

**Validating a Blog Containing Microteaching and Podcasting as a Virtual Learning
Environment**

Lina Xiomara Sanchez Suarez

Asesora

Edith Lorena Grande Triviño

Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia UNAD

Escuela Ciencias de la Educación

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Dedication

I dedicate this paper to my mother Vicky Patricia Suarez who inspired me in conducting this study, for her unconditional love, support, and comprehension when I had to sacrifice the family time because of my studies. This is also dedicated to my younger sister as an example of perseverance, dedication, and personal growth.

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Firstly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my teachers, specially to Edith Grande for guiding and supporting me through the academic and research process with patience, always willing to provide feedback and encouragement. Secondly, I want to thank my colleague and special friend Julie Herrera for her unconditional support and help during the whole research process, contributing with great ideas and advice. Lastly, thanks should also go to my lovely boyfriend who has been supporting me above all emotionally and cheering me up when I most need it.

Specialized Analytical Summary

Title	Validating a Blog Containing Microteaching and Podcasting as a Virtual Learning Environment
Author(s)	Lina Xiomara Sanchez Suarez
Editorial	Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia
Date	Oral Defense Date (Month, Day, Year)
Keywords	Virtual Learning Environment, Constructivist Learning, Blogs, Podcasting, Microteaching.
Description	Research Project
Sources	Write the number of References per type: Primary Sources: 27 Secondary Sources: 28 Tertiary Sources: 15
Contents	Este proyecto de investigación analiza los hallazgos de una investigación convergente-mixta que integra datos cuantitativos y cualitativos realizados con profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera y estudiantes de pregrado de inglés de la UNAD. Este estudio tuvo como objetivo validar un blog como un entorno de aprendizaje virtual adecuado que podría brindar a los estudiantes y a las instituciones posibilidades flexibles para ingresar y estudiar los contenidos lingüísticos de su nivel, a su propio ritmo y sin problemas debido a limitaciones de tiempo o geográficas. Los instrumentos seleccionados para la recolección de datos en esta investigación incluyen

	<p>una lista de verificación basada en opciones de sí o no, un cuestionario cerrado y abierto y el informe del blog con el fin de obtener cualidades y cantidades sobre las concepciones de profesores y estudiantes sobre el entorno de aprendizaje. construido. El análisis de datos (enmarcado en el enfoque de la teoría de la triangulación) reveló que el blog creado para ser un entorno de aprendizaje virtual centrado en el aprendizaje constructivista tiene algunas fortalezas y debilidades en relación con las necesidades de la población. Sostengo que la estructura y características de un blog son apropiadas para construir un AVA, sin embargo, el creado en este proyecto requiere de más espacios de apoyo y retroalimentación entre docente-alumno y alumno-alumno para ofrecer una experiencia de aprendizaje más calificada e incluso obtener más información sobre el sistema de soporte en los AVA específicamente. Finalmente, se demostró que la microenseñanza y el podcasting también mejoraron el aprendizaje de los estudiantes al funcionar como técnica de transmisión de conocimientos.</p>
<p>Research Line</p>	<p>This is a convergent - mixed research that integrates quantitative and qualitative data to complement findings and get better interpretations on the same issue. In definitive mixed method allows complementing, comparing, and contrasting quantitative and qualitative results for a more complete and confident analysis. So, this is the best method to know how well the blog is working considering statistics and open comments from students and teachers' experiences and appreciations.</p>

	<p>The population was selected considering the non-probabilistic sampling based on purposive sampling due to the accessibility that the researcher had to them. The selected instruments for the data collection in this research were sent via e-mail and Microsoft Teams. They include a checklist based on yes-no options, a closed-open ended questionnaire, and the blog's report. This research follows the triangulation design based on the concurrent form to be able to obtain complementary data to making more rigorous conclusions.</p>
Conclusions	<p>In the face of the difficulties for students to attend synchronous classes, it is necessary to propose more learning opportunities. The blog's features demonstrated to be a proper media to build a VLE as an alternative space for learning progress, avoiding the geographical or temporary constraints. It is recommended to include in the VLEs a specific space that evidences the support and feedback between teacher-student and student-student in order to offer a more qualified learning experience and even get more information about the support system in the VLEs.</p> <p>In addition to improving teaching skills, microteaching also improves student learning, as it functions as a knowledge transmission technique. Similarly, podcasting works to transmit lectures, discussions and generate knowledge about a topic. In English language learning, podcasting serves to improve listening comprehension and is one of the most attractive strategies for language learners.</p>

	<p>A VLE should offer possibilities for communication between students and teacher-student, interactivity of the participants with the contents and materials, and a support space in terms of student-student and teacher-student feedback or help specifically.</p>
Advisor	Edith Lorena Grande Triviño

Abstract

This research project discusses the findings of convergent-mixed research that integrates quantitative and qualitative data conducted with teachers of English as a foreign language and undergraduate English students of UNAD. This study aimed to validate a blog as a proper virtual learning environment that could provide learners and institutions with flexible possibilities to enter and study the language contents of their level, at their own pace, and with no problem because of time or geographical constraints. The selected instruments for the data collection in this research include a checklist based on yes-no options, a closed and open-ended questionnaire, and the blog's report in order to get qualities and quantities about teachers' and students' conceptions regarding the built learning environment. Data analysis (framed upon the triangulation theory approach) revealed that the blog created to be a virtual learning environment focused on constructivist learning has some strengths and weaknesses concerning the needs of the population. I argue that the structure and characteristics of a blog are appropriate to build a VLE, however, the one created in this project requires more support and feedback spaces between teacher-student and student-student to offer a more qualified learning experience and even get more information about the support system in the VLEs specifically. Finally, it was shown that microteaching and podcasting also improved student learning as it works as a knowledge transmission technique.

Key words: Virtual Learning Environment, Constructivist Learning, Blogs, Podcasting, Microteaching.

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Introduction

In recent years, technology has played an important role in supporting human beings in the different fields for which they usually develop. Education, for example, has evolved until the current educational modality, well known as virtual education, online education, or distance education, which emerged to eliminate barriers to learning such as, the time or geographical constraints, reduce the costs of education, and democratize access to it worldwide. This paper discusses the validation of a blog containing microteaching videos and podcasting using digital tools to be an effective virtual learning environment. In addition, this research confirms the findings that technology has undoubtedly been an important tool for enhancing learning.

There are multiple digital worlds with specific functions and for specific purposes, that is why educators are increasing the use of digital technologies because they make it possible to create and adapt virtual learning environments according to the learners' needs. The possibility of recording and manage information to transmit it as knowledge is another characteristic of the current teaching strategies. That is possible through the video recording and audio recording functions which allow the creation of microteaching and podcasting that are teaching strategies to build learning. Blogs are also a special technology product to create communities and publish content on a specific topic working such an interaction and learning opportunity. Since students require the acquisition and improvement of English as a foreign language, these technologies (blog, podcasting and microteaching) allow the exposition of the language in different ways and facilitate students the effective practice of the communicative skills.

In that sense, this research study fulfills the creation of a didactically focused blog for English language learners. To make this blog didactic, it includes microteaching videos and podcasting to address convenient content to provide a meaningful learning experience for the blog users (learners). More than a repository for teaching and learning, it serves as an online environment for people to interact with the content transmitted through microteaching and podcasting, as well as a space for teacher and peer communication. This paper explains the whole research development, from the design and creation of the blog to its implementation and analysis. The blog is enabled and exposed to English language learners and professional teachers to eventually validate it as a virtual learning environment.

Significance of the Study

The UNAD is a distance university where the English language learners and teachers are online users who every time are looking for digital innovations which allow them to create strategies that facilitate the teaching – learning processes. There, English teachers offer synchronous or live classes to promote interaction and participation in the target language, but most of the students are unable to attend all of them, causing a delay and poor academic performance. The most critical fact is that English language learners are not sufficiently acquiring, developing, and practicing the foreign language, so English teachers and students are the most interested in learning about this study, as they could derive benefits from it.

Those issues have led to conclude that the students' attendance and active participation influence proficiency in the target language and academic success. "Several studies have revealed that class participation is positively correlated with academic achievement whereas non-participation causes poor academic outcomes". (Akpur, 2021, p.149). At UNAD, although students have the possibility to watch the video recordings of the live classes, they are not able to interact by asking or participating through its development; therefore, a new pedagogical strategy is needed to address this problem, one that allows enabling everyone to attend and participate in quality learning environments. In fact, the proposed blog to be a VLE provides opportunities for interaction and participation by chatting, commenting, or posting contents. By using a blog adapted as a VLE, teachers ensure that content reaches everyone, and learners can not only receive the information, but also to interact and comment on it.

It is true that the communicative language skills are acquired only by using and interacting with the language constantly in its all forms (listening, reading, writing, and speaking). That is why at UNAD and other English or foreign language academies, it is important to offer a pedagogical model with flexible learning environments such as the proposed through this study so that, all students especially those with access problems can attend and participate in adapted spaces to develop the skills assertively throughout the academic process, under the same conditions and opportunities.

This study proposes that a didactic blog which gathers microteaching, podcasting and opportunities for participation would be a proper virtual learning environment (VLE) for the delayed learners who need to catch up on their lessons, while participating and learning actively. This alternative may benefit not only to learners but also to teachers as a strategy to present and transmit knowledge, even it would be an advantage for student teachers who are in the pedagogical practices as an opportunity for the creation and design of didactic material, as well as to train their teaching skills.

Statement of the Problem

In the virtual English scenarios at UNAD, there has been evidence of low attendance to the synchronous meetings by students, which has caused them to fail in the development of average skills in the target language. The most common reasons why they are unable to attend and participate are because their schedules intersect with their work schedules, or because of interruptions in the internet connection or with the devices. This has caused lack of practice and low levels of confidence in the students to participate and interact in the target language during the meetings, as they have not been able to develop sufficient proficiency in its use. These difficulties imply a delay and poor academic outcomes especially on the part of those who cannot enter the live meetings, which also causes them to fail in the proposed learning objectives.

Validating a blog as a proper virtual learning environment could provide learners and institutions with flexible possibilities to enter and study the language contents of their level at their own pace and with no problem because of time or geographical constraints. The blog is a didactic tool composed of some pedagogical products that propose an ingenious teaching strategy even to enhance the autonomous learning. It can work not only for those who cannot attend the live sessions, but also for those who need extra language practice, also as a new pedagogical practice scenario, or as an alternative to recover the levels at which students should be.

Objectives

General Objective

To validate whether blogs containing microteaching and podcasting work as a virtual learning environment for English language learners who are unable to attend and participate in synchronous classes at UNAD.

Specific Objectives

To create the blog in Wix containing microteaching and podcasting to be applied to the population.

To evaluate the blog through the application of questionnaires in order to gather the opinion, and appreciation about it by part of users.

To apply a verification checklist to experts for validating the blog as an effective VLE.

Literature Review

Virtual Learning Environments (VLE)

Technologies are potential tools created by humans for many areas and fields of application; however, various authors assert that technology is not used to its full capacity to teach a wide population of students. For example, Kumar et al (1998) states that technology enables interaction between students and teachers and facilitates the creation of cost-effective and flexible learning environments as they present the teaching paradigm called Virtual Learning Environment, better known as VLE.

The existing internet and multimedia make it possible to build VLEs, where students and teachers do not have to meet at the same time or place, while the traditional classrooms have some limitations because students and teachers must meet at the same place (classroom) and at the same time (schedule). Expressed Kumar et al (1998) who further argue that within VLEs, students can receive the course content and material to study and interact with teachers according to their needs either personally or electronically. They consider that this new educational paradigm has great potential but is not fully developed or proven.

On the other hand, Borba et al (2015) cited by Borba et al (2018) indicate that distance education has been gaining strength in recent decades and is presented as an educational modality that seeks to democratize educational opportunities, as well as a way to confront the problem of the concentration of education in large urban centers. Authors also highlight to Brazil as one of the pioneer countries in this educational model, where distance education has known three generations. The first in the early 900s was based on technical training and was marked by

correspondence education. In the second generation, during the 1970s and 1980s, complementary distance courses were offered via satellite television and students received printed material to follow the classes, and the third generation began in the mid-1990s and continues today.

VLE Purposes and Composition

The objectives of the VLEs are explained by Kumar et al (1998) which are basically, to make education available for a vast population, to provide a learning environment that overcomes the time and location constraints of traditional teaching, to develop a learning space where students can learn at their own pace, and to provide a course repository for many universities. Even, VLEs work to build virtual institutions adapted with the application, registration, online courses, assignments, and tests modules. In other words, a VLE aims to offer a good alternative to the traditional face-to-face teaching environment, by presenting course materials with multimedia tools, such as, audio and video files.

Having the previous purposes in mind, Kumar et al (1998) state that the VLE system design is composed by some modules and functions as the table 1 shows.

Tabla 1

Composition of a VLE system design

Modules	Functions
Admission module	
Admission status module	Student admission and admission status monitoring.
Monitoring module	
Course registration module	Student registration for courses.
Course module	Interactive features for viewing lectures and study material.
	Student testing and assignments.
Communication module	Student-teacher and student-student communication.

Modules	Functions
Administrative Resources Module	Management of the entire VLE system.

Note. Adapted from “The Virtual Learning Environment system” by Kumar, A., Pakala, R., & Ragade, J, 1998, frontiers in Education Conference, 716(2).

All the modules are aligned to different functions of administrative and pedagogical type. The VLE system as a global design model is the most important because it is the main module through which the VLE offers the courseware. The components of the courseware are lectures (texts, audio clips, video clips, and links to related topics), assignments, and tests. Authors express that all this together will stimulate the interest in the course, since by offering this type of teaching, the learning mechanisms are enhanced.

VLE Benefits

VLEs are relatively new, existing research has focused on addressing the benefits and advantages of the VLE in schools. Becta (2004) presents some general benefits of VLE use, benefits to teachers, and benefits to students. The table 2 shows their classification.

Table 2

Classification of the VLEs benefits

Types of Benefits	Description
General benefits	Staff and learners find it easier to use ICT in an integrated environment. The software has a consistent look and feel throughout the organization. Communication channels through e-mail, discussion groups, and chat rooms are increased.

Types of Benefits	Description
Benefits for learners	<p>The flexibility of access "anytime, anywhere". (Jacobsen and Kremer, 2000) cited by (Becta, 2004).</p> <p>ICT can improve learning, writing, comprehension, and presentation. (Walt and Lloyd, 2000) cited by (Becta, 2004).</p> <p>Improve motivation and engagement. (Walts and Lloyd, 2000) and (Wilson and Whitelock, 1997) cited by (Becta, 2004).</p> <p>High levels of learning style development. (Gibbs, 1999) cited by (Becta, 2004).</p> <p>New approaches to learning through online discussion forums. (Gibbs, 1999) cited by (Becta, 2004).</p> <p>Increases self-study by student teachers willing to engage with technology and share personal views and experiences. (Russell, 2000) cited by (Becta, 2004).</p> <p>Passive student teachers are encouraged to contribute more effectively. (Tanner and Jones, 2000) cited by (Becta, 2004).</p> <p>Student teachers using webinars can increase their participation and performance. (Pilkington et al, 2000) cited by (Becta, 2004).</p> <p>It enhances student teachers' self-confidence and improves practice and collaboration. (Selinger, 1997) cited by (Becta, 2004).</p>
Benefits for teachers	

Note. Adapted from “What the research says about Virtual Learning Environments in teaching and learning,” by Becta, 2004, ICT research.

