MASTERY OF SPANISH MORPHOLOGY AND SYNTAX THROUGH E-LEARNING AMONG MALAYSIAN STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the usage of e-learning via an interactive blog in assisting student's morphology mastery and sentence construction in the Spanish language. Data presented in this study were gathered through 1) interviews with fifteen (15) students between 20 and 23 years old, who were registered in Spanish Communication Level 1 at Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia, 2) questionnaire involving 45 students about the effectiveness of the blog as an e-learning platform, and 3) analysis of writing activities and evaluations in the blog and the classroom. The data were analysed using the descriptive-qualitative approach and supported by quantitative data. The findings indicated that the blog was viewed positively as a learning platform that provided out-of-classroom opportunities to learn the Spanish language. The usage of the blog helped elevate students' knowledge in mastering vocabulary, understanding the grammar system, and constructing grammatical sentences. The findings can guide Spanish language instructors in preparing suitable and attractive teaching and e-learning activities that contribute towards the understanding and proficiency of students learning Spanish as a foreign language.

Keywords: e-learning; morphology; syntax; Spanish as a Foreign Language

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the university's foreign language teaching and learning medium from face-to-face to hybrid. E-learning among university students has become an effective learning method and contributes to more flexible surroundings. One of the most popular online discourses is blogging. It can be utilised as a learning platform that enhances writing performance and increases vocabulary acquisition. Previous research has shown that blogging has many benefits for teachers' professional development. As a communication tool, blogs encourage teacher cooperation and increase social interaction (Kamhi-Stein, 2000; Kuzu, 2007). Blogs also provide free and accessible avenues for teachers to conduct research and access diverse information and skills (Kuzu, 2007).

A study by Nor et al. (2021) indicated that blogs can also help students understand the topics taught in the classroom and assist in the mastery of the target language grammar system. While there are various studies looking into the role of blogs in foreign language teaching or as a reflective tool for ESL teachers (Bangou, 2011; Bangou & Fleming, 2010; Barbosa & Serrano, 2005; Killeavy & Moloney, 2010; Miyazoe & Anderson, 2010; Wu, 2006a; Wu, 2006b), in Malaysia, research on blogging have concentrated on the Malay language teaching and learning context (Rahim, 2014; Othman, 2010; Zaki et al., 2015).

The third language context, on the other hand, is less well investigated. Third languages, such as Spanish, also encounter challenges in teaching and learning and may benefit from similar usage of platforms (Husain et al., 2016; Ismail et al., 2022; Mansor et al., 2022).

This study from using a blog as an assisting tool for students' learning of Spanish as a third language. This action research investigates utilising blogs as an intervention to support students' learning of Spanish as a third language. The following research questions are addressed:

i)   What difficulties do students face in learning Spanish, and how can blogs assist students in overcoming these challenges?
ii)   How do blogs facilitate the mastery of Spanish morphology and the production of grammatically correct sentences (syntax) among beginner Spanish students?

Literature Review

Blogs can be defined as a meeting point for texts and visuals. Blogs utilise websites as interaction platforms, consisting of frequent posts on teaching and learning activities organised by reverse chronological date. The posts feature a hierarchy of texts, images, media objects and data (Blood, 2002; Herring et al., 2005; Winer, 2003). Blogs have been used as an intervention learning method for improving students' writing skills and comprehension of topics covered in class. They help facilitate personalised Spanish language learning opportunities. Thus, students can independently enhance their knowledge of the language (Kavaliauskiene et al., 2006).

Blogs can also be used to supplement traditional teaching and learning. A study by Hall and Davidson (2007) showed that blogs increase students' writing skills,

facilitated by the flexibility and multimodality of the platform. Bakar (2007) found that even lower-proficiency students can write constructively using blogs. This finding was further supported by Bakar and Ismail (2009), who studied Social Science students enrolled in a general English proficiency course. Their findings showed that blogs reduced obstacles in learning English by providing opportunities to write freely without penalty for grammatical mistakes. In another study, Hussin et al. (2010) conducted a classroom-based study involving 35 postgraduate students. Students were required to develop blogs using WordPress tools over 14 weeks. The blogs consisted of learning tutorials with texts and multimedia components and interactive exercises for teaching and learning purposes. Due to the potential of blogs as an effective tool in teaching and learning, Hussin et al. (2010) recommended that teacher education programmes should expose pre-service and in-service teachers to contemporary educational technologies and tools. Additionally, these programmes should maximise the application of pedagogical principles in delivering content using blogs and forums for effective teaching.

According to Godwin-Jones (2006), the advantages of using a blog as a writing tool include the following: it encourages feedback and represents both writing and reading activities; it promotes critical analysis and stimulates articulation of ideas and opinions; it provides an opportunity for collaborative learning and a suitable environment for students to expand their persuasion and argumentation skills; and it creates a student-centred learning environment and offers informal language reading materials.

