self-controlled learning strategies (Blin, 2005). Additionally, as Blin (2005) pointed out those learning strategies focused on the learners' autonomy are positively accepted by the students.

Consequently, English teachers in the twenty-first century should be able to use technology as a teaching resource and to implement new pedagogical paradigms in their teaching practices to improve the students' language experience. For example, one of the new pedagogical perspectives is task-based teaching and learning, which focuses on the development of communicative and language skills through interactional activities and language exercises. Pica (2008) pinpointed the importance of using task-based activities for language teaching and research: "Foremost among them are emphases on communication and completion task. Participants must communicate information in order to make decisions, solve problems, and reach outcomes" (p. 526).

Another pedagogical approach is *blended learning* which is described by Graham and Dziuban (2006) as "...a learning environment that combines face to face instruction with computer-mediated instruction" (p. 270).

### **Blended Learning**

In order to determine the concept of *blended learning*, it is valuable to study and analyze the theoretical perspectives of experienced researchers such as Bonk and Graham (2006), Cuesta (2010), Graham and Dziuban (2006), Garrison and Vaughan (2008) and Lin (2008).

In the words of Bonk and Graham (2006), "Blended learning environment combines traditional face-to-face instruction with computer-mediated or online instruction" (p. 5). They

pointed out that the implementation of blended learning programs resulted in “improvements in the rate of learning, as well as the efficiency of training, maximizing corporate investments in reusable training materials, and of course, attempts to save on training time” (p.ii). The optimization of the learning resources, materials and time to carry out an effective English learning process are some of the relevant advantages to consider in the design of a blended course.

Garrison and Vaughan (2008) clearly expressed the advantages of the implementation of language teaching programs designed in a blended learning approach. They pointed out that blended learning is “a coherent design approach that openly assesses and integrates the strengths of face to face and online learning to address worthwhile educational goals” (p. x).As described in Garrison and Vaughan’s ideas, the implementation of a blended learning approach to face the students’ language difficulties is an opportunity to integrate the best of face to face and online training in the same learning environment. Some of the advantages that support the decision taken for the implementation of a blended learning approach in this research study are: 1) students’ interaction in a communicative environment through interactional activities, 2) the students’ opportunity to clarify doubts at the time, and to enhance their social abilities, 3) students’ unlimited access to innumerable learning materials provided by internet, 4) students’ opportunity to self-manage, self-direct and self-control the time that they need to achieve their own learning goals, and 5) students’ opportunity to select the resources to use and to design their own schedule considering the practice that they need to improve their own difficulties.

The advantages of adopting the blended learning approach for English teaching processes are related to learning effectiveness, students’ motivation, cost satisfaction and

effectiveness in the use of time and resources. Students have the opportunity to learn through interaction with their peers during the face to face sessions and receive synchronous instruction mediated and controlled by the teacher. At the same time, they can control their independent practice through the development of the virtual or online activities, and work collaboratively in the acquisition of new language knowledge and in the development of technological, social and cognitive abilities. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that students in the twenty-first century, the millennial generation, are "... expecting the immediacy of technology, collaborative learning opportunities, and active learning environments force faculty and administrators to adopt more effective pedagogies" (Graham and Dziuban, 2006, p. 272). Therefore, English language teachers should implement effective strategies and pedagogical approaches for the students' language learning process.

For the design of a blended learning course it is essential to consider:

- Students' experience in the use of technological resources and applications,
- Students' access to Internet (what are the requirements if the students are younger than 14 years old?) and the technological resources required for the development of the online activities,
- Students' commitment to their language learning process,
- Students' linguistic needs,
- The pedagogical approach and the strategies to use for the design of the virtual activities and the language exercises done in the face to face sessions,
- The blended learning mode and students' communicative abilities.

Bonk and Graham (2006) described additional considerations in the design of blended learning programs: “the role of live interaction, the role of learner choice and self-regulation, models for support and training, finding balance between innovation and production, and cultural adaptation.”(p. 14).

In addition, for the design of a blended learning environment a teacher must be sure that he has all the resources, equipment and time for the course implementation, to be sure that the solutions work appropriately, and be sure that the participants have the appropriate technological training and technical support to access the materials and for their effectively use. In words of Hoffman (2006) those aspects were named “*being ready, being willing and being able*” (p. 39). In order to ensure that teachers and learners are *ready, willing and able* is important: 1) to define the students’ profiles and their roles in the blended system, and the teacher’s role as designer, manager and facilitator, 2) to establish the language, cognitive and technological abilities and skills required to carry out a successful process, 3) to determine the materials, resources and technological tools necessary for the implementation, 4) to design a cyclical process of planning, piloting, design, implementation, evaluation and redesign; 5) to carry out the course implementation controlling that the blended solutions work appropriately, and finally 6) to be able of “having an organization that actively supports the new learning culture” (Hoffman, 2006, p.39 )

### **Interaction in a blended language learning experience**

The importance of interaction in a blended learning experience is clearly described by Wagner in Graham (2006) as the opportunity to create a small learning community; becoming “a strategy of achieving specific learning or performance outcomes” (p. 43). Interaction can be

classified in nine different types considering the learning purpose for its use. They are *interaction for participation, interaction for feedback, interaction for elaboration, interaction for learner control and self-regulation, interaction for negotiation, interaction for motivation, interaction for team building, interaction for discovery, and interaction for clarification* (Graham 2006). In each of these types of interaction, the social components involved in a teaching/learning process are evident. As the authors, Bonk and Graham (2006) stated “Social presence represents a context for evaluating interaction that focuses on taking advantage of the social and democratic features of technology” (p. 43). This refers to how an individual feels part of a community working in a real (face to face) context or one that is seen as real (virtual) through interaction with peers. In a blended environment, students feel social presence during the face to face interaction, and in the same way, social presence is achieved using real-time technological tools such as Skype or a forum.

Consequently, interaction, as an educational experience through which learners may define and apply new strategies of learning based on social components to build new knowledge, helps to identify and monitor patterns of communication between learners as “agents of instructional transaction”, to determine the kinds of outcomes obtained by the “agents” through the implementation of new strategies of learning to face their difficulties and to acquire new knowledge, and finally, to increase students’ engagement and motivation (Dillenbourg, 2002).

Dillenbourg (2002) stated that to carry out an effective process of interaction as an essential part of a blended learning course, it is necessary to design scripts (sets of instruction) to carry out the process towards collaborative work. These scripts prescribe “how students

should form groups, how they should interact and collaborate and how they should solve the problem” (p. v). In computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL), the script becomes important to guide the students’ practice and their interactions in the learning environment.

### **Learner Autonomy in a blended learning environment**

Learners’ autonomy is one of the main goals of the language learning and teaching process, and developing learners’ autonomy is benefit of using a blended learning environment. Holec (1981) defined autonomy as the “ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (p.3); it is an ability that learners have when they are able to monitor their own learning process. Blin (2005) pointed out “...Autonomy is a capacity for action without intervention from others. Educationalists may strive towards a system that allows learning to take place without the intervention of teachers or outside the limits of a fixed curriculum” (p. 4).

In recent decades, researchers have increased their interest in analyzing how learners develop their autonomy and how the use of technological resources influences that process. According to Benson and Voller (1997) cited in Blin (2005) “the promotion of autonomy in language learning has links to development elsewhere in the field of education...and has been sustained and nourished by innovative work in the field of self-directed language learning, which is sometimes called independent learning” (p13). It refers to how independent learning, provided by the computer assisted language learning environment, can become synonymous with learner autonomy. As Blin (2005) stated “Independent language learning environments present language learning opportunities that do not require the constant intervention of a teacher...” (p. 14). Consequently, during the recent years, computer-mediated communication and multimedia technologies have become the millennial generation resources of language

learning processes, opening new doors of pedagogical innovations to enhance and enrich the students' language learning experience.

Through technology it is possible to develop learners' autonomy. Teachers can apply database materials in a self-access facility; in addition, they can use computer-assisted language learning to incorporate training elements in order to make it less direct with, for example, the use of menus to organize computer programs and files (Blin, 2005). Although, as Herrera (2012) pointed out the isolated implementation of self-access materials in the language learning process do not guarantee the development of learners autonomy because the achievement of learners autonomy depends "on their attitudes, their decisions and the education system in which they may be immersed"(Herrera, 2012, p. 118).

## **Lexical Knowledge**

In the last twenty years, research on vocabulary has increased to an extent that this issue has become vital in the field of language acquisition, as Stahl and Nagy (2006) stated "Learning new words is foundational to success in school and life" (p. ix). Outstanding among the researchers on this topic are Nation (2008), Meara (1980), Stahl and Nagy (2006), Read (2000), Coady and Huckin (1997), Hedge (2000), and Harmer (2001). The main part of the theoretical framework related to lexical knowledge is based on Nation's principles because his guidelines were followed for the design of the vocabulary activities developed during the implementation stage in this study.

As basic part of the language acquisition process, lexical knowledge or vocabulary awareness needs to be structured to be taught. For that reason, the first step to achieve the main goal of this study was to design and develop an accurate vocabulary program, considering



the level of vocabulary that the students needed to learn, the resources to use and the techniques to apply. Therefore, some important activities for the teacher to undertake are planning, training, testing and teaching (Nation, 2008). For the first one (*planning*), the teacher must understand the students' difficulties to program the opportunities to enhance their own problems in the language learning. For *planning*, Nation (2008) pointed out four important strands to consider for the program design focused on the improvement of lexical knowledge: *Meaning focused input, Meaning focused output, Language focused learning, and Fluency development.*

Meaning focused input: Here learners learn new vocabulary and enrich and establish previously met vocabulary through listening and reading....Typical activities include extensive reading, listening to stories, listening to lectures, taking part in a conversation, and reading for study purposes (Nation, 2008, p. 1).

This strand should be considered as the first step in the development of the students' lexical knowledge course; therefore, the activities designed should be focused on the understanding, enjoyment and the acquisition of their first high frequency words.

Meaning focused output: Here learners enrich and establish their knowledge of vocabulary through speaking and writing. This strand should push the learners to make use of vocabulary at the boundaries of their knowledge, but should not overload them with the need to use largely unfamiliar vocabulary (Nation, 2008, p.2).

This strand could be considered as the second step in the vocabulary course; in this part, the students' should be able to use the lexicon learnt in the previous step to develop reading

and writing activities. The teacher should design these activities carefully considering the students' lexical knowledge level and their language awareness.

Language focused learning: Here learners deliberately learn new words and study more about previously met words, and teachers give deliberate attention to vocabulary and vocabulary strategies" (Nation, 2008, p.2). In this strand the main aim is to develop, as Nation states, "explicit knowledge of particular words" (p.2). Hence, the teacher should focus the students' learning process on vocabulary activities to understand the use of words, the words' meaning and form. Also, students should receive training in dictionary use and guessing the meaning of a word in context. Summing up, learners should do many vocabulary activities focused on the acquisition of specific knowledge of the high frequency words learnt in the previous steps and in the development of the language abilities to understand the use of any word in a specific context.

Fluency development: Here learners get more proficient at using the vocabulary that they already know. In this strand of the course, there should be no unknown vocabulary, but learners should do message-focused listening, speaking, reading and writing with the aim of getting faster at performing these skills (Nation, 2008, p.2).

In this part of the process the students should be able to use the lexicon acquired to develop or improve their language skills. The activities proposed by Nation (2008) should require the learners to reach a high language level, a solid lexical knowledge of the high frequency words acquired in the previous steps, and the development of some language and cognitive skills. Some of the activities proposed are: speed reading, extensive reading, ten-minute writing, and listening comprehension activities.

In a well-planned course, the teacher should be sure that the time used for the activities in each one of the strands is balanced considering the students' linguistic and cognitive needs (Nation, 2008).

Another important part of the process is *training*. Students need training in the use of the resources and the materials to apply in the lexical knowledge; also they need training in some of the strategies used for the acquisition of lexical knowledge (Thornbury, 2002). The strategies proposed by Nation (2008) are related to the third strand *language focused-learning* and some of them are: guessing from context, learning to use word cards, using word parts and dictionary use. The main purpose of the application of these strategies in the course is "...to get the learners to become independent in their vocabulary learning" (Nation, 2008, p. 4). Therefore, their application would benefit the vocabulary acquisition process, facilitating learning and teaching practices because the students would be familiarized with the kind of activities and materials used in each one of the activities.

*Testing* as Nation (2008) states "Teachers need to be able to test their learners and to interpret those tests to see where learners are in their vocabulary development in order to plan future teaching and to motivate learning" (p. 4). Then, testing is an essential part in the development of any course, especially a language learning course. Teachers need to determine the learners' progress in their vocabulary learning and to assess if their lexical knowledge is appropriate and accurate considering their communication needs. Therefore, the use of tests becomes an effective strategy to assess the learners' improvements. Read (2000) suggested as meaningful items that must be considered in the design of a vocabulary test: to have a list of words to assess, to choose the kind of questions to apply in the test and to consider the formal

organization of the test as an instrument of assessment. Accordingly, teachers implement testing as a teaching learning tool “to assess students’ progress in vocabulary learning and to diagnose areas of weakness in their knowledge of target language, i.e. the language which they are learning” (Read, 2000, p.11).

Summing up, teaching and learning vocabulary is a cumulative process, in which many factors influence the vocabulary acquisition. Hedge (2000) pointed out “some factors are to do with input...other factors are to do with storing, organizing, and building vocabulary in the mental lexicon...” (p. 118). Thus, it would be useful to start the process with a diagnostic activity to evaluate the students’ lexical knowledge before, to establish the learning strategies to implement and to determine the vocabulary to acquire. Then, when the learning approach and the strategies have been selected, it is important to consider the context and frequency in which the words are presented to the learners, the development of a variety of techniques for the construction of meaning, the availability of resources to acquire the accurate pronunciation of the words, and the design of the instruments for testing the process (Hedge, 2000 and Thornbury, 2002).

### **State of the Art**

Considering that the main purpose of this study is to improve English lexical knowledge in EFL fifth graders through the implementation of a blended English course designed on Moodle, it was priority to explore local and international studies related to the implementation of ICT in EFL environments, the design of blended language learning courses, strategies for the improvement or acquisition of lexical knowledge and the development of learner’s autonomy through the application of technological resources for their language learning process. A large

number of studies related to the integration of ICT in the language learning process have been carried out. Hence, the researcher considered the studies related to the implementation of CALL tools in the language teaching and learning processes, in which authors like Dang (2011), Lee (2009), Lin (2008), Blin (2005) and Cuesta (2010) demonstrated the implications and effects, based on their experiences, of the use of CALL tools in students' acquisition of lexical knowledge, the enhancement of their language learning experience, in the development of their language and cognitive skills and their autonomy.

One of the studies explored was conducted by Dang (2011) at Minnesota State University about CALL options for teaching in EFL Vietnamese environments. The purpose of that research was to select, introduce, and recommend to Vietnamese EFL teachers some effective options for teaching English as well as to assist them with using CALL tools to enhance their teaching and the students' English language acquisition. The author revealed CALL tools such as Hot Potatoes, Adverbial Analyzer, and iWRITE, which could be used in the teaching and learning of EFL for the instruction of language areas such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, also the development of all the language skills (reading, speaking, listening and writing). The author reported as benefits of the integration of CALL tools in EFL environments, the flexibility of learning and the opportunity to enhance communication and interactivity, the use of authentic materials and audience, increased student motivation to learn more and gain real world experience, increased learner autonomy and critical thinking skills. In addition, the author presented as limitations the financial barriers, availability of computer hardware and software, technical and theoretical knowledge, accessibility of Internet, users' attitudes, and proficiency

and skills of computer use. These benefits and challenges were considered for the design of the pedagogical intervention in this study.

In his research study, Lee (2009) pointed out the differential effects of CMC interaction in a blended learning environment using technological tools such as text-chat and voice-chat, and face-to-face interactions on university level of ESL students' vocabulary acquisition. Some aspects of Lee's study which were considered for the development of this study include whether CMC interaction helps learners acquire new lexical items productively, and whether ESL students find CMC interaction helpful for their English learning. As part of his pedagogical intervention, the author applied pre-tests and post-tests to determine the target lexical items acquired by the students during the process. In addition, the author used a follow up survey from each participant to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the use of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) tasks. One of the results obtained by Lee (2009) indicated that "students tended to acquire new lexical items when they had some background knowledge about the target words or they were negotiating both form and meaning with their partners" (Lee, 2009, p. iv). His conclusions led the researcher to implement similar strategies for the pedagogical intervention.

Lin (2008) conducted a study at National Taiwan Normal University. In the study the author pointed out how the application of an online lexical syllabus constructed on Moodle with the hyperlinks of concordances and the AWL (Academic Word List) Highlighter, influenced the acquisition of academic vocabulary and the developing of writing skills in twenty-five EFL college students. Lin stated that the CALL applications contributed to the students' acquisition of lexical input and the development of their autonomy. Lin designed the online syllabus considering the

implementation of explicit academic word lessons to provide online practice through downloadable resources for academic word learning and weekly lectures. In this way, Lin's study was a valuable reference to comprehend the implications of Moodle use as a CMS in the improvement of lexical knowledge and writing skills in young learners.

The study conducted by Blin (2005) at The Open University: Institute of Educational technology proposed a conceptual framework based on relevant theoretical approaches and empirical evidence for drawing and examining the development of learner autonomy in technology-rich language learning environments. It was focused on systemic tensions (or contradictions) which occurred throughout the development of the language activities. During the process, the author analyzed the dynamics in collective activities and individual actions. The author discussed specific theoretical perspectives on CALL and learner's autonomy. This paper provided relevant information related to the development of learner's autonomy through technological language learning environments. The researcher considered as a main contribution for this study, the importance of keeping in mind the learners' affective aspects in the language learning process because it was a valuable aspect to analyze and understand for determining the strategies, activities and issues to apply during the implementation part.