VLE Uses

Based on Becta (2004), the following are some uses of a VLE in secondary and higher institutions:

Table 3*VLE uses*

Use	Description
Support particular courses	Institutions that do not have enough students to maintain a traditional course, use VLEs to offer the course to students from more than one institution, achieving a sufficient population to justify the teaching resources.
Summative assessment	Online assessment techniques have proven to be more appropriate for formative assessment. However, a more controlled and structured VLE system may be useful for summative testing.
Cover	Having the content, outlines of work, class notes and assessment on the VLE covers the teacher's absence and can be much easier and more effective.
Extra support	EVEs can be useful in providing additional support, outside of the traditional schedule, to students who need it. This can supplement or even replace expensive in-home tutoring.
Inter- school collaboration	VLEs could be used as a means of fostering collaboration and joint working between institutions, both in the UK and internationally.
Catching up	EVEs are also used to provide work for students who are falling behind or to bring them up to a common level. For example, in the transition from primary to secondary school.

Note. Adapted from “What the research says about Virtual Learning Environments in teaching and learning,” by Becta, 2004, ICT research.

European Schoolnet (2003) cited by Becta (2004) found that secondary school teachers use VLEs as part of a mix of different teaching styles, including computer-based teaching with face-to-face teaching to form a blended learning approach. In addition, the findings show that

teachers use VLEs more than students, making use of their administrative and communicative skills, such as communicating and collaborating with international programs. The findings further suggest that in teaching, VLEs are generally used to teach ICT and other cross – curricular subjects (Becta, 2004).

Although there are many research studies, most of the time research has been done on the use of one or two functions of a VLE, but the impact of the entire VLE system has not been evaluated. Many of the schools using VLEs have only done so for a relatively short time. (Becta, 2004).

VLE Features

Kumar et al (1998) provide the following features of a basic VLE:

VLE only requires the Internet as a means of communication to offer the courses and it does not imply a significant cost for its development.

The VLE system is accessible from any computer in the world with an Internet connection.

The courses offered by the VLE can be taken at any time during the time the course is published on the web.

VLE systems began to spread widely in the late 1990s and quickly became a symbol of innovation. Dutton et al (2004). As VLEs allow access anytime and from anywhere, they have the potential to transform learning and teaching by enabling synchronous and asynchronous collaboration unconstrained by spatial and temporal boundaries. (Flavin and Bhandari, 2021).

Additionally, (Zabel & Almeida, 2015) as cited in (Borba et al, 2018) state that VLE is specifically characterized by offering higher education courses; therefore, Borba et al (2018)

emphasize that “VLEs have developed as a locus for enabling online teacher education” (p, 4). With the advent of the VLE, the need to train teachers to be online teachers has increased.

Positive Impacts of VLE

Scardamalia and Bereit (1996) as cited in Barker and Gossman (2013) advocate the positive impacts of using VLEs for student learning, concluding that VLEs maximize reflection, and encourage the progressive and independent thinking. In addition, the study conducted by Wernet et al (2000) cited by Barker and Gossman (2013) demonstrated that the use of VLEs is tailored to the needs of non-traditional social work students and that students' satisfaction with VLEs depends on their usefulness, exposure, access, usefulness of the technology and the tools used.

Accordingly, Diochon and Cameron (2001) as cited in Barker and Gossman (2013) corroborated the previous findings in a study based on undergraduate business students learning material accessible only through VLEs. They found that the need to be active learners when using the VLE increased students' enthusiasm, confidence, and capability. They created their own knowledge through collaborative experiences with peers from different locations, which enabled them to develop employability skills and competencies.

Downing and Chim (2004) convey that introverts who attend classes behave more like extroverts when participating in online discussion forums and consequently they are more active in online discussions than in face-to-face discussions. Then, Rogers (2004) as cited by Barker and Gossman (2013) supports Downing and Chim's findings by showing that 79% of a group of college students agree that learning through the VLE is more positive for studying, and the 28% of students preferred traditional classroom practices.

VLEs enhance learning, especially in terms of the possibility for reinforcement and for students to catch up on lost material. Means et al (2009) support the positive impacts of VLE by founding that the students using VLEs achieved a higher average learning rate than the face-to-face students. Then, Jewitt et al (2010) noted four advantages of VLEs: better organization of information and communication in schools, greater parental involvement, support for learning at home, and greater student choice and autonomy.

VLEs have several positive impacts reported by research from diverse contexts. Arbaugh (2000) found that the usefulness and flexibility of a VLE were positively associated with students' satisfaction with a course, and that the variety of multimedia factors, such as audio clips and podcasts, increased their motivation to learn. Similarly, Barker and Gossman (2013) briefly argued that VLEs can promote reflection, adapt to student needs, increase enthusiasm and confidence, improve readiness to learn, and widely reported above to improve course assessment performance.

Considering that VLEs effectively increase learner motivation, Jones et al (2006) cited by Jones and Issroff (2007) present six reasons why the use of a VLE can be motivating for learners:

Table 4

Reasons why VLE can motivate learners

Because of...	Description
Control over learning	In the online or informal learning contexts, such as a VLE, learners can control their own goals and are free to define the tasks and activities they wish to do. In this learning means there is a strong relation between the students' learning goals and their interests. Therefore,

Because of...	Description
Ownership	<p>intrinsic motivation is likely to be high, so students take responsibility for their own learning process.</p> <p>Ownership has been considered a motivating factor in learning and learning products. The domain to learn online at the time, place and pace of one's choice is highly motivating, as is having control and management of the learning process, as is the case when using VLEs. Mobile learning allows to access to resources and information in the context where they are needed and used, even “in the field” and to share this information with others. For example, biologists can access to digital sites or apps that help them to identify the species of plants during a field practice. This motivates learners to develop new learning experiences in relevant contexts.</p>
Contextual learning	<p>The mobile learning portability can provide continuity between different contexts, so the information or resources captured in certain context, can be transported to others. Therefore, learners can use devices to support their learning projects over time and in different places, it is a motivating factor as learning occurs easily and naturally.</p>
Continuity across contexts	<p>Mobile devices are used for entertainment, so the emotion and excitement for this use reveal that mobile device are identified as “fun”. Also, VLE allows users to communicate enabling and supporting the collaborative learning which implies working with others under the right conditions, and this in its nature is motivating.</p>
VLEs can be associated with fun and communication	

Note. Adapted from “Motivation and Mobile Devices: Exploring the Role of Appropriation and Coping Strategies” by Jones and Issroff (2007). *Research in Learning Technology*. 15(3).

Negative Impacts of VLE

It is also necessary to talk about the negative repercussions of VLEs. Crook (2000); Seabolt and Arends (2000), and Muirhead (2001) cited by Barker and Gossman (2013), stated that online learning does not allow for social and emotional interaction as is possible in traditional classrooms. This was confirmed by Piccoli et al (2001) as cited in Barker and Gossman (2013) who compare between classes using VLEs with traditionally taught classes, and the results showed no significant differences in learning performance between the environments, but students who participated in the VLE expressed less satisfaction with the learning process. Further, Robertson and Klotz (2002) stated that learners in a VLE lack the opportunity and benefits of structured dialogue and the sense of community that is created in a traditional face-to-face classroom setting.

Conole et al (2006) cited by Barker and Gossman (2013) concluded that VLEs are often used in passive rather than active learning, with a significant number of respondents noting that discussion forums are the least used technologies. In addition, Read et al (2013) demonstrate that the VLE is generally limited to use as a repository of work, facility to set assignments and share sites with learners, but very few staff members use the collaborative learning tools.

Recommendations to Use VLE

Considering that a VLE is a systematic platform or site for structured education and instruction, authors provide certain recommendations to access to and use it. Laurillard (2005), recommends that VLEs should be used to enhance learning and not merely as storage and communication facilities.

Additionally, some more defined management recommendations for the use of a VLE emerged from Barker and Gossman (2013) these are:

Provide ongoing staff training in the use and development of the VLE.

Ensure that all students have access to the VLE from home.

Consider minimum requirements for directed student use of the VLE.

Implement strategies to promote non-traditional use of the VLE.

Provide opportunities and flexibility to allow students to control their own learning using a VLE.

Ensure that the use of the VLE is interactive and not limited to a mere repository of information.

VLE Design Principles

A set of VLE design principles are provided by Beyond (2014) as cited in Isabwe (n,d). Those principles aid in the design of interactive systems for human use, considering the need to maximize memory load, maintain attention and concentration, minimize mental efforts during information processing, produce artifacts that are easier to recognize than having to remember them. With this in mind, table 5 shows and explains the principles chosen to design the VLE for this research.

Table 5

Principles for designing a VLE

Principle	Description
Visibility	This principle has to do with access, ease of learning and recall (learnability). A quality VLE provides good visibility of all the necessary components, it consists in being aware that not everything can be visible because it would

Principle	Description
	end up disorganizing the interface, instead it is necessary to classify the elements according to their relevance and place them.
Feedback	This principle has to do with ease of use and defines what actions have been performed. For this purpose, it can be an error message or a label that guides the user in performing the tasks.
Constraints	This principle has to do with security and emphasizes restricting the range of options for the user to interact with by simplifying the interface and directing the user to relevant subsequent actions.
Navigation	This principle has to do with ease of use. Navigation is the routes for users to interact and navigate through the site with ease. The navigation design system should always be simple, straightforward, and unadorned.
Flexibility	This principle has to do with adapting to and respecting people's differences (Accommodation). Flexibility offers learners multiple options for participation according to their needs.

Note. Adapted from “E-teaching and e-learning” by Ghislain Maurice N. Isabwe, no date. Transforming the way we teach and learn.

Other Findings Related

Jean (2009) suggests that the use of VLEs has an impact on student achievement by encouraging independent learning and increasing their motivation to learn. According to Jean (2009) reports published between 2005 and 2007 concluded that just over half of the schools surveyed rated the impact of VLEs on learning and teaching positively. In contrast, during the same research period, 58 out of 281 FE schools had VLEs and, of these, three-quarters indicated that VLEs helped learners.

On the other hand, Flavin and Bhandari (2021) published a study analyzing the existing literature review on VLE, also known as a learning management system, which has been supporting higher education for the past 20 years. They found that Newman et al (2018) demonstrated that 75% of students rely on their VLE to support their coursework. Similarly, Langer-Crame et al (2019) showed that 72% of students rely on their VLE to support their coursework. Flavin and Bhandari (2021) think that VLE studies are worth reflecting on because it is embedded in higher education and because e-learning has become the educational trend in the era of the covid-19 pandemic.

Risquez et al (2015), as cited in Flavin and Bhandari (2021) conducted a survey of VLE use in Ireland since 2008. Students wanted VLEs to be easy to navigate and noted the lack of teacher use as a barrier to engagement. Farrelly et al (2018) found that the most common use of VLEs was as a content repository and as a communication channel. Flavin and Bhandari (2021) mention that Cobo et al (2014) in a study from Spain, and Oproiu (2015) in a study from Romania found similar usage patterns. In addition, the articles on VLEs expose several underexplored areas, such as the comparison of active and relatively inactive geographic concentration of research, which in turn, may reflect uneven relationships in the design and implementation of VLEs and technology-enhanced learning more generally.

Borba et al (2018) present some appreciation of the tutors and students studied in their research. One of the tutors, states that studying in a distance education program is sometimes a shock for students as they feel the physical absence of their teacher, then, videos play a little bit of that role, all courses have videos and it helps a lot, expressed the tutor. This study highlights the importance of using videos if the teacher is not physically present, but also because they

allow students to be in contact with the classroom model that they possibly bring from the traditional classroom. One of the students expressed that the professor leaves available a series of videos already produced by the university, but that collection is more focused on the calculation of the content itself and when it is necessary to review, the students lead to YouTube videos.

Hamid et al (2018) conclude from the literature reviews on the term VLE and its use in universities, that the use of the VLE had positive impacts on students, even though they encountered numerous challenges in using the VLE, such as lack of skills and knowledge, but the positive attitude of the lecturers enabled them to overcome such obstacles, because it was demonstrated that, teachers with a positive attitude were better prepared to use the VLE than teachers with a negative attitude.

VLE Systems

Paulsen (2003) as cited in Flavin and Bhandari (2021), studied the VLE offering system at 113 European higher education institutions using 52 different VLEs before Moodle became available. The most popular system was WebCT, followed by the Norwegian system, Classfrontier, followed by Blackboard which merged with WebCT in 2005 and now operates as Blackboard. VLEs are usually produced in wealthy countries but are exported worldwide. Flavin and Bhandari (2021) state that Moodle is headquartered in Australia, however, the other major VLE systems, such as Blackboard is based in Washington, Saki was developed by some American universities and WebCT started in the USA.

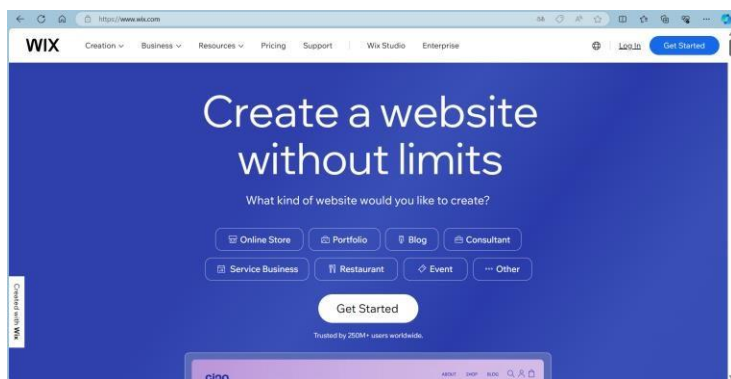
Alventosa et al (2014) found in their research that “Both, teachers and students who took part in the subjects that implemented the blog, considered it as helpful resource to create a virtual and learning-teaching environment due to the multiple potentialities it offers”. (p. 15). That

means it is possible to materialize a VLE by using didactic blogs as the main system provider.

Wix is a relatively new digital platform enable to create websites, blogs, and build e-commerce marketing. According to Guzman et al (2022) the Wix platform as a tool for website creation is a valuable contribution for teachers who want to develop digital resources in a simple way, with a wide variety of multimedia resources and free of charge. Also, “Wix has been studied as a repository for curricular content within the educational process. Concluding that there is a trend of progress in the academic performance of students in the experience with the Wix platform.” (Guzman et al, 2022, p, 391).

Figure 1

Wix platform overview



Note. The figure shows the principal panel to access to Wix platform with the different options for the creation of websites.

Then, the VLE system for this research is built in Wix platform in the form of a blog as it has potential features for pedagogical facilities. Dávila et al (2015) cited in Guzman et al (2022) refer to Wix as a practical content management platform, which facilitates and improves pedagogical practice, motivates learning, and actively links the different actors in the educational process, thus generating new learning structures in the student.

Blogs

"The blog", starting in 1999 when blogs were known as online journals or web diaries, however, a small percentage of people knew or had heard about it. It wasn't until an Iraqi known as Baghdad Blogger made it popular worldwide through the news when he told his story during the second world war; then blogs became recognizable and prevalent in daily life (Seitzinger, 2006).

Dieu (2004) defined a blog as a form of journalistic and personal expression characterized by listing dated news items authored by one or more individuals. It is an informal space and most of the time the blogger speaks in his or her own natural voice and tone. Also, like other multimedia, blogs are usually focused on a particular topic, such as food, politics, or local news. Some blogs work as online diaries, and a typical one includes text, images, and links to other websites and media related to its topic. Since their emergence in 1995, blogs have become a popular means of communication affecting public opinion and the media around the world. (Huetten, 2006). Following the above, blogs are one of the current media for people to express their thoughts or beliefs, show content of general interest, and promote online social interaction.

At the beginning, technology was not intended for education. However, with the arrival of the World Wide Web, learning moved a step forward and emerged a sub-entity, the e-learning or online learning. Seitzinger (2006) states that this new learning style leans towards a constructivist pedagogy in which collaborative learning is paramount.

