Students Attitudes Towards English Vocabulary Learning in a Blended Learning Environment in a Public High School in Pasto.

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Submitted to the school of human sciences in partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of B.A in English and French

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Chapter I: Introduction

Since vocabulary has been considered an important aspect of the English learning process, many innovative strategies supported by technological resources have been implemented by teachers and students in order to improve vocabulary acquisition. Vocabulary has become the main basis of language to communicate in different contexts; as Peregoy and Boyle (2013) mention, to attain fluency, native speakers have to acquire almost 2,000 words per year. It means that a person who tries to learn a second or a foreign language needs to study the double of time to learn the same amount of words. This makes of vocabulary learning one of the biggest challenges that students face when learning a language.

Several types of research previously studied show that vocabulary learning supported by technological resources has had effective results. In response to improve English vocabulary learning, Blended Learning was seen as a good way that combines technological resources and face-to-face teaching. It seeks to facilitate the vocabulary learning process through innovative materials and new strategies of learning without neglecting the teacher role. Using technology, students feel free and motivated, and their positive attitude was evidenced because they seemed more active, excited and engaged in the process of learning (Agustina, 2017). Most of the research in the field of vocabulary have focused their efforts on finding out strategies that can improve the process of learning it. These studies have tried to improve the results that students obtain when learning vocabulary, neglecting their attitudes, likes or dislikes during the process. Technology when used in a classroom not only may bring positive results in terms of vocabulary learning, but also in students' attitudes. For this reason, the purpose of this qualitative study is to identify the attitudes and behaviors that students have when they learn English vocabulary in a Blended learning environment.

In the development of this work, some literature related to vocabulary learning/teaching, blended learning, and why students' attitudes, and blended learning will be presented. Furthermore, the research design will be presented to determine the type of research and the data collection techniques and analysis.

Statement of the Problem

English has become a language of international usage or global language (Crystal, 2012; Graddol, 1997). English is considered as an international language since it is spoken by a large number of native speakers and individuals that have learned it as a second or foreign language (McKay, 2002). English allows people from different parts of the world to communicate effectively. Most of the countries have established as a rule to learn English at schools and universities. In Colombia, the National Congress, in the law N° 1651, 2013, established that the objectives for elementary and secondary education in terms of language learning and bilingualism are the development of language skills to comprehend and understand a foreign language. Following that law, English was adopted as the foreign language to learn, based on the competences of the Common European Framework.

Within the language, there are four relevant skills which are divided into two groups, productive or active skills (writing and speaking) and receptive or passive skills (listening and reading). Furthermore, to learn a language, it is important to know its vocabulary. Diamond and Gutlohn (2006) define vocabulary as the knowledge of words and their meanings. Although vocabulary is considered a sub-skill of language, it is necessary to be proficient in the language. According to Lewis (1993) "Lexis is the core or heart of language" (p. 89). Similarly, Nation (2001) establishes that to master any of the language skills, it is important to learn a wide range of vocabulary. Moreover, Schmitt (2000), emphasizes that "lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language" (p. 55). In the same way, Nation (2001) states that readers need to know at least 97% of the vocabulary in a text for an adequate understanding of it. In this sense, vocabulary knowledge is central to comprehend messages, readings and any kind of language utterance. All the authors mentioned above refer that without a good level of vocabulary knowledge, any language skill can be developed efficiently and communication can be limited.

Since vocabulary is the key for understanding and increasing language production, authors such as Nation (1990) and Schmitt (1998), agree that the process of learning vocabulary needs more research and it has to be a major focus of study. To begin, it is important to differentiate between second language learning and acquisition. Krashen (1982) points out that only the

mother tongue can be acquired, through a subconscious process without being aware of that. On the other hand, the process of learning refers to a conscious process with a focus on form which means to pay attention to grammar rules and vocabulary (p. 10).

Experts on the field of second and foreign language learning have realized that vocabulary is one of the most important factors to succeed in the process of learning a language. For that reason, a lot of research has been done, especially to identify strategies that learners can use to improve their vocabulary learning process. As the other language skills, to learn vocabulary is a difficult process. When learning vocabulary, students face some problems such as the spelling, pronunciation, length, and complexity of words, cognates and idiomatic expressions, memorization and meaning (Thornbury, 2011, p.14).

One aspect that means a challenge for learners is spelling. "Spelling problems are often influenced by cross-lingual transfer because learners apply patterns from their native language" (Ringbom and Jarvis, 2009). Foreign language learners tend to write the word as it sounds, applying the rules of their mother tongue. In spite of several years of English instruction, learners have difficulties to spell simple monosyllabic words. Another problem with words is its pronunciation; foreign language words usually have unfamiliar sounds causing mispronunciation and therefore misunderstandings in communication. The length and complexity of words are also problematic for learners. Moreover, the knowledge of vocabulary is a challenge for learners because of cognates and idiomatic expressions; learners can feel overwhelmed with the big range of expressions that sometimes cannot be translated, and its meaning is complex.

Finally, one of the most demanding tasks for language learners is trying to memorize large lists of words. As Wilkins (1972) establishes "while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed'' (p. 97). If learners know the grammar rules, but they do not know the vocabulary to fit those rules, they will not be able to communicate effectively. Also, meanings are complicated to learn; learners get confused when words or expressions have different meanings or interpretations. It is troublesome for students to learn this kind of words because of the lack of exposure to the vocabulary in its real context. Foreign language learners do not have the opportunities to practice the language in real situations, and most of the words change their meaning depending on the context and situation

where they are used. Seeing that it can be difficult to learn a language; it is necessary to search for strategies to improve this process.

Nowadays, the digital revolution composed by a set of technologies and a wide array of applications facilitates us the access to communication and information driving social and personal development. The digital era has meant not only a quality service enhancement but also a suitable tool in education. In the foreign language teaching and learning field, technology is seen as a tool to improve the master of the language. The use of Technology might help students to find new knowledge, acquire new skills and create new experiences that help them to succeed when learning. Besides, "today's students are different from all previous generations because they were born into a digital world and have always been surrounded by digital technology" (Prensky, 2001, p.1-6).