Teaching activities used by language instructors to teach the Spanish language in Malaysia are closely related to the traditional teaching activities known as the Performance-Practice-Production (PPP) model. According to Cook (2008), the PPP model has become a trend among foreign language instructors for 30 years. As its name suggests, PPP is divided into three phases, moving from tight teacher control towards greater learner freedom. However, Criado (2013) cautioned that it is essential to understand that the PPP model is not the only method or approach that teachers can use to teach language components to adult language learners. Today's language learning classes benefit from the emergence of new pedagogical strategies that can assist learners and teachers in blended learning. A blog or weblog is one of these. This strategy combines face-to-face teaching and learning with suitable technology at the centre (Sharma & Barret, 2007).

Methodology

Participants and Instruments

This study utilises a mixed methods research design, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This study employs triangulation, comparing datasets from both quantitative and qualitative sources. These include interviews with participants and questionnaires distributed to gather data on students' perceptions of blog usage to assist learning. Table 1 outlines the details of the instrument and participants.

Table 1

Details of Instrument and Participants

Research Design	Instrument	Participant	Purpose
Quantitative	Questionnaire	45 participants enrolled in the Spanish Communication language course Level 1 at UPSI.	To gain data about the effectiveness of blog usage as an e-learning platform.
Qualitative	Interview	15 students aged between 20 to 23 years old who enrolled in Basic (level one) Spanish Language at UPSI.	To identify the challenges students face in learning Spanish in terms of grammar system.
			To identify how a blog can assist in overcoming issues in learning.
	Writing activities and evaluations in blog and classroom	30 sentences and 180 words were analysed.	To analyse writing activities and evaluations for vocabulary mastery and grammatical sentence construction.

Research Procedure

The Spanish teaching and learning blog was developed to supplement the limited resources of Spanish teaching and learning as well as increase the time for students to learn Spanish in UPSI (Figure 1). The blog includes a quick response (QR) scanning code for each topic in the students' reference book. The QR scanning code in the reference book is shown in Figure 2.

The QR Scanning code is directly connected to the learning blog. Students can access the module using the QR code to read and do the activities related to the taught topics. For example, they can learn about the verb *ser* – the definition and correct usage. The same topic is also included in the students' reference book (Figure 3).
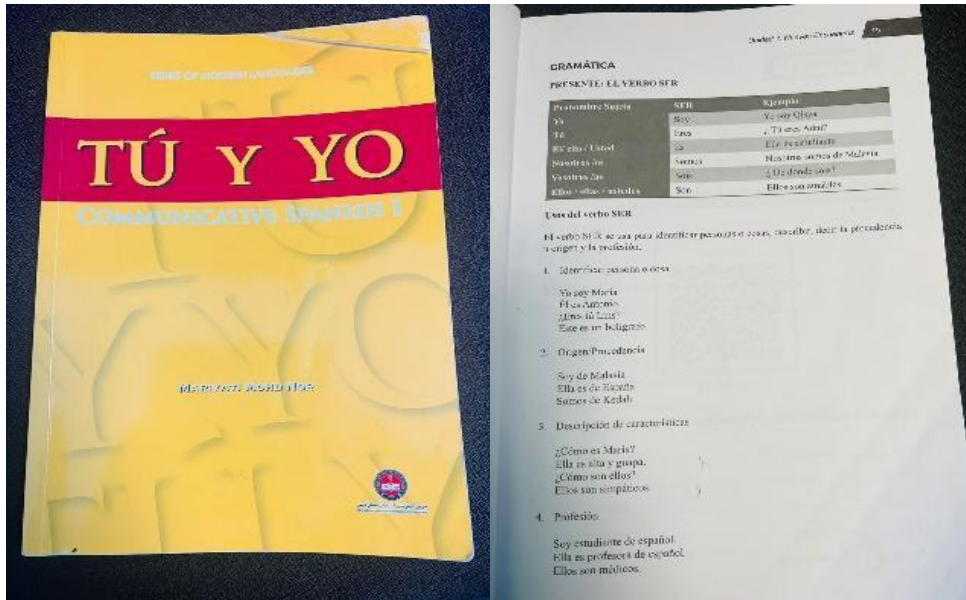
Figure 1