Seitzinger (2006) published the paper "*Be constructive: Blogs, Podcasts, and Wikis as constructivist Learning Tools*" in which she states that blogs, podcasts, and wikis arose for no educational purpose, but she finds them to be potentially powerful tools and presents each

arguing for their relevance in education. Then, the author offers an overview of how assimilating these newcomers into the constructivist learning that is sought after. Further, Seitzinger justifies why these three media are worth highlighting, as they are very popular and widely available in new media. For example, "Blog" was the word of 2004 in Merriam-Webster, "Podcast" was the word of 2005 in the New Oxford American Dictionary, and Wikipedia as well as The Encyclopedia Britannica demonstrate the success of wikis.

Blogs has also evolved as EduBlogs becoming very popular in the educational field, as they have proven to be effective for teaching and learning. It was in the 2000s when blogs started to be a tendency in education, and several universities around the world have begun using blogging tools, including, for example, the University of Iowa, Rice University, and Harvard University. Stanford University and RMIT University in Melbourne also plan to use blogs. (Williams and Jacobs, 2008).

Blogs for Constructivist Learning

Constructivism focusses on learner- centeredness, that means students play an active role in building their own knowledge and must be responsible for their own learning process. Miers (2004) cited by Seitzinger (2006) provides a concise and practical definition of constructivist learning, as table 6 shows.

Table 6

Constructivist learning definition by Jackie Miers, 2004.

Definition	Description
Active and manipulative	Constructivist learning involves students in interactions and explorations using materials and providing opportunities to observe the results of such manipulations.

Definition	Description
Constructive and reflective	Constructivist learning allows students to use their prior knowledge to come up with new ideas and create new meaning and learning through reflection.
Intentional	Providing students with opportunities to articulate their learning goals and monitor their progress in achieving them.
Authentic, challenging, and real or simulated world	Constructivist learning facilitates better understanding and transferring the learning to different situations relevant to real contexts.
Cooperative, collaborative, and conversational	Constructivist learning allows students to interact with each other, clarifying and sharing ideas to seek help, discuss problems, and find solutions together.

Note. Adapted from “Be Constructive: Blogs, Podcasts, and Wikis as Constructivist Learning Tools” by Joyce Seitzinger, (2006). Learning Solutions E-magazine.

After analyzing the theory of the previous author and others more, Seitzinger (2006) concluded 7 elements that seem to be key components for online constructive learning:

Problem-based learning

Learner-centeredness

Collaborative learning

Social presence

Interactivity

Support

Cognitive tools

Blogs in Education

Seitzinger (2006) brings up Stephen Downes an expert on online learning who considers open media, such as blogs, podcasts, and wikis as the key to the future of learning. Downes (2004) revealed in his speech that, there is a difference between learning content producers and users because while producers focus on doing everything in closed systems, users seek to use open systems. So, he affirms the convergence between open media and constructivist learning, since these three: blogs, podcasts, and wikis require the users to construct their own content.

Additionally, Seitzinger refers to Shola Adenekan, a BBC reporter who told a story of blog usage in education at Sussex University, where one of the teachers accidentally stumbled upon the use of a blog for her courses when she set up a personal one for her own research. Adenekan (2005) expressed that as she added more and more posts, the blog slowly became a place for students to find critical information and a location for her to provide answers to their questions.

Similarly, the case of Richardson (2004) who is behind the famous Weblogg-ed.com which is a widely read blog about Edublogging, this means using blogs in education, as well as blogging with learning. Richardson quits his job to pursue the possibilities of blogging in education, since as he described, he feels energy and potential in this tool and in the connections that for him are incredibly intriguing, further he argues that people need to get everybody, access to the knowledge and ideas that are making up the web, he believes that educators need to be part of this digital evolution, and why not the revolution too.

Seitzinger (2006) also presents the blogs as tools for reflection and authenticity. She says that one of the most pertinent ways to use blogs in constructivist learning is as an online journal

for students to reflect on the learning materials and content, as well as to create perceptions about their own learning process. Edublog Insights and Weblogg-ed are sites where educational bloggers reflect on what are learning about learning.

On the other hand, Lowe and Williams (2004) used blogs for their writing classes, and they found them as useful cognitive tools because they automate the creation, formatting, and uploading of material, making it easier for learners to focus on the actual task at hand. They also noticed that including a real audience by posting assignments on the web creates authentic speech and boosts students to think more carefully about articulation, and this potential of the actual readers combined with the feedback received has a positive influence on the writing skills of students.

Blogs and networks of blogs can facilitate the creation of learners' communities and social presence. Glogowski (2005) cited in Seitzinger (2006) was a student who researched in the use of edublogs and according to his experience, he confirmed his belief that blogging is about creating communities. He further noticed that students were eager to fill in the new empty blogs that were not "their" community, but "their" community fueled their learning.

Seitzinger (2006) further talks about group blogs as facilitators for collaborative knowledge building, by referring to Tom Nelson's lecture which confirms this. Nelson divided his class into blog groups according to topic interest and asked students to set up their own guidelines to include in the blog, deciding on content, style, and length. They were also asked to look for a target particular audience by generating "blog rolls", listing relevant links to other blogs on the same topic, and giving them an idea of where their own thoughts and writing fit in.

This allows for the development of larger group blog networks that become a knowledge community in their own right.

Seitzinger (2006) adds that the comments on the blog posts are powerful tools for feedback, as they provide immediate and detailed responses about the student's ideas and thoughts. She refers to Anne Davis, a student who posted about her enthusiasm for comments and the learning opportunities that they offer. Anne thinks that the best classroom discussions arise from comments since she can share with others, and talk about what makes her think, pause, and rethink; everyone enjoys sharing those valuable learnings that occur. Moreover, reading comments and commenting also generates a construction of combined meaning that comes from thinking about what was written to what other people wrote.

Following the above, Seitzinger (2006) infers that when reading comments on own posts and responding in comments to other's blog posts forces students to develop higher cognitive skills. In that dynamic, learners cannot just browse; they need to ponder, formulate an opinion about what is posted, and then effectively articulate those ideas, basically being active learners.

Blogs in EFL

In English language learning, blogs work effectively for the development of conversational skills. In conversation-based classes, blogs can be used as a bulletin board for students to post messages, images, and links related to class discussion topics. It can also be a space for them to post on a common topic assigned as homework. (Chengyi, 2006). Additionally, blogging fosters a relationship with an audience beyond the instructor. This can motivate more thoughtful writing, including expanding new vocabulary to accurately convey the ideas of student bloggers. (Arena, 2008).

However, Selami (2014) states "with respect to speaking skills, while blogs are effective for developing skills related to conceptualization, brainstorming, articulation, monitoring, evaluating, self-presentation and information exchange, they have no effect on fluency, accuracy, language complexity, or pronunciation." (p. 252). But few studies have dealt with that, so the effectiveness of blogs for language learning is worth exploring further.

There are some researches focused on the study of educational blogs for language learning and reinforcement of writing skills, as is the case of Akdağ and Özkan (2017) who highlight the potentialities of using blogs for enhancing the students' writing skills while acquiring a new language. Nonetheless, it is necessary to investigate more about the functionalities of blogs and check if they can be used to enhance the four basic communication skills and not only for writing, since there are not many inquiries about it.

Blogs Composition and Features

Usually blogs have the same structure, they are composed by a header with the menu or navigation bar, the blog's posts which contain the main content and within them occur the interactivity, such as, chats, comments sections, and other communication media, another blog's component is the footer where privacy policy, contact page, and other disclaimer links are posted. For this research, it was designed an EFL didactic blog considering the basic structure and based on the blogs features provided by Ai Vu (2019) who focused on the composition of posts as the most relevant part in blogs, and Minaev (2023) who presents the features of a quality blog and posts. The blog's overview is showed in figure 1.

Figure 2

Blog's overview with its basic feature



Note. The arrows in the figure point out the basic features that compose a blog.

Table 7

Blog's features

Feature	Description
Headline	<p>It is the blog's title; this must be interesting to capture the audience's attention. The headline is supposed to inform the potential readers about the main topic, the content, and who may benefit from it in a few words. It is important to think carefully about what words and expressions the best will be to express briefly what's the blog about in a title. For example, in this research, the blog's headline is "Interactive Microteaching and Podcasts for Students of Intermediate English Level." This title includes what will be shown (microteaching and podcasts), how will be shown (videos and audio), and who it will benefit (intermediate English learners).</p>

Feature	Description
Introduction	<p>It defines whether students stay in the blog or just leave. The introduction is the space to expose the main blog's goal and go deeper into what it is going to be about, and why and how they will benefit. In the blog conducted for this research, the introduction was in the form of a video, in which the teacher welcomes and explains how students will benefit from this blog and talks about what they will find throughout this.</p>
Content	<p>It is the main part of the blog; the content must fulfill what is promised in the headline. It means the content must be in line with what is stated in the titles and please the students based on them. It can be in the form of texts, photos, infographics, or videos. For this research, the content is shared in the form of audio podcasts and video-microteaching focused on language learning.</p>
Post	<p>It is the entry that stores the content and leads the audience through it. A post contains headlines and subheadings to highlight the topics, the main content, and the comments section. There are different types of posts, such as informative posts, posts about X or Y, reviews, etc. In this research, the blog posts show educational content centered on language learning, the number of views for the content, the comments sections, and the reaction button to indicate that the student liked the material and/or assignments. The figure 2 shows a post composition and its features as the main part of the blog.</p>

Note. Adapted from “10 Characteristics and Features of a Good Blog” by Artem Minaev (2023). FirstSiteGuide.

Figure 3

Post blog composition with its specific features



Note. This figure shows the features that compose a post blog, they are highlighted by arrows pointing to the term in each one of these.

Table 8

Main features of a post blog

Feature	Description
Blogger	The person who creates and shares the blog's content, usually centered on a particular topic, and talks about his/her perspectives and opinions around the theme to the readers. A blogger spends a lot of time on the blog, either researching and creating content, editing and publishing posts or reading and writing about comments from users, who are the people interested in consuming the content and interacting on the blog. In this case, the blogger centers the content on language teaching and learning.
Keyword phrase	Most of the audience prefers to scan the blog and look for specific statements rather than reading word by word. Using attractive keyword phrases in the blog and posts ensures that the entire audience will take a look at the content and, why not, end up interacting with it. The keywords must attract readers

Feature	Description
Post-comments section	<p>with a genuine interest in what the blog has to offer. Considering the previous features of how keywords should be; the keywords used in the blog for this research look a little flat. However, these are assertive and specific in what they try to expose.</p> <p>This is the principal means by which teachers and students can interact, it looks like a chat box where they may ask, answer, provide opinions, look for help, leave inspirational writings, etc. The comments section in the blog for this research is exclusively for students to solve assignments, receive the teacher's feedback, and comment about the content.</p>

Note. Adapted from “Guide to Design Database for Blog Management in MySQL”. By Dinh Ai Vu (2019). Scribd.

Podcasting

According to Kennedy et al (2008), podcasting has a significant uptake. They perceive that students are increasingly using new technologies in their daily lives, which opens up new opportunities to include these technologies (podcasting) in the higher education experience. Likewise, Harris and Park (2008) as cited in McGarr (2009) confirm that the increased use of podcasting in education can change the teaching and learning experience. They point out that podcasting is more than summarizing lectures, it is also a means of providing current academic material, such as news. They believe that this type of use creates constant communication and interaction between teachers and students as they engage in academic discussions and access current issues.

Copley (2007) cited by McGarr (2009) notes that many universities are using podcasting to deliver supplemental lectures to students. It also works according to student convenience,

connection, and control. William and Fardon (2007) state that the ability to replay podcasts helps students review and comprehend. Lazzari and Betella (2007) also noted this podcasting trend, however, they caution that the literature is not well supplied with case study examples and evaluations of its use. Several studies provide insights into some relevant issues related to the use of podcasting and its influence on the traditional lecture.

The Influence of Podcasting in Traditional Lecture

Firstly, McGarr focuses on examining the benefits and limitations of the traditional lecture bringing up Kozma et al (1978) as cited in McGarr (2009) who note that the lecture's evolution as the main teaching system in European universities emerged as the most effective method to transmit information from exclusive books to a large group of students. Further, Edwards et al (2001) say that lecturing is the main teaching system used in higher education; they point out that lecture's prevalence has influenced the very structure of the teaching and learning environment with fixed-point podiums and staggered seating for large numbers of students. In addition, Behr (1988) cited by McGarr (2009) states that the term lecturer is preferred by most academic staff to the term teacher.

Lectures have several educational advantages, Edwards et al (2001) claim that while bad lectures make the learner bored and frustrated, good ones can inspire. For Dolnicar (2005), effective lectures provide the excitement of intellectual discovery through the presentation of challenging and provocative ideas. Dolnicar further adds that lecturers can relate the lecture's content to their students' prior knowledge and apply it to real-life examples. According to Moore et al (2008) lectures enable students to understand engagement and areas that they would

otherwise find difficult to learn. The lectures help them to better manage their learning experiences.

Even with the current emergence of various technologies and information media, lecturing still remains, claimed McGarr (2009). There are many reasons for its prevalence. According to Kozma et al (1978) cited by McGarr (2009) from an economic point of view, the lecture is relatively inexpensive and has outperformed the competition of new technologies, since the preparation time for the lecture is less than that of other media.

However, lecture as a delivery system also has drawbacks. Williams and Fordon (2007) consider the role and effectiveness of lectures in higher education to be a highly debated topic. For Isaacs (1989) as cited in McGarr (2009) lecture is characterized by transferring the lecturer's notes to students without any thinking or processing of the information. Black (2005) thinks that overemphasis on the teacher rather than the learner contributes to isolation and disengagement of the learner from the class, which discourages critical thinking and content analysis. Similarly, Gibbs et al (1987) cited by McGarr (2009) observed that lectures induce a passive mentality in students.

Gibbs et al (1987) cited by McGarr (2009) were aware of accelerating teaching trends that focus pedagogy on learners rather than teachers but, assert that this trend has been curtailed due to resource constraints and that large lectures remain in many institutions for their resource efficiency rather than their effectiveness.

Tormey and Hency (2008), state that traditional lectures (currently also known as teaching) do not take contemporary thinking into account. The passive role that students develop in most classes is at odds with current thinking, which insists on the need for more learner-

centered learning strategies, therefore podcasting has emerged as a method to enhance lectures. (McGarr, 2009). A podcast can be defined simply as an MP3 file that can be recorded with a microphone on the computer or via phone. Also, using RSS (Really Simple Syndication) listeners can subscribe to certain podcast feeds and receive new podcasts for downloading. According to Frydenberg (2006) and Nathan and Chan (2007) both cited by McGarr (2009) much of what is written about podcasting refers to its ability to improve the convenience, flexibility, and accessibility of learning; for these reasons, many professional educators have become aware of the possibilities of podcasting in education.

In recent years podcasting has experienced significant growth in education, driven by claims of its value in supporting mobile learning and enhancing the student experience. In higher education, for example, podcasts are often used to convey information initially retained in the traditional classroom. McGarr (2009). Due to the potential of podcasting, McGarr wonders what the impact of podcasting on the traditional classroom is, what its pedagogical uses are, and if it can facilitate more flexible and mobile learning. Considering the reviews, McGarr believes that the purpose of using podcasting can be divided into three broad categories: improving the flexibility of learning, increasing the accessibility of learning (especially to enable mobile access), and improving the learning experience for learners. (2009).

Kaplan-Leiserson (2005) cited by Seitzinger (2006) mentioned how podcasting can help auditory learners and non-native speakers, create an alternative channel for reviewing material, provide feedback, enable review of lectures or training, and provide supplemental content. Even before, Sloan (2004) as cited in Seitzinger (2006) offered some ideas in the post "Podcasting for education."