"Technology facilitates the attainment of learning goals for individuals with wide differences in their abilities to see, hear, move, read, write, understand English, sustain attention, organize, engage and remember" (Dalton, 2012, p. 134). The use of technology can foster the different learning styles that students have. Also, the different kinds of intelligence such as the visual, musical, kinesthetic, etc. (Gardner, 1998) can be beneficiated. Clark (2013, p. 8) suggests that teachers have to adapt instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners and technology is a viable option to do so. A good way to implement technology in class without displacing the teacher's instruction is through a blended learning environment. Blended learning combines face-to-face instruction with technological materials fostering the benefits of both.

The purpose of this study is to find out students' attitudes towards vocabulary learning in a blended learning environment. Research done previously has focused on the strategies to learn vocabulary; however, this research will try to identify how students feel when learning vocabulary is reinforced in a blended learning environment. Because of the aforementioned problem, the following research question is posed:

 What is the attitude that eighth-grade students of a public high school in Pasto have when learning English vocabulary in a blended learning environment?

Objectives

General objective

- To identify the attitudes that students present when learning English vocabulary in a Blended Learning environment.

Specific objectives

- To describe students' attitudes when learning English vocabulary in a Blended Learning environment.
- To report the opinions and feelings that students have towards learning English vocabulary in a Blended Learning environment.

S**ignificance**

Learning English as a foreign language is of vital importance in this globalized world. English language learners must learn vocabulary to master the language. Vocabulary has to be learned for effective communication (Nation, 2001, p. 362). Thanks to technology, people can access different information that contributes to their needs in terms of education and learning. As it is known, technology has a huge effect in teaching and learning the language as a complement to the instructor's role; this means that technology and teachers instruction can lead better results in learning (Sharma, 2009). Nunan (1995) points out that vocabulary learning is essential since success in English learning depends on that, and students might see low vocabulary knowledge as a failure that takes them to unsuccessful learning.

This research follows a qualitative methodology to approach not only the outcome of the process, but also the attitudes of students during it. Quantitative researches have tried to search for strategies to facilitate the process of learning vocabulary, implementing new methodologies, materials, etc. That kind of researches have claimed that implementing technology in English classes could be suitable since conventional materials are good and have given good results; however, carrying out classes with innovative technological dynamics would multiply the results. In this research, there is another factor included; not only to suggest the implementation of blended learning to support the process of vocabulary learning, but also to consider students' attitudes as a factor that can be positive or negative in learning.

The significance of this research is determined in the way it is going to implement a different teaching method, blended learning. And, students' attitudes towards will be considered to establish if the change of methodology might be positive or negative for them in their process of learning English vocabulary.

Limitations of the study

For the development of this research, some possible limitations were founded. To establish a good blend of technology and face-to-face teaching, it is necessary that technology works perfectly. But, sometimes technology does not work appropriately, causing some lack of time until the problem could be solved. In addition, the resources that the government offers are scarce; for example, a computer has to be shared for up to three pupils, and in some occasions to accede to the classrooms is difficult since these are being used by students of other classes. Furthermore, access to the Internet causes distraction when students surf other web pages and do not do the class activities in the pertinent moment. Taking into account these limitations, the teacher has always to find alternatives for working; for example, try new activities or didactic resources. Another alternative could be blocking the web pages that can distract students, and the teacher must be attentive supervising the students' work to avoid their distraction. Moreover, the research, being qualitative, some interviews will be realized, and students may ask imprecisely. The possible solution for this problem could be to ask the same question twice, but using different words, and try as much as possible to ask non-ambiguous and clear questions to avoid confusion or misunderstandings.

Chapter II: Literature Review

In this chapter, literature related to the topic of this research will be presented; in order to provide clear ideas of the relevance of blended-learning, used as a tool to increase positive attitude on students while they learn English vocabulary.

What is Vocabulary?

As mentioned above vocabulary is an important aspect of learning any language. According to Neuman and Dwyaer (2009), it is important and necessary to know words to communicate effectively. Furthermore, Richards and Schmidt (2013) say that vocabulary is a set of lexemes, including single words, compound words, and idioms that take part in a communicative process. In short, vocabulary is words and sets of words that work together to communicate. Vocabulary leads to the improvement of language skills in order to acquire a good language proficiency.

How Vocabulary Was Taught Through the Years and Methods

In spite of its importance for language learning, in the past decades the process of vocabulary learning had been neglected (Carter & McCarthy, 1988). First, in the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), in the 18th century, vocabulary was taught by memorization and translation; vocabulary was taught out of context. The bilingual dictionaries were important tools to teach vocabulary, and bilingual lists of words were introduced to translate long passages. The focus was on translation and analysis of the language but not its use in communication (Schmitt, 2000). The purpose of teaching vocabulary was to benefit reading comprehension and translate texts in international exams (Zimmerman, 1997); there was no intention to teach vocabulary for its practical use in real life situations (Espinosa, 2003).

Later, the Reform Movement taught vocabulary in its spoken use, although it was selected by its simplicity and usefulness (Zimmerman, 1997). In the 19th century, as opposed to the GTM, the Direct Method, proposed by Maximilian Berlitz, focused its efforts to teach vocabulary in context. The translation was forbidden, dictionaries were not used, instead of them, visual materials and mimes were the tools selected to teach vocabulary; the vocabulary items were presented with demonstrations and using them in class (Richards & Rodgers, 2003). The Situational Language Teaching proposed by Hornby and Palmer presented language items in simulations of real-life situations.