Spanish Language Teaching and Learning Blog

Figure 2

QR Code Link and SER Verb Topic in the Blog
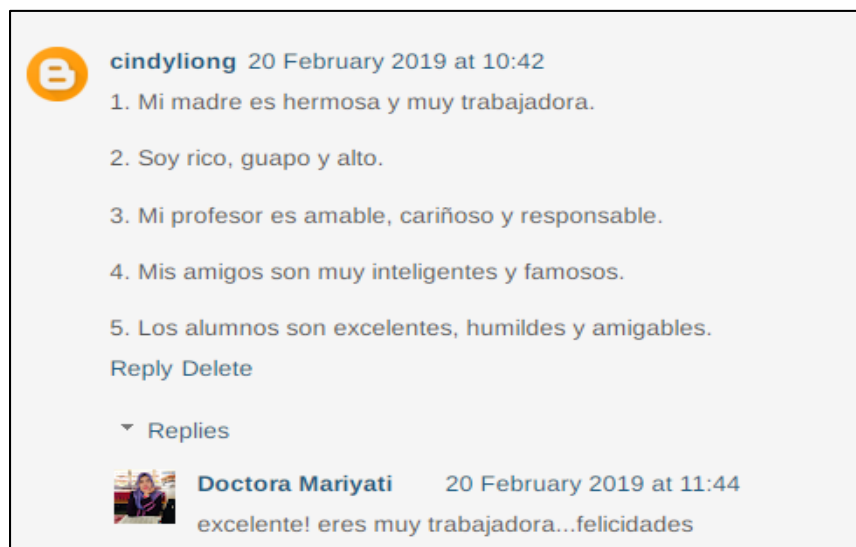
Figure 3

Students' Reference Book

The blog is also utilised for activities. Figures 4 and 5 show samples of activities for beginner-level students. The exercises and activities supplemented classroom lessons. Students can perform these activities outside class at their own leisure to enhance their understanding and language proficiency.

Figure 4

Grammar Activities (Verbs Conjugation: tener)

Figure 5
Vocabulary Activities (Adjectives and Nouns)

> **cindyliong** 20 February 2019 at 10:42
> 1. Mi madre es hermosa y muy trabajadora.
> 2. Soy rico, guapo y alto.
> 3. Mi profesor es amable, cariñoso y responsable.
> 4. Mis amigos son muy inteligentes y famosos.
> 5. Los alumnos son excelentes, humildes y amigables.
> Reply Delete
>
> ▾ Replies
>
> **Doctora Mariyati**   20 February 2019 at 11:44
> excelente! eres muy trabajadora...felicidades

All participants took part voluntarily in the study. The data collection process was explained to the participants beforehand to address ethical concerns or apprehension. Data were gathered using structured interviews, questionnaire and writing activities and evaluations. The structured interview utilised open-ended questions. Each participant was identified using an alphanumeric code. For example, [P1] referred to the first participant, [P2] the second, and so on up to [P15], the fifteenth and final participant. Interviews were conducted outside the classroom in a more casual setting to encourage participant to share their thoughts and ideas. As students only have basic Spanish proficiency, interviews were conducted in Malay to ensure responses were conveyed clearly and easily. All interviews were transcribed for analysis purposes.

The researcher conducted a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts to identify common ideas and trends in the participants' answers. Key quotes and excerpts that were indicative of broader themes and concepts were highlighted and coded. These codes were used to group related data chunks into categories. By comparing data within and between coded categories, main overarching themes that captured key elements of the participants' experiences, opinions, and beliefs in relation to using blogs to learn Spanish were developed.

The questionnaire was distributed to students in the classroom. The survey involved 45 students, who answered 10 Yes/No questions about the effectiveness of blog usage as an e-learning platform. Finally, 30 sentences and 180 words were analysed to identify the difficulties faced by the students in learning Spanish, and how the blog can assist students in overcoming these challenges.

<div align="center">**Results**</div>

The data revealed two main foreign language learning challenges, categorised into two linguistic elements: morphological level and syntactic level. Note that the codes [P2], [P3], [P5] and [P9] refer to participants who took part in the interviews and surveys.

The Morphological Level

Noun

One of the challenges in learning Spanish is the vocabulary, especially the gender-based nouns, masculine or feminine (Nor Shahila et al., 2022). Interviews revealed grammatical gender as a particular issue in learning Spanish. Grammatical gender is an important system that needs to be learned for languages that use the system. Gender exists for all noun groups, including humans and animals, as well as non-living things such as buildings, vehicles, fruits, and equipment. Students struggle to differentiate masculine and feminine nouns as there is no specific rule that can be used as a definitive guide except the suffixes of the noun, which either ends with "o" for masculine and "a" for feminine. However, some nouns that end with vocal and consonant do not follow the same rule. In addition, students need to master singular and plural nouns to match with correct articles, adjectives, and numbers. Table 2 illustrates some responses concerning grammatical gender in Spanish.