To facilitate self-learning

To allow teachers to offer additional content to advanced or highly motivated learners.

To record interviews with external experts.

To offer guest speakers the opportunity to deliver a presentation in multiple classes to provide a richer learning environment.

There are three main types of podcasting use: substitutive, supplemental, and creative. According to McGarr (2009), the most common purpose is to provide recordings of previous lectures to students for review and revision purposes (substitutive). The second most common use is to provide additional material, often in the form of study guides and summary notes, to broaden and deepen students' understanding (supplemental). The third and least common use is the creation of student-generated podcasts (creative use). In this project, the podcast will have a complementary use that has to do with the second use mentioned above.

Podcasting as a Constructivist Learning Tool

Jonassen (1999) as cited in Seitzinger (2006) presented podcasting as an auditory aid in case-based teaching. He justifies podcasts as useful tools for solving personal dilemmas because they allow discussion of various issues, listeners can listen as many times as they want and then meet in class and discuss the case. Explained Seitzinger (2006).

Some podcasting feedback and social presence were presented in Seitzinger's (2006) document. She states that when groups work together to produce a podcast and it is published on the web, the comments received can be as striking as those described by Anne Davis about her enthusiasm for the comments on the blog posts. Seitzinger also describes Jo MacLeay's case when her class created a podcast that was commented on and caused many reactions, which

made Jo reflect on the real potential of this technology and the learning that can produce.

Seitzinger considers that podcasts also work as an aid for social presence, where students can upload an introductory podcast or teachers can provide personal feedback on assignments by recording mini podcasts.

For those students who are not strong writers, podcasting may be another medium for reflection and articulation of their thoughts, since they can record, listen to, and ponder them. So, as predicted by both Stephen Downes and Karl Kapp, cited in the list of Lisa Neal (2006) the potential for reflection and articulation only expands. Again, podcasting provides the most obvious way to support constructive learning because as it was shown in the 2005 Newsweek article, professors may make their academic podcasts mandatory listening and then hold meaningful group discussions based on those lectures. Interview with an expert is another effective way to use podcasts in constructive learning, stated Seitzinger (2006).

As her conclusion, Seitzinger (2006) argues that if individuals cannot get started with a large-scale, organization-wide constructivist learning system, then blogs and podcasts can be powerful tools for getting started with small-scale constructivist learning, even if only as an adjunct to a traditional training or course. Any of these open media could be a full-fledged part of a constructivist learning environment (CLE) and possibly a combination of these tools could constitute an entire CLE.

Podcasting as Mobile Learning

McGarr (2009) states that new digital technologies have increased flexibility for learners through the use and distribution of audio and video files directly to the learner's desktop. Today, learners can subscribe to automatic downloads of new materials once they become available,

thus, learners can access them at their own time and place. This automatic distribution of materials undoubtedly increases the learner's flexibility in accessing course content.

Evans (2008) mentions that the time demands of today's students represent a force for them to study when the opportunity arises, it may be on the bus, train, or car, at night, on weekends, or during lunch breaks. These demands require portable technologies to open the material when they can, this is called "mobile learning", which is widely used in distance learning courses. According to Lee and Chan (2008), mobile learning is the perfect complement to distance education, as there are many idle moments in students' day, for example, while waiting for or riding public transportation. Mobile learning allows them to undertake learning while doing other tasks, as many learners are connected to cell phones, laptops, and handheld devices.

Lee and Chan (2008) announced a study in which podcasting was used to deliver supplementary material to distance learning students at an Australian university to examine the level of acceptance, the perceived value of podcasts, and the student's preferred way of using them. They note that students did not combine listening to podcasts with other tasks, because they considered it a learning activity that merited a formal study effort requiring absolute attention and concentration in a specific study location, (usually at home).

This is confirmed in the study by Evans (2008) in which podcasting was applied to 196 undergraduate business and management students at a UK university. Evans observed that, as in Lee and Chan's study, most students listened to the podcast on a computer from a specific location and not from a mobile device anywhere. He also argued that podcasting can fill an important gap in needs by allowing students to continue learning activities when this would not

normally be possible. However, podcasts do not seem to make multitasking much easier, as most people stated that they did not do any other activities while listening to podcasts.

Case Studies Related to Podcasting in Education

Besser et al (2022) present three real case studies of podcasting implementation in different educational contexts: elementary, secondary, and higher education.

The first case study was conducted in an elementary school with English language learners, where teacher Dakota implemented podcasting to improve students' speaking skills, by asking a target group of English language learners to record a collaborative podcast. Dakota's experience demonstrated that students can further develop their interpersonal skills while participating in the podcasting experience. Specifically, by participating in the podcasting process, students had the opportunity to reinforce several 21st-century skills, such as collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity.

The second case study takes place at Underwood High School, where teacher Jordan works with a group of English language learners in a traditional face-to-face class, Jordan creates a kind of close reading podcast assignment for groups of 2 or more students. They are asked to record a collaborative podcast to discuss in 5-7 minutes the personal, real-world, or thematic connections they make about a novel. Jordan demonstrates that podcasting engages students in dialogue with peers and adults to explore the meaning and interaction of ideas, concepts, and elements of the text, reflecting, constructing, and articulating new knowledge.

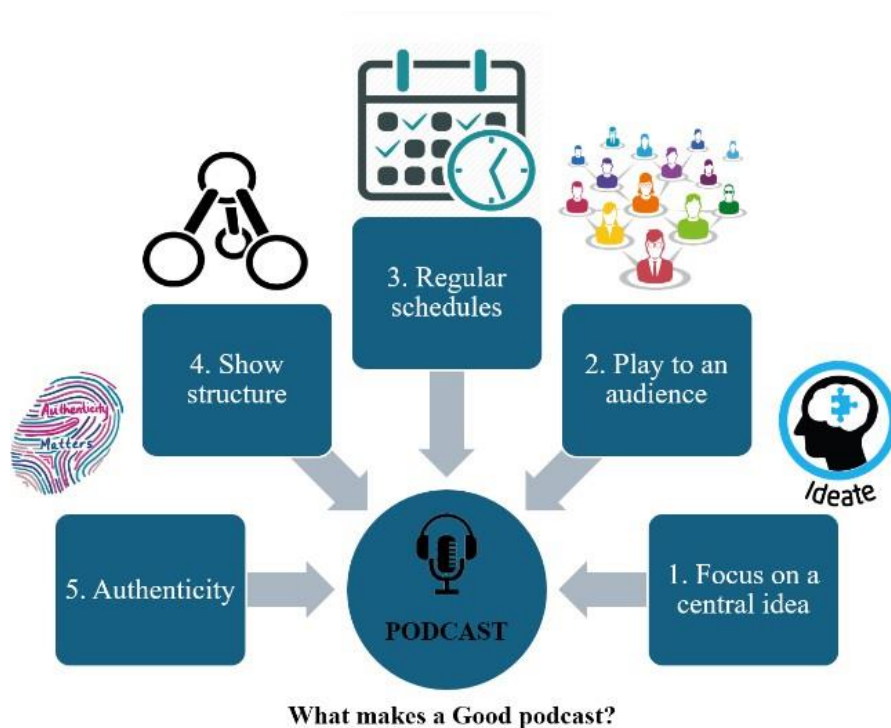
The third case study was conducted at Fairway Teaching College, where instructor Rory teaches online courses related to the design and development of emerging technologies for

teaching use. Rory finds that podcasting serves to reinforce many technical skills, allows for variation in assessment, and facilitates feedback.

In this project, podcasts were created as a supplementary teaching resource for English learners as they need to practice the communicative language skills, therefore podcasts are presented to allow learners to train the listening skill, acquire new vocabulary, and develop knowledge. To offer a quality product, the podcasts were recorded considering some key elements that make a good podcast provided by the expert in podcasting Piper Thomson as the figure shows.

Figure 4

Elements that make a good podcast



Note. This figure shows important elements to keep in mind when making podcasting.

Table 9

Description of the key elements to create a good podcast.

Focus on a central idea	Play for an audience	Regular schedule	Program structure	Authenticity
Every podcast tries to transmit knowledge and points of view on specific topics to an audience. A good podcast has a well-defined central idea and knows what it wants to say and how best to express it. If a podcaster is interested in cooking recipes but spends most of his recording talking about the night's soccer game, it is a clear message to the audience that they should look	The audience is paramount. This is something that a good podcaster must fully understand. Podcasts have the potential ability to target a specific niche in whatever topic they address; unlike traditional radio which, due to time constraints, had to appeal to as many listeners as possible. With this change, knowing who the content is aimed at is more important than ever. Good podcasters know what their audience	All good podcasts have a regular publishing schedule. Podcast consumers have expectations of content creators - after all, they're doing like a TV show - and it's crucial to have a publishing schedule to engage the audience and increase the	In podcasting, there is a unique relationship between the presenter and the listener. Good podcasters open up and speak from their authenticity and vulnerability, inviting listeners to engage with them. They become characters in the drama of their programs, and this empathetic bond between the audience and podcaster is crucial to maintaining	In podcasting, there is a unique relationship between the presenter and the listener. Good podcasters open up and speak from their authenticity and vulnerability, inviting listeners to engage with them. They become characters in the drama of their programs, and this empathetic bond between the audience and podcaster is crucial to maintaining

Focus on a central idea	Play for an audience	Regular schedule	Program structure	Authenticity
elsewhere for cooking content. Implicit in every podcast episode is a promise: that the creator will explore to some extent the ideas that form the core of the program.	is looking for, what knowledge is common among those interested in a particular topic, and what problems they could solve through their podcast content.	visibility of the content.	interest in a program.	interest in a program.

Note. Adapted from Thomson (2019). What Makes a Good Podcast? 5 Elements You Should Know.

Microteaching

Microteaching is a learning term defined as a teaching training technique to learn and develop teaching skills. It includes real teaching situations and helps to acquire deeper knowledge about the art of teaching. Allen and Wang (1968) cited by Rohmah (2021).

Microteaching was initially carried out at Stanford, USA in 1963, as an effort to improve the quality of professional teachers. (Rohmah, 2021), this author adds that microteaching works as a method to enhance teaching skills by simplifying learning aspects, such as didactic materials, number of learners, and application of specific teaching skills, so that, teachers can effectively know their strengths and weaknesses. Regarding the microteaching phases, Peker (2009) reminds the common microteaching steps of techniques that consist of "Plan, teach, criticize, re-plan, re-teach, and re-criticize." (p. 874).

Definition of the Term “Microteaching”

There are several aspects and definitions of "microteaching" that Rohmah, (2021) raises by citing different experts, among them, Arifin (2016) cited by Rohmah (2021) who states that microteaching is a method used in teaching and learning environments, where a group of future teachers practice to master basic teaching skills, recording the process in a supervised video, and the teachers exchange roles becoming students and teachers. Likewise, Asril (2011) cited by Rohmah (2021) defined microteaching as a real teaching model where five to ten people participate, and the time ranges from ten to fifteen minutes, focusing on certain teaching skills and simplifying the subject matter. Furthermore, Hasibuan et al (2014) cited by Rohmah (2021) consider microteaching as "a method of teaching performance training designed to clearly isolate the component parts and process of teaching so that teachers or prospective teachers can master basic teaching skills one by one in simplified situations." (p. 9).

Microteaching Functions

According to Rohmah (2021) microteaching has many functions. It serves to provide new teaching and learning experiences. In the case of teachers, microteaching serves to provide them with skills and as a means of feedback on their performance, so that both student teachers and teachers can gain information about their strengths and weaknesses in teaching. In addition, microteaching allows teachers to test new learning methods before applying them in the classroom. Helmiati (2013) cited by Rohmah (2021) argues that microteaching works to encourage prospective teachers, through psychomotor, and reactive and interactive cognitive

skills. Additionally specifies the 4 functions of microteaching, namely the instructional function, the orienting function, the integral function, and the experiential function, with the idea of bringing together the necessary teaching competencies.

Microteaching Objectives

Regarding the purposes of microteaching, Barnawi and Arifin (2016) as cited by Rohmah (2021) state that "the purpose of microteaching is to equip and/or improve the performance of trainee teachers or teachers in conducting teaching and learning activities through training in teaching skills." (p. 11). They further state that microteaching aims to bring together teaching theory and practice and prepare the pre-service teacher before teaching in schools. According to Hasibuan et al (2014) as cited by Rohmah (2021) the following are the expected objectives of microteaching:

Help student teachers master certain teaching competencies, so that they do not experience difficulties in training.

To increase the level of teaching competence, ensuring mastery of skills that will eventually be integrated into actual teaching.

Continuously train teachers and professors in the hope that they will discover their own teaching deficiencies and try to solve them.

Provide opportunities for micro-teaching exercises to enable teachers to master a specific teaching skill in order to become qualified and competent teachers.

Support efforts to improve the skills, abilities, effectiveness, and efficiency of teachers' practices during the teaching and learning process.

Skills Developed in Microteaching

There are some aspects of skills in microteaching; Barnawi and Arifin (2016) cited by Rohmah (2021) present them as the table 10 shows.

Table 10

Skills developed through microteaching

Skills	Description
Lesson opening and closing	Refers to the ability to mentally precondition and focus students' attention on what they are going to learn. Lesson opening consists of directing the learners to the topic and should be considered at the beginning of each part of the lesson. On the other hand, the ability to close the lesson is to be able to efficiently conclude the essence of each activity, there should be an overview of what has been learned and achieved, as well as the success of the teacher. It should be taken into account not only at the end of the lesson, but also at the end of each activity throughout the entire lesson.
Explanatory skill	This refers to the ability to present the didactic material in an organized and systematic way, so that it is easy to understand by the students. Explanatory activity has three components: the delivery of the message, the target, and the message. The objective of the explanation activity is to make the learners understand what is being learned rather than to make them memorize it; it should be

Skills	Description
Skills to create variation in teaching	<p>outstanding and meaningful. Prior to the explanation activity, it is necessary to organize a plan and be aware of the content of the material as well as the conditions of the learners to present the material with the proper technique to make it understandable.</p> <p>Refers to the ability to apply various teaching skills to encourage students by making the learning atmosphere attractive, where they feel passionate and enthusiastic about receiving the learning. This skill aims to eliminate boredom during the process, maintain optimal learning conditions, increase learners' attention, and state, and facilitate learning achievement.</p>
Reinforcement skills	<p>These refer to the ability to favor an increase in the quality of behavior in order to maintain and enhance certain behaviors by giving positive responses.</p>
Asking skills	<p>It refers to the ability to obtain feedback from other people, as every teaching, evaluation, measure, and assessment is done by asking questions. The purpose of this skill is that learners feel motivated to participate in the learning interactions, can express their opinions, and improve their thinking patterns.</p>
Classroom management skills	<p>These skills create and maintain optimal learning conditions and restore them in case of learning disruption. The classroom</p>

Skills	Description
Small group and individual teaching ability	<p>management component is divided into two, namely preventive and curative components. The preventive components create and maintain optimal learning conditions; while the curative components are related to actions to restore optimal learning conditions.</p> <p>This refers to the ability to teach 3-8 students per group and individual teaching is the teacher's ability to determine time, teaching materials, and teaching objectives, and to be aware of student differences. A good teacher should organize students according to the subject matter, teaching objectives, learning needs, time, and tools available.</p>
Skills to guide small group discussions	<p>It refers to the capacity to direct group debates by the teacher. In the teaching activities, the teacher sometimes carries out group work. However, in a discussion activity, students use to train about things outside the material, therefore, teachers must know how to guide the debates in small groups to ensure the debate continuity.</p>

Note. Adapted from Barnawi and Arifin (2016) cited by Rohmah (2021) in “Microteaching: Preparation and Performance”. Pustaka Learning Center.

