

**UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR  
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT**



**Universidad de El Salvador**

*Hacia la libertad por la cultura*

**TOPIC:**

**“A Descriptive Study of the Results Obtained in Blended-Learning Intensive English Courses in the Language Skills Development Area at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador during the Year 2014.”**

**In Order to Obtain the Degree of:**

**Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas: Especialidad en Francés e Inglés**

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## **I. Acknowledgements**

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To our closer friends who were always encouraging us to do our best always providing us their support.

To our teachers for their guidance since they were always available every time we needed them to share their knowledge to make us better.

## **II. Objectives**

### **2.1. General Objective:**

- To study the results of the application of a blended-learning program in Intensive English courses at the Foreign Languages Department.

### **2.2. Specific Objectives:**

- To find out the results of the application of a blended-learning program in Intensive English courses at the Foreign Languages Department gathering teacher's and students' experiences to inform interested researchers.
- To determine if the current development of the blended-learning program in Intensive English courses satisfies student's needs through their opinions to determine the method efficacy.
- To identify how the implementation of blended-learning program courses can benefit the Foreign Languages Department on its overpopulation issues to lay the foundations for further studies.
- To describe how the blended-learning program in Intensive English courses is carried out via surveys and questions to point out benefits and drawbacks of this method.

### **III. Problematic situation**

It is quite well known that the idea of implementing a blended-learning program in different courses in the Foreign Languages Department emerged as a result of the lack of facilities to cover the population demand as well as the over-crowding of classrooms due to the increasing population in the Department. For that reason, the research team has decided on presenting the results of the implementation of this program as a supporting tool for teachers.

The students' population in the Foreign Languages Department has increased in the last years at an abrupt rate. According to a research thesis work, and information gathered from the digital newspaper of the University of El Salvador named "El Universitario", the student's population growth in the Department, the quantity of new registered students per year is approximately 1300 and the rate of increase is about 200 to 300; besides, the number of changes in major is about 350 to 400 per year. As a result, the high number of students affects the quality of education and interferes with the teaching-learning process.

In addition, the Foreign Languages Department population is affected by the lack of classrooms and desks and because of that, students have less or limited access to equipment and technology. At times, classrooms where to have classes can be found but there are not enough desks available. On the other hand, many of the desks available are in bad condition. In any of the two cases the Foreign Languages Department does not provide the supplies teachers and students require to develop a course in an ergonomic environment.

Another difficulty found is the lack of personal connections and less individualized focus due to when there are more than thirty students per classroom, teachers cannot spend the same amount of time with each of them. Noise level increases, becoming harder to students to concentrate and teachers to teach.

#### **IV. Justification**

During the past two years, a blended-learning program using Moodle and Facebook social media, has been implemented through the use of a virtual learning platform in a number of English courses in the Foreign Languages Department. This virtual platform has been mostly used to provide virtual access to materials and other information resources to students registered in these courses. This action has been taken mainly in an effort to overcome the lack of space for the growing population of the Department.

It is essential that the impact and repercussions of the blended-learning program implementation through the application of this virtual learning platform (Moodle) be studied and surveyed to make a diagnosis of the practicality of such implementation.

##### **The purpose of this research is to:**

- Find out the results of the application of a blended-learning program in Intensive English courses at the Foreign Languages Department.
- Determine if the current development of the blended-learning program in Intensive English courses satisfies student's needs.
- Identify how the implementation of blended-learning program courses can benefit the Foreign Languages Department on its overpopulation issues.
- Describe how the blended-learning program in Intensive English courses is carried out

This research will benefit students of the Foreign Languages Department by helping them to recognize the results of the implementation of the blended-learning program in the different English courses. Moreover, it will be useful for teachers and other people involved in the development of this program. Finally, this research will serve as a reference for further studies on the subject matter. In addition, it will serve students, teachers and authorities to perceive if the implementation of the blended-learning program will have benefited in the teaching-learning-process.

## **V. Delimitation of the study**

The study will cover only those courses in the language skills development in which a blended-learning program has been implemented at the Foreign Languages Department. The population selected for this study is limited to students registered at the Intensive English courses for the semester II/2014 as well as teachers and others involved from the already mentioned Department.

The application of a blended-learning program in Intensive English courses in the Modern Languages Major and English Teaching Language Major is relatively new. This impacts the amount of information available to us.



## **VI. Theoretical framework**

The availability of technological tools in educational contexts around the world helps teachers and professionals of education while incorporating a variety of applications into their administrative and teaching duties. The typical current practices of technology use for teachers are: administrative and organizational functions - such as record keeping, word processing to produce texts; taking classes to computer lab on scheduled days; and using computers to support distance learning, where learners meet only virtually. The great promise of blended learning lies in its potential to combine the best of traditional and online practices (Thorne, 2003).

An increasing development has taken place over the past 10-15 years in computer and communications technology. Today, an advanced cellphone almost has the computing power and features of a desktop computer from a decade ago. Because of the ever-increasing possibilities enabled by faster computers and internet connections, it is difficult to imagine a university that does not maintain several computer labs for instruction and provides their faculty with one or more learning management systems such as Moodle. At the same time, the internet has developed very fast during the past decade and is today an important resource for research, learning and socialization for most students. This technological development has gradually opened up new instructional possibilities in universities and allowed administrators to seek greater educational achievements (Chute, Williams & Hancock, 2006; Dziuban, Hartman, Juge, Moskal & Sorg, 2006; Graham, 2006; Lewis & Orton, 2006; Pease, 2006; Ziob & Mosher, 2006).

Blended learning strategies vary according to the discipline, the year level, student characteristics and learning outcomes, and have a student-centered approach to the learning design. Blended learning can increase access and flexibility for learners, increase level of active learning, and achieve better student experiences and outcomes. For teaching staff, blended learning can improve teaching and class management practices. A blend might include:

- **Face-to-face and online learning activities and formats.**
- **Traditional time tabled classes with different modes, such as weekend, intensive, external, trimester.**
- **Well established technologies such as lecture capture, and/or with social media and emerging technologies.**
- **Simulations, group activities, site-based learning, practical.**

Blended learning mixes various teaching techniques, learning styles, and delivery methods. Typically, blended learning combines a mix of classroom meetings known as face-to-face and content delivered by technology, such as computer-based study or e-learning. Teachers have been blending or integrating different types of learning activities and resources in classroom, laboratory, practicum, studio contexts for a very long time. Today, the term “blended learning” has evolved to mean the integration of classroom learning with online or e-learning. Blended learning comes in many aspects, although each application or method may have similar “ingredients” or elements such as face-to-face delivery, flexible options, online components. In essence, there is a blending of flexible learning and teaching experiences that may involve assessment, teacher/student communication, student activities, teaching activities and students resources.