Cuesta (2010) through her study determined some steps and principles to consider in the design of materials for virtual environments. She pointed out the aspects of the structure to follow in a design of technological materials process, the Model (ADDI) to apply, the difficulties to face during the design and the implementation processes, the skills that an online instructor or tutor needs to be competent with, the instruments used to analyze, design, implement and evaluate in each one of the stages during the investigation. Accordingly, the information

presented in the paper supported the decisions made by the researcher related to the design of the blended English course and the kind of technological materials implemented in this study. In addition, Cuesta's study is contextualized because it was developed in Colombia. In this manner, it revealed that the local educational projects influence on the development of this inquiry. The experience presented through the paper was a positive guide for the visualization of the possible difficulties in the implementation of the virtual resources.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter started with an overview of the inclusion of technology as a teaching resource for the improvement of the language teaching process in the recent decades. In addition, some pedagogical approaches emerged from the use of technology in the language teaching practices were presented. Then, the researcher described some definitions of blended learning as one of the new pedagogical perspectives for ELT based on computer-assisted language learning approach. Also, she determined the aspects to consider for the design of a blended learning course based on Bonk and Graham (2006), Hoffman (2006) and Cuesta's (2010) considerations. Additionally, some representations of learner autonomy and learners' interaction resulted from the implementation of CALL strategies was recalled. Thus, the interaction was considered an important factor for the construction of knowledge in the English language learning process and for strengthening the learners' autonomy. Finally, the strategies for the design of a course focused on the improvement of students' lexical knowledge based on the Nation (2008) principles were presented.

The last section highlighted the lack of empirical studies concerning the development of lexical knowledge in EFL fifth graders supported by technology. In spite of this, the researcher



presented some local and international studies related to the implementation of CALL strategies in EFL environments, the design of blended language learning courses, strategies for the improvement or acquisition of lexical knowledge and the development of learner's autonomy through the application of technological resources for their language learning process; on which she supported her decision making.

### **Chapter 3: Research Design**

Action research is a powerful reflection process that encourages teachers in the innovation of their teaching practice through the implementation of new educational tools and strategies. Conducting an action research study implies planning (the objectives and the steps), designing (the instruments), implementing (a strategy), analyzing data and reflecting (on the solution given to the difficulties identified). For this study the researcher followed the parameters and considerations of an action research study. Thus, in this chapter, are described the characterization of the study, the context and institutional setting, a brief description of the data collection instruments, the participants, the role of the researcher, the ethical considerations, triangulation, validity and the action plan for the investigation (See appendix F).

#### **Type of the Study**

The present study follows the considerations and parameters for a qualitative action research study. Action research is, as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) stated, "...a powerful tool for change and improvement at the local level" (p. 297), suggesting its application in classroom settings. Kemmis and McTaggart cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) suggested that:

Action research is concerned equally with changing individuals, on the one hand, and on the other, the culture of the groups, institutions and societies to which they belong. The culture of a group can be defined in terms of the characteristic substance and forms of the language and discourses, activities and practices, and social relationships and organization which continue the interactions of the group (p.298).

This definition explains action research from the socio-cultural perspective, presenting its relevant implementation to solve problems in a situation influenced by several variables. Zuber-Skerrit (1996) cited in Cohen (2007) suggests that the aims of all action research projects and programs are to bring about practical improvement, innovation, change or development of social practice, and the practitioners' better understandings of their practices. Also Hopkins (1985) presented the combination between action and research as disciplinary inquiry, in which a person attempts to understand, improve and reform practice.

Therefore, for this study, action research is considered as a systematic process of investigating practical issues which arise within a particular social group, following the premise that changes in practice should be based on the collection and analysis of data. The stages followed in this study are the four phases for the cyclical action research process stated by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) cited in Burns (2001, p. 8): *planning, action, observation and reflection*, which are fundamental steps in a spiraling process aimed at continued reflection on effects so that further planning can be refined.

### **Institutional Setting**

This research was carried out in Santa Librada School, a public institution in the sector of Usme in the southeast of Bogotá, where socio-economic problems are evident. As Rueda (2003) states "The localities of Bosa, Usme and Ciudad Bolívar have the highest concentrations of poor people in the city: 28 per cent in Usme, 20 per cent in Bosa and 30.7per cent in Ciudad Bolívar according to the NBI indicator" (p.15). Most heads of households have informal employment in

position such as street vendors, maids, housekeepers and guards, hence, many families experience difficulty fulfilling basic needs.

In this setting, where social problems characterized by aggression and sometimes violence, often interrupt the daily routine, teachers devote much time and effort to addressing problems of intolerance, impatience, and low self-esteem at the expense of academic projects and programs.

The main educational purpose of Santa Librada, as is described in the mission statement of the school, is to educate competitive citizens engaged with the improvement of their local communities through their contributions as citizens, family members and professionals, who establish as life principles values such as leadership, respect, freedom of opinion, self-esteem, autonomy, creativity and perseverance, through the development of civic competences, communicative and productive skills through the implementation of different educational strategies based on Meaningful Learning<sup>3</sup>.

The educational project of the school (PEI) is based on pedagogical conceptions of Meaningful Learning, which are focused on the students' knowledge acquisition in a meaningful environment, the implementation of learning strategies and techniques such as consolidation of study groups, learning through experiential activities, self-paced reading, cross-curricular

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<sup>3</sup>Novak (2011) defined Meaningful Learning as a "theory of education". The principles of this theory of education "are based on Ausubel's assimilation theory of meaningful learning and constructivist epistemology" (Novak, 2011, p. 1).

learning projects, and finally the development of study habits. This is all based on the school's principle: *if the students feel comfortable, they will learn*<sup>4</sup>.

The educational project or PEI (in Spanish) presents the organization of the school, regarding the educational component for the teaching-learning process. The subjects, the school's cross-projects of learning, the values to develop in the students, the parameters for the evaluation and the rating scale are defined, based on the foundations and principles described in the school's mission, vision and pedagogical approach. However, there was no evidence of the English syllabus (a document in which the specific goals, activities and strategies were described) for each one of the grades in elementary school. Thus, English teachers planned and developed the strategies, activities and topics to work on during each quarter but they did not have specific parameters to follow or objectives to achieve for the area. There was an evident need to carefully structure the English syllabus for the school.

English is taught as a foreign language and it has faced numerous challenges. Some of these challenges included large classes, students' apathy and passivity, limited contact with proficient speakers in a communicative environment, insufficient materials to offer students, and traditional educational systems that did not prioritize new teaching strategies. These problems added to the difficulties and challenges that EFL students had to face in their performance reflected in faulty pronunciation, inadequate structuring of sentences, and poor vocabulary. As a consequence, the use of the students' mother tongue in the EFL classrooms increased, consequently the second language acquisition became a difficult process (Brown,

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<sup>4</sup> This translated definition of Meaningful Learning was taken from the Santa Librada's educational project.

2007). In addition, in 2011, there were no English bibliographical resources, but there was a computer room with Internet access.

## **Participants**

The study was developed with a group of 29 EFL fifth graders. The students were between 9 to 12 years old. They studied in Santa Librada public school and attended 3 hours of English sessions per week. Although the learners who attended many of the face to face sessions and developed the majority of the activities designed for the implementation stage were taken by the researcher as a sample of the research population. The students' English level was low (below A1 according to CEFR presented by British Council in 2007) because, in spite of the fact that they recognized familiar everyday expressions and tried to understand when the teacher talked using visual images to introduce the topic, followed the instruction or provided personal data required by a question, they did not introduce themselves or others, they did not ask and answer questions about personal details in a simple way using the L2 (A1 standards of CEFR). Therefore, the teacher identified their level and determined that they were pre-elementary learners. This group of students had begun a new process of language learning in May of 2012. They were learning vocabulary, commands and some structures to organize a statement related to the topic following the examples given by the teacher although they did not know their use in a communicative situation, when the pedagogical implementation started on August of 2012. Before the first part of the process (in 2011), students copied the phrases and the words written by the teacher on the board to their English notebooks using translation to understand those expressions and they did not accept the use of the English language in class, arguing that they did not understand it and rejecting all the activities to be done.

Therefore, the management of the group became a complicated task. Accordingly, the teacher decided to start the process in May of 2012 applying some strategies focused on the students' motivation. The teacher captured the students' attention with notes taken only in English, coloring and matching activities including vocabulary, songs and project work, with instructions given in both languages. Then the students gradually accepted the changes. Students had been improving their language learning, when the researcher decided to start the pedagogical implementation in August 2012 applying new effective strategies to improve the students' language performance.

### **Students' needs**

***Learners' linguistic needs:*** The students had been working on the second language acquisition process through translation in 2011, before the preliminary inquiry of this study. The teacher and students used Spanish, the students' L1, to ask for clarification, give instructions, provide information, and for classroom management. During the observation stage, in the preliminary inquiry from February to June 2012, the teacher identified that the students had several needs related to their pronunciation (producing phonetic sounds), their lexical knowledge and the use of the second language to communicate. Therefore, for the pedagogical intervention, in August 2012, it was necessary to rethink the educational and linguistic strategies applied during the preliminary inquiry considering the improvement in the students' performance obtained during that stage. Consequently, the researcher decided to start the implementation stage in August of 2012, reinforcing the daily use of familiar expressions like commands, and teaching vocabulary, implementing the activities designed on Moodle about colors, numbers from 1 to 20, school items, family members, description of physical

appearance, parts of the house and furniture, places in the city and professions, and how to greet the teacher.

***Learners' affective needs:*** The students had been increasing their motivation during the preliminary inquiry, so when the pedagogical implementation started, the students expressed interest in the language learning activities focused on the acquisition of lexical knowledge. Some of them did not demonstrate anxiety about working in an interactional or communicative activity because they spontaneously used their mother tongue if they did not understand or did not know the expression to use in a specific situation. During the preliminary inquiry (from February to May 2012) and the pedagogical intervention (from August to November 2012) it was necessary to apply strategies (the use of forums to communicate with others and the interactional activities applied during the face to face sessions) to strengthen their self-confidence and self-esteem because they live in a problematic environment where some people make them feel unable to participate in any social or educational activities. Learners sometimes feel vulnerable to criticism, pressure, and rejection from peers.

***Learners' cognitive needs.*** Taking into account Piaget's conceptions cited in Jardines (2006) about the stages of intellectual development, students were in the Concrete operations stage. Therefore, the study must be focused on the development of knowledge and language skills based on concrete representations of the students' reality; giving students the opportunity to understand the actions and organization of the information presented. The activities developed by the students must be focused on the building of language and mental constructions. It might be important to take as advantage the students' ability to classify



information, their global attention span, and “reversibility” or their capability to recognize that an operation can be done in different way.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher was a participant-observer in this action research study because she was part of the context in which the investigation was carried out. Stringer stated (2007).

The role for the researcher is not that of an expert who does research but that of a resource person. He or she becomes a facilitator or consultant who acts as a catalyst to assist stakeholders in defining their problems clearly and to support them as they work toward effective solutions to the issues that concern them. Titles such as facilitator, associate and consultant are more appropriate... (p. 24)

This definition provides a clear explanation of what the researcher’s role is in the action research process, suggesting that her participation is a variable in the study. This implies the establishment of the researcher’s functions and behavior in the community because she is part of the group of people involved in the process. Some of the most relevant features to take into consideration in this study to define the role for the researcher are: to be disciplined (complying faithfully with the plan), to be a self-educator, and to be the guide (supporting the students during the process).

In this study, the researcher was the English teacher of the group who had the responsibility of applying the activities to improve students’ lexical knowledge, designing the applications to use on Moodle and, at the same time, to collect the data through questionnaires, surveys and artifacts, and to record her own impressions of the process in the journal. She guided the group

of learners from a pedagogical point of view, which means not being intrusive or authoritative but just being the agent that promotes an appropriate environment for individual growth in the community.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Questionnaires, surveys, pre-test and post-tests, artifacts and teachers' journal were the data collection instruments selected to gather valuable and reliable data related to the students' progress and findings of the study.

One instrument that the researcher used was *Questionnaire* (Appendix A) because they gave evidence of the students' improvements in their language performance for the application of the blended English course, in addition it evidenced of how the use of Moodle as a course management system influenced their autonomy. Questionnaires were a meaningful tool to collect survey information. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) pinpointed, "The questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher, and often being comparatively straightforward to analyze" (p. 317). In this study, questionnaires were applied three times during the pedagogical intervention, one of them applied to students' parents and the others, to students.

Another instrument that the researcher used were *surveys* (appendix B); they were chosen, in spite of the similarities with the *questionnaires*, because they are useful instruments to capture students' perceptions and reflections of their own experiences during the pedagogical intervention, as well as the improvement of their lexical knowledge through the exploration and development of online materials managed on Moodle. The surveys were

designed using closed questions unlike questionnaires which were built with open questions. As

Brown (2001) stated

Surveys provide relatively efficient tools for gathering simple demographic or other descriptive information...surveys also provide tools for in depth investigations of people's experiences with language. For instance, you might appropriately use survey tools to study people's ideas, attitudes, opinions, and evaluation. (p. 19-20)

The third instrument that was chosen is a **test** (appendix C); it was chosen because it is a useful instrument to identify the number of words that students acquired taking into consideration their English level, and to determine the improvement of students' lexical knowledge at the end of the implementation process. This instrument was applied at the beginning and at the end of the pedagogical intervention during two face-to-face sessions. The pre-test and post-test were not applied using Moodle because when the pre-test was applied the students did not have the technological knowledge and experience to use programs and applications for the test, and it could influence the results. In addition, for the implementation of the post-test, the researcher decided to use the same means applied in the pre-test. It was important to be totally sure that the results belonged to the students that answered them, in order to gather valuable and reliable data related to the improvement of the students' lexical knowledge.

A **journal** (appendix D) was used as a reflective instrument for the teacher's analysis of her teaching practices. It was chosen because it is a useful instrument to capture the researcher's perceptions and considerations about the pedagogical intervention. In the words

of Tomal (2010) "...A journal can be considered as a method of recording the behavior, feelings, and incidents of subjects... the use of journals can be helpful for researchers in observing behavior and making a detailed analysis"(p. 43). Accordingly, in this study, the journal showed evidence of how activities took place during the implementation stage; it recorded the students' behavior and performance using Moodle, and the improvement of their lexical knowledge. Entries were recorded each week during the pedagogical intervention.

Finally, **artifacts** (They were taken from the activities done on Moodle and the papers used in the face to face sessions) were an important instrument to collect information related to the students' improvement of their lexical knowledge and to evaluate the impact of the implementation of online activities in students' performance. The researcher took into consideration the artifacts of the face to face sessions (papers of the workshops, quizzes) organized in portfolios and the activities done on the platform for the analysis of the data.

### **Ethical Considerations**

It is considered priority for planning an educational research to think about some key considerations related to ethical concerns because they could potentially threaten the pursuit of truth, the subjects' rights and values and the reliability of the study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) stated that "Ethical issues may stem from the kinds of problems investigated by social scientists and the methods they are to obtain valid and reliable data" (p. 76). Accordingly, some of the ethical concerns faced by the social researchers are related to the nature of the research project, the context for the research, the procedures adopted by the investigator, the

methods of the data collection, the nature of the participants, the type of the data collected and the publication of the data (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011).

Consequently, for this research study the researcher had determined to apply appropriate strategies and instruments to guarantee the participants' confidentiality, and to make an accurate analysis and dissemination of findings negotiated with relative openness, honesty, accuracy and scientific impartiality. In addition, the researcher decided to use consent letters to provide the legal mainstay for the publication of the results of the research; because, through the consent letters, the researcher obtained the permission or authorization from the people who have the responsibility for the management of the institution and its projects, also from the participants. For this study, the researcher obtained the permission from the school's principal and the students' parents (appendix E) because the participants are young learners (under 14 years old). Therefore, it was mandatory to have the authorization for the implementation, analysis and publication of the data collected during the process.

### **Validation Process**

The data collection process took three months. The data collection instruments were piloted by the researcher, who made some changes in the tools based on the constraints identified during the piloting. The data collection instruments were piloted with a small group of 5 fifth graders prior to the pedagogical implementation stage. The changes made to the instruments piloted were related to the level of the language used and the mean (printed, using the forums... (i.e. In the pre-survey was used a forum). The researcher designed these instruments considering a triangulation process aimed at obtaining reliable data.

Before the implementation of the project, a pre-survey was applied to gather the students' perceptions related to their expectations of the course. That instrument, implemented using a forum posted on the platform, helped the researcher to notice some constraints related to language use and the students' limitations in the management of technological applications and technological resources. Therefore, the researcher made some changes in the pedagogical intervention to include training in the use of Moodle applications, and then she decided to use the students' mother tongue in the data collection instruments and both languages in the instructions for each one of the virtual activities posted on Moodle.

This is a qualitative investigation and the triangulation process had to be evident. To make it so, the researcher gathered data about the students' impressions and insights through the implementation of questionnaires and surveys. Likewise, the researcher applied pre and post-tests as essential instruments to value the students' lexical knowledge improvement, and took notes in a journal as a tool to report the process but not as a research instrument. Also, during the implementation a questionnaire was applied to gather data related to the parents' perceptions regarding the students' performance throughout the process. Parents participated in the pedagogical implementation because the students were younger than 14 years old.

## **Chapter 4: Pedagogical Intervention**

This chapter presents the pedagogical intervention of the research project, including the stages that the researcher followed to carry out her project as well as the materials and strategies. This intervention proposed an objective to achieve in order to improve the students' lexical knowledge through the use of Moodle as a resource in an English blended course.