Preparation of Microteaching

Rohmah (2021) mentions relevant aspects of microteaching preparation considered to carry out the microteachings in this research, which refers to the development of a plan for each

type of teaching skill to be trained. Elements of planning include the determination of objectives, materials, methods, means, and evaluation. Further, Kurniasih and Berlin (2014) cited by Rohmah (2021) present the six basic principles for lesson plan preparation, these are, paying attention to individual differences, encouraging active student participation, developing a reading, and writing culture, providing feedback and follow-up, linkage and integrated, and applying information and communication technology.

In addition, Sudjana and Riva'l (2002) cited by Rohmah (2021) recall the importance of using media in teaching processes, referring to graphics, three-dimensional media, or projection media. Based on technological advances, learning media would be grouped into four groups, such as media produced by printed technology, media based on computer technology, and media combined with printed and computer technology.

To carry out microteaching, it is important to know the stages of its activities, which are divided into three stages. The first is the cognitive stage, where the teacher understands what the basic teaching skills are, why they are necessary and how to practice them. The second is the implementation stage when the teacher practices the basic teaching skills by preparing the lesson plan, the media to be used and all that is required to be professional educators. The third is the feedback stage when peers provide an evaluation related to the trainee teacher's strengths and weaknesses, which will be discussed and can be used as a source of material to improve their performance as a professional educator (Rohmah, 2021).

Practices in Microteaching

To conclude, the following are the common practices in microteaching reunited by Rohmah (2021) product of a deep literature review.

The class time, content scope, and time frame are all reduced.

The class is smaller than usual, with five-eight peers, not the twenty-five or thirty regular students.

Participants may be from different disciplines and may not be familiarized with the content.

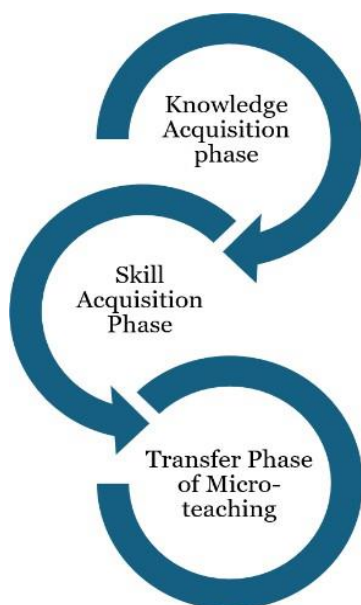
Lessons are shorter than usual, fifteen minutes rather than a regular period or two.

Contents must be according to the time specified.

However, there are some phases or steps to keep in mind as part of the practice of microteaching and its good development. Figure 5 shows what the cycle of phases of microteaching looks like.

Figure 5

Cycle of the phases in a microteaching



Note. This figure shows the cycle followed by the microteaching phases. Adapted from “Microteaching, an Efficient Technique for Learning Effective Teaching”. By Chaman Lal Banga (2014). Scholarly research journal for interdisciplinary studies.

Table 11*Description of each phase in the microteaching development*

Phase	Description
Knowledge acquisition	<p>In this phase, the trainee teacher learns about his or her skills and their components by discussing, illustrating and demonstrating the skills imparted by the expert. He/she learns the purposes of the skills and the conditions under which they are useful during the teaching-learning process and analyzes the components of the skills that carry out various types of behaviors to be practiced. The trainee teacher tries to learn a lot about the skill from the demonstration performed by the expert and discusses and clarifies all aspects of the skill.</p>
Skill acquisition	<p>Taking into account the performance given by the expert, the trainee teacher plans a micro-lesson to practice the demonstrated skill. He/she practices the teaching skill through the micro-teaching cycle and continues to strive until the mastery level is reached. The feedback component of microteaching contributes significantly to the acquisition of mastery of the skill. Based on the results of the teacher training, feedback is provided to change the teacher's behavior in the desired direction.</p>
Microteaching transfer	<p>After achieving mastery of all teaching competencies, the trainee teacher brings them all together and the transfer to actual classroom teaching occurs during this last transfer phase.</p>

Note. Adapted from “Microteaching, an Efficient Technique for Learning Effective Teaching”. By Chaman Lal Banga (2014). Scholarly research journal for interdisciplinary studies. 2(15).

Methodology

This study adopts the pragmatic approach to maximally validate a blog containing microteaching, podcasting, and spaces for interaction as a virtual learning environment. The main rationale for considering the pragmatic approach in research is the freedom of choice of the researcher since for pragmatism, individual researchers are free to choose the research methods, techniques, and procedures that best suit their needs and purposes. (Cresswell and Cresswell, 2018) and because of the plurality that it brings to the research; according to Cresswell and Cresswell (2018) “pragmatism opens the door to multiple methods, different worldviews, and different assumptions, as well as different forms of data collection and analysis.” (p. 48).

This is a convergent - mixed research that integrates quantitative and qualitative data to complement findings and get better interpretations on the same issue. The mixed method refers to "a process of research in which researchers integrate quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis to best understand a research purpose." (Clark and Ivankova, 2015, p. 4). According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) the main strength of mixed methods designs is that they allow the research to be as thorough and complete as possible. Similarly, Taguchi (2018) states that "Through data integration, mixed methods can respond to research questions in a more meaningful manner than either quantitative or qualitative method alone can do."(p. 36).

The convergence model is a variant of mixed research design, it is when a "researcher collects and analyzes quantitative and qualitative data separately on the same phenomenon and then the different results are converged (by comparing and contrasting the different results) during the interpretation." (Creswell et al, 2007, p. 64). For this research, the quantitative data

are collected from students' and teachers' appreciation regarding the blog as a virtual learning environment, and the qualitative data are collected from students' and teachers' commentaries about the blog. Eventually, results are compared and contrasted.

In definitive mixed method allows complementing, comparing, and contrasting quantitative and qualitative results for a more complete and confident analysis. So, this is the best method to know how well the blog is working considering statistics and open comments from students and teachers' experiences and appreciations.

Teachers of English as a foreign language and undergraduate English students of UNAD are the population selected, considering the non-probabilistic sampling based on purposive sampling due to the accessibility that the researcher had to them. The researcher in the last semesters was a trainee teacher in different scenarios and virtual language courses at UNAD, so there was easy access and contact with the population for the study. The students are about 18-50 years, and the teachers are about 30-60 years. Both students and teachers are men and women from different geographical locations and diverse socio-economic conditions.

The non-probability sampling methods are less objective than probability techniques and is a type of sampling in which the researcher uses sampling that does not provide for each member of a target population to participate in a study and rather the participants are selected by the researcher, are referred to the researcher, or self-select to participate in a study. (Stratton, 2021, parr, 3).

Additionally, according to Rai Neetij and Thapa (2016), purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the

sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the research issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research. (p. 5).

Therefore, the researcher selected eleven undergraduate students, and six English teachers from UNAD as the research participants. The students sampling involves those who are in intermediate semesters of the program “Licenciatura en lenguas extranjeras con énfasis en inglés” and the teachers sampling includes those with a high level of English, with experience in the use of VLEs, English teaching and the application of collaborative methodologies at least in the last three years.

There are many instruments to collect data, measure it, analyze it, and interpret it depending on the research purpose. The most wide-used research instruments include interviews, questionnaires, surveys, observations, or checklists. (Trigueros, 2017). The table 12 shows the common instruments for qualitative and quantitative research.

Table 12

Instruments in qualitative and quantitative research

Interview (qualitative)	
Interviewing consists of asking questions and obtaining answers from participants in a study. Interviews can be individual, face-to-face, or group interviews. Asking and answering questions can be done via telephone or other electronic devices (e.g., computers). (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2006), as cited in (Trigueros, 2017). Interviews can also be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured.	
Types	Description
Structured interview	A formal set of questions asked to each interviewee and recorded using a standardized procedure.

Semi-structured interview	It is characteristically based on a flexible topic guide that provides a loose structure of open-ended questions to explore experiences and attitudes.
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Types

Description

Unstructured interview	A less formal set of questions; the interviewer modifies the sequence and wording of questions.
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Observation (Qualitative)

The process of observing what people do is a type of correlational (non-experimental) method in which researchers observe ongoing behavior. There are various types of observation, such as, structured observation, participant observation, and non-participant observation.

Types

Description

Structured observation	Research conducted at a specific place and time where participants are observed in a standardized procedure. The researcher defines certain behavioral variables or indicators to be observed rather than writing a detailed description of all the behaviors observed.
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Participant observation	The participant observer is part of the community and feel and live what the target population goes through. In other words, the researchers join in and becomes part of the group they are studying.
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Non-participant observation	The observer participant is a visitor with the only right to observe the target population behavior and environment without participating in their activities and can only take notes.
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Questionnaires (Quantitative and qualitative)

This is a data collection instrument mostly used in normative surveys. This is a systematically prepared form or document with a set of questions deliberately designed to elicit responses from respondents or research informants for the purpose of collecting

data or information. Questionnaires may be designed as structured or closed-ended form or unstructured, open-ended form. (Munir, 2017).

Types	Description
Structured or closed-ended questionnaire	They are those in which some control or guidance is given for the answer. This may be described as closed form because the questions are basically short, requiring the respondent to provide a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response. (Munir, 2017).
Unstructured or open-ended questionnaire	This type which is also termed as open-ended or unrestricted type of questionnaire calls for a free response in the respondent’s own words. It also constitutes questions which give the respondent an opportunity to express his or her opinions from a set of options. (Munir, 2017).

Survey (Quantitative and qualitative)

There are several types of surveys as telephone survey, online survey, in-person surveys, and mobile surveys. These surveys are administered by interviewers who have experience in research. (Trigueros, 2017). Similarly to questionnaires, surveys include free answers and guided response type.

Types	Description
Free answers	Referred to as open-ended questions, these include unrestricted, essay, or unguided questions.
guided response	Recall-type questions asking the participant to recall a set of categories. Multiple-choice or multiple response questions.

Checklist (Quantitative and qualitative)

A checklist is a list of aspects to observe as content, abilities, and behavior. It is a mechanism to verify if certain indicators or symptoms are present in a phenomenon.

(Trigueros, 2017). Checklists also include close and open-ended questions as well as the opportunity to get both quantitative and qualitative data.

Note. Adapted from Qualitative and Quantitative Research Instruments by Roxana de Trigueros (2017). ResearchGate.

The selected instruments for the data collection in this research include a checklist based on yes-no options created in google forms and send it to the teachers via institutional email. It contains nine close-ended questions and an open-ended choice to collect commentaries, allowing to get quantitative and qualitative data.

Figure 6

Instrument 1- Checklist

Checklist to validate the VLE by professional teachers.

Introduction: This document is intended for the teachers who will be responsible for the validation of the VLE. The purpose of this document is to provide a checklist of questions that will be used to evaluate the VLE. The questions are divided into three sections: Introduction, Objectives, and Questions. The questions are designed to be answered with a 'Yes' or 'No' response. The questions are designed to be answered with a 'Yes' or 'No' response. The questions are designed to be answered with a 'Yes' or 'No' response.

Objectives: The objectives of this checklist are to evaluate the VLE's design, content, and user experience. The objectives are to evaluate the VLE's design, content, and user experience. The objectives are to evaluate the VLE's design, content, and user experience.

Questions:

- 1. Are there enough spaces for students' content communication through the VLE?
 - Yes
 - No
- 2. Are there enough spaces for teachers' content communication through the VLE?
 - Yes
 - No
- 3. Does the VLE provide interactive group activities that require students to collaborate and cooperate together in order to reach a common goal? (forums, wikis, group projects, etc.)
 - Yes
 - No
- 4. Is the VLE user-friendly? (easy to use, clear navigation, etc.)
 - Yes
 - No
- 5. Is the VLE content relevant and up-to-date?
 - Yes
 - No
- 6. Is the VLE content engaging and motivating?
 - Yes
 - No
- 7. Is the VLE content accessible to all students?
 - Yes
 - No
- 8. Is the VLE content easy to understand?
 - Yes
 - No
- 9. Is the VLE content clear and concise?
 - Yes
 - No
- 10. Other comments:

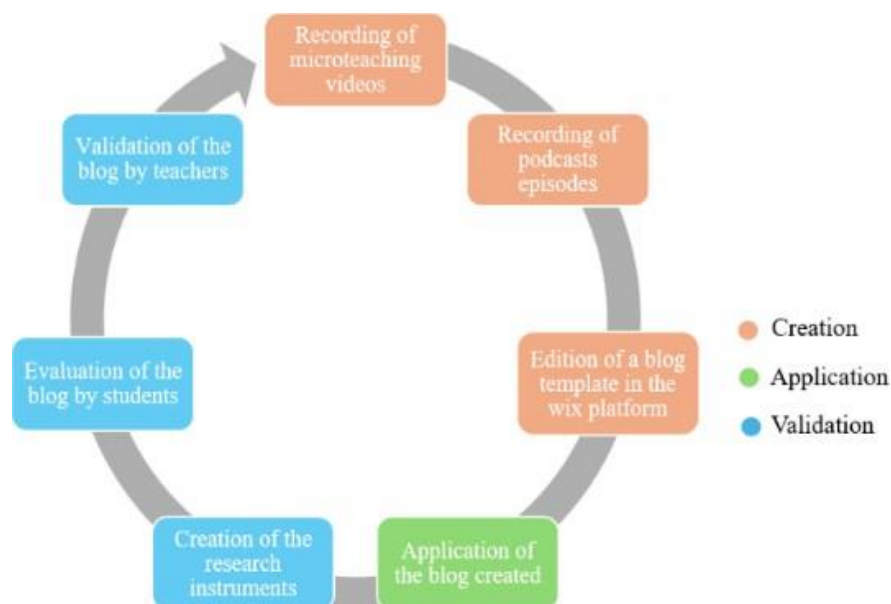
Note. The checklist is a researcher's creation. It is divided in three sections which explain the indicators to be considered for the validation of the blog with three close-ended questions in each section and one open-ended question at the end of the checklist.

As a second instrument a closed-open ended questionnaire, also created in google forms was send it to the students via Microsoft teams once the blog was ready to be used. It includes

All the above instruments were shared with the project assessor and an academic colleague with whom a conversation was held to discuss and validate the instruments, reaching the conclusion that the checklist would be improved by merging some criteria to make it more specific and concise, as the first version contained a lot of repetitive information.

Figure 9

Phases of the research process related to the research purposes.



Note. This figure shows the phases of the research process. The colors indicate the purpose that each phase aims to reach. The descriptions in the figure are the phases and the key words in the left of the figure are the purposes. The phases in orange color referring to recording and edition are directed to the creation of the blog. The phase in green color aims to apply the blog. Finally in the phases of blue color occurs the validation of the blog as a VLE.

Table 13

Description of the phases of the research process.

Phase	Description
Recording of microteaching videos	Three microteaching videos based on a lesson plan adapted for an intermediate English level, and the use of PPT as a tool to record both the teacher and the content simultaneously.
Recording of podcasts episodes	Three episodes of 10+ minute podcasts containing narrations, conversations, and explanations that work for an intermediate English level.
Edition of a blog template in the WIX platform	Creation of the blog which integrates the welcome video, microteaching videos, the podcasts, and the spaces for interaction.
Application of the blog created.	Publication and availability of the blog for students and teachers to access and explore it in order to continue with the validation phase.
Creation and application of the research instruments	Creation of a checklist and questionnaire in google forms, and activation of the likes, visualizations, and commentaries in wix. Application of those instruments to teachers and students.
Evaluation of blog by the students	Gathering of students' appreciations regarding the blog as a space to learn and practice English as a foreign language.
Validation of the blog as a VLE by the teachers	Gathering of teachers' validation and comments regarding the blog as a VLE to teach and learn English as a foreign language.

Note. Researcher's creation to stablish the research process.