Certain adjustments are required to incorporate flexibility and blended learning experiences on higher education institutions (HEI). When teachers design the curricula for blended learning courses, they should consider:

- **The role of the physical space:** Use face-to-face interaction when the activities best suit the use of physical spaces. HEI is building collaborative learning spaces across the campuses. Some of these spaces are designated learning commons where students can work together.
- **Planning and creating class content:** In addition to content you have created, look at open education resources and resources available from the Library.

- **Using the online space:** Use collaboration and communication spaces in HEI. There are discussion boards, posting and private groups on Facebook, sharing virtual documents (PDF and Word files), links for YouTube videos.
- **Providing feedback:** Feedback will need to be timely as well as clear and concise.
- **Flexibility versus structure:** Often when you add flexibility, you can lose a certain amount of structure. Due dates, clear learning objectives and expectations will play an important role in providing online structures.
- **Class participation versus class attendance:** Students will need to understand what is expected of them and also the mandatory requirements for successful completion of the unit. Students need to be made aware that participation is important and necessary.
- **Office hours:** Provide students with extra help or an opportunity to ask questions. Consider using asynchronous (e.g. Discussion Boards) and/or synchronous (e.g. Collaborate) sessions.

There are some accepted definitions for several course types, including hybrid and blended courses represented on the following table:

% Content Delivered Online	Course Type	Accepted Definition*
0%	<b>Traditional</b>	Course with only face-to-face meetings and no online technology. Content delivered in writing or in person.
1 to 29%	<b>Web-facilitated</b>	Course with primarily face-to-face meetings. May post syllabus, assignments, or resources via a course management system or web pages.

<p><b>30 to 79%</b></p>	<p><b>Hybrid or blended</b></p>	<p>Course blends online and face-to-face delivery. Much of the content is delivered online, often uses online discussions, and a reduced number of face-to-face meetings.</p>
<p><b>80% or more</b></p>	<p><b>Online</b></p>	<p>Course with most or all content delivered online. No face-to-face meetings.</p>

The idea of a blended-learning program in the Intensive English courses was born in the second half of 2011 with English Composition II course, was possible with the help of the University Authorities even though there was not a proper budget to be done. The person in charge of the virtual platform used to develop this program is a level I university teacher, who has a Master Degree in Instructional Technology. He decided to venture in this project and to provide this innovating tool so that the University could be positioned in a more technological environment and to contribute to release the pressure of the student's overpopulation issues and the lack of facilities at the Foreign Language Department.

The person in charge to teach how Moodle platform works and provides maintenance to teachers' profiles, has said that teachers have shown great enthusiasm with this project because they have the opportunity to learn more about how to use this new alternative in the teaching process and because they have increased or improved their knowledge after they had taken the training program. According to this teacher, there are many possible options for teachers to use in their sessions such as the online file edition, online voice/video recording and file uploading, so students can get the information files of the course. This person also said that a survey would be delivered to determine the impact and of this implementation and to decide how to improve it if any deficiencies are encountered. In the forthcoming years, it is possible to create a major based on the application and management of these courses.

Time management of a Blended-Learning course is often seen as a time-saving measure both in terms of course design and tutor time for delivery, this is a huge misconception. The development and instructional design of the online part of the blended learning course can be extremely time consuming and complex if you want to take the course beyond the delivery of simple downloadable documents. Delivering any kind of online support for blended learning can also be very time consuming for tutors as many participants feel that an online tutor is available 24/7 and they do not have the limitations of ‘class time’ to restrict access to their tutor. Calculating how much time to allow tutors per student and dealing with student expectations becomes significantly challenging.

The teacher interviewed in charge of both English Teaching Major and Modern Languages Major, and who has worked on this platform suggests that the virtual platform is a useful tool which can help students to improve their academic performance by providing activities to develop the learning skills and competences in different areas as well as to achieve independence and self-learning and encouraging group work.

In her opinion, the possible benefits to the students’ community are: the development of intrinsic motivation, through the expansion of students’ sense of responsibility; maturity; independence and commitment to their own learning, since they have to look for complementary information to the one given by the teacher; and the application of some teaching strategies and approaches to learning, such as the student-centered classes, the negotiated curricula and discovery learning. She also mentioned that there can be benefits for teachers too since, in her particular case, she experienced the sharing of knowledge and experiences with some of her colleagues who helped her to get prepared in order to efficiently exploit this resource.

Improvement, normally, implies the enhancement from the current state to another agreeable or satisfied level. To what “quality” the learning and teaching shall be enhanced may be related to the learning outcomes of a particular course or, in a wider context, the aim or role of higher education (HE). Such an educational aim is complicated. University has always been a physical place for educators, researchers and students to come together, to interact (Noll, 2002) and to construct knowledge and skills. In the classic publication, *Universities*, by Abraham Flexner (1930), the role of higher education is both developing knowledge (research) and

developing people (learning and teaching). He stresses that a university is an “autonomy organism” which is not simply influenced by the preference of society and culture. Jaspers (1960) agrees with Flexner’s (1930) view that the idea of higher education is an “autonomy organism” but he also highlights the fact that universities are not able to leave behind society. He argues that a higher education institution (HEI) is an intellectual community within the society, and ideally, it should play a major role in contributing to the community and society. In modern days, UNESCO advocates four educational roles:

(1) **Learning to know:** by combining a sufficiently broad and general knowledge with the opportunity to work in depth on a small number of subjects.

(2) **Learning to do:** in order to acquire not only occupational skill but also the competence to deal with many situations at work in teams. It also means learning to do in the context of young peoples’ various social and work experience which may be informal or formal.