### **Objective for the Pedagogical Intervention**

The main objective established for the pedagogical intervention of this research study was:

- To apply Moodle as a course management system in a blended English course to motivate EFL fifth graders to improve their English lexical knowledge

### **Procedures for the Pedagogical Intervention**

For the achievement of the pedagogical intervention aim was necessary to identify the students' linguistic needs, to seek the appropriate learning strategies for the design of the blended English course, to design and put the course on practice, and to evaluate the process. At the beginning of the pedagogical implementation process was applied a pre-test to diagnose the students' lexical knowledge level. Then, the researcher based on the results obtained in the pre-test and during the observation step decided to design the blended English course considering the ADDI model (for the design and implementation of online materials), the strategies proposed by Nation (2008) (for vocabulary teaching), and Richards' (2007) foundations (for the design an effective language lesson). Finally, at the end of the

implementation process, was applied a vocabulary test to determine the improvement of students' lexical knowledge.

The course was structured in 5 units; in each one, the students carried out different activities about a specific topic. The steps of the implementation are presented in the table 1.

**Table 1.** Steps in the pedagogical intervention process and instruments.

STEP	INSTRUMENT	TIME SPENT	PERIOD OF TIME
Diagnosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Observation and pedagogical work during 8 months with the research population (Teaching practice).</li> <li>➤ Pre-test</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 8 months (From October in 2011 to July in 2012)</li> <li>➤ August 24<sup>th</sup>– 2012</li> </ul>	Prior to the pedagogical implementation. From the last term of 2011 and first term of 2012.
The learning strategies to use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Literature review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 5 months (From March to July in 2012)</li> </ul>	
Course design and practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Course registration (access to the platform)</li> <li>➤ Training in the use of the laptop and the technological applications</li> <li>➤ Pre-survey</li> <li>➤ Units (1-5)</li> <li>➤ Questionnaires</li> <li>➤ Surveys</li> <li>➤ Observation</li> <li>➤ Analysis of artifacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 2 weeks (From August 13<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>)</li> <li>➤ 2 weeks (From August 27<sup>th</sup> to September 7<sup>th</sup>)</li> <li>➤ Implementation of the instruments and the course development: 8 weeks (From September 10<sup>th</sup> to November 1st)</li> </ul>	During the implementation. From August to October in 2012
Determining students' improvements	Post-test Final survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 2 weeks (From November 2<sup>nd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>)</li> </ul>	At the end of the implementation. November in - 2012



### **Diagnosis**

During this step the researcher identified the students' linguistic needs and their lexical knowledge. Thus, the researcher took into consideration the preliminary inquiry as part of the diagnosis step and she applied a vocabulary pre-test to establish the number of words that the students knew at the starting point of the implementation stage.

### **The learning strategies to use**

In this step, the researcher presented the strategies applied to design the blended English course. Thus, the learning strategies selected were Linguistic approach to acquire new lexical knowledge based on Nation's principles, *Instructional design – ADDI model* for the design and implementation of online materials through Moodle; and stages of the lesson for the face to face sessions following Richards' (2005) postulates.

***Linguistic approach to acquire new lexical knowledge based on Nation principles.*** Teachers must understand students' difficulties to program the opportunities to solve their problems in their language learning. For that reason the first step in the process was the diagnosis step. Considering the students' lexical knowledge level and their linguistic needs. Thus, for this study, the researcher decided to follow the Nation (2008) principles to design the course activities. Nation (2008) presented four strands to take into consideration in the planning of an activity; these are *meaning focused- input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning and fluency development*. Two of the strands were used during the application stage of this research project: *meaning focused- input and language focused-learning*.

For the first strand, *meaning focused-input*, the researcher decided to design activities focused on the understanding, enjoyment and the acquisition of the students' first high frequency words through a great deal of exposure to the words and their meanings. Some examples of the activities developed are making associations, learning words in groups, exploring range of meaning, and inferring the meaning of a word from its context. For the development of the second strand, *language focused-learning*, Nation (2008) proposed four strategies: *guessing from context, learning to use word cards, using word parts, and dictionary use*. Thus, the researcher focused the students' learning process on vocabulary activities to understand the use of words, the words' meaning and form. Also, students received training in dictionary use. Consequently, learners did many vocabulary activities focused on the acquisition of specific knowledge of the high frequency words learnt in the previous step and in the development of the language abilities to understand the use of any word in a specific context.

Other factors considered in the course design was the time for the students' training in the resources used, the context and frequency in which the words were presented to the learners, the use of multipurpose materials for the construction of meaning, the availability of the online resources like songs, videos and short stories to acquire the accurate pronunciation of the words, and the design of the workshops, papers and tests for recording and testing the process

***Instructional design – ADDI model for the design and implementation of online materials***

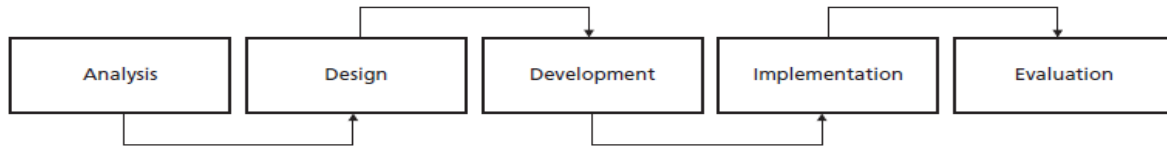
***through Moodle.*** For the design and the implementation of the online materials, the researcher considered the Instructional Design- ADDI model presented by Cuesta (2010):

Instructional design is a process that entails the creation or adaptation of instruction. Most research evidence concerning instructional theories relies on underpinning needs and goals. The basic aim is to identify conditions of instruction which will optimize learning, retention and learning transfer (p. 182).

For the implementation of the activities used through Moodle, the teacher posted the instructions to be followed by the students in each of the activities; providing the students with the “route” or the guidelines to follow. In addition, the students were aware of the importance of understanding the instructions given in each one of the vocabulary exercises in the online sessions for the success of the practice because for the achievement of the main pedagogical objective of this study or the objectives of the lesson, it was necessary to comply with assignments and the tasks properly.

Moreover, for the materials implemented, it was necessary to consider the following aspects: determine the target audience that benefits from the instruction; determine audience’s needs and styles; select, design and sequence content and learning activities; and then evaluate and implement changes (Cuesta, 2010). All of the insights that emerged from the ADDI model (See figure 1) were followed for the selection, design and implementation of the materials used on Moodle and for monitoring the use of Moodle as a course management system in the blended English course.

**Figure 1.** ADDI model. This figure illustrates the steps to follow for the ADDI model implementation.



Taken from Cuesta (2010). The Design and Development of Online Course Materials: Some Features and Recommendations.

Retrieved from <http://www.revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/profile/article/viewFile/13996/14764>

***Stages of the lesson for the face to face sessions using Moodle.*** The stages of the lesson were determined taking into a consideration the principles described in the Educational project (PEI) of the Santa Librada School and also the postulates of Richards (SP) (2007) about the structure for an effective language lesson which are:

1. Teacher begins a lesson with a short review of previous, prerequisite learning;
2. Teacher begins a lesson with a short statement of goals,
3. Teacher presents new material in small steps, with student practice after each step;
4. Teacher gives clear and detailed instructions and explanations;
5. Teacher provides a high level of active practice for all students.

Therefore, the stages followed in the face to face sessions of this research project were:

- ✓ Warming up: Part of the class when the teacher motivates students to activate their interest for the topic that will be presented.

- ✓ Language input: The teacher presents the new language through an interesting activity, activating previous knowledge to recognize and learn the new knowledge. (see Annex 8: Lesson plan)
- ✓ Guided practice: Teacher promotes the use of the language and knowledge presented in the last stage through guided activities.
- ✓ Independent language practice: It is the moment when the students use the language to communicate through interactional activities.
- ✓ Wrap up: Assessment stage
- ✓ Reflection: It is the moment of the lesson when the instruments to collect data for the research (Questionnaires, surveys, pre- and post-tests, and artifacts) will be applied or the teacher writes the reflections of the class in the journal.

### **Practice**

For this part of the pedagogical intervention initiated with the design of the course. It was necessary to consider the learning strategies chosen in the previous step (during the preliminary inquiry), the students' cognitive, affective and linguistic needs, the technological and bibliographical resources to use, and the participation of the students' parents in the pedagogical intervention. Likewise, the teacher noticed the importance of working on the face to face sessions as regular classes in which the students carried out different kinds of vocabulary activities focused on the acquisition of new language input to use in a specific communicative situation. The online activities posted on Moodle were the extension of the process initiated in the classroom, but in them, the students had the opportunity to take control of their own

language learning process. In appendix N the reader will find the design of the course, and in the table N°2 will find the units and the activities of the course.

**1.2.3.1 Units and activities of the course**

**Table 2.** Course outline: units and activities applied in the course.

Units	Activities	Tools
Colors	Workshop (face to face session) Memory games Word search Songs Language games Videos Quiz	Voki Papers PDF Forum Web sites linked
Numbers from 1 to 100	Workshop (face to face session) Memory games Word search Songs Language games Videos Power Point presentations Quiz	Papers PDF Forum Web sites linked Power Point
School items	Workshop (face to face session) Memory games Word search Songs Language games Videos Power Point presentations Quiz	Papers PDF Forum Web sites linked Power Point Dictionaries/a picture dictionary
Parts of the house	Workshop (face to face session) Memory games Word search Songs Language games Videos Paint production Tutorials by videos Quiz	Papers PDF Forum Web sites linked Paint program Online dictionaries/a picture dictionary

Places of the city and professions	Workshop (face to face session) Memory games Word search Songs Language games Videos Paint production Tutorials by videos Online quiz	Papers PDF Forum Web sites linked Paint program Online dictionaries/a picture dictionary Poster Hot potatoes
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***Description of course implementation***

During the implementation, the teacher started the practice providing support and training in the use of technological applications. Initially, as the students were younger than 14, it was necessary to train their parents for the registration on the platform because an e-mail account was required. The parents also participated in the process by monitoring the students' internet access. The students could not differentiate a chat from a forum, web site, e-mail, e-mail account and they did not know how to use a laptop; consequently, teacher held some training sessions to provide support in the use of technological tools. It was necessary to schedule some extra hours in the school to give for the students the opportunity to receive the teacher's support for the development of the activities posted on the platform because some of them presented difficulties in the use of technology and others did not have the resources (internet access or computer) in their homes.

For the lexical knowledge improvement, the course was conducted with five units. The units were structured for students to do different vocabulary activities to acquire lexical knowledge about a specific topic. The activities were conducted to foster the practice during the face to face sessions and in the students' free time through the online activities. Each one of the

face to face sessions included language input, guided practice, independent practice and assessment. The students' artifacts, organized in the portfolios, are the evidence of the process carried out during the face to face sessions. The portfolios have the students' papers for each one of the units, the test applied at the end of each unit, the consent letters signed by the parents and the instruments implemented during the pedagogical intervention. Also, the report of each student obtained through the administrator of Moodle is the evidence of the activities developed in the online practice. Furthermore, the students participated in the forums posting a final product for each unit. In the table 3, readers will find information related to the time, activities and instruments applied during the course implementation.

**Table 3.** Implementation outline: Time, activities and instruments applied.

<b>IMPLEMENTATION OUTLINE</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Tools and data collection instruments</b>
Week 1 and 2	Learning to use the platform	Teacher's journal
Week 3	Vocabulary activities about colors	Paper Moodle Checklist
Week 4	Support in the use of technological applications and MOODLE	Computer's room Moodle Teacher's journal
Week 5	Vocabulary activities about numbers from 1 to 100	Paper Moodle Questionnaire
Week 6	Vocabulary activities about school items	Paper Moodle Teacher's journal
Week 7	Vocabulary activities about parts of the house	Paper Moodle Survey



Week 8	Assessing the process and support in the activities developed through the online practice	Checklist Computer's room Moodle Questionnaire
Week 9	Vocabulary activities about places of the city and professions	Paper about professions Moodle Survey
Week 10	Closing the implementation (Meeting with parents) and a face to face session with the students	Questionnaire applied to students' parents Post-test

During the course implementation process some constraints were presented related to the students' lack of technological knowledge and experience, and limited access to the internet and technological resources; which affected the pedagogical intervention. Consequently, researcher decided to train the students' in the use of technological applications and equipment to start the process. Also, to include parents', as participants, in the process. Additionally, to schedule extra hours of training to access the school's resources and equipment.

**Summary and Conclusion.**

This chapter started by describing the methodological issues implemented in the operationalization of the theoretical principles defined in the chapter 2. Methodological requirements for studying the improvement of lexical knowledge in EFL students and the implementation of strategies and tools for the design and application of a blended learning environment.

During the pedagogical implementation stage there were some unexpected constraints originated by specific limitations that were evidenced during the process. The limitations were lack of technological knowledge and experience, time management, and limited access to the

internet and technological resources. Those limitations were faced with the redesign of some strategies.

## **Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Findings**

In the previous chapter (Chapter 4), the researcher presented the methodological implications of the adoption of theoretical principles for the study of the development of lexical knowledge in EFL fifth graders, and the construction of a blended English course. The researcher considered the results obtained by other researchers in their studies, to select the appropriate strategies and instruments to apply in the pedagogical intervention, data collection process and the analysis of the results. For the analysis and interpretation of the data, the researcher followed grounded theory principles.

### **Data Management**

All the data related to the students' performance during the pedagogical intervention were stored in students' portfolios and on the virtual platform (Moodle). The students' portfolios contained each one of the tasks carried out during the classroom sessions, the tests applied to assess the knowledge acquired in the session, and the research instruments implemented questionnaires (See Appendix A), surveys (See Appendix B), and pre-test (See Appendix C) and post- tests. All of the information was organized chronologically. The virtual activities done online (See Appendix J), the final products of the units posted on the forums (See Appendix K), and a pre- survey implemented prior to the data collection process, and the students' performance during the online activities (See Appendix L), appear on the platform organized by weeks and in the activity reports provided by Moodle for each participant. The teacher also

transcribed the data collected from the surveys and questionnaires in tables to analyze the responses to each one of the questions. The tables were designed in a Word document and saved in a digital file. All of the data were numbered from S1 to S14 to facilitate classification and to maintain participant anonymity. The data were collected in 12 sessions of three or 4 hours per session (1 or 2 in the classroom and 2 virtually) which took place from August to November 2012.

### **Procedures for Data Analysis**

For the data analysis, the researcher took into consideration the Grounded theory approach, defined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as a qualitative research method that follows systematic procedures to develop a theory as inductively derived from the study of a social phenomenon. Likewise, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) stated that grounded theory is a significant method of theory generation which is characterized by being inductive and in which everything is integrated. In consequence, the researcher applied a systematic set of procedures to study a social phenomenon, or in this case, a problematic situation presented in the language learning process to build a theory. One of the procedures is the use of codes for the data analysis.

In this way, to initiate the analysis of the data collected, it was necessary to understand the concept of coding in the grounded theory approach. Then, the data would be classified taking into account the purpose of the project. Coding procedures are defined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as the “operations by which data is broken down, conceptualized, and put back together in new ways to build the theory” (p. 57). Thus, for this research project, the researcher

carried out the coding procedures by analyzing the students' responses and highlighting the similar features in the responses to group them into families of similar coded data. In this way, the result of the coding procedures was the categorization of the data from which the theory emerged. For the data analysis the researcher used three major types of coding: Open coding, axial coding and selective coding.

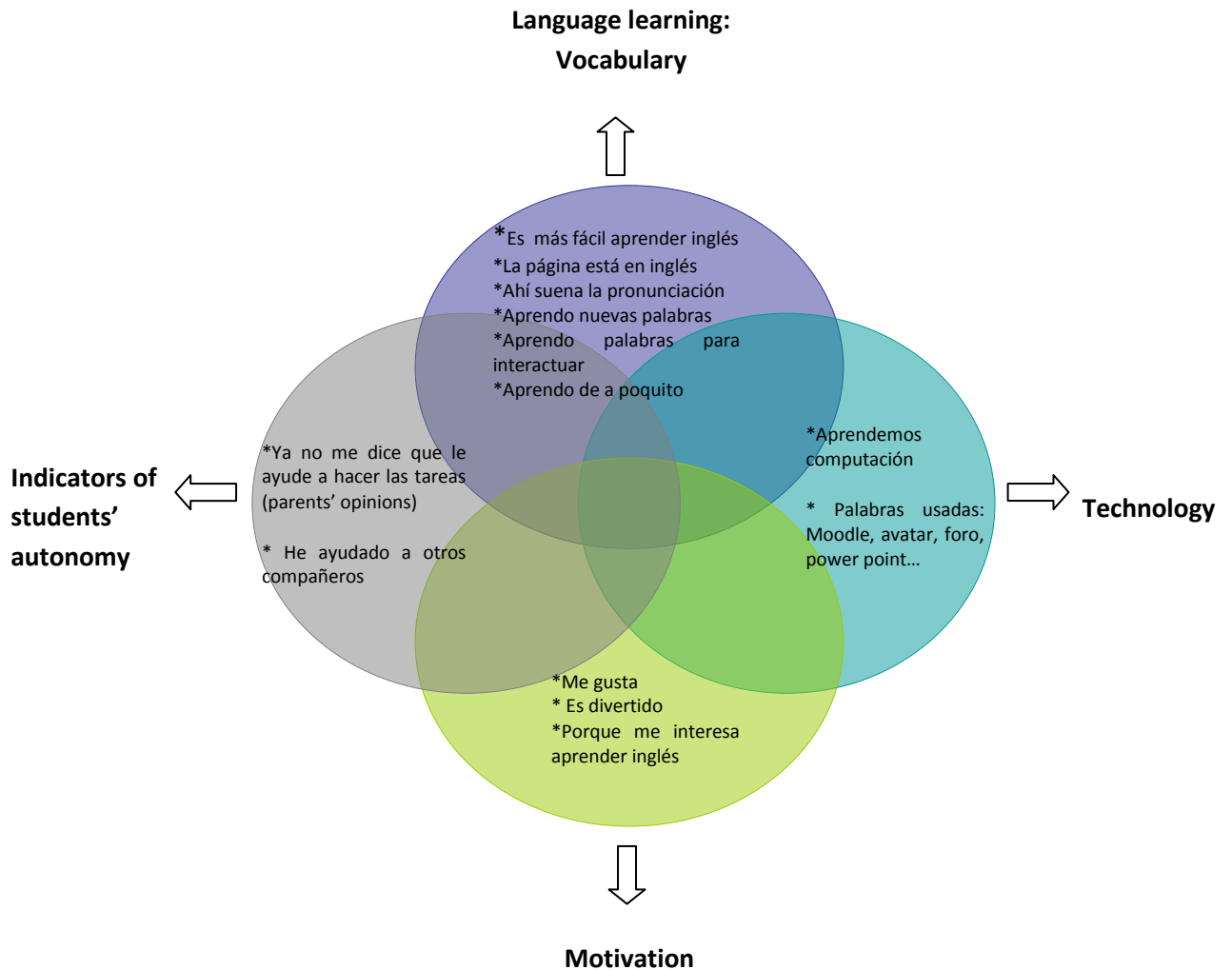
### **Open coding**

Corbin and Strauss (1990) defined open coding as “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (p. 61). Open coding involves exploring the data and identifying units of analysis to code for meanings, feelings, actions, and events (Cohen, 2007). Taking into consideration the Cohen, Corbin and Strauss' perceptions, it is possible to define open coding as a process of data analysis through which the researcher identified similar patterns in the students' responses in order to obtain commonalities for categorization.