Table 2
Grammatical Gender Issue

Participant	The Issue in Grammatical Gender Application
P1	*Didapati agak keliru membezakan perkataan itu bersifat maskulin atau feminine.* (It is confusing to differentiate the word either to be masculine or feminine)
P2	*Terlampau banyak kata dengan akhiran yang berbeza, selalu kita refer akhiran kata tersebut untuk tentukan gender namun ada pengecualian juga bagi kata-kata tersebut.* (Too many words with different suffixes, usually we refer to the suffix of the word to determine the gender but there is exclusion for those words)
P3	*Tiada peraturan yang konsisten untuk penentuan gender kata nama. Sebagai contoh, benda yang dikaitkan dengan lelaki adalah maskulin dan sebaliknya.* (No consistent rules to determine the noun gender. For example, things related to male are masculine and vice versa)
P4	*Semua kata nama kena dipadankan dengan kata adjektif dan artikel yang sama kalau tidak ayat yang dibina akan salah. Agak sukar kerana tidak tahu kata nama yang digunakan maskulin atau feminin.* (All nouns need to be matched with same adjective and article if not the sentence is wrong. Quite difficult because do not

	know either the word used is masculine or feminine)
P5	*Susah, artikel juga terlampau banyak untuk diingat.* (Hard, too many articles to be remembered)
P6	*Tiada strategi yang boleh digunakan untuk membezakan gender kata nama* (No strategies that can be used to differentiate noun gender).

The blog is used to supplement classroom lessons on Spanish grammatical gender. The strategies related to grammatical gender were thoroughly explained, increasing students' mastery and comprehension. Examples of explanations of grammatical gender and strategy in identifying feminine and masculine nouns can be accessed by scanning the QR code (see Figure 6). This code is included in the students' reference books, allowing them to scan it and engage with the materials independently.

Figure 6
Grammatical Gender Activities and QR Code
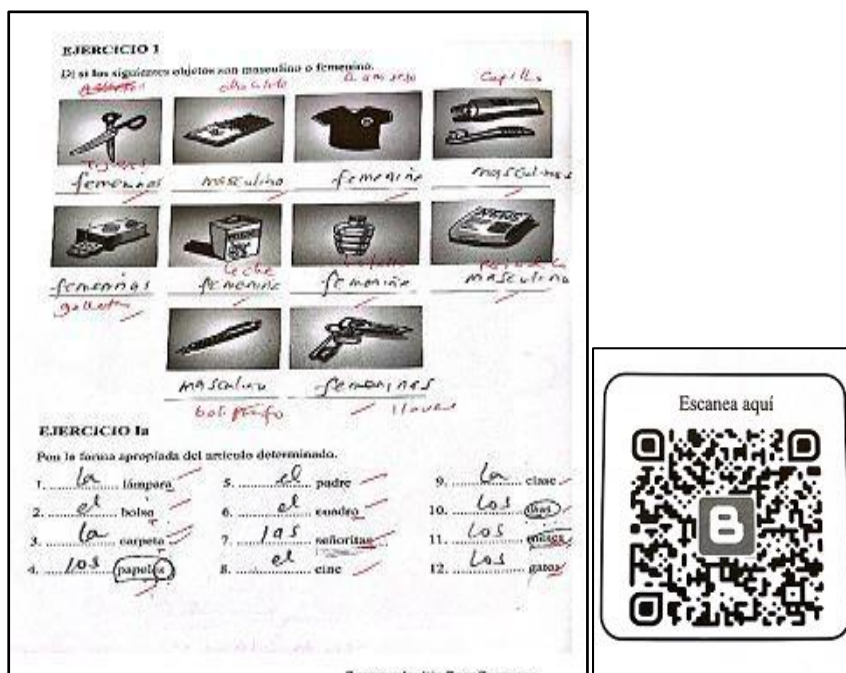
The exercise on categorising noun gender, such as the one in Figure 6, can help polish and later demonstrate students' ability to classify nouns as masculine or feminine. For instance, students can refer to noun suffixes, with "o" typically indicating masculine and "a" signifying feminine. For nouns ending in vowels or other consonants, students can consult the teacher or scan the QR code, which links to the course blog outlining strategies for identifying grammatical gender.

Adjectives

Adjectives are another challenge in Spanish language learning. Students must use correct adjectives of the gender to match the associated noun. The correspondence or compatibility between nouns and adjectives is important (Nor et al., 2022). If the noun is masculine, the adjective describing it must also be masculine. For example: "Mi padre es guapo" (My father is handsome) uses the masculine adjective *guapo* to match the masculine noun "padre". Conversely, "Mi madre es guapa" (My mother is beautiful) uses the feminine form *guapa* to align with the feminine noun "madre".

The exercise shown in Figure 7 and Figure 8 demonstrate students' ability to appropriately apply nouns and adjectives. In sentence number 5, for example, the article "*los*" correctly refers to the masculine plural noun. The adjectives used, including *hermosa* (beautiful), *trabajadora* (hardworking), *amable* (good), *cariñoso* (loving), *responsable* (responsible), *inteligentes* (intelligent), *famosos* (famous), *excelentes* (excellent), *humildes* (humble), and *amigables* (friendly) correctly match the gender and the plurality of their corresponding nouns. A QR code link to adjective lists is included in the student reference book for support.

Figure 7
Adjective Exercise in Blog

Soalan : Terjemahkan ayat ini dalam bahasa Sepanyol dengan menggunakan kata adjektif seperti di atas.

Translate this sentences in spanish using the adjectives as above.