Right after that, in the Audio Lingual Method (ALM), Charles Fries stressed that language is a process of habit formation following the tenets of behavioral psychology. Vocabulary was taught by the repetition of drills and memorization (Richards & Rodgers, 2003). It was until the late 1970s when the communicative approach set the stage for a major focus on vocabulary (Thornbury, 2011). In this method, language is learned in a communicative context. Words are learned by its use in authentic communicative activities. For the communicative approach, the language is a vehicle for communication. When the communicate competence was stated, language was taught by is functionality. It was in the 1970's and 1980's when vocabulary obtained a major focus of study. Studies developed at that time were concerned to look for more effective vocabulary teaching and learning strategies (Decarrico, 2001, p. 286).

How Is Vocabulary Learned? Incidental or Explicit Learning

With the emergence of the communicative approach and the interest to study vocabulary as a central focus of attention to language learning, it also emerged the debate between teaching vocabulary explicitly or implicitly (Decarrico, 2001, p.286). Considering this debate, it was necessary to establish how the process of learning a word can occur. Experts suggest that this process can take place in two different ways, incidentally or explicitly.

Incidental Learning

Hulstijn (2001) notes that 'incidental vocabulary learning refers to the learning of vocabulary as the by-product of any activity not explicitly geared to vocabulary learning, and intentional or explicit vocabulary learning refers to any activity aiming at committing lexical information to memory'.

A definition of incidental learning is provided by Schmidt (1994), he states it is learning without the intent to learn. Also, the learning of one stimulus aspect while paying attention to another stimulus aspect. Zimmerman (1997) and Huckin and Coady (1999) indicate three important advantages of incidental vocabulary learning when reading. First, it is contextualized learning. The second advantage is that it fosters vocabulary learning and reading at the same time. Finally, it is learner-centered and individualized because of the opportunities that it offers to learners to select the materials to read depending on their preferences.

Explicit Learning

On the other hand, explicit learning is responsible for vocabulary growth; it can be focused on a single aspect of vocabulary knowledge. When a learner acquires vocabulary in this way, they have to be concentrated and try to remember words as much as possible. With intentional vocabulary learning, students learn to spell words, its meaning by using a dictionary, or memorizing lists of words. Intentional/explicit learning also involves how to use words, grammatical functions, and collocations.

Decarrico (2001) acknowledges that for a deeper understanding of a word, it is essential to present them by means of a variety of different contexts. She advocates that even some researchers consider incidental learning as the best way to teach vocabulary, both explicit and implicit are necessary to provide appropriate context for vocabulary learning. Due to incidental and intentional are needed to present words better, Ellis (1999) explains some activities for both types of learning. Ellis (1999) suggests that listening to or reading a message are tasks for incidental learning. Developing these activities, learners are able to comprehend and learn new words in different contexts without explicit attention to the word itself. In contrast, some activities for intentional vocabulary learning are specific tasks such as looking up words in the dictionary, cloze activities, crosswords, words search, mapping activities, flash cards, semantic mapping, etc., without taking into account the context.

What Is Involved in Knowing a Word

After having explained how the process of knowing a word can occur, it is necessary to explain what is involved in knowing a word. Learning a word means to know four important aspects of it. Laufer (1991) explains that knowing a word involves the knowledge of its form, word structure, meaning, and syntactic behavior. First, words can have two forms: spoken and written words. To know the form of a word means to know its phonological features and its orthographic form (Zhang, 2016). In this sense, the knowledge of a word form includes its correct pronunciation and spelling. Second, word structure implies the knowledge of the morphemes that form a word. Third, the syntactic behavior of a word suggests knowing how the word works it a sentence. Finally, to know a word means to know its meaning. Words can have different meanings depending on the context they are used. The meaning also includes the

relation a word has with others, for example, synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, and collocations. In short, Thornbury and Harmer (2002) emphasized that knowing a word encompasses to know the sum total of semantic, syntactic, phonological, orthographic, morphological, cognitive, cultural and autobiographical information.

The Role of Comprehensible Input in Vocabulary Learning

Knowing all those aspects means a challenge for language learners, and at the same time, it carries some difficulties for teachers too. As mentioned before, words can be learned explicitly or implicitly, the goal for teachers is to state a balance of activities that combine both types of learning. Teachers also have the responsibility to present high-quality input to help students in their learning process. Krashen (1982) describes the process of learning a second language as similar to the process children use in acquiring the first language. Krashen and Terrel (1983) confirm that vocabulary is an essential part of language learning because without comprehension of vocabulary, there will be no acquisition. Learners learn the forms of the second language when they are provided with sufficient comprehensible input. Krashen's (1982) comprehensible input theory refers to any meaningful interaction in the target language or any message that can be understood by the learner. It includes any teaching strategies used to make instruction as clear as possible. He adds that only when a comprehensible input is offered, the process of acquisition will take place (Krashen 1985).

It is important that learners receive input, but it is almost impossible outside the classroom. For that reason, teachers must provide as much input as possible, so they need to approach vocabulary learning in different ways. In terms of Krashen (1989) the acquisition of vocabulary and spelling is achieved through exposure to comprehensible input. Comprehensible input is necessary to learn better. The quality and quantity of language input which learners hear from the environment can help them to form the habit and have an effect on their success in L2 acquisition (Lightbown & Spada 1999).

Furthermore, when students hear a word repeatedly, that word will be internalized better. The aim is to understand the input because the more input students receive, the opportunities to encounter new words increase and there is a greater likelihood of learning those new words (Webb & Chang, 2015). In addition, Nation (2001) argues that the more often an unknown word

is shown in the context the more likely it can be guessed and learned. Nevertheless, it is necessary to pay attention to the new words that appear in the input presented. Nation (2001) proposes that in extensive reading, as an example of input, should contain no more than 5% of unknown words to avoid a mental block and ensure comprehension.

The Role of Attitude and Affective Filter in Vocabulary Learning

Another important aspect to discuss in this research is the attitude students have when learning a second/foreign language and how it affects language learning. According to Latchanna and Dagnew (2009), attitude is defined as a mental state that includes beliefs and feelings about something. Attitude is an affective factor that is highly related to success in language teaching (Gardner, 1985). Krashen (1985) explains in his affective filter hypothesis that affective factors can have a positive or negative effect on language learning. The affective filter can become a barrier that impedes the process of language learning. When there is a higher affective filter, the process of comprehending the input can be blocked. In contrast, when there is a lower affective filter, the possibilities to comprehend the input and learn the language increase. The attitude students have towards English language learning can become an affective filter as well. A negative attitude can impede learning a language (Ellis, 1994). Or, if the attitude is positive, the process of learning can occur better.