For the open coding procedure in this research project, the data from all the instruments was transcribed with the aim of finding out the learners' opinions and perceptions about the topics determined in the research question and the research objectives. Then, the researcher decided to make comparisons between the concepts identified in the data to group them. Through the grouping process or categorization, the researcher reduced the number of units with which she was going to work on the analysis. For the categorization procedure the researcher used color coding.

The emergent patterns identified from the color coding are presented in figure 2. From the analysis of the students' perceptions, parents' perceptions, teacher's notes and the results obtained in the pre-test and post- tests emerged patterns related to the language learning, students' motivation, indicators of students' autonomy and technology. Those emerging categories are connected with the research objectives.

**Figure 2.** Emergent patterns.



### Axial coding

Corbin and Strauss (1990) defined Axial coding as “the set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by marking connections between categories utilizing a coding paradigm.” (p. 61) Based on the authors’ ideas, axial coding is the

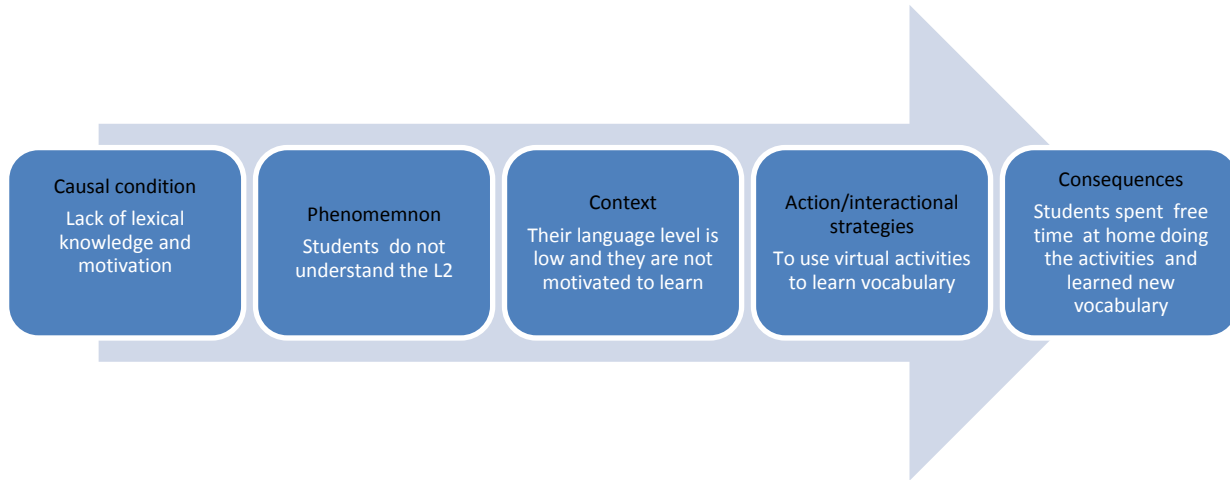
part of the data analysis in which the units of data, obtained in the open coding procedure, are put together in a new way to establish connections between a category and its subcategories.

In this stage, the researcher established some connections among the emerging categories through the use of a technique for keeping track of the analysis through “baskets”. Each basket was named as an important topic determined in the research objectives and the patterns which emerged in the open coding procedure; Basket 1: *Language learning: vocabulary*, Basket 2: *Traits of autonomy*, Basket 3: *Motivation and* Basket 4: *Technology*.

Likewise, she took into consideration the paradigm model (See figure 3) to understand the categories that emerged from the “basket coding”, considering the relationship between causal conditions, phenomenon, context, action/interaction strategies and consequences as defined by Corbin and Strauss (1990). Corbin and Strauss (1990) described and recommended the use of Paradigm model with the following words:

In grounded theory we link subcategories to a category in a set of relationships...use of this model will enable you to think systematically about data and relate them in very complex ways. Just as now when you encounter certain life situations you automatically rely on a casual model (something has happened because of this cause or condition) to explain to yourself and to others why it may have occurred (p, 99).

**Figure 3.** Linked categories based on the paradigm model



**Categories and subcategories**

As a result of the analysis of the data collected throughout the pedagogical intervention and as a result of the open and axial coding, the researcher obtained the following categories and subcategories which respond the research question and address the research objectives.

**Table 4.** Categories and subcategories.

Research objectives	Categories	Subcategories
✓ To determine the impact of the application of a blended course based on Moodle in the acquisition of lexical knowledge in EFL fifth graders.	1. Acquisition of lexical knowledge	1.1 Learning words
		1.2 Learning through interaction
	2. Students' motivation	
✓ To identify the changes in	3. Traits in the students' autonomy	3.1 Self-control of their own practice



<p>the students' autonomy by means of the implementation of a blended English course based on Moodle.</p>		<p><i>3.2 Collaborative and cooperative work patterns of interdependence</i></p>
	<p>4. Knowledge of technology</p>	

***First main category: acquisition of lexical knowledge.*** This category pinpoints the relevance that students gave to the acquisition of new vocabulary through virtual activities as means for learning and feeling confident in the interaction with others throughout their learning process. The results obtained from the students in the pre-test and post-test and in each one of the activities developed during the pedagogical intervention provided the most important evidence related to the improvement of the students' lexical knowledge. In addition, students' responses in the questionnaires and surveys provided evidence about how the vocabulary exercises and virtual activities focused on the acquisition of lexical knowledge posted on Moodle gave them the opportunity to learn interacting with others and to acquire vocabulary with accurate pronunciation. This category emerged from the analysis of the results obtained from the students in the pre-test and post-test, the activities developed during the pedagogical intervention, and their responses gathered through the surveys (1 and 2) and questionnaires. The subcategories: *learning words and learning through interaction* reflect the students' acquisition of new lexical knowledge.

*Subcategory: Learning new words.* The comparison between the results obtained by the students in the pre and post-tests (Table 5) evidences the improvement of the students' lexical knowledge during the pedagogical implementation. It demonstrates how the implementation of different virtual activities and language exercises during the face to face sessions influenced the students' lexicon (Appendix E). Thus, the aspect learning new words emerged from the analysis of the experience that the students faced during their acquisition and improvement of lexical knowledge.

**Table 5.** Students' results on the pre and post- tests.

POPULATION	TOPICS N THE PRE TEST	NUMBER OF WORDS RECOGNIZED ON THE PRE-TEST	GRADE	TOPICS ON THE POST TEST	NUMBER OF WORDS RECOGNIZED IN THE POST-TEST	GRADE
ST 1	*Colors *Numbers from 1 to 20 *Items of clothing *Body parts	8	2.1	*Colors	73	6.1
ST 2		7	1.8	*Numbers	78	6.6
ST 3		12	3.1	from 1 to 100	65	5.5
ST 4		15	3.9	*Body parts	51	4.3
ST 5		12	3.1	*School items	81	6.8
ST 6		1	0.2	*Parts of the	76	6.4
ST 7		10	2.6	house	87	7.3
ST 8		14	3.6	*Places in	97	8.2
ST 9		9	2.3	the city	43	3.6
ST 10		1	0.2		96	8.1
ST 11		16	4.2		86	7.2
ST 12		1	0.2		65	5.5
ST 13		13	3.4		89	7.5
ST 14		8	2.1		68	5.7

In addition, students showed evidence of their learning experience through their responses in the questionnaires and surveys applied in four different stages during the pedagogical intervention. In the questionnaire 80% of the students agreed that they learnt new vocabulary more easily through the application of virtual activities (like videos, virtual flashcards

and songs) because they could listen to and learn the words with accurate pronunciation. Also, they had the opportunity to practice as often as they needed. In excerpts N°1 and N°2 the researcher shows evidence of the students' opinions regarding how the development of the activities posted on the platform influenced their language learning process.

Excerpt N.1: Questionnaire 1. Question 1

<b>Question 1: Al incluir actividades online a través de MOODLE para el desarrollo de las clases de inglés ¿Crees que esto ha ayudado a que aprendas más fácilmente inglés? ¿Por qué?</b>	
S3	Si. porque me ayuda a saber mas de ingles con la pagina y English for kids con las palabras en ingles y mensajes y tareas en la pagina. (Sic)
S5	Me parece que e aprendido muchas cosas como números utiles colores etc. (Sic)
S8	Si porque uno esta mas concentrado y tranquilo para aprender y escuchar las palabras en ingles. (Sic)
S11	Si porque hay suena la pronunciacion en ingles y tambien por las canciones que aparecen como karaoke. [...]toda la plataforma es en ingles. (Sic)
S14	Si me a ayudado a aprender ingles porque el avatar habla y me ayuda a entender palabras. (Sic)

Excerpt N° 2 : Questionnaire 1. Questions 2 and 3

<b>Question 2: Te gusta realizar actividades online a través de MOODLE para aprender vocabulario en inglés? ¿Por qué?</b>	
S6	si [...]aprendemos a hablar en ingles muy fácilmente. (Sic)
S4	porque me enseñan un nuevo vocabulario para aprender a decirlo en english como los numeros o las palabras en ingles. (Sic)
S7	porque nos enseña palabras en ingles y podemos ahora decir bien las palabras. (Sic)
<b>Question 3: ¿Crees que has aprendido más palabras en inglés para poder interactuar con tus compañeros en ese idioma? ¿Por qué?</b>	
S10	si e aprendido varias palabras en ingles [...] porque en la pagina nos las enseñan y en clase con la profesora tambien nos enseñan también. (Sic)
S4	si e aprendido palabras [...] (Sic)

S6	si creo que e aprendido un poco de palabras. (Sic)
S7	porque podemos decir mas palabras en ingles bien y ya no podemos decirlas mal. (Sic)

Students' responses in excerpts N° 1, 2 and 3 highlight some relevant aspects of their language learning experience through the completion of the virtual activities posted on the platform. First of all, they corroborate the thesis of the improvement of lexical knowledge through the virtual activities. Secondly, they pinpoint how the structure of the platform provided a different practice which influences the way that they learnt; for example: *"si porque uno esta mas concentrado y tranquilo..." "toda la plataforma es en ingles"*; Thirdly, student N° 10 in question number 3 (Excerpt N° 2 ) mentions significant evidence related to the learning effects of the implementation of a blended course because they point out the relationship between the activities developed through the platform and the language exercises carried out during the face to face sessions. Finally, students recognized the importance that the listening activities had in the acquisition of new vocabulary with accurate pronunciation. The answer given by student N°11 is one of the examples, that evidence the importance that the listening activities had in the students' vocabulary acquisition. Student N°11 in Excerpt N°1: *"Si porque hay suena la pronunciacion en ingles y tambien por las canciones que aparecen como karaoke. [...]toda la plataforma es en ingles".(Sic)*

Excerpt N.3: Survey 1. Questions 2 and 4

<b>Question N° 2 ¿Cómo te sientes haciendo las actividades que encuentras en MOODLE?</b>	
S10	Satisfecho bien porque podemos aprender mucho mas. (Sic)

S13	Satisfecho [...] me ayudado a aprender. (Sic)
S14	Satisfecho [...] aprendo mas. (Sic)
<b>Question N°4 ¿Has aprendido nuevo vocabulario en inglés a través de las actividades implementadas por medio de MOODLE?</b>	
S7	Satisfactorio si porque hay vemos y dicen como decir las palabras y ya nos enseñan las partes de la casa. (Sic)
S10	Satisfactorio
S11	Satisfactorio E aprendido mucho. (Sic)

In the survey, in question N° 4 the learners valued the acquisition of the new lexical knowledge through the implementation of virtual activities; 80% of the students agreed that the process had been **satisfactory**. In Excerpt N° 3 the researcher presents evidence related to the students' perception<sup>1s</sup> about how the online vocabulary exercises influenced their lexical knowledge acquisition. In question N°2, 78% students expressed how they felt (using *satisfactory* instead of *satisfied*) developing the online activities, their personal impressions and feelings about the application of the virtual activities.

As a consequence of the analysis, it is possible to state that the implementation of virtual activities and vocabulary exercises during the face to face sessions facilitated students' acquisition of new vocabulary and the improvement of the students' the lexical knowledge; because the strategies implemented provided the opportunity to explore new learning environments through practice.

*Subcategory: Learning through interaction.* The subcategory learning through interaction is defined as a learning strategy used by the students during their acquisition and improvement of

lexical knowledge. The students highlighted the importance of the activities in which they had to interact with others in their language learning process. Students showed evidence of their learning experience through their responses in the questionnaires and surveys applied. In Excerpt N°4, students pinpointed some relevant aspects related to the interaction for their language learning process. First of all, they pointed out how through interaction it is possible to learn from each other. Secondly, they underlined that communication is part of the acquisition of lexical knowledge. And finally, that interaction facilitated their language learning process.

Excerpt N°4: Questionnaire 1. Question 3

<b><i>¿Crees que has aprendido más palabras en inglés para poder interactuar con tus compañeros en ese idioma? ¿Por qué?</i></b>	
S6	si creo que e aprendido un poco de palabras y e ayudado a un poco de compañeros y creo que es divertido ablar en idiomas con mis compañeros. (Sic)
S14	si e aprendido muchas palabras y me ayuda tambien a comunicarme. comunicarme con mis compañeros ayuda a entender palabras. (Sic)

Excerpt N° 5: Survey 2. Question 1

<b>Participación en los foros</b>	
S3	Me gusta participar en los foruns.(Sic)
S14	ablo con mis compañeros. (Sic)

Paavola, Lipponen, and Kakkarainen (2004) cited in Garrison (2008) “argued that constructing individual meaning and knowledge creation is a matter of individual initiative embedded in fertile group...activities” (p. 15). Through their statement, they highlighted the importance of interaction in the construction of knowledge. Therefore, interaction in a learning

process plays an important role as a means of communication among participants and as a medium of learning for the development of social, cognitive and language skills. Students felt free to share their ideas using the language input acquired during the implementation of the blended English course. Learners (except N° 4 and N°5) expressed how the virtual activities helped them to learn new words and how those words helped them to increase their confidence to interact with others using technological applications such as forums.

**The second main category: motivation.** The students expressed how the implementation of a course management system (Moodle) as a self-directed resource positively influenced their acquisition of new lexical knowledge because they felt motivated to carry out the independent practice. The researcher identified patterns, as exemplified in excerpts N°6 and N°7, related to the students' motivation to carry out the activities posted on the platform. The excerpts present the parents' perceptions, students' perceptions and the students' feelings towards the implementation of technology in their language learning process.

Excerpt N° 6: Questionnaire 2. Question 2

<b><i>¿A su hijo (a) le gusta realizar actividades online a través de MOODLE para aprender vocabulario en inglés? ¿Por qué?</i></b>	
S7	"Si le gusta porque él se la pasa jugando con unas palabras en inglés asta formar palabras como las partes de la casa, los números, etc."(sic)
S8	"Si le gusta porque el aprendizaje es por medio de juegos o por tiempo entonces se le convierte en un reto"
S11	"Si porque le veo interés ya que ella quiere aprender mucho sobre el idioma a parte se entretiene y se toma todo el tiempo que ella vea necesario". (Sic)

Excerpt N°7: Survey 2. Question 2

<b><i>¿Cómo te sientes haciendo las actividades que encuentras en MOODLE?</i></b>	
S11	Satisfecho me divierto mucho y a la ves aprendo. (Sic)
S6	Satisfecho Son fantasticas las actividades. (Sic)
S8	Satisfecho Feliz y active

***The third main category: indicators of students' autonomy.*** In this category the researcher illustrates the traits related to autonomy that emerged during the pedagogical intervention. The researcher based the analysis of this main category on the premise that "the expression *independent* has almost become synonymous with learner autonomy" (Blin, 2005, p. 14); Therefore, "Independent language learning environments present language learning opportunities that do not require the constant intervention of a teacher or that can be pursued outside the framework of an educational institution" (Blin, 2005, p. 14). The researcher identified some indicators of autonomy, *self-control of their own practice* and *collaborative and cooperative work patterns of interdependence*, in the students during the pedagogical intervention for the application of virtual activities. The students were requested to practice with online activities posted on the platform in their free time; therefore, the students had the opportunity to manage and control their own independent practice.