(3) **Learning to live together:** by developing an understand of other people and an appreciation of interdependence – carrying out joint projects and learning to manage conflicts in a spirit of respect for the values of mutual understanding.

(4) **Learning to be:** so as better to develop one’s personality and be able to act with ever greater autonomy, judgment and personal responsibility. (Delors et al., 1996, p.37)

Since the technology has impacted many aspects of life including the educational setting. It is important to understand how this tool can impact the pedagogical approach that teachers take to align with the needs of the learners in their classrooms. One approach that has emerged from the convergence of technology and pedagogy is the blended learning environment. This type of classroom uses the technology available to incorporate asynchronous learning opportunities, which may provide students with more relevance in their understanding and learning of content in a given subject. This “pedagogical approach should not be seen merely as a balance between delivery models but as a fundamental redrawing of the instructional model” (NACOL, 2008, p. 5). Ultimately, however, it is the responsibility of educational institutions and the educators who teach in the schools to shift from a transmissive approach to a constructivist approach. This may keep students engaged and learning.

Some of the most common elements of blended learning cited in the literature included blending of face-to-face and online instruction for the purpose of satisfying a portion of content delivered online, using multiple approaches to learning or to enhance the classroom experience by using new information and communication technology (NACOL, 2008). A working definition of blended learning was adopted for the purpose of this study: a pedagogical approach that combines the effectiveness and socialization opportunities of the face-to-face classroom with the technology-enhanced active learning possibilities of the online learning environment across a group of diverse learners (Dziuban, Hartman, & Moskal, 2004; NACOL, 2008; Bonk & Graham, 2006). This definition allowed for flexibility of instruction, as teachers in the high school setting became comfortable and explored the possibilities of a blended learning approach.

There are many theories that support the use of blended-learning. Many of these theories are already existent but there are others emerging from the basis of e-learning and that can be applied to blended-learning. That is the case of a learning theory developed by George Siemens and Stephen Downes called “connectivism” which is defined as a “theory for the digital age”. Connectivism is based on the analysis of the limitations of behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism, to explain the effect of technology on the way in which people live, interact and learn. Simply stated, connectivism is social learning that is networked. It starts with an individual’s personal knowledge that is organized and used as needed. The speed at which information is expanding and at the same time becoming obsolete has created the need for new ways of providing instruction. George Siemens (2005) discusses how the acquisition of knowledge is changing from what is known to how to find the information when it is needed. This leads to continual learning for an individual based on one’s ability to find the correct information, to connect it with past and current information, thus increasing his or her knowledge.

It is important to remark that both experts’ opinions and theories on the application of the virtual platform are closely related given that in her own words: “the use of this resource helps students to improve their academic performance... to develop learning skills... and encourages group work”. This is connected to the principle of socio constructivism which refers to the creation of opportunities for students to develop meaning by dialoguing, discussing, and debating with other learners. The use of virtual classes also stimulates students’ independence

and commitment to their own learning, which is the basic of connectivism: learning how to find the information when it is needed. Finally, the transformative learning theory suggests a conversion of students' reflections which can be observed in terms of matureness and sense of responsibility since students are more conscious of the importance of objectivity when being evaluated in group work participation and assignments, thus developing awareness on moral values and ethics to become a valuable professional.

The overall advantages of taking a blended learning course as opposed to doing the course completely face-to-face are many. The greatest advantage is that having considerable parts of the course online enables us to extend the period of learning over a far greater timescale than would be possible with face-to-face teaching. This means that teachers have more time to develop and absorb the materials they are studying. It also enables the teachers to learn in their own teaching context, try things out with their own students and gain genuine first-hand experience on which they can reflect when they come to approaching and understanding theory. These online courses also help students to develop their self-learning experience through the source of information such as the internet.

We are also able to make much better use of the face-to-face time that is available for the course because participants arrive with a good level of technical knowledge and sound experiences and have already had some time to absorb many of the technical and theoretical aspects during the first online block of the course. Students can receive as many feedbacks as possible in face-to-face interaction after they have studied the class information posted.

The followings are some examples of discussion boards on Moodle online platform:

- **Theory-practice:** make links while on work placement; tutor poses questions, students share experiences, problems and solutions which will differ between work places
- **Critical thinking:** Examine past events or current topics and pose challenging or counterchallenging statements/ideas proposed.
- **Brainstorm:** stimulate ideas ahead of lectures, tutorials, field trips or guest speakers.
- **Create threaded discussions around assigned readings:** Threads may include pre-reading (anticipation) activities, interpretations, evaluations.



- **Cooperative Debate:** in groups or individually student's present perspectives on a particular issue, followed by a whole group consensus-building discussion.
- **Collaborative Writing:** in groups students work together to create a single document formulating proposals and analytical reports, which they then post to the larger group for discussion and/or critique.

The followings are some examples of digital tools such as Facebook and Email that can be used to support learning and teaching in a blended environment.

- **Commentary and analysis:** Social media is an ideal tool for disseminating regular commentary and opinion. Posts, for example, might be written by a single author or several. Multi-author posts in particular can provide an opportunity for improving communication and increasing impact.
- **Learning Journals:** Students can use work groups to support and develop their learning. These groups are often reflective and might be private, shared with a teacher or completely public. It allows learners to document their learning and can enable the Instructor to gauge a students' depth of understanding about a task or unit content.
- **Learning communities:** This could be in the form of a group sharing post for a unit involving teachers and / or students using it to share information and discuss topics. Learning communities can also be loosely connected networks involving many individuals reading and commenting on each other's post around a common theme.
- **Resource sharing:** Postings can be used as a resource sharing tool allowing students to share, review and critique resources.
- **Collaborative authoring:** Posting can be used to develop a "publication". The commenting functionality allows readers and collaborators to comment on each other's text.

Good practice in blended learning involves using a few tools in effective ways to achieve quality learning outcomes. When designing a unit for blended learning start first with the learning outcomes and consider what supports students will need to achieve successful learning outcomes. This planning process includes the integration of blended learning in your unit and designing the learning activities.