1. My mother is beautiful and very hardworking

2. I am rich, handsome and tall.

3. My lecturer is kind, caring and responsible.

4. My friends are very clever and famous.

5. The students are excellent, humble and friendly.

Figure 8
Student's Answer

> **cindyliong** 20 February 2019 at 10:42
>
> 1. Mi madre es hermosa y muy trabajadora.
>
> 2. Soy rico, guapo y alto.
>
> 3. Mi profesor es amable, cariñoso y responsable.
>
> 4. Mis amigos son muy inteligentes y famosos.
>
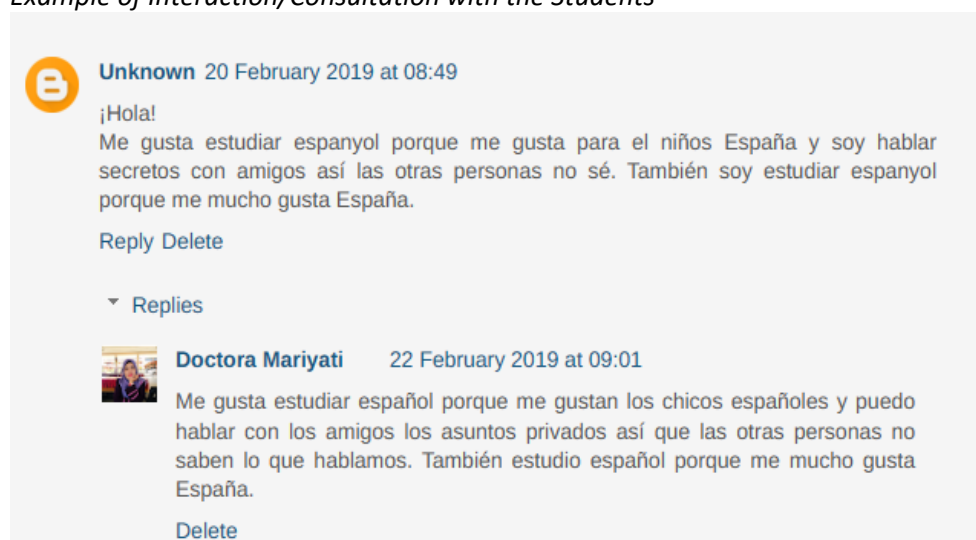> 5. Los alumnos son excelentes, humildes y amigables.
>
> Reply Delete
>
> ▼ Replies
>
> **Doctora Mariyati**   20 February 2019 at 11:44
> excelente! eres muy trabajadora...felicidades
> Delete

However, if students fail to produce grammatically correct sentences or make morphological mistakes such as using incorrect adjectives or verbs, the lecturer can provide feedback explaining the errors and ask the students to correct the errors. For example, in Figure 9, the student incorrectly used "España" (Spain) as a noun instead of the adjective "españoles" (Spanish) to describe the children. Additionally, the verbs "hablar" (to speak) and "estudiar" (to study) were not conjugated to "Yo hablo" (I speak) and "yo studio" (I study). After receiving comments, the student revised the sentence. This is one example of an interactive exchange using blog.

Figure 9
Example of Interaction/Consultation with the Students

> **Unknown** 20 February 2019 at 08:49
> ¡Hola!
> Me gusta estudiar espanyol porque me gusta para el niños España y soy hablar secretos con amigos así las otras personas no sé. También soy estudiar espanyol porque me mucho gusta España.
>
> Reply Delete
>
> ▼ Replies
>
> **Doctora Mariyati**   22 February 2019 at 09:01
> Me gusta estudiar español porque me gustan los chicos españoles y puedo hablar con los amigos los asuntos privados así que las otras personas no saben lo que hablamos. También estudio español porque me mucho gusta España.
>
> Delete

Verbs

Verbs is another considerably complex grammar aspect when learning Spanish. This is because verbs must be conjugated based on the doer of the action. Spanish verbs are categorised into two types: regular and irregular. Irregular verb conjugations differ from regular verbs, frequently causing errors (Husain et al., 2010; Nor & Mansor, 2021). Using the blog, lessons about verbs can be expanded in a fun manner and at the students' leisure.

Figure 10
Student's Answer (Verb)

liana ridzuan 1 May 2019 at 12:48

Hola! Yo soy Liana

1. Trabajar = work
2. Correr = run
3. Pensar = think
4. Escuchar = listen
5. Pintar = paint
6. Cantar = sing
7. Dormir = sleep
8. Hablar = talk
9. Escribir = write
10. Jugar = play
11. Respirar = breathe