Attitude influences language learning in three main ways. First, a positive attitude leads to rapid and easy progress in learning. Second, attitude decides the commitment to learning. Learners with more commitment can achieve their goals faster than those with lower commitment. Finally, attitude influences class participation. A positive attitude represents more participation in class (Du, 2009)

In short, people learn a second language when they receive enough comprehensible input and when their affective filters are low enough to allow the input in. An alternative that has been the focus of investigation in the recent decades has been technology as a way to provide good input in contexts where English is learned as a foreign language, and at the same time it may lower the affective filters of students and foster a positive attitude towards learning.

Technology and Education

Technology can be defined as a set of technic knowledge which is arranged scientifically, this term is related to innovation and all kind of new things that help people in different quotidian aspects. Kumara (1999) defines technology in two different ways, the first defines technology as a physical component (Hardware) related to products, tooling, equipment, blueprints, techniques, and processes, and the second defines technology as an informational component (software) that involves know-how in management, marketing, production, quality control, reliability, skilled labor, and functional areas. As well, Lan and Young (1996) states that technology definition can vary according to authors and the context of disciplines. Technology has been incorporated in the educational field to discover new strategies that contribute to education development.

Educational Technology

Nowadays technology has a great impact on every single aspect of our society. Technology is applied to improve people lives and makes everything easier. In the field of education, it has been applied to improve the learning process. Technology applied in the field of education takes the name of educational technology. Richey (2008, p.24-25), defines educational technology as "the study and ethical practice of facilitating learning and improving performance by creating, using and managing appropriate technological processes and resources". It involves effective use of technological tools that contribute to the learning process and the use of media such as images, animation, videos, and machines such as TV, CD-ROM, networking, hardware, and different applications. Educational technology refers to the use of both physical hardware and educational theoretic.

When studying with technology students can face two types of learning: asynchronous and synchronous learning. Asynchronous learning refers to the use of technologies such as emails, blogs, wikis, video courses, social networking with web 2.0, and virtual rooms. And, synchronous learning refers to the exchange of ideas and information with one or more participants during the same period, it can be a face-to-face discussion, online conferences, and Skype conversations and so on. The main idea is that students work online and help each other in real time.

For the right use of technology in education, it is necessary to think about some essential considerations. First, teachers have to identify the role of technology in education. Some teachers think that when using technology in class, their role will be considered as least important or underestimated. However, the intention of education technology is not that teachers change the traditional educational system or feel as not necessary, but to include new strategies and techniques to the knowledge that they already possess. Second, teachers need to enquire common applications and resources that can be used in class. Once teachers are familiarized with applications and resources to be used, they have to identify those that can be more suitable for their classes and evaluate them to have better results. Finally, teachers should keep in mind the possible challenges they can face using technology. Since, when using technology there can be some faults, teachers need to be prepared to continue with the class using another kind of strategy (Brückner, 2015). In short, by using educational technology as a tool in the teaching/learning process students have the possibility to learn, understand, communicate, collaborate and create using different modes that support each learning style.

How Technology Works in Memory

In the same way, technology is an alternative that enables knowledge storage in students' memory. Especially when students are paying attention to input into their sensory register, this information becomes part of the short-term memory. If students want to retain appealing information in their memories, it will be encoded into the long-term memory. So, when students need to retrieve and use this information, it will be less complex due to it is stored in the long-term memory (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968). Digital media resources help students to develop mental representations using activities which includes colorful texts, real images, videos, audios to present information useful to learn. All the resources that technology offers help students to retain the information or input that they encounter better, not only in the short-term memory, but also in their long-term memory. Moreover, technology can lower the affective filter of students because they can feel motivated when learning using any type of technological device.

Technology Applied in Language Learning (ELL)

In the field of English Language Learning (ELL), technology provides the advantages mentioned before. Specifically, in ELL, technology increases the opportunities for language use,

social interaction, and motivation. Moreover, it caters for different learning styles and improves learning outcomes. Technology can enhance social, language, and cognitive abilities in ELL. Technology offers a variety of educational site**s** with interesting activities that teachers can implement in their classes. It is important to realize the usefulness of technological activities in English classes because they allow learners to expand and interiorize concepts.

Technology applied for the master of a language has been a common topic of research. In ELL, technology has been used many years before, since the use of audio-players in the Audio Lingual Method in the late 1940's. Nowadays, there are many approaches that include technological resources as central sources of input. The study of the application of technology to the ELL field has delivered some important approaches such as Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), E-learning, and B-learning which is the main focus of this study.

Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

First, when talking about the use of technology in English classes, the most common referent is Computer-Assisted Language Learning. CALL can be defined as the use of computer applications for language teaching and learning (Levy, 1997). According to Hardisty and Windeatt (1989) "CALL is the term used by teachers and students to describe the use of computers as part of teaching and language learning". In terms of Beatty (2007, p.7) CALL is "any process in which a learner uses a computer and, as a result, improves his or her language" CALL proposes the use of computers to complement and to reinforce the process of direct instruction given by the teacher in the traditional classes.

CALL has been used since the 1960s and 1970s, but it still lacks a clear research method. CALL development can be divided into three phases (Moras, 2001). The first stage of CALL is related to the behaviorism, and it was implemented in the 1960's and 70's when the audio-lingual method was widely used. This provided students with drills and practice. In this phase, the computer was used as a tutor, presenting drill exercises without a feedback component, it did not include interactive components. The second stage was during the communicative approach. It focused more on language function than on the form. These programs provide skill practice in a non-drill format (e.g. language games, reading, and text reconstruction). In this phase the computer was still used as a tutor, but it gave students more choices, control, and opportunities

for interaction. Other CALL models, at that time, used the computer as stimulus (e.g. to stimulate writing, discussions) or as a tool (e.g. programs that did not offer language for communication but were used for creating or understanding the language, such as word processors, spelling and grammar checkers). Finally, the third phase, the current integrative CALL approach is based on multimedia computers and the Internet that combine text, graphics, sound, animation, and video. Integrative CALL and its research methods are still under development.