**The blended learning activity is planned in advance, as something that the student does.**

A blended learning activity is designed as a learning process which the student does. Typically, it involves the student in doing something more than just reading on-screen. The sequence of what the student will do in the blended learning activity is mapped out in advance. The resources and supports that students will need, and when they will need these are also mapped out in advance. Resources and supports include: task instructions, learning guide, online tools, and appropriate FAQs, web links, media files, etc.

**All the components of the activity are ready (but not necessarily available) before the student starts the activity.**

The resources that students will use in doing the activity (e.g. instructions, content materials, online tools etc.) are written/created and linked into the appropriate part of the Moodle platform or Facebook site before the student starts the activity. Pointers to resources and supports are provided.

**The activity leads students towards achieving the learning outcomes and/or completing assessment for the unit.**

An effective blended learning activity is designed as an integral component of the unit. The activity may help students achieve the learning outcomes for the unit, for example, by practicing written communication skills and critical thinking in an online discussion (if these are learning outcomes, or implicit in the learning outcomes for the unit). Or it may help students prepare for an assessment task, for example by doing practice quizzes which allow multiple attempts. Blended learning activities extend learning opportunities beyond the classroom.

**The activity takes account of students' incoming level of expertise in online learning/independent learning.**

Students who have not experienced online learning may find it challenging, at least initially, to do a blended learning activity. Blended learning places more emphasis on individuals to learn independently including monitoring their own progress. Blended learning activities, particularly for first-year students, should build students' confidence in themselves as online

and independent learners. This does not imply making blended learning activities trivial, but it does imply careful design so that the activity is both challenging and achievable, with support. Although mature students may initially be more apprehensive about blended learning, there is some evidence that older learners may be better equipped than younger students to study independently. [Hartley, J. (1998) *Learning and Studying: A Research Perspective*. London: Routledge.]

**Students are provided with clear guidelines/expectations about what they are to do, where, and within what time frame.**

Before beginning the blended learning activity, students are provided with an overview of what they will do in the activity. As well, students are provided with information about the components of the activity, where they will do these, in what sequence, with what support, and within what timeframe/s. This information is provided online so that students can refer back to it, at will. Usually this information is also discussed in class. When preparing guidelines, it's a good idea to ask someone else to trial these, aiming to identify any gaps or information that could be misinterpreted by students.

**The rationale for the activity is made clear to students. Students are informed about why they are doing the particular blended learning activity.**

Explain how the activity will help them to achieve the learning outcomes for the unit, and/or complete assessment task(s) for the unit. Remember too, to explain how the blended learning activity will help them develop professional skills for the workplace. For example, blended learning activities can help students enhance their independent learning skills, writing skills, collaboration skills, investigation skills, etc.

**Students get feedback on their performance as part of doing the activity or following completion of the activity.**

An advantage of blended learning is that it can enable students to receive immediate feedback on their performance (e.g. automated feedback on quizzes). It can also enable students to receive more feedback (e.g. feedback from multiple students and the teacher/ guest presenter in an online discussion). Feedback provided in online discussions is also “persistent” in the sense

that the student can return to the feedback and re-read it, thus increasing the likelihood of learning.

**The activity is manageable by staff.**

When designing a blended learning activity, keep in mind what it is suitable for you to do during semester. If the blended learning resources and task components are in place in the online tool before semester starts, your blended learning teaching time during semester will be mostly related to monitoring. A built-in feedback process can reduce your blended learning teaching time. To keep your workload manageable, you could also create a Frequently Asked Questions resource so that you do not have to answer any task-related questions multiple times. Remember to tell students how frequently you will be monitoring the site and responding to questions, posts etc. One final word: as with anything new, it is wise to expect to devote a little more time to an activity the first time you run it

Lastly, through exploiting the social media and community building opportunities offered during the initial online phase of the course, the participants arrive at the face-to-face part of the course already familiar with each other and this really accelerates the bonding process that groups generally go through during the initial stages of a face-to-face course, making the learning process more comfortable so this can help students to feel assured since they also need to build their social skills as well.

## **VII. Design of the research**

The application of a virtual platform in the Foreign Languages Department is a relatively new subject that must be studied and monitored during the course of its development to determine its effectiveness; this is the main reason for the research team for choosing a descriptive study.

A descriptive study is conducted to specify important properties of people, groups, communities and any phenomenon submitted to analysis; it is also used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomenon (in this case, virtual classes implementation). Consequently, the team aims to determine the current state of the process as well as to identify and study the benefits, if any, of the application of virtual classes.

The research team will work on a non-experimental research. In a non-experimental research, variables are not deliberately manipulated. The researcher does not have control over the independent variables because they have already happened (or they are happening at the moment). They study what naturally occurs (what happens in real situations) and how variables are related. According to the types of non-experimental research, the research team is going to use a Cross-sectional design. A Cross-sectional design gives the idea about the state of one or more variable by measuring the variable(s) in a group of people at one specific point of time and giving their description. Thus, the research team will describe the independent variable (in this case the development of a virtual class) as it occurs in its natural context while it is carried out in order to collect information and then describe and analyze its meaning.

## **VIII. Universe and sample**

The universe for the research project about the implementation of virtual classes is the students' population of the Modern Languages Major and English Teaching Language Major, since it is here where the researchers take part of and due to one of the objectives of the research is to describe the way this methodology is carried out in these majors.

To obtain information, the research group worked with a group of 60 students, which were the sample; this sample was divided in two groups of 30 students each, such students were registered in the Intensive English courses (Intermediate and Advance level) and were selected since the virtual classes' methodology was implemented as a supporting tool.

Non-probabilistic sampling will be used to carry out the research due to the fact that the sample has been deliberately chosen since they accomplish the requirements that the research demands.

## **IX. Research techniques**

### **9.1. Techniques**

#### **Survey:**

The survey is an inquiry in which questionnaires are employed to know the public opinion. The research group ran a survey to students of the Modern Languages Major and in English Teaching Language Major who are registered in Intensive English courses of the Foreign Languages Department. The objective of this survey is to gather information about the students' opinion of the use of virtual classes.

#### **Interview:**

The interview is the verbal conversation between two people with the objective of collecting relevant information for the purpose of the research. Interviews are particularly useful for getting the participant's experiences on this teaching method. The personal Interview was carried out as a face to face two-way communication between the research group interviewers and the respondents.