a) Me encanta escuchar la cancion
b) Maria corre a la parada del autobus
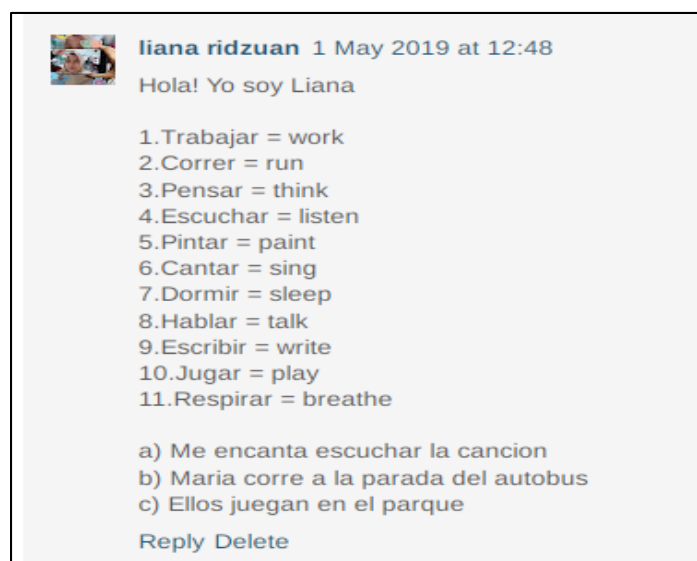c) Ellos juegan en el parque

Reply Delete

Figure 10 is a blog exercise requiring students to complete a crossword puzzle with eleven verbs and construct three sentences using three of those verbs. Students have successfully identified the verbs and constructed grammatical sentences using correct verb conjugations. The verb in the sentence (a) *Me encanta escuchar la canción* shows that the student knows the existence of the verb *escuchar* ("listening") after the verb *gustar* (like) does not have to be conjugated. The root verb needs to be used. For sentences (b) and (c), the verb *correr* (run) is conjugated into *corre* (she runs), which is also correct, referring to the subject "María" who did the action of the run. Similarly, with the sentence (c), the verb *jugar* (play) is conjugated into *juegan*, referring to the subject *ellos* (they), who did the action. By doing such exercises, students master the conjugation of regular and irregular verbs very well.

Addition of New Vocabularies

Findings from interviews revealed that the participants viewed the blogs as a platform that augmented classroom vocabulary teaching. Selected interview excerpts are included to showcase participant perspectives.

R1: We are able to add new vocabulary through the teaching by Dr in blog. Though we have reference book, information in blog helps us in adding new vocabulary. For example, hmmm… in blog, lecturer lists the adjectives that can be used in sentence. As for in reference book, the examples are limited.

R3: words used in blog… is not the same in the reference book, so, we can learn new vocabulary and words. The QR code in reference book really helps.

R4: The use of vocabularies in blog is wider… and can be applied in classroom as well.

The Syntactic Level

Another concern for most Malaysian students enrolled in Spanish language courses is the complexity of the grammar, primarily related to verb conjugation, concordance or compatibility between noun gender and adjective, and the aspect of numbers, whether singular or plural. The lack of mastery in these aspects often leads to ungrammatical sentences or errors. To overcome this challenge, the Spanish language learning blog was utilised to assist students' understanding when it comes to correct syntax.

Sentence Construction Using the Verb 'Estar'

Figure 11 shows that student can construct the sentences using the verb *'estar'* very well. The verb *estar* '*to be*' needs to be conjugated into *estoy' iam', estás 'you are', está ' she/he is' estamos 'we are' estáis ' you are (p)* and *están 'they are'.* The sentence translation by students is grammatical and precise. However, in Spanish language, the verb está in sentence (ii) (vi) and sentence (v) need to be added with *tilde (á)* on the alphabet (a). Students usually neglect the issue of tilde, yet its usage is essential as the usage (or non-usage) changes the context or meaning. Sentence (iv) also faces the issue of the lack of in-front question mark (¿) for question sentences.

Figure 11
The Construction of Sentences Using the Verb 'Estar'

4. Terjemahkan ayat di bawah ini dengan menggunakan kata kerja ESTAR
i) Saya adalah sangat sedih (Estoy muy triste)
ii) Taiping terletak di Negeri Perak (Taiping esta en Perak)
iii) Kami adalah letih (Estamos cansados)
iv) Saya berdiri (Estoy de pie)
v) Saya sedang makan (Estoy comiendo)
vi) Awak apa khabar? (como estas?)
v) Buku itu berada di atas meja (El libro esta sobre la mesa)

Figure 12
Sentence Writing Using the Verb 'Tener'

> Hola, yo soy Afrina. Tengo 22 años. Soy estudiante de contable. Tengo una familia feliz. Mi padres son muy cariñoso y agradable. Tengo tres hermanos, yo soy el mayor. Tengo uno hermano y una hermana, ellos son sorprendentes. Tengo dos gatos lindos. Mucho gusto!