*subcategory: self-control of their own practice.* One of the two indicators of autonomy identified is related to the students' abilities to carry out their assignments without their parents' or teacher's support. In excerpts N°8 and 9, the researcher presents some teacher's and parents' perceptions related to the students' capacity to take control of their practice; the students' self-control of their own practice was evidenced in the students' performance.

Excerpt N°8: Extract of the teacher's field notes

***Based on the vocabulary activities developed during the class (face to face and online sessions)... What went well...?***  
During the face to face session, the students demonstrate interest in the use of the technological resources to practice. [...] They tried to solve their own problems without requiring the teacher's support.

Excerpt N.9: Questionnaire 2. Question 4

<b><i>¿Cree que su hijo(a) ha aprendido más palabras en inglés para poder interactuar con sus compañeros en ese idioma? ¿Por qué?</i></b>	
S7	Si porque el vive más pendiente con sus trabajos. (Sic)
S9	Si ha aprendido, ya que hace sus tareas de ingles con mucha mas facilidad. Y ya casi no me dice que le ayude. [...] (Sic)
S13	Si ha aprendido un poco mas, pues el solo hace sus tareas y trabajos. Yo soy la que le pregunto. (Sic).

Subcategory: Collaborative and cooperative work patterns of interdependence. For the analysis of this indicator of autonomy it was necessary to consider some perceptions of experts in this topic. Blin (2005) stated "equating autonomy to individualization and isolation is misleading. Indeed it has been argued by others that learner autonomy is rooted in our

interactions with others and with the knowledge domains which are our concern". For Boud (1988) the exercise of autonomy has a social context. Consequently, it becomes unavoidable to talk about autonomy without exploring and understanding the concept of interdependence in the language learning process. Benson cited in Blin (2005) stated,

When independence is used as synonym for autonomy, its opposite is dependence, which implies excessive reliance on the direction of teachers or teaching materials. One problem with the use of this term, however, is that it can also be understood as the opposite of interdependence, which implies working together with teachers and other learners towards shared goals. Many researchers would argue that autonomy does imply interdependence (p.22).

During the pedagogical intervention it was evident how the students improved their ability to work together with their peers, even when under the teacher's guidance. Although the process was structured by the teacher, the students defined their own strategies to face the challenges; one of them was to work as a team using communication to help each other. Thus, the students decided to share their ideas and knowledge for the accomplishment of the course requirements. In consequence, the students became independent learners but dependent on peers' perceptions for the building of knowledge.

The following excerpts (N° 12 and 13), taken from the questionnaire N° 1 and the teacher's field notes, exemplify that the students were less teacher dependent because they tried to solve the difficulties and faced the limitations of communicating with their peers. They felt committed to helping each other. Some of these collaborative patterns are evident in their

interaction in the forums. The researcher points out the students' opinions that show that the students are more autonomous and less dependent on the teacher.

Excerpt N°10: Extracted from the teacher's field notes

***Based on the vocabulary activities developed during the class (face to face and online sessions)...***  
***What went well...?***  
 During the face to face session, the students demonstrate interest in the use of the technological resources to practice. [...] Students tried to work collaboratively asking other classmates for information, and helping each other to access the platform.

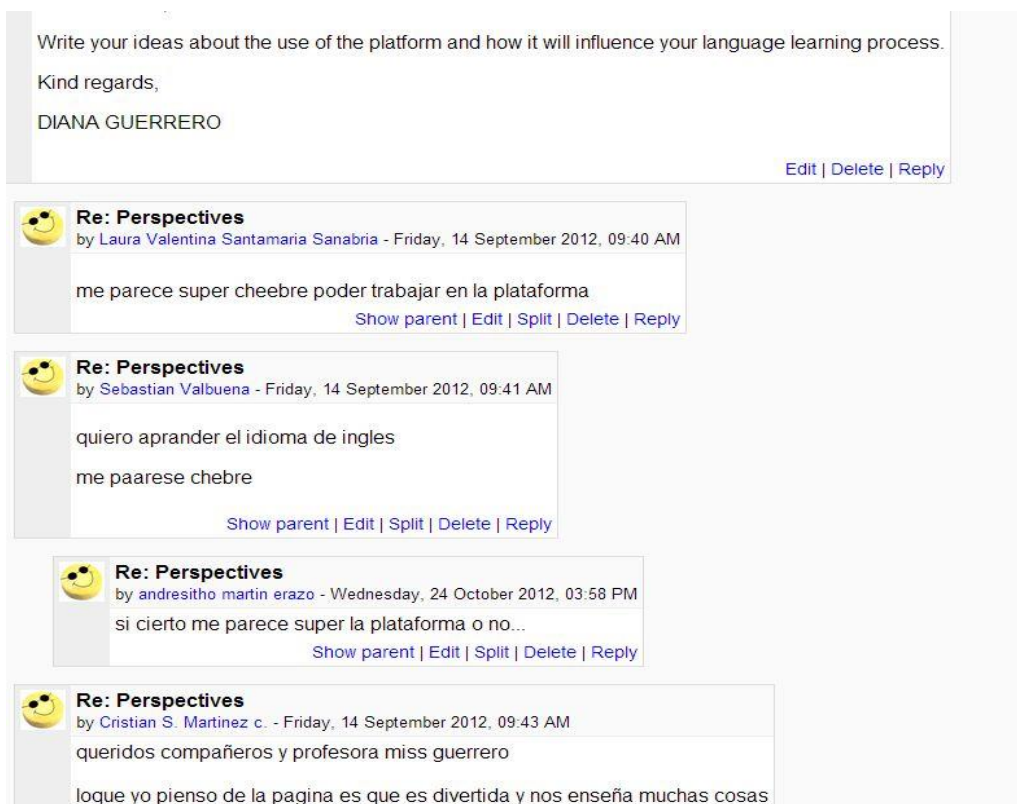
Excerpt N° 13 : Questionnaire 1. Question N° 3

<b>¿Crees que has aprendido más palabras en inglés para poder interactuar con tus compañeros en ese idioma? ¿Por qué?</b>	
S3	porque necesito aprender el idioma así como mis compañeros y yo aprenderemos inglish. (Sic)
S6	[...] e ayudado a un poco de compañeros .(Sic)

***The fourth main category: knowledge of technology.*** For the analysis of this main category, the researcher considered Blin's perceptions related to the role of technology in education, and, accordingly, in the language learning process. Blin (2005) suggested that independent language learning environments, like the self-directed context provided by technology in education, present language learning opportunities that do not require the constant intervention of a teacher. Accordingly, new teaching methodologies emerged integrating face to face teaching and independent learning. The students demonstrated how the implementation of a course management system (Moodle), as a self-directed resource, and the use of different programs and technological applications positively influenced their language

learning process, although during the process, the lack of technological knowledge was a constraint. One of the examples of the lack of the students' technological knowledge was the minimal student participation (5 students) in the pre survey applied the first week of the implementation stage using a forum (See Figure 4). Thus, the teacher changed the strategy and she decided to apply the research instruments in printed versions. In addition, she planned some training sessions in the use of the laptop and its programs.

**Figure 4.** Students' participation in the first forum (pre-survey)



Appendix K presents examples of the students' advances related to the use of technological resources and applications for their language learning process. Through the students' participation in the activities posted on the platform and their participation in the

forums in which they shared their ideas and productions, the students acquired technological knowledge and developed some abilities in the use of technological resources. Appendix K shows how, at the beginning of the process, few students answered a survey posted on a forum, while at the end of the pedagogical intervention, many of the students (90%) posted on the forums their final products made using PowerPoint or Paint about the last topic studied in the unit.

In excerpts N° 12, N°13 and figure N° 4 the researcher shows evidence of the use of new technological vocabulary by the students. At the end of the pedagogical implementation the students had not only increased their English lexical knowledge through the online activities, but also had acquired vocabulary related to technology, new knowledge and abilities related to the use of technological tools.

Excerpt N°12: Questionnaire 1. Question 1 and 6

<b><i>Al incluir actividades online a través de MOODLE para el desarrollo de las clases de inglés ¿Crees que esto ha ayudado a que aprendas más fácilmente inglés? ¿Por qué?</i></b>	
S6	Si, porque aprendemos de computación y a la misma vez avanzamos con la clase y así aprendemos más
<b><i>¿Lo haces por tu propio interés? (explore the activities posted on the platform or other resources) ¿Porqué?</i></b>	
S14	Porque es muy chévere por los juegos y crear mi avatar. Sic

Excerpt N°13: Survey 2. Question 3

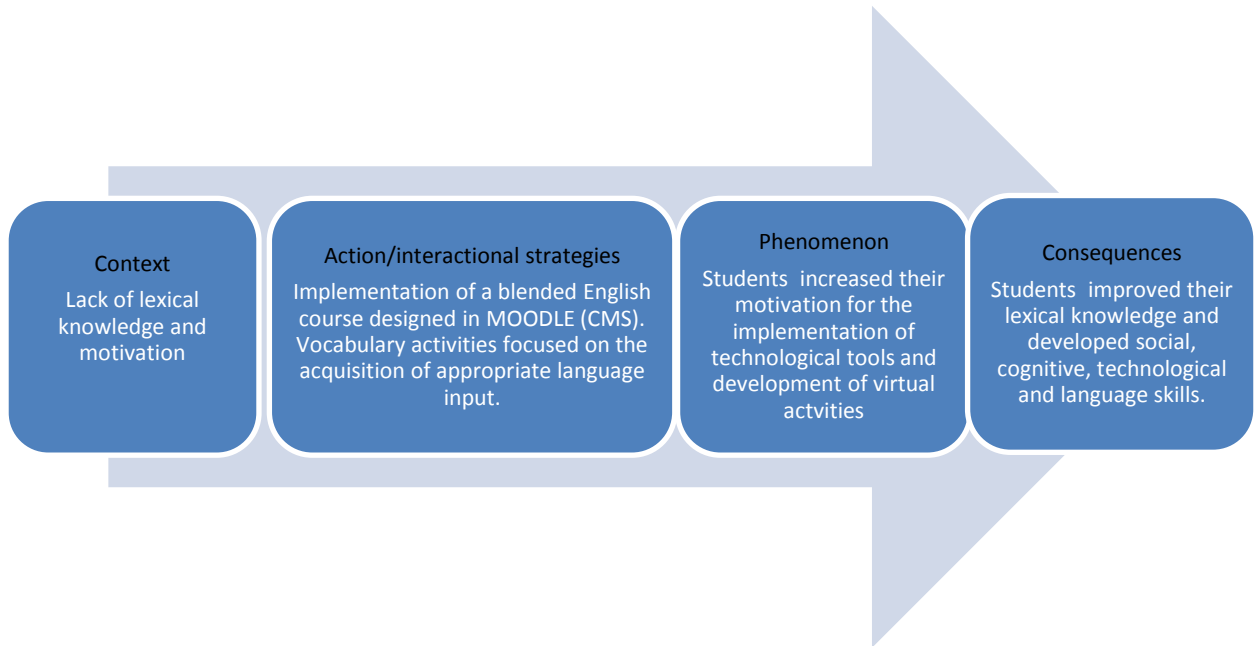
<b><i>¿Los recursos seleccionados y subidos en MOODLE son interesantes para ti?</i></b>	
S6	Satisfactorio
	Porque nos ponen cosas divertidas en Paint y Power Point

### **Selective coding**

This stage is defined according to Corbin and Strauss (1990) as the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, and considering the ones which need further development. Therefore, based on the data analysis, it is possible to say that the implementation of blended English course, introducing computer mediated language learning and face to face instruction, positively influenced the improvement of the learners' lexical knowledge, which is the core category of the study. Students acquired new words because the strategies applied for the design of the virtual activities and the language/vocabulary exercises (considering Nation's principles and ADDI model) were appropriate for the students' language needs related to their lack of lexical knowledge. The activities were focused on the acquisition of suitable input to use in communicative situations. The use of a course management system (Moodle) provided the students with new opportunities for learning based on the independent and mediated practice. Also, it facilitated students' interactions for the construction of new knowledge and the use of the knowledge acquired. So, the technological resources applied helped the students in the acquisition of new lexical knowledge, in the development of social, cognitive, technological and language skills, increased the learners' self-confidence, their motivation to learn in a new way and their autonomy. The process was an enriching experience for students, parents and researcher despite different constraints and difficulties related to the lack of technological knowledge and experience, and limited access to internet and technological resources. Although all of them were overcome, the researcher suggests new ideas for further research and the pedagogical implications of considering those difficulties.

Accordingly, the researcher concludes the analysis with the representation of the core category, See figure 5.

**Figure 5.** Core category



## Chapter 6: Conclusions

In this chapter the researcher presented the results obtained in this action research study. The research findings demonstrated how the implementation of virtual activities positively influenced the students' acquisition of their lexical knowledge; the development of their technological abilities, and social (interaction), communicative and language skills; increased their motivation and helped them to overcome some of their language difficulties.

Through this research study, the teacher had the opportunity to reflect upon the students' difficulties, propose a solution, and carry out a reflective process of improvement in which the parents and students were aware of the learning strategies that were being implemented. Learners were able to identify, highlight and point out several aspects that influenced the improvement of their lexical knowledge process, which were interpreted during the data analysis. In order to summarize the conclusions of the study, they are presented in accordance with the categories mentioned in the data analysis.

The first conclusion that emerged is: *the implementation of a blended English course influenced the students' lexicon*. The implementation of virtual activities for the acquisition of the lexical knowledge, to complement the vocabulary exercises during the face to face sessions, facilitated the language learning process because it provided the students with the opportunity to acquire vocabulary with accurate pronunciation. Students agreed that they learnt it more easily through the application of virtual activities (like videos, virtual flashcards and songs) because they could listen to and learn the words with accurate pronunciation. Also, they had the opportunity to practice as often as they needed in a different and self-directed environment. In addition to this, the students pinpointed some relevant aspects related to their



interaction (both in the face to face and the virtual scenarios) for their language learning process because they were able to learn from each other, acquire lexical knowledge and improve communicative and language skills.

The second conclusion is *the virtual activities posted on the platform provided students with the opportunity to manage and control their own independent practice and to develop collaborative and cooperative work abilities*. During the pedagogical intervention the students were requested to practice in their free time, by carrying out online activities posted on the platform; therefore, the students managed and controlled their independent practice. This increased the students' motivation and gave them the opportunity to become more autonomous in the sense that they were less dependent on the teacher and more dependent on their own criteria. The teacher and the parents of the students, through their perceptions, confirm that the students' developed their collaborative and cooperative work abilities during the independent practice (at home) and in the face to face sessions because they showed feelings of commitment to helping each other to face difficulties.

The third conclusion is: *the vocabulary activities implemented through the blended English course increased the students' motivation*. The researcher identified patterns of motivation in the students' performance based on the implementation of online activities for the independent practice. The students stated how participating in different vocabulary activities (which were interesting for them) such as word searches, memory games, language games, songs and videos in the virtual environment positively influenced their language learning process because they felt motivated to learn new words through practice and to use the new language to interact with others. The implementation of a course management system

as a computer-based resource helped the students to structure their acquisition of lexical knowledge based on the practice (self-controlled by students).

Another conclusion is *the integration of computer-based technologies as essential resources in the language learning process opened new doors to pedagogical innovation and enhanced the language learning experience*. At the end of the pedagogical implementation the students not only increased their English lexical knowledge through the development of online activities, but also acquired vocabulary related to technology, new knowledge and developed new abilities related to the use of technological tools. In addition, the teacher had the opportunity to reflect about her teaching practice, to learn about new language teaching strategies to apply considering the population's needs and, to consider the use of technological resources in her language teaching process.

To sum up, it is possible to state that the learning strategies implemented by the teacher for the design of the blended language English course focused on the improvement of the students' lexical knowledge, such as: Linguistic approach to acquire new lexical knowledge based on Nation (2008) principles and the Instructional design – *ADDI model* for the design and implementation of online materials through Moodle (Cuesta, 2010), positively influenced in the students language learning process. Students improved their lexical knowledge, increased their motivation and enhanced their language learning experience through the implementation of virtual activities; improved their technological abilities, acquired lexicon and knowledge related to technology and they are more autonomous (they manage and self-control their independent practice and develop cooperative and collaborative work abilities).

### **Pedagogical Implications**

The implementation of a course management system like Moodle for the English teaching process, requires that the teacher, students and parents acquire different kinds of knowledge and develop technological abilities, and in some cases language skills. For example, the teacher needs to learn about reflective teaching, blended learning, use of technological resources, tools and applications, learning styles, testing, assessment, language skills, autonomy and collaborative and cooperative work. Also, it is a requirement for the teacher to carry out a quality teaching process throughout which it is essential to plan, design, implement, evaluate, and redesign based on the students' needs, their learning styles and their performance. Students need motivation, enthusiasm, a desire to learn, responsibility and some technological knowledge and abilities, although they can acquire all of them throughout the course. It is important to note that to carry out a successful process requires more than knowing how to use a computer. It is necessary to have the resources, the time for training and the authorization and participation of other members of the community like parents, teachers of other subjects and coordinators.

In this study, to overcome the difficulties presented during the pedagogical implementation it was necessary to train the students in the use of technological applications and equipment like the laptop because they had never used one. They required training in the use and the differences between chat, forum, web site, e-mail, and e-mail account. To create the access to the platform (Moodle), it was necessary to train their parents in the creation of their own e-mail accounts because the students were younger than 14 years old and they

needed parental control, monitoring and help in accessing the internet. Likewise, students and parents needed training in the use of the Moodle tools.