### **9.2. Instruments**

#### **Questionnaire:**

A questionnaire is a set of systematically structured questions use by a researcher to get needed information from respondents. A series of questions were presented to students to which they were asked to provide their opinion regarding this teaching method and the learning online tool.

#### **Set of questions:**

Predetermine questions were asked to teachers, and all the respondents were asked the same questions giving a closed, fixed-response interview.

## **X. Analyses**

### **10.1. Analyses of the survey of students that used the platform in a blended course**

#### **1- What is your opinion about the quality of interaction between your classmates and the teacher?**

When asked about the quality of interaction in a blended course, all students interviewed answered the questions in the context of the use of the platform. Twenty-eight out of thirty reported a higher quality of interaction for several reasons such as every student had the opportunity to interact between the other classmates and the teacher with an equal chance to participate; it means that during the class the teacher was always available to answer questions or doubts and that improved the confidence to interact each other. One explanation that they cited about the reason they like this interaction is that the teacher did not only a lot of dynamics but also work groups, exercises and discussions, and that encouraged the students to participate during the class and outside the class (the platform). Another reason that students cited is the convenience and flexibility due to it is not necessary to answer the post immediately because students had time to reflect on what they had to contribute to the class. Only two students reported that the asynchronous nature of the discussion did not allow for spontaneity of response.

#### **2- What is your opinion about the quantity of interaction between your classmates and the teacher?**

The most common answer was given by twenty-six out of thirty students and it was that the quantity of interaction in blended course was good and reasonable. One of the reasons was that the course was interactive and the time they spent was enough because of the convenience and flexibility of the platform and online discussion posts.



Four students said that the quantity of interaction was brief and limited, considering that not all of them could participate and the time that they had to do it, sometimes it was not enough.

**3- How did you learn in this course? Which techniques did you use?**

The way that they have learned during this blended course was varied, twenty-five of thirty students said that the best way for them to learn was taking responsibility for their own learning not only inside the classroom but also at home writing new vocabulary, studying it, learning it and practicing it with their classmates in groups. Two of them said that the best way is being a self taught person and three more said that having some literary work as novels or some others readings activities increase the knowledge that they need to acquire during the semester.

**4- Which were the biggest challenges you faced in this blended course?**

The thirty students interviewed had several problems at the moment of participating in Blended Learning Intensive English courses like sending homework on time but one of the biggest difficulties is that they had problems with the platform at the moment of loading the documents because the system did not function properly due to its limitations or the platform did not accept the format of the document, but also, the lack of information when using the platform due to there was not an orientation in the initial face-to-face (F2F) class.

**5- What is your opinion about the activities developed in this course?**

All students that answered the question agreed that the asynchronous discussion was the most valuable way to share different perspectives on topics in an informal setting, they said that discussion in a Blended class is more extensive than in a F2F class and there is more time and opportunities to be exposed to multiple perspectives and that increases their learning. Some of the activities that they mentioned were group interaction, case analysis and teachers can apply scaffoldings techniques.

**6- What is your opinion about the technological resources that were used and their learning orientation in this course?**

According to this question, students expressed their opinion and mentioned some technological resources that the platform provides to the students. Some of these, which they mentioned, are online quizzes and midterms function, uploading and downloading documents in different formats, the possibility to post web page links with course materials and check their grades online. Most of the students mentioned that they were oriented in a F2F class in how to log in and get registered in the platform, but only in general terms, and they learned how to use the platform features best by exploring on their own.

**7- What did you learn in this blended course?**

During this course, students learned a lot of vocabulary but also, they practiced and they improved their pronunciation, fluency and grammar because they had the time to search by their own, but also they become more responsible with their time management. Few of them learned how to use the platform.

**8- What is your opinion about the teacher's performance?**

According to the students the teacher's performance was excellent, the teacher was responsible, innovative, motivating and dynamic, but also, the teacher asked the students to be consistent with due-dates for assignments and the teacher was concerned about the student's usage of the platform and always providing feedback on online work.

**9- What do you suggest for better development in Blended Learning Courses and for future students of these courses?**

For this Blended Learning Course, students suggest the authorities to improve the platform and to inform the students about how to use it in order to have a better learning. They suggest to the teachers to provide more audio-visual and audio activities in the

platform. To future Blended Learning students, they suggest to be aware that the academic work will not be less than in a F2F course and do not expect that teachers should explain every small details of the usage of the platform, in other words, the new students have to learn to exploring it by themselves

#### **10- Would you like to participate in a blended course again?**

Students were satisfied with a Blended Learning course and they are willing to participate in another hybrid course. Some of them said that it was hard at the beginning and they had problems to get use to it, but at the end, they could manage this resource without letting aside the socialization in the F2F course.

#### **10.2. Analyses of students that used Facebook in a blended course**

##### **1- What is your opinion about the quality of interaction between your classmates and the teacher?**

When we asked students about the interaction, they said that it is really good because this social media tool is frequently used not only for the students but also for the teachers. This interaction that they have with this source makes it more personal due to students can use their cell phones to check information posted on social media at any moment; also, they can get feedback from teachers, in addition easy access to questions and interactions with classmates.

##### **2- What is your opinion about the quantity of interaction between your classmates and the teacher?**

Most of the students said that the quantity of interaction is almost excellent because of the facilities that almost all students should connect themselves in this social media. Nowadays, students are connected with the technology and it makes this interaction easier than other media, like email or the platform, even if Facebook is used as

a social media, but this idea makes the students be more focused and interested making questions or giving their opinion about a topic or the class.

**3- How did you learn in this course? Which techniques did you use?**

The students that answered the question said that they've learned when they were writing the comments and their opinion in the posts that teachers shared. They also said that using the technology, the class becomes more interesting because it is something that catches their attention. Students learned a lot also when listening to the videos and reading the material that teachers provided them in this tool.

**4- Which were the biggest challenges you faced in this blended course?**

In this kind of course, students said that they did not face major problems because the access that they have to Facebook is more accessible than other tools because the cell phone companies give the opportunity to get access to this tool. The problem that they had was when the internet was slow and the signal was weak, this made the student to look for another way to share or download files and videos to interact with their classmates.