Advantages of CALL

Some reasons to use CALL mentioned by Lee (2000) are experiential learning which means that students can approach many different sources of information by themselves, manipulating the knowledge on their own. Motivation is another important element because students feel more engaged with the pages or games that they can use in class. Another factor that CALL provides is authentic materials for study; students can find authentic reading materials either at school or from their home. CALL can facilitate the information interchange among students and teachers; it fosters interaction. Also, web pages and some interactive platforms are designed to provide instant feedback to the students; when practicing or doing online exercises students can get individualized feedback immediately by the automatic corrections that those pages give. Finally, the sources provided by CALL help to be involved in a cultural context. Language learning could not be taught apart from the cultural context where it is spoken.

In short, CALL can promote the different learning styles that students have. Students can get different strategies to learn and they can work independently. The teacher assumes the role of facilitator, but is the learner who has the control of their learning process while they manage their own pace. Through the use of multimedia resources, it could be created an authentic meaningful language. The computers as principal devices for CALL are beneficial for students since computers are not emotional; they cannot lose patience, get angry or tired as many teachers do after long schedules.

Electronic Learning (E-learning)

E-learning is a web application that integrates a set of tools for learning online. E-learning combines different electronic tools in face to face experiences and online teaching (Ramboll 2004; Jenkins, Browne,& Walker, 2005). E-learning has as an aim the creation and management

of spaces appointed to education on the internet where learners and teachers could interact during the formation process, so it is possible to access by using a browser. In essence, e-learning is a computer-based educational tool or system that supplies students to learn anywhere and at any time. Besides, it offers the ability to share information, materials such as videos, presentations, documents, books, in different formats. Students can communicate with teachers via chat, forums, and online classes as well.

Blended Learning (B-learning)

Within the e-learning, there is another type of learning program called blended learning or b-learning. "Blended learning is the term most commonly used to refer to any combination of face-to-face teaching with computer technology (online and offline activities/materials)" (Tomlinson & Whittaker 2013, p. 12). Valiathan (2002) establishes that blended learning includes three types of learning which are: face-to-face classrooms, live e-learning, and self-paced learning. Another significant definition is provided by Bañados (2006), she explains that b-learning is a flexible approach that combines technology and classroom instruction; it uses different modes of delivering to make up a complete training program that improves learning outcomes and saves costs. Another similar definition is given by Singh and Reed (2001, as cited in Tomlinson & Whittaker 2013, p. 12); they describe b-learning as a learning program that uses more than one mode of delivery with the objective of optimizing the learning outcome.

Authors such as Neumeier (2005, as cited in Tomlinson & Whittaker 2013, p. 12-13) describe b-learning as a learning and teaching environment that combines face-to-face learning and computer assisted language learning (CALL). However, Dudeney and Hockly (2007) and Sharma and Barrett (2007) instead of CALL, they refer to any kind of technological devices, such as internet and interactive whiteboards, used to complement the teacher instruction.

Sharma and Barrett (2007) propose four guiding principles for an approach to blended learning. First, they suggest that the role of the teacher and the role of technology are not interchangeable but complementary. Second, they recommend that teaching should be accompanied by means that best suit the learners' needs. Third, they explain that the lead or main teaching mode is face-to-face (F2F) teaching, and the use of technology is a way to complement

and enhance F2F teaching. Finally, they state that technology does not guarantees good results, what ensures the best results is the use that teachers and students give to it.

Reasons to Use Blended Learning

Some of the most important reasons to use b-learning in teaching are mentioned by Osguthorpe and Graham (2003). They suggest that b-learning offers a pedagogical richness that allows access to knowledge. It also promotes interaction and personal choices. Finally, it is practical because it reduces costs and eases revision.

Pedagogical richness refers to the wide range of aids that blended learning can offer to implement in the class. The central purpose here is to improve student learning. The blended approach allows to change the way that class time is spent using diverse resources; for example, students can watch online PowerPoint presentations and then they can use class time to clarify the online information. Those resources facilitate access to knowledge. Blended learning increases the pedagogical options for teachers that help students to master the content effectively.

Blended learning is also suitable to increase social interaction. The learning process is considered as a social act especially when students share questions, perceptions, and perplexities. The purpose of Blended learning is to help students to interact with others. Personal agency or personal choices are also supported by blended learning; it helps students to find means for directing their own learning, their own choices about what they want to study and how they study. Blended systems are a tool to increase the range of personal choice for learners.

Some final advantages mentioned by Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) are cost reduction and ease of revision. Blended environments offer a reduction of time in class and costs. And, ease of revision means that b-learning offers online resources for courses that are relatively simple, easy to change, and they do not require a stylish program, graphic arts, or video and audio production skills. With Bended learning teachers and students have the possibility to respond to online questions or comments easily and quickly obtaining instant feedback and corrections.

In addition to online and F2F teaching, self-paced learning is another key component of b-learning. Self-paced learning is essential to maximize students' outcomes. Self-pacing or self-regulation enables flexibility; the learner can study at their own pace with their own choices in

terms of materials or learning strategies. At home, students can reinforce the knowledge learned in class. They can clarify doubts, ask questions or comment on things to improve using class wikis or blogs. In this way, it can be combined the technological part of blended learning with independent study. Technology offers a creative and personalized way to learn which adapt to the personal choices of learners and the time they invest in the process of learning. The aim of b-learning is to look for different modes of delivery that suit the different learning styles that students have. The different modes of delivery increase students' engagement and interest while learning in class or independently (Lim & Morris, 2009).