### **Limitations**

During the development of this study there were some unexpected results originated by specific limitations that were evidenced during the process. The limitations were *lack of technological knowledge and experience, time management, and limited access to the internet and technological resources*:

#### **Lack of technological knowledge and experience**

For the first part of the implementation, it was necessary to create an e-mail account for the platform access. In that session, the lack of technological knowledge and experience emerged as a constraint to continue the process. The students did not know how to use a laptop, they could not differentiate between a chat, forum, web site, e-mail and an e-mail account and they did not know how to access to Internet and create an e-mail account. For those reasons, the teachers planned some training sessions in the use of laptop, access to the internet and use the technological applications. It was necessary to train the parents in the creation of an e-mail account for the registration process to have the platform access because the students were younger than 14, and to schedule some extra hours in the school to provide support for the use of technological applications. Apart from this, the parents' participation in monitoring the students' access to the internet became a requirement to carry out the pedagogical implementation.

### **Time management**

For the pedagogical intervention, five units were designed to conduct the process. The units were structured with different vocabulary activities to promote acquisition of lexical knowledge about a specific topic. The activities were planned to foster the practice during the face to face sessions and in the students' free time through the online activities. Each one of the face to face sessions included language input, guided practice, independent practice and assessment. However, some school events (that were not included in the planning of the school year) and constraints during the implementation affected the continuity and the distribution of the lessons and the sessions. This fact led to the scheduling of some extra hours for practice in school using the time at the end of the school day ( fifth graders finish the school day at 11:30 a.m. and the work day ends at 12:30) and the time in which the school community was attending other pedagogical activities such as parent or teacher meetings.

### **Limited access to Internet and technological resources**

It was necessary to schedule some extra hours in the school to give the students the opportunity to work on the activities posted on the platform using the technological resources of the school because some of them do not have access to internet or a computer at home. Also, the teacher gave information related to the opportunity that the students have for free internet access in the public libraries to do their assignments.

### **Further Research**

This action research study was focused on the improvement of the students' lexical knowledge through the implementation of a blended English course designed on Moodle. The participants are now aware of how their acquisition of lexical knowledge and the development

of their technological abilities, cognitive, social and linguistic skills were influenced by the implementation of new language learning strategies and the use of technological tools for their practice. The achievement of the main aim of this study was evidenced through the changes in the students' attitudes during the implementation process, because they tried to help each other to face the challenges that emerged from the use of technological applications, students felt motivated to practice on the virtual activities posted on the platform in their free time, and they used the new vocabulary to interact with others in the second language. Consequently, one of the primary further researches would be to conduct deeper analyses of the impact of the use of technology in the development of autonomous learning environments for the language learning process with younger students (learners of primary school or preschoolers) to develop students' autonomy.

Secondly, further research study may be directed at the investigation of the parents' participation in the development of the students' autonomy through the implementation of strategies and tools of monitoring, control and self-control to evaluate the students' performance during their independent practices (language learning activities mediated by computer).

Finally, a study could be carried out on the effect of improvement of lexical knowledge through the implementation of blended or online learning strategies in the students of the first levels of the educational system (learners of primary school or preschoolers) on students' motivation.

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### Appendix A: Sample of Questionnaire

Nombre: \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha \_\_\_\_\_

*Querido estudiante:*

*Lea cuidadosamente cada una de las preguntas que encontrará a continuación y conteste sinceramente. Este es un instrumento importante para evaluar y poder mejorar la clase de inglés.*

*Gracias;*

*Miss Guerrero*

1. Al incluir actividades online a través de MOODLE para el desarrollo de las clases de inglés, ¿Crees que esto ha ayudado a que aprendas más fácilmente inglés? ¿Por qué?

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2. ¿Te gusta realizar actividades online a través de MOODLE para aprender vocabulario en inglés? ¿Por qué?

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3. ¿Crees que has aprendido más palabras en inglés para poder interactuar con tus compañeros en ese idioma? ¿Por qué?

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- 
- 
4. Cuando estás en tu tiempo libre ¿dedicas tiempo a realizar actividades online en inglés (tareas, juegos, cantar canciones, ver videos, escribir...) que encuentras en MOODLE?

Si \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_

5. ¿Exploras páginas internet o actividades diferentes a las que encuentras en MOODLE para aprender vocabulario en inglés?

Si \_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

- 5.1 ¿Si tu respuesta es afirmativa comenta cuales.

---





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- 5.2 ¿lo haces por tu propio interés? Si \_\_\_ No

**Appendix B: Sample of Survey**

Students' perceptions related to the practice through online activities posted on MOODLE

Nombre:	Fecha:
Grado:	Area:

CRITERIA	SATISFACTORIO (3.5 POINTS)	INSATISFACTORIO	COMENTARIOS
			
Participación en los forums 			
Como te sientes hacienda las actividades que encuentras en MOODLE? 			
Los recursos seleccionados o diseñados y subidos en MOODLE son interesantes para ti?			

			
<p>Has aprendido nuevo vocabulario en inglés a través de las actividades implementadas por medio de MOODLE ?</p> 			
<p>Las instrucciones para el desarrollo de de las actividades virtuales, subidas en MOODLE, son claras?<sup>5</sup></p> 			

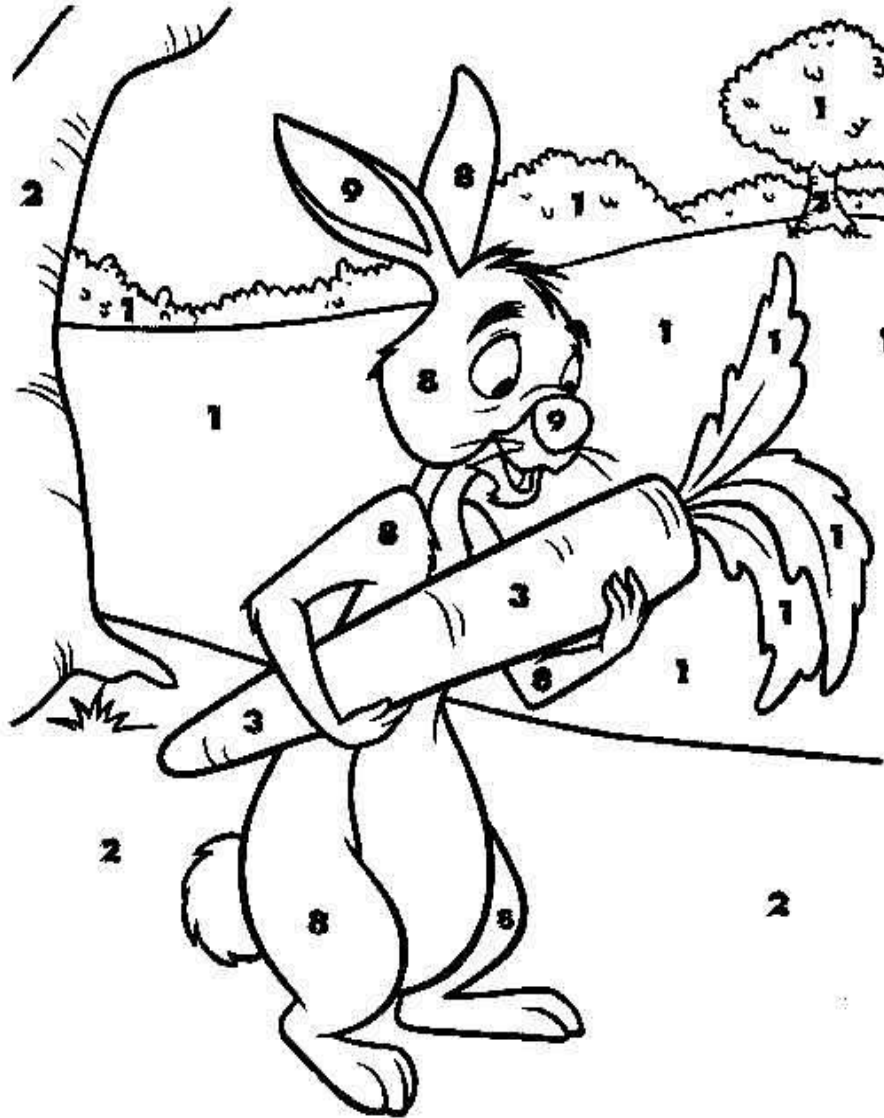
Comentarios del docente:

<sup>5</sup> The images used from the survey were taken from [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

Appendix C: Vocabulary Pre-test

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

1. COLOR



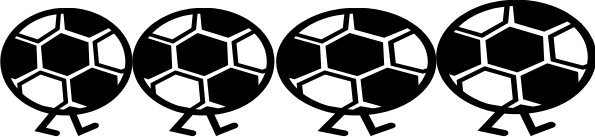
1 green 3 orange 5 purple 7 gray 9 pink  
2 brown 4 blue 6 red 8 yellow 10 light pink

2. COUNT AND WRITE THE QUANTITY.



A. \_\_\_\_\_

3. DRAW THE QUANTITIES.

<b>One</b>	
<b>Two</b>	
<b>Three</b>	
<b>Four</b>	
<b>Five</b>	
<b>Six</b>	
<b>Seven</b>	

<b>Eight</b>	
<b>Nine</b>	
<b>Ten</b>	

4. DRAW AND MATCH

It's an eraser.

It's a book.

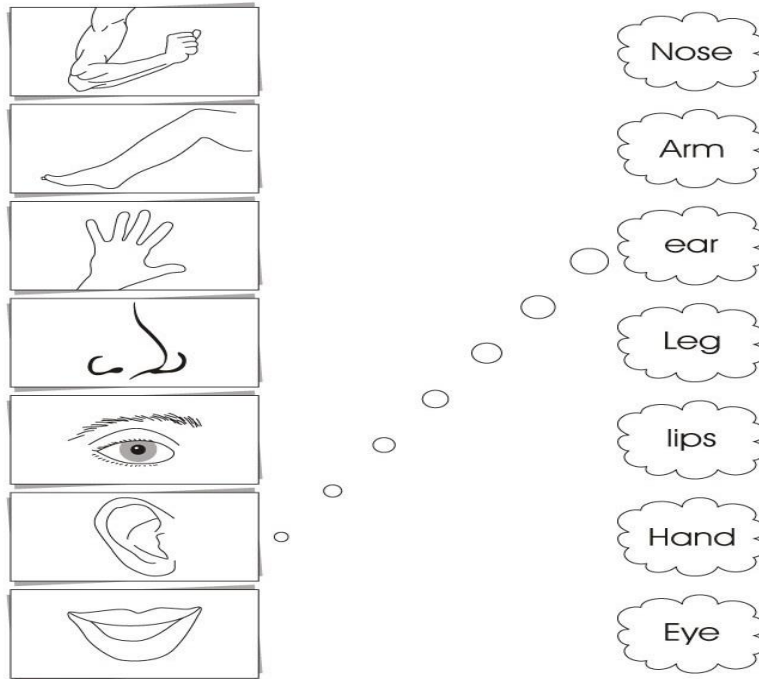
It's a pencil.

It's a crayon.

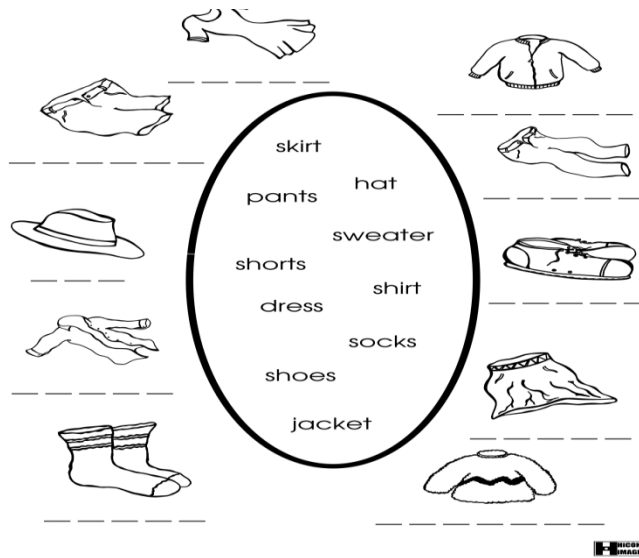
It's a desk.

It's a chair.

5. MATCH THE NAMES OF THE BODY PARTS WITH THE IMAGES



6. MATCH AND WRITE





### Appendix D: Teacher's Journal Form as a Reflective Instrument

<b>DATE:</b> _____	<b>SESSION:</b> _____
<b>ACTIVITY:</b> _____	

*Based on the vocabulary activities developed during the class (face to face and online sessions)...*

*What went well...?*

*What aspects didn't go well...?:*

*What did I observe about the development of the students' lexical knowledge through the application of a blended English course?*

- *Use of new expressions:*
- *Use of new vocabulary:*
- *Use the applications on Moodle:*
- *Confidence to use the language:*
- *Participation in each one of the activities in the face to face session*

**Appendix E: Sample of Students' Consent Letter**

**SANTA LIBRADA IED**

**Formato de Autorización- Estudiantes**

Bogotá, Agosto 31 de 2011

**Estudiantes: Quinto grado.**

Ciudad,

Queridos niños,

Con el propósito de mejorar el proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje del inglés, se pretende desarrollar el proyecto Desarrollo de habilidades léxicas a través de la implementación de un curso de inglés de aprendizaje mixto basado en Moodle como herramienta tecnológica con los estudiantes de tercer grado en la clase de inglés.

El proyecto busca ayudarlos en sus habilidades léxicas por medio de actividades comunicativas que serían desarrolladas en las clases de inglés durante el primer semestre del 2012.

El proyecto se llevará a cabo por parte de su docente: Diana Marcela Guerrero, en las clases se utilizarán herramientas tecnológicas, que dadas las circunstancias se requiere que tengan acceso a Internet en su tiempo libre y sean muy responsables con el uso de los recursos de la sala de sistemas, los cuales serán utilizados en una de las tres horas de las clases de inglés, Así mismo todas las actividades a desarrollar durante el proyecto (sean en el cuaderno, en fotocopias o en la plataforma) serían analizadas y usadas como evidencia para el documento de investigación siendo publicadas sus producciones aunque no se revelarán sus identidades.

Si está de acuerdo y conoce el proyecto que está realizando la profesora por favor escriba su nombre.

**Estudiante**

**Curso**

- |    |       |       |
|----|-------|-------|
| 1. | _____ | _____ |
| 2. | _____ | _____ |
| 3. | _____ | _____ |
| 4. | _____ | _____ |
| 5. | _____ | _____ |

6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_
11. \_\_\_\_\_
12. \_\_\_\_\_
13. \_\_\_\_\_
14. \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix F: Action Plan 2012-2 and 2013-1**

Activity/date	May June July	August				September				October November				January February				March and April				May and June			
Week	1 to 4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1 to 4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4			
Piloting of the dc instruments																									
Design all of the activities and material for the pedagogical intervention																									
Pedagogical intervention																									
Monitoring and data collection																									
Analysis of the data																									
Reflection and making decisions																									
Analyzing results																									
Conclusions																									
Refining final paper																									
Sharing findings																									

**Appendix G: Timeline for the Implementation**

<b>TIMELINE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Tools and data collection instruments</b>
Week 1	Learning to use the platform	Teacher's journal
Week 2	Vocabulary activities about colors	Paper Moodle Checklist
Week 3	Support in the use of technological applications and MOODLE	Computers' room Moodle Teacher's journal
Week 4	Vocabulary activities about numbers from 1 to 100	Paper Moodle Questionnaire
Week 5	Vocabulary activities about school items	Paper Moodle Teacher's journal
Week 6	Vocabulary activities about parts of the house	Paper Moodle Survey
Week 7	Assessing the process and support in the activities developed through the online practice	Checklist Computers' room Moodle Questionnaire
Week 8	Vocabulary activities about places in the city and professions	Paper about professions Moodle Survey
Week 9	Closing the implementation (Meeting with parents) and a face to face session with the students	Questionnaire applied to students' parents Post-test

**Appendix H: Lesson Plan Form for the Face to Face Sessions**

<b>Name of teacher: DIANA MARCELA GUERRERO ARROYO</b>		<b>Candidate Number: 201022409</b>	
<b>Institution: SANTA LIBRADA I.E.D.</b>			
<b>Date of Observation:</b> DAY    MONTH    YEAR		<b>Face to face session: 2 hours</b> <b>virtual session: 2 hours</b>	
<b>Class/grade: Fifth</b>		<b>Room: 15</b>	
<b>Number of students: 33</b>		<b>Average age of Students: 10 to 12 years</b>	
<b>Number of years of English study: 2</b>		<b>Level of students: Pre-elementary</b>	
<b>Unit 1: Colors</b>		<b>Research instrument used: Questionnaire and Journal</b>	

**Main Aim(s):**

Students will be able to produce appropriate utterances with an accurate positioning of the adjective to ask for a color and express what the color of any item is.

**Subsidiary Aims:**

To properly pronounce and recognize 11 colors through different kinds of activities.

To properly use the adjective positioning in a statement following the examples given by the teacher to request, ask and answer questions.

To build connections between the new vocabulary and their previous knowledge about the topic and the grammar structure used.

**Research aims:**

To collect data related on the students' perceptions about the employment of technological applications through Moodle to learn new vocabulary.

**Assumed knowledge:**

*Write a description of the language/skills/competences that students already know/have that will serve as a basis for new language/skills input.*

*The learners are starting their second language learning process, therefore their comprehension and oral production in the second language is elementary. The students follow simple commands (sit down, stand up, color the drawing, pay attention, listen, silence, etc) given in a leveled language and supported with body language; a minority of them identify vocabulary related with colors and numbers from 1 to 10 and can recognize them in matching activities. Some of them use expressions like "Can I borrow your pencil" or "How do you say \_\_\_\_\_" to interact with their peers or ask for information but a high percentage of students always use their mother tongue to communicate. They enjoy working on activities such as songs, role-plays, associating words with images, coloring or making topic projects.*

**Description of language item / skill(s)**

For the second language acquisition it is relevant to develop lexical skill as base of the development of all the language skills, presenting the target language in a natural way, providing the students with the appropriate language input. Also, young learners unconsciously acquire their first and second language, they can use or express phrases in a relative clause form without comprehension of the grammar structure (Gass, 2008).