**5- What is your opinion about the activities developed in this course?**

Most of the students are eager to use their favorite tool: Facebook. They enjoy using it to keep contact with others, to download and share information and even know each other better, adding classmates as friends. These options make them feel more comfortable, making the learning process friendlier. They also said that the teacher was a dynamic person and he tried to be frequently in touch with them in order to keep them interested in the course.

**6- What is your opinion about the technological resources that were used and their learning orientation in this course?**

Most of the students said that using the internet is always useful and innovating because of the access to a lot of information that the web has such as: dictionaries, web pages and social media to communicate each other. A few students said that they are more traditionalists because they said that they learn more going to class and participate, they learn more in a face-to-face course; it means that they have the need to practice with others and the teacher, not with technology but oral.

**7- What did you learn in this blended course?**

Students that were asked agreed they have learned from others by sharing opinions, vocabulary and providing feedback from teachers and their own classmates. All this, make students trust themselves in order to produce better outcomes, even if they have the knowledge about language but they do not practice it in a accurate way, everything they know is worthless.

**8- What is your opinion about the teacher's performance?**

All students answered that the teacher was committed with their learning; the teacher was very interesting to make the students learn and get them involved into language. This positivism from the teachers encourage the students to continue their learning process always supporting students to do their best, even if they make mistakes because she gives positive feedbacks to them avoiding harmful comments from the teacher or their classmates.

**9- What do you suggest for better development in Blended Learning Courses and for future students of these courses?**

All students stated that more audiovisual resources in optimal conditions built inside every classroom will help to improve the learning process. Also, this can help students to keep inside campus, avoiding risks, to save some money and time. They said that at least the authorities should fix the technological resources that the University has such as: the audiovisual laboratory and the computer lab.

**10- Would you like to participate in a blended course again?**

Almost all students that were interviewed said that they will participate in a blended course again; even if they had problems of any kind they could solve them. Only one student said that he or she will not participate in a blended course because of the problems that he or she had at the moment of posting or share documents or links.

### **10.3. Analyses of teachers that used Facebook in a blended course**

#### **1- Why did you choose to teach blended learning courses?**

The teachers interviewed said that the students are needed to be in touch with new technology like a private groups class in social media (Facebook) or e-mail and they really like it, it is proven useful for academic purposes. The teacher and students keep communicated, information can be uploaded anytime so students can access to these documents whenever they want.

#### **2- How do you orient students to the blended learning design of teaching and learning?**

The teacher persuades students easily to use technology, because they already are eager to use it and also the teacher gives them the proper orientation of the objectives to be accomplished in short term or during the semester, it means that they do not have to extend themselves at the moment of explaining to the students how to use it because students have a previous knowledge of the situation.

#### **3- How do you develop social presence in your blended learning course?**

The teachers mentioned that there are some problems at the moment of using a Blended Learning course. The most common problem that students face is that not all of them have the same access to internet at home and it makes them to go to find another way to access to the internet and get connected. That is way, the usage of technology is voluntarily and it must be oriented to complete what it is being study but never to substitute a face-to-face class.

**4- How does the size of your class influence your course design?**

The size of a class is always an important determinant for designing or planning, moreover an access to technology becomes a relevant tool that can save time and space due to the crowded classes. This type of courses allows students that do not participate in the class, because the lack of time and big classes, to participate using the technology.

**5- How do you schedule the face-to-face time and the out-of-class time?**

Usually eighty-five percent of the class is in the classroom, the rest of the course can be developed through internet on students' free time. One of the teachers interviewed said that he used this private group in social media to post links of videos with class content in order to make them watch the video and later in the class discuss the topic.

**6- How do you integrate face-to-face and the out-of-class components?**

Out of class and social media are used for activities designed to help with homework, advisory, checking compositions and other activities to provide feedback and improve students' production in class such as keep communicated. One of the teachers interviewed said that he used this private group in social media to post links of videos with class content in order to make them watch them and later in the class discusses the topic but also, another teacher received and send word documents posted in the group chat.

**7- How do you avoid creating an excessive workload for students and for you?**

It is necessary to program and organize the stages that can be developed outside and inside the classroom to design the strategies that will best develop the teacher's objectives without turn it out a burden. For example: when students needed to look for extra information and make a summary, teachers gave them a deadline to do it and to send it to the e-mail or in a message in Facebook.

**8- What particular teaching and learning activities are well suited to the blended learning design?**

Some activities that suit better are research reports, writing compositions, expressing opinions as in debates. Also teachers can upload supplementary information, material and other files so these can be downloaded any time.

**9- What technological resources and/or social networking tools do you usually use when teaching a blended learning course?**

The main technological resource is the social media such as Facebook and its messenger to be in touch with students, also some web pages like Wikipedia and Youtube and sometimes e-mail it is useful to.

**10-What impact does a blended learning design have on students' willingness and ability to take responsibility for their own learning beyond the classroom and students outcomes?**

It has a positive impact due to this is something attractive, new and interesting for the students. They could learn much more since students feel more motivated to perform or develop some activities involving social media because they are familiarized with it and it becomes easier for them. Those students who have a major contact with technology



and performance in class complement each other to develop better outcomes. In most of the cases when the students have more contact searching and reading information from other sources outside the class the objectives of the course can be accomplished in an easier way and this motivates students to develop, unconsciously or not, the self-taught learning.

### **11- What are the primary benefits for you when using a blended learning design?**

It is fun and it motivates students to their own learning through real contact with internet, new technology and media, and also the information is already in there to gather it and organized it better.

#### **10.4. Analyses of teachers that used the platform in a blended course**

##### **1- Why did you choose to teach blended learning courses?**

In general, teachers choose Blended Learning courses in order to put in practice what they have learned from this methodology and it is a good way to get quiet students to share their thoughts because the F2F classroom participation is generally dominated by a small percentage of students who are comfortable speaking in a group setting, but when the quiet students are able to use the asynchronous discussion in addition to F2F discussion they have more time to formulate their thoughts. Another teacher mentioned that she is using the platform only to upload information like power-point slides, web pages, links, video-links and audios.