On the other hand, this research follows the triangulation design based on the concurrent form. The purpose of the triangulation research design is “to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic” (Morse, 1991, p. 122) cited by (Creswell, 2006, p. 62). The qualitative and quantitative data collected complement each other to broaden the interpretations of the results. In triangulation and embedded designs, qualitative and quantitative data are collected during the same period but independently. (Creswell, 2006). In this research, quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously and interpreted separately, as it allows maximizing and leveraging each type of data, as well as reinforcing and complementing them.

Considering that students and teachers operate in distance education, aspects such as gender, geographic location, age, or social and economic conditions are no considered for this research.

Results and Discussion

Results from the Instrument 1- Blog's Report



This instrument reveals the students' comments on podcasts and microteaching as well as the quantity of visualizations, comments, and likes obtained in each blog posts. It is important to highlight that from 11 students, only 5 of them participated and interacted through the blog in the time it was available for the study.

Qualitative Results of Instrument 1

The table 14 shows the students comments on podcasts and the relevancy of each one.

Table 14

Comments on podcasts 1,2,3

Comments on podcast 1		
ST	Comments	Relevant part of the comment
1		<p>“I also consider it a good strategy for teachers to convey experiences and knowledge and for us as students to acquire language and knowledge as well.”</p>
2		<p>“It gave me a lot of tips to write a text. The podcast is creative and is a perfect way to practice listening.”</p>



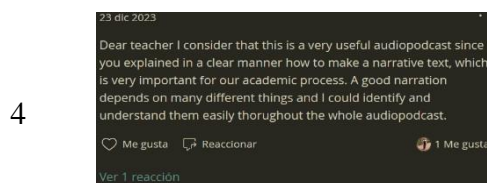
“Regarding your performance, I think you have good pronunciation, you explain well, and you get to the point.”

Comments on podcast 1

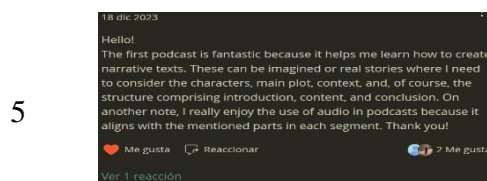
ST

Comments

Relevant part of the comment



“I consider this is a very useful audio podcast since you explained in a clear manner how to make a narrative text, which is very important for our academic process.”



“The first podcast is fantastic because it helps me learn how to create narrative texts.”

“I really enjoy the use of audio in podcasts because it aligns with the mentioned parts in each segment.”

Comments on podcast 2


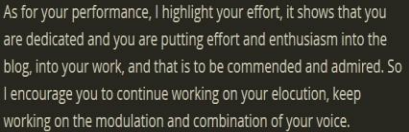
ST

Comment



Relevant part of the comment



“I'd like to highlight the good work you have done with the narration, the effects and all the parts of the episode in general.”

3		<p>“This is a really interesting podcast because it not only transmits a message of environmental care but also serves to practice our English.”</p>
		<p>“It is a pedagogical podcast since it offers information on a specific topic.”</p> <p>“As for your performance, I highlight your effort, it shows that you are dedicated, and you are putting effort and enthusiasm into the blog”.</p>

Comments on podcast 2

ST	Comment	Relevant part of the comment
4		<p>“Hello teacher and mates, this podcast was really interesting because of the sounds, the plot, and the form how you told us this story made me imagine everything and even I could feel many sensations.”</p>
5		<p>“At first, I want to thank you for remembering the importance of the moorlands, as these places provide us with water, an essential element for life.”</p>

 Comments on podcast 3

ST

Comments

Relevant part of the comment

1



“Now I have a better understanding of how to study grammar correctly”.

“What a pertinent strategy you are using”.

 Comments on podcast 3

ST

Comments

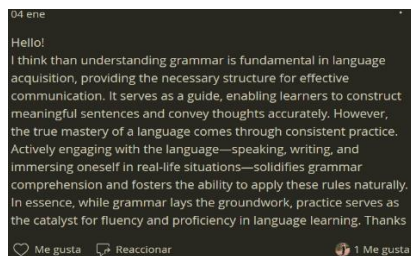
Relevant part of the comment

3



“Another great podcast, I love the way you sound, you have an advanced level of English, and you have a good sound that makes it feel more professional.”

5



There is no relevance in this comment to highlight because the student does not comment something about the podcast.

Note. Researcher’s creation to classify the students’ comment on each podcast episode (1,2,3).

Through the students' comments review on the podcasts 1,2,3, it was found that the students consider them useful and understanding, in addition to highlighting the good performance of the blogger - teacher.

Then, the variables found in the comments were the usefulness and comprehensibility of the podcasts, as well as the performance of the blogger - teacher. The table 15 shows the meaning of each variable.

Table 15

Definitions of the variables considered in the instrument 2

Variable	Definition
Usefulness	According to the compilation of different dictionary definitions, the term usefulness refers to the quality of something, whether a product or a resource, that serves for practical use, applicability, and productive activities.
Comprehensibility	“According to the Karlsruhe comprehensibility concept, ideal comprehensibility depends on six dimensions of a text: simplicity, structure, correctness, motivation, concision, and perceptibility.” (Göpferich, 2009, p. 48)
Performance of the blogger – teacher	There is not a well-defined meaning for the term “blogger – teacher”, this just raised because of the need to mention that the blog creator is also a teacher who performs as both a teacher, and a blogger at the same time.

A blogger is the person who manage a blog either personal or corporative posting informative content in different media forms (video clips, audio clips, or text) as well as the edition tasks and blog design, in a regular schedule and for a specific audience. While the teacher is the knowledge mediator and the information transmitter who creates and brings out creative strategies.

Note. The table explains in what each variable consists of in order to understand what is being evaluated.

Table 16

Analysis of the comments on the podcasts 1,2,3

Variable	Student's comment	Analysis of the comments
Usefulness	1, 2, 3, 4, y 5	All students consider that the podcasts were useful because through them they can acquire knowledge and practice the listening skill. Also, because those provide relevant and important content suitable for their academic process.
Comprehensibility	1, 2, 3 y 4	Students consider that the podcasts were understandable as they contain clear and quite clean explanations, they are motivational, concise, and structured facilitating them the perceptibility of many sensations and learning, as it is evidenced in comments such as, "Now I have a better understanding of how to study grammar correctly. (student 1).

Performance of the blogger-teacher	1, 3 y 4	The students consider that the blogger – teacher has a good performance because she demonstrates a high level of English, the didactic strategies she uses are appropriate, and the blog reflects effort, dedication, and enthusiasm on the part of the blogger – teacher. In addition, the students highlight the good work she has done in relation to podcast creation.
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Note. The table shows the students' comments that bring out each variable with a brief analysis.

As a general analysis of the data collected from this instrument, the comments provided by the students on each podcast post reveal positive reactions to their interests and learning progress. There were many different comments that allowed contrasting and comparing students' opinions getting most of them to agree that the podcasts were useful and comprehensive in some way. In addition, they comment in favor of the blogger's performance as a teacher and podcaster. Therefore, the podcasts proved to be significant in the students' learning experience.

On the other hand, the comments in the microteaching posts represent the interaction between student – student (SS), student – teacher (ST), and student – content (SC). According to Li et al (2022) a SS interaction consists of students' exchange of ideas, views, and knowledge about the course content independently of the teacher's presence. ST interaction refers to the two-way communication between teacher and student during the academic course, and SC has to do with the students' reflection on the learning topic or content.

Table 17

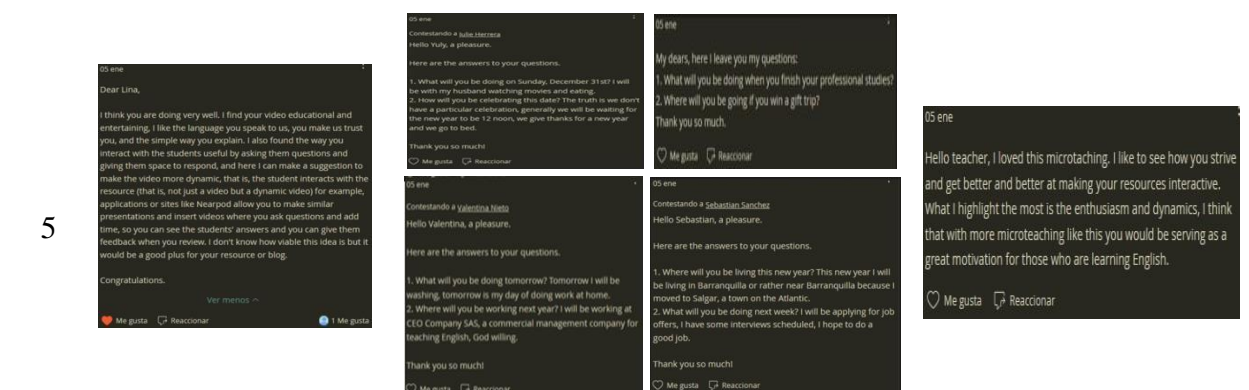
Students' comments in the microteaching 1,2,3

ST	Microteaching 1	Microteaching 2	Microteaching 3	
1	 <p>02 ene Hello teacher and colleagues! I'll tell you what I'm going to do tomorrow. First, I will get up very early because my family and I will go to a small town nearby for a 2-hour walk to a tourist destination called "the natural bridge". Then, we will eat a delicious lunch that we cooked at our house; we will enjoy the natural and fresh scenery and we will arrive home around 6 or 7 in the evening. Thanks. Me gusta Reaccionar</p>	 <p>02 ene Hello teacher and mates, My questions for you are: - Where will you be living this new year? - What will you be doing the next week? I await for your answers. Me gusta Reaccionar 02 ene Contestando a Sebastian Sanchez Hello Sebastian, a pleasure. Here are the answers to your questions. 1. Where will you be living this new year? This new year I will be living in Barranquilla or rather near Barranquilla because I moved to Salgar, a town on the Atlantic. 2. What will you be doing next week? I will be applying for job offers, I have some interviews scheduled, I hope to do a good job. Thank you so much! Me gusta Reaccionar</p>	 <p>02 ene Contestando a Valentina Nieta Hello Valentina, Tomorrow I'll be going for a short trip with my family to a small town nearby. There, we'll be having lunch, we'll be drinking some few beers and will be taking pictures to the biodiversity we find. On the other hand, this new year I'll be working on the family farm. Thanks for your questions. Me gusta Reaccionar</p>	 <p>06 ene Hello everybody! This is a new and more complex microteaching, I liked all the dynamics and activities. 1. By the time of 5 years I will have traveled abroad. 2. On 2025 I won't have traveled abroad. Thanks. Me gusta Reaccionar</p>
2	 <p>30 dic 2023 Hello teacher! Tomorrow is new year and we are going to meet with friends. First we are thinking in cooking together and we may will prepare a special plate. We have to wait until tomorrow to know if everybody found the ingredients. Then we are going to play some games to have some fun and finally eat a little before midnight... I hope everybody has a nice night and a really good 2024! Thanks! Me gusta Reaccionar 1 Me gusta Lina Sanchez 02 ene Contestando a Julia Borralla Hello dear julie! It sounds nice, you have a fun plan for receiving this new year. I consider you're using the future tense correctly, the sentences are clear and well structured. However, I have in doubt about this sentence "First we are thinking in cooking together and we may will prepare a special plate." Specially in the part you said "we may will prepare a special plate" is it ok using "may" and "will" together? Me gusta Reaccionar</p>	 <p>30 dic 2023 Contestando a Valentina Nieta Tomorrow is new year for me. First I am going to clean my apartment and prepare everything to a little meeting with friends. We are not sure about what we doing to prepare, it may will be decided when everybody arrives and we know which ingredients we have... Me gusta Reaccionar 1 Me gusta</p>	 <p>30 dic 2023 Contestando a Yuly Borralla I think that the order is cleaning, cooking, playing, eating... :) First I am going to clean my apartment and prepare everything to a little meeting with friends, they arrive at 2 pm so we have plenty time to cook together and play something waiting for the last cutdown. We are not sure about what we doing to prepare, it may will be decided when everybody arrives and we know which ingredients we have... Me gusta Reaccionar 1 Me gusta</p>	
3	 <p>30 dic 2023 Hello dear teacher and mates, Christmas is going to be together with my family and some friends. In the morning we will go to the river with our dogs, then in the afternoon we will buy some presents and go to eat at a country restaurant. Finally, in the evening we will celebrate Christmas at home by cooking delicious dishes, opening our gifts and drinking wine. Thank you for using videos and quizzes to teach because I can understand the topics better thanks to the graphics and audio explanations, as well as practice my writing and grammar skills. Me gusta Reaccionar Lina Sanchez 27 dic 2023 Contestando a Valentina Nieta Hello dear Valentina! You have made a good delivery about your most recent future plan and the use of grammar for this time is correct. I congratulate you. Me gusta Reaccionar</p>	 <p>30 dic 2023 Hello class mate and tutor my questions for you mates are: -what will you be doing tomorrow? -where will you be working next year? Thanks for the explanations teacher, I really learn with this strategy. Me gusta Reaccionar 2 Me gusta</p>	 <p>06 ene Hellooo Thanks to this microteaching I could understand the future perfect tense, which had been so difficult and confusing for me in other classes, thanks teacher. Now, answering to your questions: 1. I will have traveled abroad in the next 10 years. 2. I won't have bought a car by 2025. Have a nice weekend! Ver medios ~ Me gusta Reaccionar</p>	
4	 <p>16 ene 2023 Hello! Today, I am going to share with you what I will do tomorrow. Tomorrow, I will go for a walk with my family to a good place nearby and I feel happy for this opportunity to exercise. Then, I will go to a nearby village to buy some things that I need. Also, I will read a book about personal growth that is interesting. And finally, I will pray with them on the third day of the Christmas novena and enjoy some yummy food. Thank you! I await your feedback. Me gusta Reaccionar 1 Me gusta Lina Sanchez 21 dic 2023 Contestando a Yuly Borralla Hello... Wow, it sounds interesting! You have a really good plan for these Christmas days. Also, you used the future tense correctly, as well as the connectors of sequence. Good job! Me gusta Reaccionar</p>	 <p>26 dic 2023 Hello classmates and tutor, My questions are: What will you be doing on Sunday, December 31st? How will you be celebrating this date? Thanks Me gusta Reaccionar 1 Me gusta</p>	 <p>04 ene Hello! Next year, I plan to travel abroad to improve my English communication skills and delve deeper into learning. However, I won't have completed my college career by then. This trip aims to help me immerse myself in an English-speaking environment to enhance my language skills. Even though I won't have finished my studies, I'm eager to embark on this journey to broaden my horizons and gain valuable experience. Thank you! Me gusta Reaccionar</p>	

ST Microteaching 1

Microteaching 2

Microteaching 3



Note. Researcher's creation to classify the students' comment on each microteaching episode (1,2,3).

Table 18

SS, ST, and SC interactions in the microteachings 1,2,3

Comments in the microteaching 1				
Student	Interaction			Interpretation of the comments
	SS	ST	SC	
1			X	The students' comments in the microteaching 1 reveal
2		X	X	learning engagement and assertiveness since they participate
3		X	X	following the teacher's instructions. Through the comments,
4		X	X	students demonstrate interest to participate in the
5			X	microteaching activities and interact with its content as well.
The blogger- teacher by her part demonstrates interest and support towards the students, by responding to their				

comments, providing enthusiastic messages and feedback. In other words, this comments section characterizes mostly by the ST and SC interaction.