The advantages of b-learning and technology, in general, had been presented so far. Nevertheless, this project focuses on the importance of vocabulary learning by the implementation of a blended learning approach. Vocabulary learning supported by b-learning can have a major growth since b-learning offers plenty of technological delivering modes that make input more appealing to learners. Moreover, as said before, technology applied for learning lower the affective filters increases motivation and fosters retention of new information in the long-term memory. In this case, technologically supported materials or strategies presented by a b-learning approach can deliver better results in the process of English vocabulary learning.

Teaching Vocabulary with B-Learning

There are plenty of online websites, platforms, and technological aids that provide many different learning activities which students can use to learn vocabulary. Among the most commonly used modes of delivery that could be used in b-learning are:

Flashcards: which are a set of cards where students can write the word on a side, the definition on the other side, include a picture, the correct pronunciation, and write some real-life examples to make connections and promoting oral and visual cues to improve retention.

Cd/Dvd: they provide easy access to specific knowledge or information that students can implement and discover anytime; for example, word lists, games, dictionaries and so on**.** Besides, the use of audio and visual presentations causes a positive effect on learning since students listen to new words and associate them with pictures.

*Online (Internet-based) dictionaries***:** they provide clear definitions, examples, sounds for pronunciation, synonyms, and antonyms to facilitate the learning process.

Authoring programs: programs that teachers can use creatively creating, editing, commenting, explaining and adding new information and activities for students to study in or before class. Teachers edit and prepare attractive activities.

Online glossing: a suitable resource because students can develop the ability to read on websites and authentic texts with specific vocabulary support.

*Blogs***:** pages where people share opinions and writings. This provides to the teacher opportunities to monitor the students works overtime. It can be a suitable strategy to assess students in a different way. Besides, blogs allow students to take part of discussions in forums. This kind of activities encourages students' ownership and responsibility.

Wikis: are collaborative that many people can work or edit, the created information is shared with all people freely. Students can work cooperatively to increase their vocabulary knowledge by adding new items to the blog or sharing readings to independent work. Students can create databases of any kind of words with its meaning and examples.

Related Research

Previous investigations related to this research project had depicted positive results. Regarding the fact that attitude is an essential factor to succeed in language learning, many investigations had shown that attitude can be positive when technology is applied for learning and teaching. Technology offers good input and supports different learning styles. For vocabulary learning, technology has also been a good tool that supports this process. For the case of blended learning, researches show it could be helpful when used appropriately. Blended learning combines the best of face-to-face instruction, technological materials, and autonomous learning. All those characteristics would have a positive impact on vocabulary learning and the attitudes students have toward it.

In a research project conducted by Alduwairej (2014), the results depicted that students adopt a positive attitude towards learning English when technology was used in class. This study aimed

at discovering students' perspectives toward the use of aids such as Word Processing, Online Audio and Video (Podcast, YouTube), and Social Networking sites in the classroom. After applying a survey, students agreed that technology could lead to a better learning process.

Similarly, Agustina (2017) investigated how technology enhances a positive attitude among 52 English adult learners. To conduct the research, computer-based lessons, videos, films, Powerpoint presentations, and e-learning were implemented in class. For data collection, some interviews, a questionnaire, direct observation, pre-test and post-test were applied. The findings showed that when using technology, students feel free and motivated. This attitude was evidenced because they seemed more active, excited and engaged in the process of learning.

Lin, Hsiao, Tseng, and Chan (2014) show the results of an experiment that was carried out in a school in Taiwan with 92 students. Interactive White Boards (IWB) and two software were used to teach vocabulary. At the end of the research, 80 % of the words were learned correctly, and 70 % of the words were used by the students 30 days after classes demonstrating that the use of new teaching strategies and technology is beneficial for students in their vocabulary learning process.

Another related research, Clark (2013) explains the effects of the application "vocabulary builder" in the acquisition of English vocabulary, in an elementary school in New York. The participants were five immigrant students who spoke different languages, and they need to learn English for academic purposes (EAP). During this study, qualitative and quantitative data were gathered during 12 daily meetings of 30 minutes. The data collection depicted that participants improved their vocabulary acquisition and began to use the words they had learned, especially verbs. In short, the effects of technology were positive when it is used appropriately.

Pazio (2010) in Cracow Poland, conducted a case study whose aim was to investigate the effectiveness of blended approach for teaching a foreign language. The methodology consisted of the exchange of e-mail between a native speaker of English and a Polish learner of English. The main idea was to measure vocabulary progress achieved by email exchange. The results showed that e-mail correspondence helped students to expand their vocabulary and to eliminate the spelling mistakes. Moreover, the blended course was beneficial for learners since they were exposed to real input and had the opportunity to produce output in a real context.

Consequently, the participant´s motivation to learn and their confidence to use the foreign language increased as they used the language for a real purpose of communication.

Djiwandono (2013) developed an exploratory study in Indonesia. This research aimed at determining the effectiveness of blended learning in vocabulary lessons and identifying the participants' opinions about the blended learning experience. For the application, different vocabulary lessons devoting 100 minutes per week were taught to 21 students. Each lesson was focused on intentional learning instructed with authentic reading material and vocabulary profiler. Next, students had to write a text and post it in a blog in order that students could read and learn new words. At the end of 16 weeks, students gained almost 5000-level English words, and the final interview they displayed a positive attitude toward the use of authentic materials and the use of the blog.

Vasbievaa, Klimovab, Agibalovac, Karzhanovad, and Bírováe (2016) developed a study to determine the effects of the blended learning approach to teaching English vocabulary to ESL learners. The participants were adult learners. After the application of a pre and a post-test. The training process was carried out using face-to-face instruction combined with digital visual learning tools. At the end of the second month of training, the results presented greater outcomes; that is to say, the b-learning approach increased the vocabulary knowledge of the participants. Besides, students' attitudes were positive; they expressed that they preferred studying with b-learning since it allowed them to work at their own pace.