## Description of language item / skill(s)

### Form

Clauses with Adjective + Noun

*red tomato*

What color is the number 1?

Number 1 is a *blue car*

### Use

To describe based on vocabulary learned (numbers and colors) and build phrases or statements to ask and answer questions following the same pattern.

### Skill(s) and sub skill(s)

Skills:

Reading, writing, speaking, listening, lexical

### Functions

- ✓ Well-known easy topics.
- ✓ Monitoring
- ✓ Guided conversations.
- ✓ Drilling
- ✓ Practice in order to produce chunks of language taking into account the intention of the speaker
- ✓ Monitoring
- ✓ Try to use commands, vocabulary and simple clauses to communicate.



**Materials :**

- **Describe and write a rationale for all the materials that you are going to use in the lesson, and attach copies/photocopies with their proper referring citation.**
- ✓ Video about colors from [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6cV\\_a\\_18AI&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6cV_a_18AI&feature=related) is used to introduce the topic and present the new vocabulary related on colors, it is a useful activity to motivate the students. Teacher will support the information presented on the video with flash cards. The video and flashcards are posted on the platform.
- ✓ Teacher will control the practice during a guided practice through a coloring activity in which the students will use the structure and vocabulary presented by the teacher to develop the exercise. (Annex H-2)
- ✓ The matching activity will help the teacher to present the language input in a communicative way with small phrases, following the same language pattern. Also, to establish a relation between previous knowledge acquired in both languages and the new concept that will be built in L2 associating words with pictures and classifying the items taking into account their colors. (Annex H-3)
- ✓ Snakes and ladders activity will be used for the *independent language practice*. It will help the students in the construction of questions and create a comfortable context to interact in groups using L2. (Annex H-4 and H-5)
- ✓ The applications posted on Moodle help the students improve their lexical knowledge through the independent language practice.

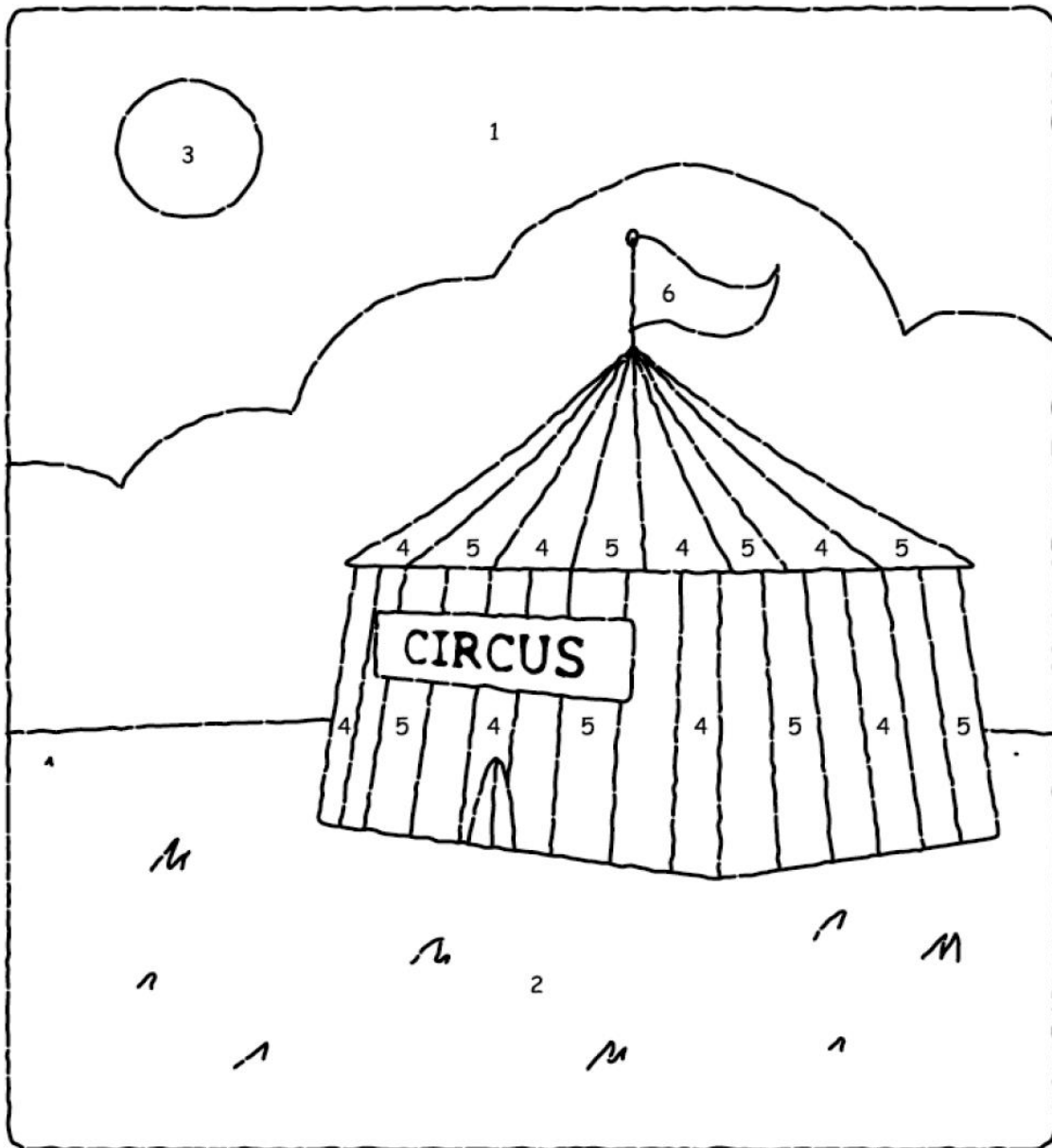
Stage	Aim	Procedure Teacher and student activity	Time and interaction
<u>Warming up</u>	To introduce the new vocabulary	<p>The students will look at flashcards about colors (Annex H-1), Students will listen to the appropriate pronunciation of each one of the colors and they could associate the color name and its image.</p> <p>Students will listen and try to sing “The colors song” repeating the expressions.</p>	<p>10 min (T-Ss)</p> <p>10 min (T-Ss)</p>
<u>Language input</u>	To present the accurate pronunciation and build a new concept using previous knowledge.	Students will learn the structure to ask for a color. They will have the opportunity to practice through a coloring activity in which a student will have the correct color for each one of the numbers and the other students will ask for the color using the structure and vocabulary presented by the teacher to develop the exercise. (Annex H-2)	15 min (S-Ss)
<u>Guided practice</u>	To build meaning between phonetic production of the word and the image (reinforcing their mind images about a word) and to guide the construction of questions for interaction.	In the graphic organizer, the students will find some pictures and they will have to match them with the right color and write the words below each one. This activity will help the teacher to present the accurate positioning of the adjective in an utterance. Students will understand the structure and use it following the same language pattern to produce their own statement. (Annex H-3)	20 min (T-Ss)
<u>Independent language practice</u>	To use the vocabulary learned to make a poster and to create a space of interaction and oral production between students.	<p>Students will work in small groups of 5.</p> <p>Students will play “Snakes and Ladders” through which they will work in a cooperative way, interacting in a comfortable context and using the language in a natural way. Students will throw the dice and move the quantity that appears on the dice. Then they will have to draw something on the board but he / she will ask using the question <b>What is the number ____?</b> to the leader, who is other student with the answers. The leader will answer the question expressing statements like: <b>the number ____ is a red car.</b> The winner will be the first person who finishes the game and passes over the board.</p> <p>Students will find activities to practice posted on the platform</p>	<p>30 min (GW) (S-Ss)</p> <p>2 hours Individual work</p>
<u>Wrap up</u>	To reinforce and assess	<p>Teacher will ask for information using concept questions.</p> <p>Teacher will apply a questionnaire at the end of the class</p>	<p>10 min (T-Ss)</p> <p>15 min (IW)</p>

Annex H-2



Colour in the circus scene

Can you colour this picture of a circus scene?



Annex H-3



Colour match

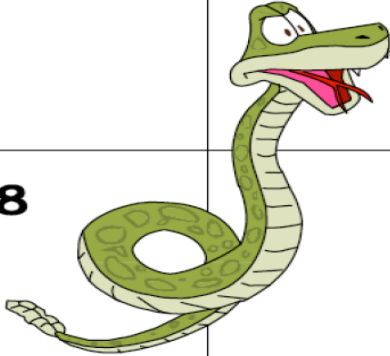
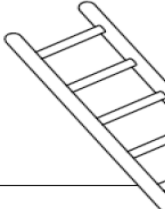
Match the pictures to the right colour and write the word.

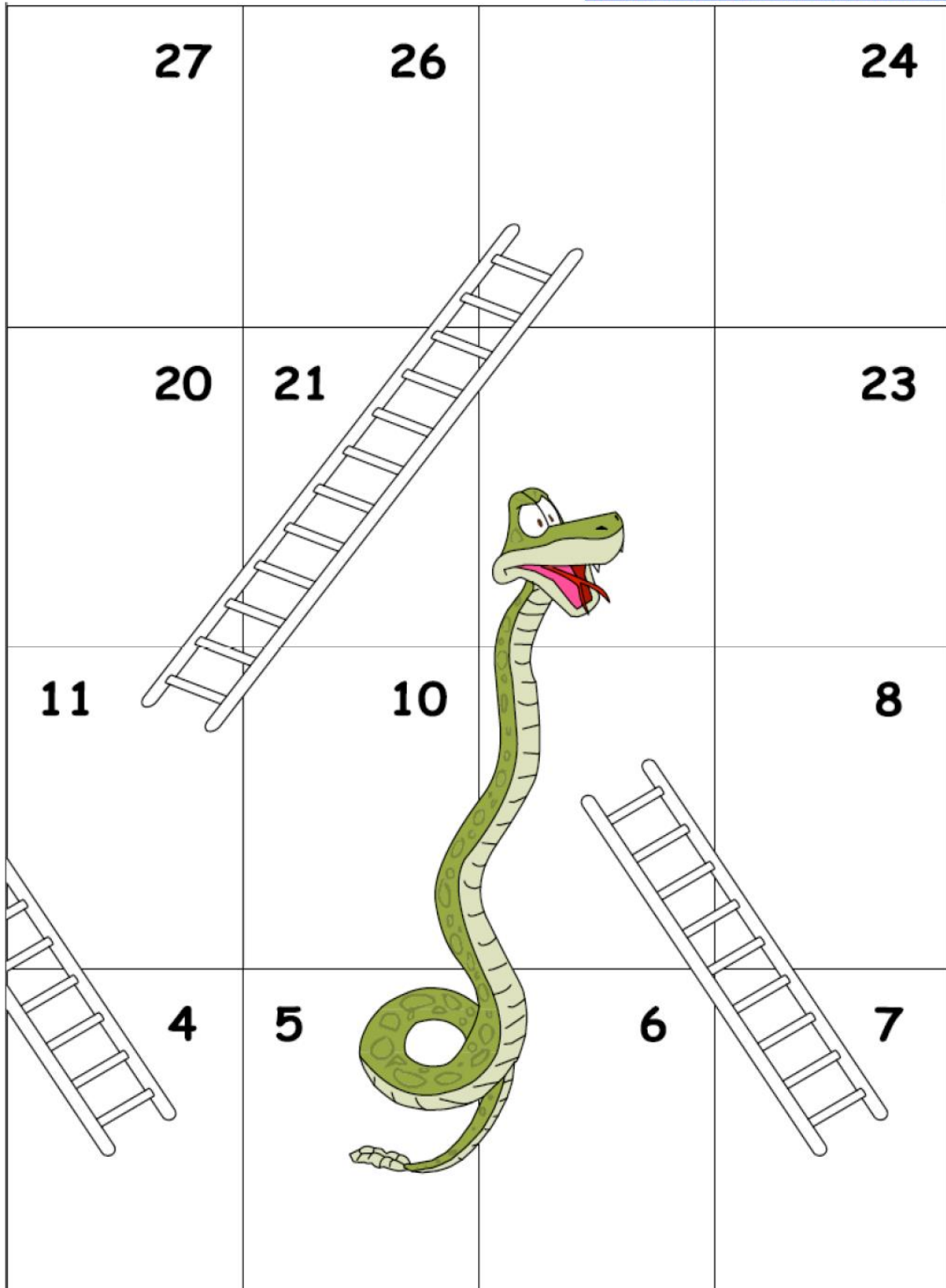
The activity consists of a central circle divided into six segments, each labeled with a color: red, orange, purple, blue, green, and yellow. The labels are written in a curved path around the circle. Surrounding the circle are various illustrations: a strawberry, blue pants, a green crocodile, a red tomato, a yellow banana, a pumpkin, a sun, a bunch of purple grapes, a green broccoli, a pair of red cherries, a green frog, a carrot, a blue shark, a purple plum, an orange, a purple flower, and a blue sky with clouds.

Annex H-4 and H-5



Snakes and Ladders

	30	29	
<b>HOME</b>			
16	17	18	19
15		13	
<b>START HERE</b>	1	2	3



## Appendix I: Example of a Questionnaire Answered by a Student

Blended learning English course based on Moodle in the improvement of English lexical knowledge

### DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS Sample Questionnaire 2

Nombre: Michael y Anderson Fecha: 1 noviembre

Querido estudiante:

Lea cuidadosamente cada una de las preguntas que encontrará a continuación y conteste sinceramente. Este es un instrumento importante para evaluar y poder mejorar la clase de inglés.

Gracias:

Misa Guerrero

1. El desarrollar cada una de las actividades de inglés pegadas en MOODLE, te ha ayudado a aprender más fácilmente inglés? ¿Por qué?

porque una encuentra palabras que no hemos visto y pues es chevere

2. ¿Te gusta realizar actividades online a través de MOODLE para aprender vocabulario en inglés? ¿Por qué?

me gustaría aprender mucho más inglés porque facilita el vocabulario

3. ¿Crees que has aprendido más palabras en inglés para poder interactuar con tus compañeros en ese idioma? ¿Por qué?

se aprende mucho vocabulario y espero aprender más vocabulario

Blended learning English course based on Moodle in the improvement of English lexical knowledge

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4. Cuando estás en tu tiempo libre ¿dedicas tiempo a realizar actividades online en inglés (tareas, juegos, cantar canciones, ver videos, escribir...) que encuentras en MOODLE?

Si  NO \_\_\_\_\_

¿Exploras páginas internet o actividades diferentes a las que encuentras en MOODLE para aprender vocabulario en inglés?

Si  NO \_\_\_\_\_

¿Si tu respuesta es afirmativa comenta cuales.

learn english for kids, google,

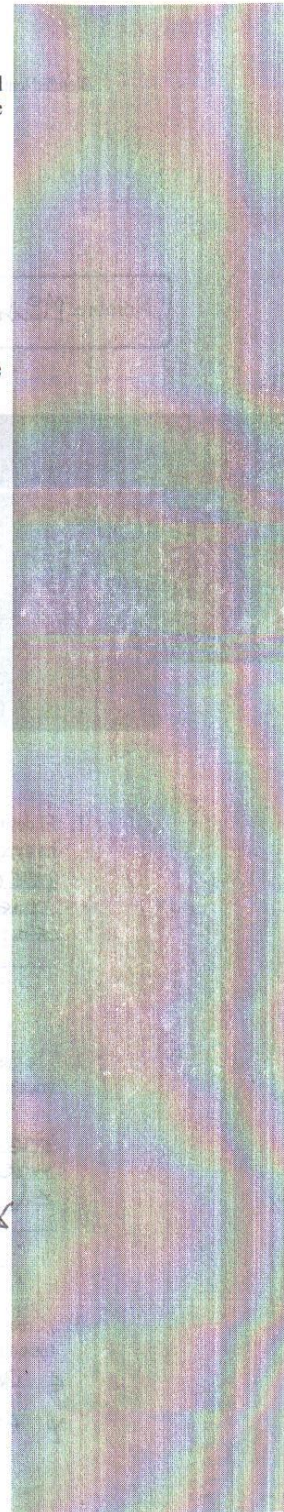
¿lo haces por tu propio interés? Si  No

5. ¿Qué has aprendido al desarrollar las actividades pegadas en MOODLE, además de vocabulario en inglés?

los colores, e numeros y animales

6. ¿Cómo te ha ayudado el desarrollar actividades en MOODLE en tu desarrollo personal? ¿Eres más responsable? ¿Te gusta lo que haces? ¿Organizas tu tiempo para hacer las tareas? ¿Necesitas que alguien te recuerde qué debes hacer? O lo haces por tu mismo?