Comments in the Microteaching 2

Student	Interaction			Analysis of the comments
	SS	ST	SC	
1	X		X	The comments section in the microteaching 2 characterizes mostly by the SS interaction and the SC interaction. Students communicate and interact between them to solve a collaborative task; they exchange questions and answers providing critical ideas and reflection on the learning topic.
2	X		X	
3			X	
4			X	
5	X		X	

Comments in the Microteaching 3

Student	Interaction			Analysis of the comments
	SS	ST	SC	
1			X	The students' comments in the microteaching 3 reveal a high SC interaction and reflection on the relevancy of the activities. They explain how the presentation of the content facilitates their learning and highlight the positive aspects from the dynamics. However, in this comments section do not evidence SS or ST interaction.
2				
3			X	
4			X	
5			X	

Note. The table shows the students' comments that bring out each type of interaction with a brief analysis.

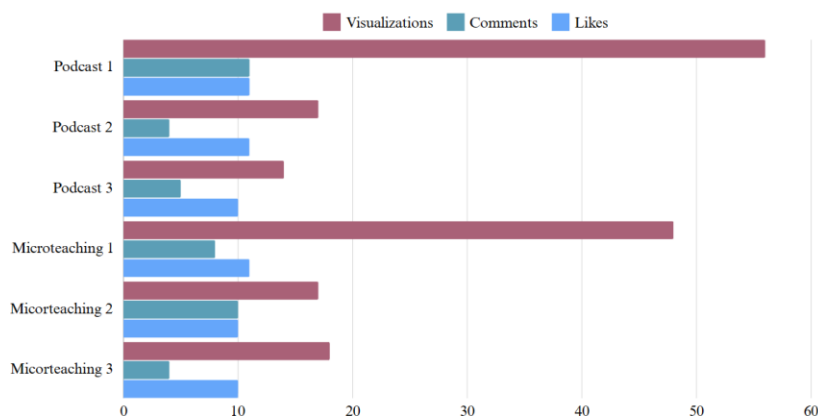
Similarly to podcasts, microteaching also proved to be positive for students' learning. According to comments, most of the students demonstrated to feel satisfied with the activities and dynamics contained in the microteachings, which also allowed them to develop reflection and share critical thinking with peers. Microteaching outstands because of the possibility, the activities, and the spaces that blog offers for SS, TS, and SC interactions. Although the blog allows the same opportunity for the three interactions, the SC interaction predominates, followed by the SS interaction which occurs in the microteaching 2, and conclude the TS interaction which is evident in the microteaching 1 only. Therefore, the students' and teacher's interactions were decreasing through the microteaching posts.

Quantitative Results from the Instrument 1

The quantity of visualizations, comments, and likes in each blog post are also revealed by the instrument 1. These interactions are assumed to SC interaction in terms of the times the podcasts and microteaching were reproduced, the quantity of comments on each post, and the number of people who like that content, as the figure 10 shows.

Figure 10

Quantity of visualizations, comments and likes of the whole blog posts



The longer bars represent 56 views in podcast 1, and 48 in podcast 2. Next, the green bars represent the comments decreasing in number with each blog post. The number of likes represented by the blue bar is maintained across each post with 11 being the average number. It has been found that SC interaction is more evident in the views and likes than in the comments section.

Results from the Instrument 2 – Open-Ended and Closed-Ended Questionnaire

The instrument 2 was answered by the total of the student sampling (11). This instrument allowed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data based on 11 close-ended questions and 2 open-ended questions. The following categories are considered for the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected from the instrument 2:

Table 19

Categories considered in the instrument 2

Category	Definition
Learning progress	It refers to the progress that students have perceived in their learning process in terms of improvement of the communicative skills, acquisition of knowledge, new vocabulary, and language structures.
Students' participation	It refers to the interaction and involvement that students are able to develop throughout the blog's activities, spaces and content.
Student' perception	It refers to the thinking, opinions, considerations, and feelings that students can express about the blog's activities, spaces, content, and the blogger – teacher.

Learning Progress Category Results

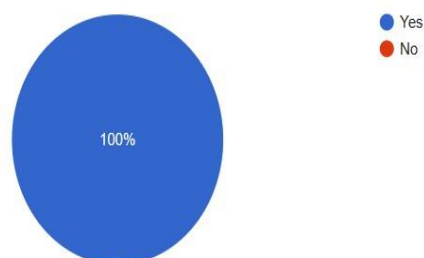
Quantitative Results

Figure 11

Question 1 - Instrument 2

Do you consider that the use of digital tools improve your language skills?

11 responses



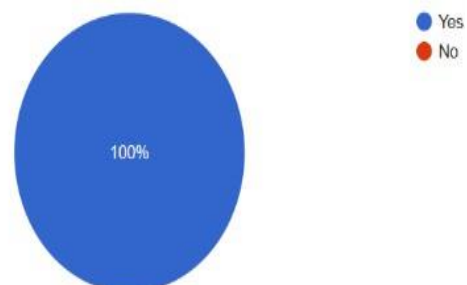
With this question, it was thought that all students would agree that using digital tools improves their language skills. In fact, the 100% of students agreed. Certainly, they have had meaningful learning experiences using ICTs.

Figure 12

Question 3 - Instrument 2

Does this didactic blog promote your autonomous learning?

11 responses



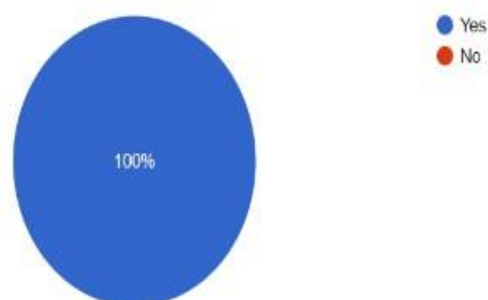
With this question, it was thought that the students would agree that the overall blog design promotes the development of self-learning. In fact, the 100% agreed. Certainly, they perceive it as an easy, attractive, and structured learning opportunity.

Figure 13

Question 5 – Instrument 2

Does this blog allow you to catch up on the academic process and activities when you are unable to attend live classes?

11 responses



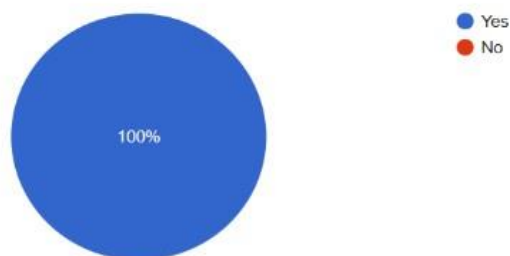
With this question, it was thought that students would agree that they can catch up on their academic process and activities using the blog. Indeed, the 100% of them do, as they feel that interacting appropriately in the blog helps them to keep up with the course.

Figure 14

Question 10 – Instrument 2

Do podcasts help you to improve the listening comprehension skill?

11 responses



With this question, it was thought that the students would agree that the podcasts in the blog help them to improve their listening comprehension in the target language. In fact, the 100% of them indicate that it does. In short, podcasting proved to be an effective strategy in language acquisition.

Qualitative Results

Table 20

Students' answers that were related to the learning progress category

ST	Question 12	Interpretation of the students comments related to the category
	Briefly describe in a paragraph how was your learning experience using the microteachings, podcasts, and the interaction through the blog specifically.	With this question, it was thought that students would respond with positive comments about their learning experience through the blog. In fact, a large number of the students' responses describes their experience as positive and significant because basically, the process allowed them to perform and improve the four communication skills as well as the foreign language structures. In other words, students expressed to have had a progress in their learning. Overall, the responses obtained are what was intended to be heard, revealing that the designed blog provides meaningful learning experiences.
1	I loved it because it facilitates the carrying out of new learning and evaluation activities and the creation of learning networks. Digital skills are developed and improved, from the search and selection of information and its process to convert it into knowledge, to its publication and transmission through various media.	
2	I develop the different strategies and language skills for the acquisition of a second language.	
5	Microteaching is a highly effective method of learning. It allows for immediate feedback and the opportunity to refine and improve teaching techniques.	
6	It allows me to learn at my own pace and I can repeat the information the times I want or need, because sometimes I may have the idea that I understood something, but during the exercise I realize that I am not so sure about the use or structure.	
7	The experience through microteaching has allowed me to loosen up more in my speaking, allowing me to learn new words and the structure of sentences.	
8	In the blog it is much easier to understand and understand structures in their negative, affirmative and interrogative forms and using the gerund in questions, I learned to respond quickly to the actions that people do according to the images seen and personally I can affirm that I improve my language skills	

According to the quantitative results, the 100% of students asserted that the use of the blog allowed them to improve different aspects of their learning. This was confirmed and could go further with the qualitative results, which reveal that most of the students' experiences with the blog were significant, as they were able to improve their language knowledge and skills specifically, as well as acquiring new vocabulary and improving learning strategies. Therefore, the blog favors students' learning progress.

Students' Participation Category Results

Quantitative Results

Figure 15

Question 2 - Instrument 2



With this question it was thought that all students would agree that the video microteaching generate a real learning experience by participating and interacting through it. However, the 90% which corresponds to 10 students answered that yes, and the 9% which corresponds to 1 student disagrees, which wasn't expected. Probably the participatory component in the video microteaching material was not understandable to that student.

Qualitative Results

Table 21

Students' answers that were related to the students' participation category

ST	Question 12	Interpretation of the students comments related to the category
4	Briefly describe in a paragraph how was your learning experience using the microteachings, podcasts, and the interaction through the blog specifically. <small>The truth is you can't participate much, because the microphone doesn't want to work, but as such the experience is very good, since there is participation and at the same time knowledge.</small>	The student 4 expresses that it was not possible the participation for him since the microphone was not working, probably the student thought that the seconds provided to respond in the microteachings were for speaking aloud using a microphone.
10	<small>This learning experience was meaningful and interesting because the didactic strategy is creative, eye-catching, well planned and designed. The learning environment made me be involved throughout the whole videos, participate and develop the language skills as well as my critical thinking.</small>	However, the blog does not include the use of this function. Contrarily, the student 10 states that he was involved and could participate throughout the whole videos developing the language skills, and critical thinking as well.

According to the quantitative results, the 9% which corresponds to 1 of the students states that the microteachings on the blog did not allow him to participate or get involved through them. That information can be complemented by the qualitative data in which the learner explains the reason why he was not able to interact, but it has nothing to do with the type of participation offered by microteaching. Probably the dynamics of participation through the microteaching videos were not understandable to the learner. As an aside, this instrument does

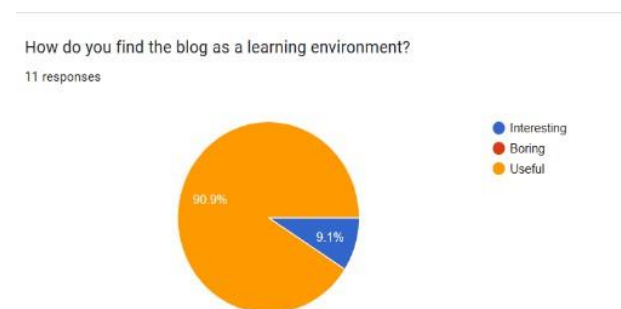
not focus sufficiently on the participation aspect, as it was addressed in greater depth in the instrument 1.

Students' Perceptions Category Results

Quantitative Results

Figure 16

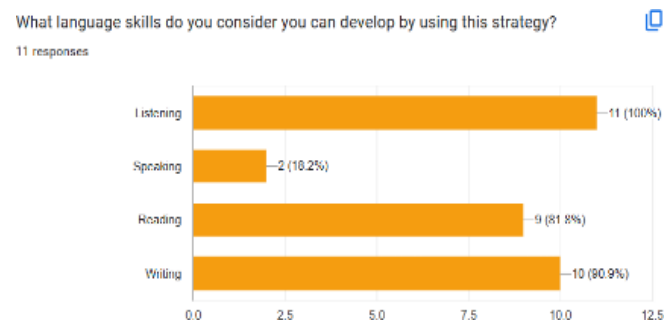
Question 4 – instrument 2



With this question it was thought that students would perceive the blog as useful, rather than boring or simply interesting. In fact, the 90% of the students found it useful and the 9% found it interesting. Certainly, the blog is useful for those who are really for that level of knowledge and language. The student who finds the blog interesting is likely to be on a higher or lower level to find it useful, but considers it a fun, captivating, or attractive learning experience.

Figure 17

Question 6 – instrument 2



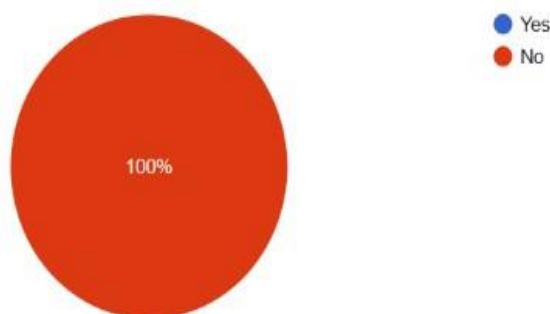
With this question, it was thought that the students would perceive the blog as useful for developing the 4 communicative skills. Although the 100% of them consider that listening is the skill they develop the most using the blog, only 18%, which corresponds to 2 of them, consider that the oral expression is developed. The 90% of them consider that it is writing, and the 81% consider that reading is also developed. Then, it is understood that more reading dynamics could be created as well as designed special activities to improve the speaking skill.

Figure 18

Question 7 - instrument 2

Did you identify any mistake or disruption in the blog?

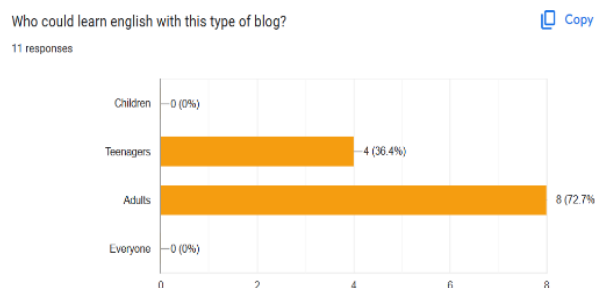
11 responses



This question was intended to get students to respond that they had not found any interruptions or errors in the blog. In fact, no one found any in it. The 100% of Students could use it without problems.

Figure 19

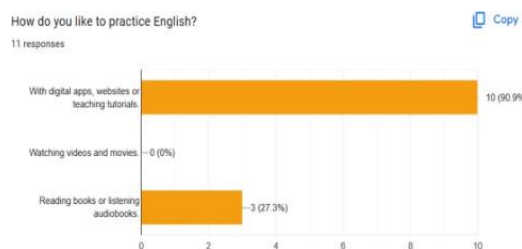
Question 8 - instrument 2



With this question, it was thought that the students would answer that the blog is adapted for teenagers and adults. The 72% of the students answered that it is for adults, and the 36% of them consider that it is for teenagers. Certainly, they find in the blog appropriate features for both younger and older learners.

Figure 20

Question 9 - instrument 2

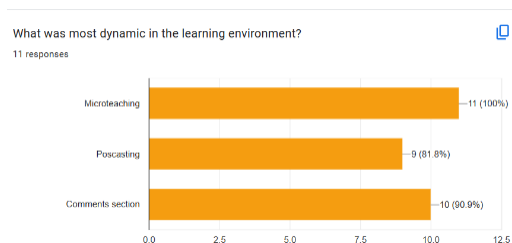


With this question, it was thought that students would respond that they like to practice English using digital applications, web pages and didactic tutorials. In fact, the 90% of them do, and the 27% like to practice English by reading books and listening to audiobooks.

Undoubtedly, ICTs are the favorite of English language learners.

Figure 21

Question 11 - instrument 2



With this question, it was thought that all students would choose microteaching as the most dynamic activity in the blog. In fact, the 100% of them do; however, it was not thought that the 81% of students would also consider podcasts and the 90% consider comment sections as dynamic activities as well. Certainly, microteaching, podcasting and interaction through comments are assertive strategies for language learning.

Qualitative Results.