In Colombia, Pardo-Gonzalez (2013) reported the implementation of blended learning in English classes at Universidad de Los Andes. The English course was offered to students of all university programs who needed to learn English because of the university requirements. The blend was created by using Online Lab, YouTube for videos and listening exercises and the internet in general. In the end, students explained three main advantages of using a b-learning approach. First, flexibility; it was a positive aspect from students to learn from home at their own pace. Second, students appreciated the personalized feedback given by the instructor. Finally, students valued the face-to-face lessons where they could practice what they had learned by their own means using the blend.

Another similar research conducted by Moreno (2013), vocabulary was taught to 10 eighth graders, using PowerPoint (image, text or definition and audio). The results were positive since 60 % of the vocabulary was acquired efficiently and 90 % of the students remembered easily more than half of the words presented. To conclude, multimedia resources combines with teacher instruction increase motivation in the students, causing that they learn more during classes and develop their autonomous learning.

This research project was developed by Cantor (2009), in Universidad Nacional in Colombia adopting a program called ALEX (Program of Autonomous Learning of Foreign Languages). In the Blended Course, the material was delivered online and the students were given face to face meetings about the use of the platform, the content and the oral practice of the language. The aim of this project was to make the students participate in discussion boards about the changes faced by the university and their own learning processes. For data collection, the students had to answer a survey about their perceptions; it showed that they knew how to use the technological tools, but they the problem was a lack of guidance on the teacher's part. Also, students claimed that the use of a foreign language in a Blended Course reduces the vocabulary available to write. Finally, teachers rewarded autonomy with points, which does not promote real autonomy for the students.

The previous researches demonstrate that in most of the cases the use of some technological tool in a blended learning environment could have several benefits for language learners in their process of vocabulary learning. The most important reasons to teach in a blended learning environment are that it may increase the attitude students have toward English vocabulary learning and facilitate the presentation of words to students which means better retention and learning.

Chapter III: Research Design

After having revised the relevant concepts related to this research, this chapter will focus the procedure to be used to conduct the research taking into account meaningful concepts such as the paradigm, kind of investigation, instruments for data collection, the setting, population, sample, and data analysis.

Research Paradigm

On account of the objectives, characteristics and significance of this study, it will follow the theoretical underpinnings of the interpretative paradigm and qualitative methodology. "A paradigm is a set of assumptions, concepts, values and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them, especially in an intellectual discipline like consumer studies" McGregor and Murnane (2010). In the same way, a qualitative approach is defined as a set of interpretive techniques that aims to describe, decode, translate the meaning, not the frequency, of an occurring phenomenon. (Shah and Corley, 2006, as cited in McGregor and Murnane, 2010).

 According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research is a multi-method in focus, it involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, in order to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the use and collection of a set of empirical materials case study, personal experience, introspective, life story interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments in individuals' lives.

Moreover, Creswell (1998) defines a qualitative study as an inquiry process of understanding the human social problems, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting, making it possible that participants act and express as natural as possible.

The above mentioned authors agree in their concepts, they state that qualitative research aims at understanding what people feel, express, and do in a given phenomenon of real life.

Qualitative research is conducted in a setting where the participants could act freely to make data collection a process of obtaining meaningful and real data.

Research Design

Phenomenology explores the unique meanings of any human experience or phenomenon. It has been developed as a human science that is employed in professional disciplines such as education, health science, clinical psychology, and law. The value of phenomenology is that it prioritizes and investigates how the human being experiences the world. The main purpose of phenomenology is to describe the phenomenon or a lived experience (Giorgi, 2012). Phenomenology aims at describing a phenomenon on the basis of participants' perceptions and attitudes.

For Creswell (2007), a phenomenological study describes individuals' meaning of lived experiences in a certain situation or phenomenon. Phenomenology describes the experiences in common of a group of participants. After comparing and categorizing individuals' experiences, the goal is to identify the essence of what occurred in general with the phenomenon. Moustakas (1994, as cited in Creswell, 2007) explains that the description presented in a phenomenological study must include what the participants experienced and how they experienced it.

The techniques and instruments used to collect data in a phenomenological study are interviews, conversations, observations, focus meetings, analysis of diaries and journals. This kind of methods tries to gather as much information as possible so that they encourage open-ended responses to make participants sharing their experiences related to the phenomenon being studied.

Setting and population

This phenomenological study will take place at a public high school located in the south-west of Pasto. The institution has over 2000 students in kindergarten, elementary, and high school. Students belong to 1 and 2 social strata, female and male gender. Due to the inclusion policy that this institution follows, there are students with some different capacities that are integrated into classes.

The institution has six headquarters, five of them offer elementary education. The central headquarter in which the project will be developed offers education from 6th and 11th grades. The institution has adequate facilities such as large classrooms, a library, a cafeteria, computer-rooms, etc. There is also a facility called "PUNTO VIVE DIGITAL" that contains 40 tablets and 34 computers with internet connection, a smart TV and a video-beam.

Sample

The participants of this study are 30 eighth graders, and a female English teacher graduated from the English and French program of Universidad de Nariño. Students are 12 female and 18 male teenagers with an average age of 13 and 15 years old; they belong to 1 and 2 economic levels. The "Punto Vive Digital" facility that possesses the school allows them easy access to updated technology such as tablets, computers, and internet which can be used as a blend to their learning process. They will be taught in a blended-learning atmosphere with the purpose to determine what are their attitudes when learning vocabulary in this way.

Data collection Techniques and Instruments

Data will be collected using direct observation, a field diary, and interviews.

Direct Observation and Field Diary: While conducting the research, the researchers will collect data from what they observe in the behavior and attitude of participants. The data obtained by observation will be registered in a field diary. It will contain detailed information of what happens during the classes, for example, what activities will be done, how students react to the task assigned, how many time they will spent to do the activities, how they act and interact, etc. The idea is to seek detailed information about the attitudes of participants acting naturally in the real context.