Figure 12 shows a sample response from a student, extracted from the blog about a short self-description using the verb *tener "to have"*. The student can construct good sentences with correct verb conjugations. However, sentence 4 contains pronoun and adjective agreement errors: "mi padres son cariñoso y agradable" (my parents are affectionate and pleasant). Since "padres" is plural, the possessive pronoun "mi" should be the plural "mis". The adjectives "cariñoso" and "agradable" should also be in the plural form. The correct statement is "mis padres son cariñosos y agradables". In sentence 7, "yo soy el mayor" (I am the eldest) is incorrect because the subject is female. It should be "*yo soy la mayor*".

Figure 13 shows how the blog was used to correct student's response. The lecturer engaged the students by commenting on the post, which the students can refer to. Figure 14 shows that the student can construct good sentences with correct verb conjugations. However, the sentence contains errors: *veintiún años* (20 years old), missing a comma, missing a tilde for letter "í" (psicología) and the verb "*tienes*". After receiving comments, the student revised the sentence and rewrote the sentence with fewer errors as shown in Figure 14.

Figure 13
Correcting Student's Response

> **Unknown** 13 March 2019 at 08:41
>
> Hola! Me llamo Shahirah. Tengo veintiuno años tienes Soy de Ipoh,Perak.Pero vivo en Tanjung Malim. Soy estudiante de Psicologia. Mucho gusto! :)
>
> Reply Delete
>
> ▼ Replies
>
> **Doctora Mariyati**   13 March 2019 at 10:08
> Hola shahirah!..mucho gusto
> Tengo veintiun años, Soy de Ipoh,Perak, pero vivo en Tanjung Malim. Soy estudiante de Psicologia. Mucho gusto! :)
> Delete

Figure 14
Reduction of Errors After Comments

Hola! Me llamo Shahirah, Tengo veintiun años. Soy de Ipoh, Perak, peri ahora vivo en Tanjung Malim. Soy estudiante de psicología. Mucho gusto!

Reply Delete

Figure 14 shows that the sentence has been revised by the student and has only one error, possibly a typo, compared to the previous sentence. The correct word is *pero.* This shows that after getting feedback from the lecturer, students can produce sentences with fewer errors.

Sentence Construction Using an Adjective

The sentences in Figure 16 resulted from the explanations given by the lecturer in the blog on the use of adjectives. It can be seen that the students are able to construct grammatically correct sentences based on the gender. All five sentences (1-5) used adjectives that correctly describe the corresponding nouns by gender and singular or plural form. In sentence (1), the adjectives **hermosa** (beautiful) and **trabajadora** (hardworking) correctly describe the noun **mi madre** (my mother). Sentence (2) uses the masculine adjectives **rico** (rich), **guapo** (handsome), and **alto** (tall) to depict the male subject. Sentences (3-5) also apply correct masculine adjectives matching the masculine singular noun **mi profesor** (my teacher) and masculine plural nouns **mis amigos** (my friends) and **los alumnos** (the students).

Figure 15
Sentence Writing Using an Adjective

Hola! Me llamo Hafeeza

1. Mi madre es hermosa y muy trabajadora.

2. Soy rico, guapo y alto.

3. Mi profesor es amable, cariñoso y responsable.

4. Mis amigos son muy inteligentes y famosos.

5. Los alumnos son excelentes, humildes y amigables.

Findings from interviews with participants also indicated that participants agreed to the usefulness of blog explanations in helping them construct grammatical sentences. Selected excerpts are provided as follows:

R10: this blog has explanation in Malay language which made it easier… we can understand the Spanish language system and it helps us to construct more grammatical sentences.

R6: Information and explanations are simple and understandable… there are lots of examples of sentences using verb, adjective, and noun which are learnable.

R15: the vocabularies in the blog help us in constructing sentences.
R7: Before I do the exercises in book or blog… I will read the entry of the topic first… explanation in the blog really help me.

Quantitative Findings

The questionnaire results showed positive perceptions regarding the usefulness of the blog and its compatibility as a learning tool. All 10 items received more than 80% of agreement, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Perceptions on the Usage and Compatibility of Blog

Aspects	Yes (%)	No (%)
Enhance understanding	97.7	2.3
Adding new vocabulary	97.7	2.3
More interesting learning	97.7	2.3
Understanding grammar system better	95.5	4.5
Helps in constructing more grammatical sentences	93.3	6.7
Sentence writing becomes better	93.3	6.7
Minimise the grammar errors	88.9	11.1
More motivated to study	88.9	11.1
Refers to the info in the blog before doing exercises	84.4	15.5
Preparation for test	84.4	15.5

Participants overwhelmingly agreed on three items concerning the usage of blog in Spanish language learning. A total of 97.7% agreed that the blog enhanced their understanding, added new vocabulary, and made their learning more interesting. The participants also viewed the blog as useful when it comes to improving their grasp of Spanish grammar and writing. Fewer participants referred to the blog before doing exercises or used it to prepare for test, although the percentages of agreement for both items were still high (84.4%).