##### **2- How do you orient students to the blended learning design of teaching and learning?**

One teacher said that in the first F2F class, she presented the guidelines step by step, how to register to the platform and how it works giving to the students some instructions, how to create their users and all that implies using the platform.

**3- How do you develop social presence in your blended learning course?**

Teachers that were asked about the presence said that they used some tools such as chats, forums, messaging and mainly the online platform in order to try to keep students in touch with the activities in F2F and online. These methods help the teachers to control the students' participation. Teachers recognized the users to have the control of participations and also they made frequent online written feedbacks to let students know they were present and engaged in their learning.

**4- How does the size of your class influence your course design?**

Teachers said that the size of the class is affected negatively because it takes more time and effort to prepare and to evaluate the activities and materials. The platform helps teachers to decrease workload. In F2F class one of the helpful activities to diminish workload is work groups, so the teacher has more time and less paperwork and students interact each other and they share knowledge.

**5- How do you schedule the face-to-face time and the out-of-class time?**

Most of the teachers divide their class giving more time to the F2F and less time to out-of-class activities on online platform, with some topics they have to meet in the classroom because they need to explain in detail and everything has to be clear leaving activities or material, after the topic comprehension, in out-of-class to gain time in F2F course and clarify any doubt students would have in out-of-class activities.

**6- How do you integrate face-to-face and the out-of-class components?**

Teachers try to link the contents in the class with online activities. In the F2F class they give feedback for the more difficult and challenging activities that required more

time and students' focus at the moment of developing the activity. In F2F class the teacher takes the time to introduce topic, giving previous information in order to students finish any task online regarding topic.

**7- How do you avoid creating an excessive workload for students and for you?**

Teachers redesigned the course to create a student-center-learning experience and most of the activities are focus on learning outcomes. These activities are design with multiple due dates versus giving large assignments; this gave the teacher an opportunity to provide feedback, so students could improve on their work instead of receiving an unsatisfactory work assignment and avoid a higher incidence of poor-quality work. One of the teachers assigned a task for three weeks and before the due date, he checked students' progress and provide feedback.

**8- What particular teaching and learning activities are well suited to the blended learning design?**

Teachers use several activities that well suited in blended learning course like *peer review of written assignments* where the students that review their peers work benefit with this activity because they gain new knowledge and different perspectives and those who are reviewed get feedback to improve their work before final submission. Another activity is *more exposure to native speakers through videos*, the accessibility to post video links on the platform makes it easier to students to look, listen, watch and analyze native speakers on the web, giving them the opportunity to enter in the field with engaging learning activities.

**9- What technological resources and/or social networking tools do you usually use when teaching a blended learning course?**

Some resources that the teachers used are:

- Moodle platform: power point presentations, downloading and uploading pdf and word files, asynchronous chat and reading analysis, drop box to store students work, online quizzes.
- Internet: online encyclopedias, blogs, YouTube, Google, downloadable images.

**10- What impact does a blended learning design have on students' willingness and ability to take responsibility for their own learning beyond the classroom and students outcomes?**

Teachers coincide that if students are responsible and committed to their own learning process, they become autonomous by their own means and in a way, they can get better results during the course.

**11- What are the primary benefits for you when using a blended learning design?**

According to teacher there are several advantages for them, for example, the information is always there and they can provide feedback at any time with plenty of authentic materials. It is easier to organize contents and it allows teachers to improve on the use of different web tools such as Moodle. They can organize synchronous online quizzes so students can surf the web and this keep them motivated to improve themselves due the information is accessible to all.

## **XI. Data analyses**

The increasing development in technology lead people to improve the way to research, learn and socialize. This technological approach has been developed through students' affinity to new and interesting ways to learn with technology as a tool. According to students' experiences, using a learning online tool, it changed the traditional way in which the curricula is developed, mixing face-to-face interaction with asynchronous meetings, so learning process became more flexible and attractive.

At the beginning, for some of the students who were registered in these courses, it was difficult to understand how to use the Moodle platform but, when they got familiar with the online tool, it became easier each time. Another group of students who used Facebook as an online tool, even with its limitations, enjoyed the experience due to it helped to get in touch with classmates faster and share information. Most of the students stated they were eager to use these learning methods, as an aid to refresh the manner the learning process is carried out.

The development of the blended-learning program focuses on students-centered approach and the relatively new learning theory called "connectivism", this helps students to improve the way they learn and interact each other, changing the way knowledge is acquired, leading students to a conversion to become more independent and enhance their sense of responsibility.

A blended-learning program has some benefits in students' community such as developing the intrinsical motivation helping to increase their sense of responsibility, matureness, independence, and commitment to their own learning leading to the student to look for extra information about the topic given by the teacher but also, a blended-learning program has a pedagogical approach that combines both, face-to-face classroom with technology-enhanced active learning, that take place to socialized and to take advantage of the online learning environment across a group.

Students feel more comfortable due to information is always at hand, finding it whenever is needed, to gather more significant knowledge for better outcomes. Since students have more time to produce, and acquire more information for assignments, they can carefully design their methods in which they are going to develop their tasks and activities. Students feel they can get feedback more frequently even they are not within the classroom.

This blended-learning program was carried out in courses that implemented learning online tools to help diminishing workload for teachers and students. Paperwork was reduced for teachers and information was provided most of the time digitally, using Moodle online platform and Facebook social media as well to upload and download information and to provide feedback. Some disadvantages that the study highlighted are the limitations some students ran into such as the time they spent to get used to the way the Moodle platform works and its limitations to upload and download large documents.

Facebook was used more frequently to share points of view between classmates and teacher, keeping in touch as well. Most of the students pointed out the importance of the face-to-face interaction to develop their social skills, but they were satisfied with the innovation of a learning online tool. Teachers mentioned that they learned as well as students did, when they decided to implement this method but due to the limitations of these learning online tools, they decided to use them as aide in the learning process.

## **XII. Conclusions**

After gathering the information by surveys about the Blended Learning to students of Intensive English courses, it concludes that:

- It is necessary to use technology in the learning and teaching process, always bearing in mind the need for face-to-face interaction.
- The use of Moodle and Facebook in Intensive English courses in Foreign Languages Department should be taken into account as a supporting tool in the learning process as a way to share ideas, information and documents between teachers and students.
- Using an online tool can let students make maximum use of time, maximum benefits such as plenty of information on internet and everyone can participate and express themselves sharing their ideas.
- Using an online tool can carry some problems at the moment of uploading, downloading, looking for information or when students or teachers interact each other like internet issues or if the students do not have internet at home, they have to look for another way to try to interact.