*Interviews***:** An interview with the teacher will be conducted with semi-structured questions to know her thoughts about the attitude she has observed in her students before the implementation of the blend. Moreover, interviews will be done to students at the beginning and at the end of the process to identify the opinions of participants about English vocabulary learning before and after the blend and how they experienced the process. Students will be asked open-ended questions, and they will have the opportunities to share whatever they want with the researchers.

Procedure

For the development of this study, the next steps will be followed. First of all, the approach to the institution's principal to ask for their permission to conduct the research and implement the blended learning English course. After having obtained the permission, the preparation of the materials that will be used to the blend will start. Second, a meeting with the teacher and students' parents will be arranged to ask them for permission and cooperation to carry out the research. An interview with the teacher will be conducted to ask her about the general behavior and attitudes that students have when learning English vocabulary. Interviews will be applied to students to have previous ideas about their attitudes, likes, opinions and perceptions when learning English vocabulary. Third, the teaching part will start during a certain time that will be described further on a schedule. Vocabulary will be taught in a blended learning environment created with the use of the materials provided by the "Pasto Vive Digital" facility. During the application time, data will be collected by direct observation and registered on a field diary. Fourth, at the end of the application time, interviews will be done to each participant to obtain information about their attitudes and experiences that they have during the time that they were though in a blended learning environment. Finally, the data will be analyzed and organized in order to fulfill the objectives of the study. In this sense, the conclusions of the project could be presented and the final report will be submitted. A final meeting will be organized with the institution's principals, administrators, and teachers to report the results obtained and present them the final conclusions.

Data analysis

The process of data analysis will be conducted following the process described by Creswell (2014). The first step is to organize and prepare the data for analysis which means transcription of interviews and sorting of data obtained from observations stored in a field diary. Step 2 suggests reading all the obtained data to have the opportunity to reflect its overall meaning. In this step the researcher could write some notes or general thoughts about the data. Step 3 is coding the data. In this step data will be organized by bracketing it in chunks or segments, named with a word that represents its main idea or content. The process of coding involves creating emerging codes with the data, or to fit data in some predetermined codes. In this research, data

will be sorted in emerging codes since it is hard to predict the possible codes that we can find. In step 4, using the codes previously made, the researchers will describe how the phenomenon was experienced by the participants and their perspectives towards the phenomenon. And, these descriptions as well as codes will generate the themes, or the most relevant findings. Step 5, consist on representation of themes. This representation will be a detailed discussion of the themes with specific illustrations of individuals' perspectives, and quotations. The final step is the interpretation of data. In phenomenology, themes are shaped into a general description (Creswell, 2014), this general description encompasses the essence of the research findings. It will depict if the students' attitudes along the process were positive or negative. This final stage will briefly include the researchers' personal interpretation. The development of this process will lead to the accomplishment of the objectives of this study.

Schedule of Activities

Schedule of activities for the development of the research																				
Months	January				February				March				June				July			
Weeks	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Activities																				
1.Ask for permission to institution		✓																		
2. parents and teacher meeting		✓																		
3.Prior interviews to teachers and students			✓	✓																
4.Observations					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓									
5. Post interviews												✓	✓							
6.Data analysis														✓	✓	✓				
7. Writing the final report																	✓			
8. Final report presentation																		✓		

Budget

Unit	Detail	Unit Value	Total Value
90	Printing (letters, interviews, final report)	100	$ 9.000,00
184	Transportation	1.600	$ 294.400,00
500	Photocopies	50	$ 25.000,00
		Total	$ 328.400,00

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Attachments

Field Diary

Class N°:		Date:	Time:
Teacher:		Subject:	
Students N°:		Grade:	

Lesson Objective:		
Time:	Description of Activities	Description of the Observation

Teacher Interview

Información General

Nombre:	
Edad:	
Genero:	
Colegio:	
Curso:	
Fecha:	

Le solicitamos muy comedidamente responder a las siguientes preguntas de la manera más honesta y sincera posible. La información proporcionada por usted es confidencial y con fines académicos.

1. ¿Usa usted alguna estrategia en especial para el aprendizaje de vocabulario?

2. ¿Los estudiantes recuerdan con facilidad el vocabulario visto en clases previas?

3. ¿Cuál es la actitud de los estudiantes cuando se les presenta actividades que involucren el aprendizaje de nuevo vocabulario?

4. ¿Qué tan importante considera usted el uso de tecnología para el aprendizaje de inglés?

5. ¿Cómo evalúa usted el aprendizaje de vocabulario?

Students Pre-interview

Información General

Nombre:	
Edad:	
Genero:	
Colegio:	
Curso:	
Fecha:	

Le solicitamos muy comedidamente responder a las siguientes preguntas de la manera más honesta y sincera posible. La información proporcionada por usted es confidencial y con fines académicos.

1. ¿Cómo se siente usted durante una clase de inglés?

2. ¿Considera usted que el aprendizaje de vocabulario es importante? ¿Por qué?

3. ¿Usted dedica tiempo extra clase al aprendizaje de vocabulario?

4. ¿Qué hace usted cuando no conoce una palabra?

5. ¿Cuáles son las actividades que más le llaman la atención cuando se trata de aprender vocabulario en inglés?

6. ¿Considera que la tecnología puede contribuir en su proceso de aprendizaje de vocabulario?

Post-Students Interview

Información General

Nombre:	
Edad:	
Genero:	
Colegio:	
Curso:	
Fecha:	

Le solicitamos muy comedidamente responder a las siguientes preguntas de la manera más honesta y sincera posible. La información proporcionada por usted es confidencial y con fines académicos.

1. ¿Cómo se sintió con el cambio de metodología?

2. ¿A partir de la implementación de la nueva metodología, el tiempo extra clase dedicado al estudio de vocabulario aumentó o disminuyó? ¿por qué?

3. ¿Considera importante el uso de ayudas tecnológicas para el aprendizaje de vocabulario? ¿por qué?

4. ¿Qué estrategia implementada por la profesora le llamó más la atención? ¿por qué?

5. ¿Considera importante el rol del profesor para el aprendizaje de vocabulario, justifique su respuesta?