Discussion

Teaching Spanish as a foreign language in Malaysia poses tremendous challenges for instructors, as the Spanish grammar system differs from Malaysian students' native languages like Malay, Chinese, Tamil, Iban, Bidayuh, or Kadazan Dusun. These differences can lead to confusion and unavoidable errors during the learning process (Nor et al., 2020). The main difficulties relate to two linguistic elements: morphology (the construction of words) and syntax (the formation of sentences). Students' diverse backgrounds, motivations, and interests further complicate instruction and language acquisition (Hassan et al., 2018).

One of the challenges at the morphology level is the gender-based nouns, masculine and feminine. This basic rule in Spanish can be complex for Malaysian students to grasp, assimilate, and memorise in order to distinguish gender and properly apply noun-adjective agreements (Mansor et al., 2022). This struggle happens because the Malay language does not have a gender structure, and no specific rules can help the students differentiate between masculine and feminine words.

Verb conjugation is also challenging and complicated compared to other aspects of Spanish grammar. The Spanish language uses an inflection-shaped verb system that has three distinct suffixes, which changes for each word according to the subject or doer, the number of subjects (singular or plural), and time frame (present, past, future, progressive, subjunctive). It is difficult for students to master the morphological aspect, particularly the derivation and conjugation of varied and deformed verbs. This confusion caused grammatical errors, ungrammatical sentences, the addition of unnecessary verbs, reduced essential elements, incorrect verb selection, and inaccurate order in sentence construction. The interview findings aligned with the written work, revealing that the students agree that Spanish conjugation is the most challenging part (Nor & Mansor, 2020).

Besides the complexity of Spanish grammar, another obstacle that Malaysian students encounter when learning Spanish is the absence of the language's contextual and natural linguistic environment. There is a lack of practice and environmental support for the students to use the language naturally (Mansor et al., 2022). Hence, utilising blogs is an effective intervention to support Spanish language learning and development for students. Jones (2006) stated that as blogging has become a popular communication form, it is viewed by academics as an interactive and effective pedagogical tool to master a foreign language.

In this study, the blog was used to supplement classroom lessons on Spanish grammatical gender. The strategies related to grammatical gender were thoroughly explained, helping to increase students' mastery and comprehension. Examples of explanations of grammatical gender and strategy in identifying feminine and masculine nouns can be accessed by scanning the QR code that is included in the students' reference books. Students can scan the materials as and when they need to. The blog was also used as an intervention learning method for improving students' writing skills and comprehension of topics covered in class. This facilitated personalised Spanish language learning opportunities.

Participants overwhelmingly agreed on three items concerning the usage of

blog in Spanish language learning – they agreed that the blog enhanced their understanding, added new vocabulary, and made their learning more interesting. The participants also viewed the blog as useful in improving their grasp of Spanish grammar and writing. Understanding grammar system better helped the students to construct grammatical sentences, minimise grammar errors, and raise their motivation. According to Aydin (2014), blogging positively affects learners' writing performance, their ability to monitor writing, their attitudes towards and perceptions of writing, and their interactions and participation in writing. More specifically, blogs are effective for developing rhetorical strategies, improving grammar skills, designing paragraphs and essays, revising written works, giving and receiving feedback and participating in peer review activities.

Feedback from the lecturer is also important to minimise the errors that made by the students. Satish and Kaila (2005) found that blogs enable meaningful connections between students, lecturers, and universities, as extensively implemented in institutions like Harvard and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Blogs can also help students understand the topics taught in the classroom and assist in the mastery of the target language grammar system (Nor et al., 2021). In the current study, engagement between the lecturer and the students resulted in reduced errors when students wrote in the target language.

Conclusion

The use of a blog as a learning technology enables learning spaces outside of the classroom, which can be used for independent learning. The findings of this study provided evidence that using a blog as a teaching and learning tool enhances students' vocabulary mastery, improves their understanding of the Spanish language grammar system and construction of grammatical sentences, and minimises students' errors. The blog also offers an environment that facilitates students to participate in learning communities for active engagement. Most importantly, students can practise the language using various skills, especially writing and vocabulary, in an authentic learning environment. Typically, students learn from peers, from their lecturers in the classroom, and from their reference books. Therefore, the use of a blog that is accessible with a quick response code offers another mechanism to enhance students' learning of Spanish.

This study established that blog can offer a platform to help language learning in terms of the morphology of vocabulary mastery and syntax (sentence construction). Peer learning occurs when the students convey their opinions and discuss among themselves, promoting independent learning and critical abilities. The majority of students also agreed that the blog was a positive add-on to their Spanish language learning.

The findings from this study have implications for foreign language educators as it presents a potential approach for effective language learning outside of the classroom. Language educators need to continuously improve their teaching and learning techniques according to students' needs. This includes incorporating technology and digital media as part of their teaching. Using blogs, as shown in this study, is an effective way of doing these. While the present study only examined the

use of blogs in the teaching and learning of Spanish as a third language, it is highly possible that other language teaching and learning can also benefit from the use of blogs.

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