### **XIII. Recommendations**

After gathering the information by surveys about the Blended Learning to students of Intensive English courses, it recommends that:

- Teachers should be committed to make an accurate use of the platform, using always precise teaching materials.
- Students' interaction with classmates inside and outside the course is as important as classes themselves, due to learning can be reached also by sharing with others our knowledge and experiences and vice versa, increasing everyone's learning sharing to improve comprehension level.
- Teachers and students' organization is very important in this kind of courses. Both need to be organized; teachers need to know which topics subjects can be developed in face-to-face class and which others outside the class to fulfill the curricula. The students need to have a schedule in order to keep in touch in their learning process.
- Teachers and students should be in touch with new ways to take advantage of incoming technology for the learning process. Teachers should use at least one technological resource to get students involved in their learning outcomes. Students should realize that they are responsible of their learning outside the classroom so they can improve everyday and become autodidactic students.



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## XV. Appendices

### STUDENT'S SURVEY



**UNIVERSIDAD DE EL SALVADOR**  
**FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS Y HUMANIDADES**  
**DEPARTAMENTO DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS**  
**CUESTIONARIO PARA ESTUDIANTES DE INGLES INTERMEDIO**  
**INTENSIVO I**

Respetables estudiantes:

Por medio de este cuestionario se espera conocer algunos aspectos relacionados a tu experiencia en el proceso de aprendizaje del idioma Inglés, a través de un enfoque de enseñanza híbrido. Las respuestas serán anónimas. Recuerda que no hay respuestas incorrectas, lo que interesa es tu opinión.

Gracias por tu colaboración.

#### **Objetivo:**

Encontrar los **resultados de la aplicación de la enseñanza mixta o híbrida (Facebook, e-mail) en los cursos de Inglés** en el área de desarrollo del idioma en el Departamento de Idiomas Extranjeros de la Universidad de El Salvador durante el año 2014.

**INSTRUCCIONES:** Por favor, responde las siguientes preguntas.

1- ¿Cuál es tu opinión respecto a la **calidad** de la interacción con tus compañeros y con el maestro?

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2- ¿Cuál es tu opinión respecto a la **cantidad** de interacción con tus compañeros y con el maestro?

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3- ¿Cómo aprendiste durante el curso? ¿Qué técnicas de aprendizaje empleaste?

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4- ¿Cuáles fueron los desafíos más grandes a los que te enfrentaste en este ambiente de enseñanza híbrido?

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5- ¿Qué opinión tienes respecto a las actividades realizadas en este curso?

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6- ¿Qué opinión tienes acerca de los recursos tecnológicos utilizados y su orientación hacia el aprendizaje durante el curso?

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7- ¿Qué aprendiste durante este curso?

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8- ¿Qué opinión tienes del desempeño del maestro?

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9- ¿Qué sugerencias tienes respecto al desarrollo de este curso?

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10- ¿Te gustaría participar de nuevo en un curso híbrido?

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**UNIVERSIDAD DE EL SALVADOR**  
**FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS Y HUMANIDADES**  
**DEPARTAMENTO DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS**  
**CUESTIONARIO PARA ESTUDIANTES DE INGLES INTERMEDIO**

**INTENSIVO I**

Respetables estudiantes:

Por medio de este cuestionario se espera conocer algunos aspectos relacionados a tu experiencia en el proceso de aprendizaje del idioma Inglés, a través de un enfoque de enseñanza híbrido. Las respuestas serán anónimas. Recuerda que no hay respuestas incorrectas, lo que interesa es tu opinión.

Gracias por tu colaboración.

**Objetivo:**

Encontrar los **resultados de la aplicación de la enseñanza mixta o híbrida (Moodle) en los cursos de Inglés** en el área de desarrollo del idioma en el Departamento de Idiomas Extranjeros de la Universidad de El Salvador durante el año 2014.

**INSTRUCCIONES:** Por favor, responde las siguientes preguntas.

1- ¿Cuál es tu opinión respecto a la **calidad** de la interacción con tus compañeros y con el maestro?

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2- ¿Cuál es tu opinión respecto a la **cantidad** de interacción con tus compañeros y con el maestro?

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3- ¿Cómo aprendiste durante el curso? ¿Qué técnicas de aprendizaje empleaste?

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4- ¿Cuáles fueron los desafíos más grandes a los que te enfrentaste en este ambiente de enseñanza híbrido?

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5- ¿Qué opinión tienes respecto a las actividades realizadas en este curso?

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6- ¿Qué opinión tienes acerca de los recursos tecnológicos utilizados y su orientación hacia el aprendizaje durante el curso?

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7- ¿Qué aprendiste durante este curso?

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8- ¿Qué opinión tienes del desempeño del maestro?

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9- ¿Qué sugerencias tienes respecto al desarrollo de este curso y para los futuros estudiantes de de éste tipo de curso?

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11- ¿Te gustaría participar de nuevo en un curso híbrido?

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**TEACHER'S SURVEY**



**UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR  
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES  
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PROFESSORS**

**Objective:**

To find out the results of the application in Blended Learning English courses in the language skills development area at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador during the year 2014.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please, answer the following questions.

1-Why did you choose to teach blended learning courses?

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2-How do you orient students to the blended learning design of teaching and learning?

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3-How do you develop social presence in your blended learning course?

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4-How does the size of your class influence your course design?

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5-How do you schedule the face-to-face time and the out-of class time?

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6-How do you integrate face-to-face and the out-of class components?

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7-How do you avoid creating an excessive workload for students and for you?

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8-What particular teaching and learning activities are well suited to the blended learning design?

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9-What technological resources and/or social networking tools do you usually use when teaching a blended learning course?

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10-What is your opinion about students' learning outcomes?

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11-What impact does a blended learning design have on students' willingness and ability to take responsibility for their own learning beyond the classroom?

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12-What are the primary benefits for you when using a blended learning design?

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