lo hago porque me gusta entrar a la página porque uno encuentra cosas nuevas






## Appendix J: Example of a Weekly Plan Activities of English for Kids Course Designed Using Moodle (Screenshot)

14 September - 20 September

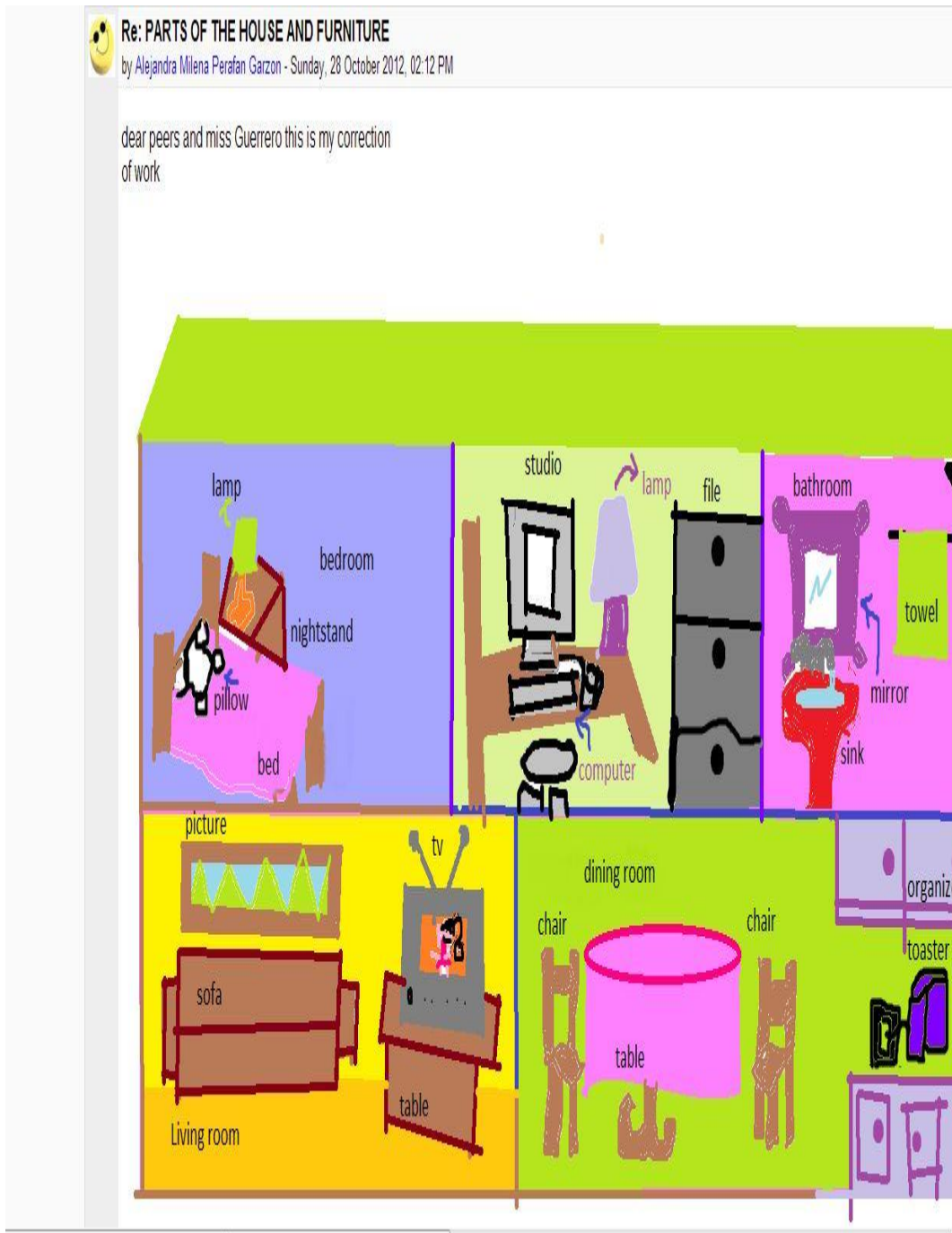
WEEK 4 and 5: Vocabulary about numbers from 1 to 100 and school items



Picture taken from: <http://www.lasaraids.net/news/display.v/ART/488f4a96078bf>

- Quiz
- Math activities
- An activity about numbers
- Word game
- Numbers from 1 to 20
- Song about numbers
- Power point presentation about numbers
- Instructions
- Session 6: School items
- Activities about school items

### Appendix K: Example of the Students' Participation on the Forums to Present their Final Products (Screenshot)



**Appendix L: Students' Activity Report on MOODLE (Screenshot)**

**Alejandra Milena Perafan Garzon**

[Profile](#)
[Edit profile](#)
[Forum posts](#)
[Blog](#)
[Notes](#)
[Activity reports](#)
[Roles](#)

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[Outline report](#)
[Complete report](#)
[Today's logs](#)
[All logs](#)
[Grade](#)

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**Week 0**

 [News forum](#)

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**Week 1**

 [Syllabus](#)      2 views      Wednesday, 5 September 2012, 03:19 PM (206 days 6 hours)

 [Message to say WELCOME](#)      1 views      Tuesday, 23 October 2012, 08:19 PM (158 days 1 hour)

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**Week 3**

 [Memory games](#)      9 views      Wednesday, 24 October 2012, 12:14 PM (157 days 9 hours)

 [Perspectives](#)      1 posts      Monday, 8 October 2012, 12:59 PM (173 days 8 hours)

 [Color activity](#)      4 views      Monday, 29 October 2012, 01:11 PM (152 days 8 hours)

 [Colors - memory game](#)      3 views      Wednesday, 24 October 2012, 06:14 PM (157 days 3 hours)

 [Colors song](#)      1 views      Wednesday, 24 October 2012, 12:12 PM (157 days 9 hours)

 [Colors in the rainbow song](#)      2 views      Wednesday, 24 October 2012, 05:50 PM (157 days 4 hours)

 [Painting activity 1](#)      7 views      Monday, 29 October 2012, 01:10 PM (152 days 8 hours)

 [Activity about colors in the rainbow](#)      2 views      Wednesday, 24 October 2012, 12:12 PM (157 days 9 hours)

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**Appendix M: Students' Performance in the Activities Applied During the Pedagogical Intervention**

	TOPICS/student	Activity/Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Week 1		PRE-TEST	2.1	1.8	3.1	3.9	3.1	2.0	2.6	3.4	2.3	2.1	4.2	1.0	2.9	2.1
Week 2	Colors	Workshop	NP1.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	NP1.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	9.1	8.3
		Activities on Moodle	7.1	10.0	7.1	5.7	10.0	4.2	5.7	8.5	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0
Week 4	Numbers from 1 to 100	Workshop	NP1.0	1.2	6.1	5.5	NP1.0	3.6	6.1	7.5	2.8	5.6	5.2	4.5	5.8	5.2
		Activities on Moodle	7.1	10.0	2.8	4.2	8.5	8.5	8.5	10.0	7.1	10.0	10.0	8.5	8.5	8.5
		Activity posted on the forum	NP1.0	9.0	10.0	4.0	8.0	NP1.0	8.0	8.0	NP1.0	6.0	7.5	NP1.0	8.0	NP1.0
		Test	2.9	5.4	8.3	6.2	9.7	7.5	7.5	10.0	4.8	7.8	9.4	2.7	9.1	8.6
Week 5	School items	Workshop	7.5	6.5	8.5	5.0	NP1.0	7.5	NP1.0	8.0	7.0	7.0	8.0	7.0	7.0	6.0
		Activities on Moodle	10.0	5.0	2.5	NP1.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	NP1.0	10.0	10.0	2.5	10.0	2.5
		Activity posted on the forum	NP1.0	7.0	9.0	NP1.0	8.0	NP1.0	NP1.0	10.0	NP1.0	NP1.0	NP1.0	NP1.0	10.0	NP1.0
		Test	2.0	3.0	4.0	7.0	4.0	6.0	NP1.0	9.0	5.0	5.0	10.0	NP1.0	7.0	6.0
Week 6	Parts of the house	Workshop	6.0	8.0	6.0	8.0	7.0	7.0	NP1.0	8.5	NP1.0	NP1.0	8.0	6.5	7.0	NP1.0
		Activities on Moodle	10.0	8.8	1.1	3.3	10.0	10.0	6.6	10.0	NP1.0	10.0	10.0	1.9	3.3	3.3
		Activity posted on the forum	NP1.0	4.0	8.5	NP1.0	5.0	NP1.0	NP1.0	NP1.0	NP1.0	6.5	9.8	NP1.0	10.0	NP1.0
		Test	1.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	5.0	3.0	1.0	6.0	3.0	1.0	8.0	4.0	4.0	5.0

			0	5	5	0	0	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
Week 8	Places in the city (preposition of place)	Activities on Moodle	NP 1. 0	2. 5	5. 0	NP 1. 0	7. 5	NP 1. 0	2. 5	7. 5	NP 1. 0	5. 0	5. 0	NP 1. 0	5. 0	5. 0
		Activity posted on the forum	NP 1. 0	7. 5	10. .0	NP 1. 0	NP 1. 0	NP 1. 0	NP 1. 0	7. 5	NP 1. 0	NP 1. 0	9. 8	NP 1. 0	10. .0	NP 1. 0
		Oral test	6. 5	7. 0	6. 0	8. 0	7. 0	7. 0	6. 0	9. 0	6. 0	8. 5	9. 5	6. 0	8. 0	7. 0
		POST-TEST	5. 0	6. 6	5. 5	4. 3	6. 8	6. 4	7. 3	8. 2	3. 6	8. 1	7. 2	5. 5	7. 5	5. 7

## **Appendix N: English for Kids (Course Design)**

Designed by DIANA GUERRERO (2012)

Guided face to face sessions: 24 Hours

Guided practice in the school using MOODLE: 12 Hours

Independent practice in their free time (Doing the activities posted in the platform): 12 Hours

### **Course description and Objectives**

#### **Previous knowledge needed:**

It is required that students be competent in using the Microsoft Office programs (Power Point and Word) and accessing the tasks on MOODLE.

#### **Objectives:**

- To motivate the students to learn English through the application of technological resources.
- To increase the students lexical knowledge in English through the development of vocabulary activities organized on MOODLE.
- To develop the students' cognitive and social skills through the implementation of virtual tools and computer applications for their interaction and language learning process such as forums, Power Point presentations, Screen cast, Vokies, You Tube videos and language learning web sites for kids.
- To encourage the students autonomy using self-access activities and resources in the English learning as a foreign language.

#### **Resources for the course**

The course resources is available at <http://dianag432.freewebclass.com/course/view.php?id=5>

### **Methodology**

**English for kids** is a blended English course, through which the students improve their lexical knowledge and cognitive, social, and linguistic skills. They participate in the course attending face to face sessions and practicing through the online activities. In that way, the students learn English as a foreign language by exploring and participating in different vocabulary activities such as word searches, memory games, language games, songs and videos, which have been previously posted on MOODLE. In consequence, the students take the control of their own language learning process because they establish their own aims to fulfill and the time to achieve the goals, self-monitoring and self-assessing their performances during the process. The activities are designed according to the learners' cognitive, linguistic and affective needs, their language level and their learning styles. During the implementation the students receive support through the teacher's guidance and instruction.

### **Attendance and participation**

Participants are expected to attend all the face to face sessions and participate actively in each one of the activities posted on the platform (In MOODLE). All assignments and projects must be submitted on the due date. Extensions may only be requested PRIOR to the due date. For the achievement of the main aims of the course it is relevant to be responsible.

### **Participating in the Forums**

The forums are designed to develop the students' collaborative work abilities. So, for each unit the students will find 2 or 3 forums in which they will be requested to participate. The students will post their final products of each unit and will comment on their classmates'

productions using appropriate language and following the net etiquette rules. Each forum will have the instructions to develop the activity.

**Being successful in the course**

- Follow the instructions to carry out the activities
- All assignments and projects must be submitted on the due date
- Check the platform every day
- Contact your teacher if you have doubts or questions. She will help you.
- Have permanent contact with your classmates in case you have doubts.
- Be responsible; organize your time to comply with the tasks and projects on time.
- Attend all the face to face sessions and participate actively in each one of the activities posted on the platform (In MOODLE)



**Appendix O: Example of a Questionnaire Answered by the Parents**

*Blended learning English course based on Moodle for the improvement of English lexical knowledge in EFL learners*

Questionnaire N° 2

Querido padre de familia:

Lea cuidadosamente cada una de las preguntas que encontrará a continuación y conteste sinceramente. Esto es un instrumento importante para evaluar y poder mejorar la clase de inglés.

Gracias:

Miss Guerrero

1. Al incluir actividades online a través de MOODLE para el desarrollo de las clases de inglés, ¿Cree que esto ha ayudado a que su hijo aprenda más fácilmente inglés? ¿Por qué?  
 pues la leda a mejorado en el medio pronunciamiento

2. ¿A su hijo (a) le gusta realizar actividades online a través de MOODLE para aprender vocabulario en inglés? ¿Por qué?  
 mas o menos por que no a podido ingresar muy facil mente

3. ¿Con qué frecuencia ingresa su hijo a la plataforma a realizar las actividades? (Dos veces a la semana, tres veces...)-  
 2 veces

4. ¿Cree que su hijo(a) ha aprendido más palabras en inglés para poder interactuar con sus compañeros en ese idioma? ¿Por qué?  
 Si

5. Cuando su hijo (a) está en su tiempo libre ¿dedica tiempo a realizar actividades online en inglés (tareas, juegos, cantar canciones, ver videos, escribir...) que encuentra en MOODLE?

Si  NO

¿Su hijo (a), Explora material diferente al que encuentra en MOODLE para aprender vocabulario en inglés?

Si  NO

¿Si tu respuesta es afirmativa comenta cuales.

¿Lo hace por su propio interés? Si  No

Observaciones:

se nos a dificultado mucho el ingreso a la pagina me gustaria que me explicaran o que tvea algo mas.

## **Appendix P: Consent Letter Signed by the Parents**

*Blended English course based on Moodle to improve Lexical knowledge in EFL fifth graders*

**SANTA LIBRADA IED**

**Formato de Autorización- Padres de familia**

Bogotá, Agosto 2 de 2012

**Padres de familia de los estudiantes de Quinto grado**

Bogotá

Queridos y respetados padres de familia:

Con el propósito de mejorar el proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje del inglés en la institución, se pretende desarrollar el proyecto de investigación titulado “Building a blended English course based on Moodle to improve English lexical knowledge in EFL fifth graders”; que en español sería “ Desarrollo de habilidades léxicas a través de la implementación de un curso de inglés de aprendizaje mixto basado en Moodle como herramienta tecnológica en los estudiantes del grado Quinto de la jornada de la mañana”. El proyecto busca establecer el impacto de la aplicación de un curso de aprendizaje mixto para el desarrollo de conocimientos léxicos en inglés en los aprendices, estableciendo la importancia de la adquisición de vocabulario para el desempeño comunicativo en una segunda lengua. La implementación del proyecto se llevaría a cabo durante las clases de inglés y horas extracurriculares durante el segundo semestre del 2012.

El proyecto se llevará a cabo por parte de su docente de inglés: Diana Marcela Guerrero Arroyo. En las clases se utilizarán herramientas tecnológicas para lo cual se requiere tener acceso a internet en la institución durante las clases de inglés y fuera de la institución para las actividades extracurriculares destinadas al desarrollo de la autonomía de los escolares. Todas las actividades a desarrollar durante la implementación del proyecto (sean en el cuaderno, en fotocopias o en la plataforma) serán analizadas y usadas como evidencia para el documento de investigación siendo publicadas sus producciones aunque no se revelarán las identidades de los estudiantes. Así mismo, se tomará registro fotográfico y en video de todas las clases desarrolladas durante la implementación que se tendrá como evidencia para el momento de la publicación de los resultados de la investigación a la comunidad académica.

*Blended English course based on Moodle to improve Lexical knowledge in EFL fifth graders*

La participación de los niños es de vital importancia para el proyecto y es de carácter voluntario. De igual manera se aclara que el proyecto no tendrá incidencia alguna con el proceso académico de valoración, puesto que en cualquier momento de la implementación se podría notificar que su hijo o hija no seguiría siendo parte de la investigación.

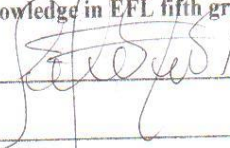

La investigación tiene el consentimiento de las directivas del colegio, quienes tienen pleno conocimiento que es un proyecto de investigación para obtener el título de máster en el programa de Didáctica del Inglés con énfasis en ambientes de aprendizaje autónomo de la universidad de la Sabana.

Agradezco su autorización para contar con su hijo o hija como participante en este proyecto

Cordialmente;

DIANA MARCELA GUERRERO ARROYO

Docente de Inglés

Nosotros:	<u>JOSE ROSAS</u>	padres
del estudiante:	<u>NECLA ROSA CORTES</u>	<u>501</u> del grado
501 de la jornada de la mañana, autorizamos a mi hijo a participar del proyecto de investigación <b>Building a blended English course based on Moodle to improve English lexical knowledge in EFL fifth graders.</b>		
Firma:		C.C. <u>79803861</u>
Firma:		C.C. _____

Appendix Q: Example of the Students' Tasks

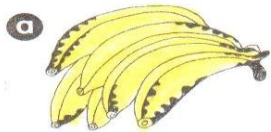
Stendy Llorleng López Monroy 501  
Thursday, September 21<sup>th</sup> 20

# Unit 1 Extra practice

Write your answers.

- a Six and three are nine
- b Four and six are Ten
- c Two and seven are nine
- d One and one are Two
- e Five and three are eight
- f Six and one are seven
- g Four and two are six
- h Three and one are four

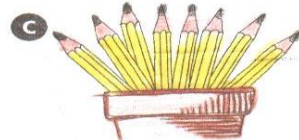
Count and write.



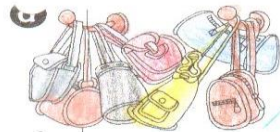
Six bananas



nine erasers



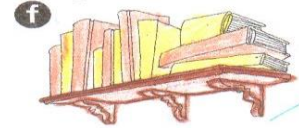
eight pencils



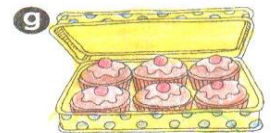
Seven backpacks



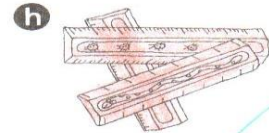
Five sodas



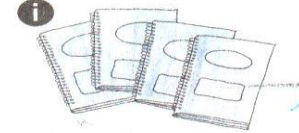
Ten books



Six muffins



Three rulers



four notebooks