Table 22

Students' answers that were related to the students' perceptions category

ST	Questions	Interpretation of the students comments related to the category
	Briefly describe in a paragraph how was your learning experience using the microteachings, podcasts, and the interaction through the blog specifically. (Question 12)	
10	This learning experience was meaningful and interesting because the didactic strategy is creative, eye-catching, well planned and designed. The learning environment made me be involved throughout the whole videos, participate and develop the language skills as well as my critical thinking.	With both questions, it was thought that students would respond with positive perceptions about their learning experience through the blog and with a critical view about the blog as an entire strategy for language learning. In fact, most of the students describe the learning experience as meaningful, interesting, interactive, and useful. They also consider that the blog is worth in language learning because it allows the communication with peers and teacher, facilitates the learning of grammar and structures, and improve the language skills. To sum up the blog
11	I think I can learn from the experience of another teacher in training, know her methods, the ways or tools that can help me to learn and teach others as well.	
	Why would it be a didactic strategy worth using and applying in language learning? (Question 13)	
1	The incorporation of ICT in learning and the implementation of the blog as a teaching strategy have been fundamental tools that have changed the motivation of students, facilitating teaching-learning in an innovative and enriching way, thus obtaining the best results in their demonstrated knowledge. in the development of different activities, themes and good academic performance during the development of classes.	
2	Of course, since the student works in the applied strategy to learn a new language.	
4	Yes, because I think it allows me to dialogue with other people and be able to share ideas.	
5	This can be particularly beneficial in language learning where different aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, listening skills, etc...	
6	It is worth it since the fact that the information is delivered directly by a teacher, whether through video, there is a feeling of personal treatment and not the feeling of impersonality that sometimes arises when I encounter flat explanations. Additionally the student can get easy access to the information...	
7	Yes, it is important because it allows direct learning, it evaluates our knowledge, promoting and strengthening it immediately.	
8	Personally, I think it would be totally worth applying to language learning, currently there are many learning methods, however we need strategies that truly contribute to knowledge and stand out for their ability to improve learning and linguistic skills.	

ST	Questions	Interpretation of the students comments related to the category
9	Yes, it is an important technique to help bridge theory with practice and prepare students for real classroom contexts. It provides space for communication between students and the teacher, collaboration between them and reflection on teaching.	proves to be convenient for their academic and learning process.
10	Yes, it would. Because it allows students to interact and use the target language. Microteaching provides feedback and the writing participation promote the collaborative learning.	
11	Yes, because it is a tool that contains useful information that provides students with didactic strategies to improve their language skills and by doing so with questions or activities that stimulate these abilities, I believe that I can be a material that can help to the students that like me we will want improving our skills.	

According to the quantitative results, most of the students' perceptions of the blog as a learning environment are positive and favorable. They consider that the blog allows them to develop a proper learning, and the qualitative results confirms that, since the students describe in detail how was their learning experience, that generally, they define it as meaningful and interesting. Additionally, the students argue some reasons why the blog is worthwhile in language learning, stating that it provides multiple benefits for the development of the communicative language skills and the acquisition of knowledge. In definitive, their answers were what was intended to be heard with these questions.

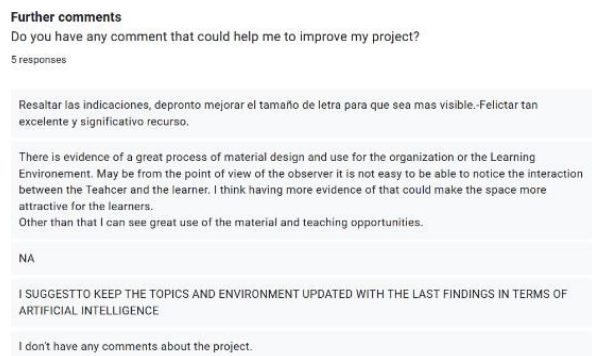
Results of the Instrument 3 – Validation Checklist

The checklist is based on yes-no options to collect the quantitative data and an open space for teachers to leave comments for the qualitative data collection. Eventually this instrument addresses the validation of the blog as a virtual learning environment. The categories validated through the quantitative component in this instrument are collaborative learning, interactivity, and support.

Qualitative Results of the Instrument 3

Figure 22

Teachers' comments regarding the blog



The teachers' comments are relevant since those represent their perceptions and considerations about the blog allowing to reveal its strengths and what is missing in it to be an assertive virtual learning environment. The first comment suggests some aspects to improve in the blog in terms of design such as the letter size in order to be more visible. The second comment highlights that the material design and the organization of the learning environment are appropriate, and further suggests making more visible the space for teacher-student interaction through the blog. Lastly the fourth comment suggests updating the environment and the content in terms of the last artificial intelligence findings, this is something that may be considered however, the blog is not intended to include that element.

Quantitative Results Presented by Categories

Collaborative Learning (Category 1): As is well known, collaboration is a fundamental factor in the construction of learning and knowledge. The collaborative learning builds deeper understanding and involves learners to solve a problem, complete a task or create a product. This variable of constructivism considers communication and group work as its main quality indicators.

Communication: Students have the opportunity to transmit information and ideas, communicating with each other effectively and assertively. Communication channels are well adapted and flexibly available to all participants within the learning environment.

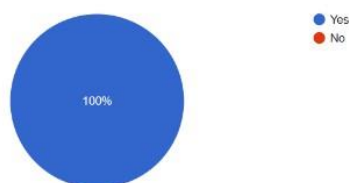
Group work: Students are integrated as a group to participate in a variety of activities in which they can contribute and cooperate to achieve a common learning goal together.

Figure 23

Question 1 of the category 1 in the instrument 3

Are there enough spaces for student - student communication through the blog?

6 responses



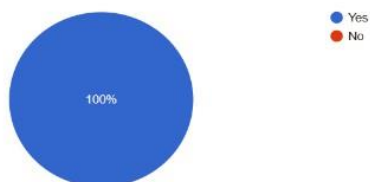
The 100% of the teachers agree that the blog provides enough spaces for student – student communication, which is a positive result as the blog was designed specially to generate collaboration and communication between the students.

Figure 24

Question 2 of the category 1 in the instrument 3

Are there enough spaces for teacher - student communication through the blog?

6 responses



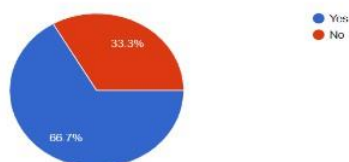
The 100% of the teachers agree that there are enough spaces for teacher – student communication through the blog. That is a positive result since the blog was intended to provide opportunities for teacher – student communication. However, it is worth noting the related comment in the qualitative results where one of the teachers mentions the little evidence of the teacher – student interaction space through the blog.

Figure 25

Question 3 in the category 1 of the instrument 3

Does the blog provide assertive group activities that require students to collaborate and cooperate together in order to reach a common goal? (online discussions, group projects, debates, or case studies).

6 responses



The 66% of the teachers agree that the blog provides group activities for students to collaborate and cooperate in order to reach a common learning goal, and 33% of the teachers consider that it does not. According to these results, it is assumed that there is a need to come up with more collaborative activities in which students can play a role in their group to reach a common learning goal together.

As an overview of the results obtained in the category 1 corresponding to collaborative learning, it was found that the blog works as a learning environment in terms of spaces for communication between the participants, but it is necessary to bring out additional activities focused on provide more group learning experiences.

Interactivity (Category 2): Learning is constructed from the cognitive interactions that learners create with each other and with different resources or tools, this is known as Interactivity, and occurs when tasks and resources require connections and cognitive reactions to certain situations in order to reach a result or conclusion. The most relevant indicators of learning interactivity are: cognitive reactions and participation.

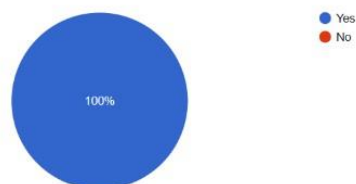
Cognitive reactions: Learners are exposed to the subject matter through experimentation, facing unforeseen circumstances or even learning from their mistakes. They may include multiple-choice quizzes, tests, eLearning scenarios, simulations, videos, etc.

Participation: The learning process requires learner participation since it is fundamental to construct meaningful and personal learning experiences, which can come from small group discussions, exploration of interactive material, role-playing in a community, etc.

Figure 26

Question 1 of the category 2 in the instrument 3

Are there spaces in the blog that stimulate the student's learning process?
6 responses

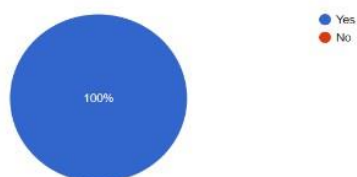


The 100% of the teachers agree that the blog stimulates the student's learning process, which is a positive result because it was designed precisely to improve the students' language skills and knowledge.

Figure 27*Question 2 of the category 2 in the instrument 3*

Are there spaces in the blog for interaction between learners with the content? (likes, comments, or sharing options).

6 responses

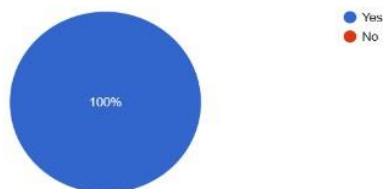


The 100% of the teachers agree that there are spaces in the blog for student – content interaction, this is a positive result since the interaction of the students by liking, commenting and sharing the content allows to know if the content is attractive and worthwhile or not.

Figure 28*Question 3 of the category 2 in the instrument 3*

Are there spaces in the blog for interaction between learners with the material? (podcasts, videos, quizzes).

6 responses



The 100% of the teachers agree that in the blog there are spaces for student interaction with the material, which is a positive result since the blog was designed to generate as much interactivity as possible and student-material interaction is a very important aspect in the learning process.

As a general interpretation, the results obtained in the category which corresponds to interactivity in the instrument 3, show that the blog works for the stimulation of the students' learning process, as well as for providing student – content and student – material interaction.

Those are positive findings since the blog proves to be a learning environment with a high interactivity.

Supporting (Category 3): Support is one of the crucial elements for student success because it provides clarity and facilitates understanding. Students feel more motivated when the teacher and peers support them and are part of their learning process, which results in better academic performance. Indicators of supporting in learning are: feedback and guidance.

Feedback: The comments from teachers or peers on the students' achievements are given in order to improve their knowledge. The feedback system allows teacher – student and student – teacher communication in constructivist learning.

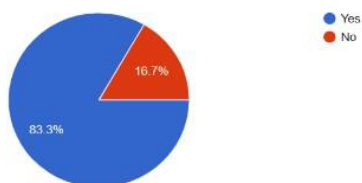
Guidance: Essential for effectively achieving the transition of levels, e.g., from secondary to higher education. In online learning, orientation focuses on introducing navigation skills, program structure and requirements, practical activities, and course facilitators. (Orientation includes video presentations, live seminars, quizzes, study guides, etc.).

Figure 29

Question 1 of the category 3 in the instrument 3

Do you evidence enough teacher support in terms of feedback for the students to learn English through the blog?

6 responses



The 83% of the teachers which corresponds to 5 of them, evidence enough teacher support in terms of feedback for students to learn English through the blog, and the 16% which

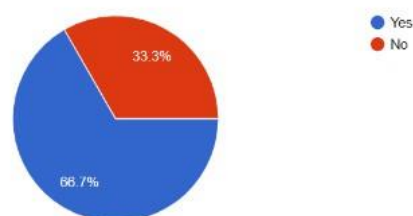
corresponds to 1 of them does not. The teacher who disagrees expands in the space for comments and argues that it is difficult to identify where occurs the teacher – student interaction through the blog. Therefore, it may be necessary to create a special space in the blog for supporting in terms of feedback between teacher – student specifically.

Figure 30

Question 2 of the category 3 in the instrument 3

Do you evidence enough peers support in terms of feedback among them to learn English through the blog?

6 responses



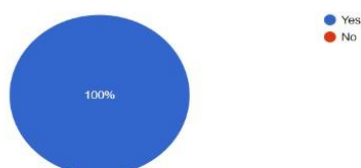
The 66% of the teachers, which corresponds to 4 of them do evidence enough student – student support in terms of feedback to learn English through the blog, and the 33% which corresponds to 2 of them disagree. Therefore, it may be necessary to create a special space in the blog for supporting in terms of feedback between student – student specifically.

Figure 31

Question 3 of the category 3 in the instrument 3

Is the guidance or orientation through the blog comprehensible?

6 responses



The 100% of the teachers agree that the guidance through the blog is understandable, which is a positive result since it was designed to facilitate the learning process of the students

by guiding them through the blog's navigation and the development of the activities in the clearest possible way.

According to the results obtained in the category corresponding to supporting, it was found that the orientation through the navigation of the blog and through the learning process is understandable, however, the student-student and teacher-student support spaces in terms of feedback need to be improved. For this, it would be necessary to adapt new spaces for support where the feedback process is evidenced specifically in the blog.

This research emerged to address various issues, but specifically the fact that most of online English learners are unable to attend many of the synchronous classes, which results in low academic performances and difficulties in mastering the target language. In those cases, educators usually look for alternatives and strategies that work to increase the students learning and academic average, this could be by creating and opening new learning environments that meet their expectations. In most cases, these strategies involve the use of digital tools.

In that similar way, this study looked for the validation of a blog which integrates microteaching and podcasting as a proper VLE for those who are unable to attend all the live classes, therefore, they need to catch up on their lessons and increase their academic performance.

The results obtained lead to the fact that the blog created to be a VLE focused on constructivist learning has some strengths and weaknesses with regard to the population needs. The positive findings of the blog as a VLE come from the quality of the content and material, as well as the blogger – teacher performance, and the weak points come from the lack of certain aspects in the blog that will be explained later in this section.

According to the findings gathered from the three instruments, the blog proved to be a VLE in terms of spaces for communication between the students and the teacher. It also generated interactivity, collaborative work, and meaningful learning experiences for students. However, a bad point of the blog is the lack of a specific space for supporting, so it is needed more spaces for teacher's and peer's supporting and feedback, as well as more opportunities for training the reading skill. Additionally, it requires the design of special activities to train the speaking skill.

On the other hand, according to the comments found on each blog post, podcasts and microteaching episodes proved to be proper teaching strategies to be included in constructivist learning as it has been found in previous studies. In fact, the interpretation of the comments, revealed that the blog works to build a learning community and as a means of knowledge building, as well as a space to train the language skills, especially the listening through the podcasts, and writing and reading through the comments. Other language skills such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and language structures are trained through the microteachings.

It was expected that interactivity with the blog content would increase, however, the number of likes, views and comments obtained through each blog post indicated a decrease in the number of comments, but the likes and views maintained a good average. This type of data is important because it allows us to know to what extent the content is interesting and worth studying.

The results confirmed that the structure and features of a blog are appropriated to build a VLE because it allows the collaborative learning, the interactivity, and the support proper of the

constructivist model. Nevertheless, in this VLE it is necessary to improve, the supporting service provided through the blog, as it was found there are not enough spaces for support and feedback.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In the face of the difficulties for students to attend synchronous classes, it is necessary to propose more learning opportunities. The blog's features demonstrated to be a proper media to build a VLE as an alternative space for learning progress, avoiding the geographical or temporary constraints.

It is recommended to include in the VLEs a specific space that evidences the support and feedback between teacher-student and student-student in order to offer a more qualified learning experience and even get more information about the support system in the VLEs.

In addition to improving teaching skills, microteaching also improves student learning, as it functions as a knowledge transmission technique. Similarly, podcasting works to transmit lectures, discussions and generate knowledge about a topic. In English language learning, podcasting serves to improve listening comprehension and is one of the most attractive strategies for language learners.

A VLE should offer possibilities for communication between students and teacher-student, interactivity of the participants with the contents and materials, and a support space in terms of student-student and teacher-student feedback or help specifically.

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