A BRIEF HISTORY OF BLENDED LEARNING AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a brief history of blended learning and emphasizes its importance in English language teaching and learning contexts dealing with it as a way of empowering the efficiency of educational activities by promoting learning and its outcomes with the implementation of literature review as a research method to gather the essential data, evaluate, and analyse the existing research studies to develop a solid theoretical framework of blended learning and its importance in English language teaching. Blended learning is regarded as a comparatively new trend in education that integrates traditional way of instruction with computer technologies. The article also reveals that blended learning approach could be implemented effectively to improve students' speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills along with their pronunciation, vocabulary knowledge, and grammar. It has an undeniable positive impact on learning contexts and more importantly, it could increase students' motivation, autonomy, engagement, and involvement in educational activities both offline and online resulting in a sense of responsibility and independence.

Keywords: Blended learning, online education, distance education, ESL, EFL, English teaching and learning, educational technologies.

INTRODUCTION

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When exploring the historical background of blended learning and its importance in English language teaching, it is of high significance to focus on the gradual development of the subject by taking the existing knowledge and studies into consideration. To do so, it could be emphasised that globally, in the 21st century, not only language teaching but also language learning plays a vital part in education. What is more significant today is the responsibility of learners to accomplish far more than what they have done up to now. They are now more dependent on the lifelong basis of language learning to be competent enough to fulfil their responsibilities in learning. The requirement for learning a foreign language has always been beyond argument, unquestionable together with the necessity to be more efficient learners. Despite tons of efforts, it appears to be a quite significant point to assist learners to enhance their language skills and make progress in learning and help them practice the target language. To serve this very significant purpose, all educators are expected to be competent enough to combine technology and a set of computer technologies effectively with traditional teaching methods or approaches. In this respect, with the implementation of literature review as a research method to gather data, the fundamental and underlying objective of this article, then, is to dwell upon the developmental background of blended learning approach and its importance in English language education focusing on the traditional way of instruction along with blended learning teaching instructions where learners learn independently and creatively developing a sense of their own learning responsibility with the help of a set of innovative and instructional computer technologies.

This study conducted to determine the impact of blended learning on English language skills and delve into its historical development is based on literature review as a research method. To produce knowledge within a specific research area, it is crucial to gather conclusive, scientific, practical, and compelling evidence to support any research to develop it effectively. In this respect, due to the nature of this research, literature review as a research method was implemented to gather and evaluate data as it is a critical systematic way of gathering, analysing, and synthesizing data depending on the previous and reliable research studies. Moreover, it is a ground on which knowledge and theory development could be based. The literature review method is regarded as a systematic approach used to gather, assess, and analyse the previously conducted research and scholarly and scientific articles in relation to a specific topic or research subject matter/question. In this article, it is implemented through doing research on the relevant literature for the topic of the research by importantly reviewing and summarising the results of the previous studies in the existing knowledge. It also provides a compelling and comprehensive summary of the current state of research in the related field by helping researchers base their theories and claims on the existing knowledge along with offering them to identify the current research trends and develop a theoretical framework for their research areas and studies properly (Webster, 2002).

HISTORICAL TRACES AND DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS OF BLENDED LEARNING

This study highlights a literature review focusing on the development of instructional technologies and blended learning through history. The process of informatization from the 1990s to the 2000s is believed to have contributed to the gradually increasing development of technologies turning out to be one of the most underlying and popular trends in education today (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2016). The advent of such a revolutionary trend, online learning in education, not only increases the costs for the advancement of one country's technology-based economy but also gives room for talented and skilful personnel. Henceforth, it seems to be a necessity to advance education and educational systems along with a comprehensible introduction of digital tools to make educational activities more accessible and attainable in the teaching-learning contexts holistically. In this respect, the advancement of information or computer technologies adds up to the development of educational methods, approaches, and principles to move with the times and helps nations to flourish in education (Kornilov, et al., 2019).

Traditional instruction is being enhanced and computer technologies have been gaining a great deal of popularity by being more widespread all over the world as it could be applicable both separately and simultaneously. A fair number of researchers all over the world seem to have agreed on the idea that blended learning has been quite adequate, powerful, influential, operative, and serviceable over the past years and it appears to have the function of establishing far more excellent outcomes than the traditional way of instruction and online learning alone. It is claimed that the use of technology has turned out to be highly beneficial and productive with countless advantages for both teachers and learners. To exemplify, it offers a great chance to learners to experience some real-world situations in classrooms (Munson, 2010). It would precisely motivate and encourage learners as Ellis (2007) put forward the idea that designing interesting and critical tasks followed by computer-based activities might make learners more eager because blended learning shines a light on the diversity of subject matters, topics, a ton of activities to be performed and makes them more attainable for both teachers and students.

The literature in the related field provides a limitless number of descriptions of the blended approach (Bliuc, Goodyear & Ellis, 2007). However, to put it into a definition, it could be stated that Internet technology is the fundamental basis on which the blended learning approach functions as a form of distance education with an integration of traditional teaching with a set of online and educational self-study sources (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). According to Gómez & Igado (2008), blended learning empowers the ground of educational activities and instruction. Garrison and Kanua (2004) accentuated that it could help both teachers and learners make the most of it and it could even make a more sophisticated level of learning achievable and accessible.

TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

The implementation of computer-based instructional approaches is of high significance for educational institutions to enhance educational activities, conduct extracurricular affairs, and address the needs of notions to meet the demand for educated labour. As known, unlike the traditional way of instruction and classroom

setting, technology offers a great deal of opportunities for teachers to direct the learning process differently. Regarding the improvement of teachers' teaching skills, the most critical point is to make them able to use technology productively and creatively (Bates & Poole, 2003). In all educational contexts, the role of teachers is regarded as the facilitator of the teaching-learning process. Therefore, it is stated that instructional technology could improve traditional instruction with a combination of different computer technologies to help both teachers and learners. It is also emphasized that technology plays a vital and primary part in promoting language teaching instruction and learning outcomes (Blin, 2005). The most indispensable and valuable part of this current popular trend that technology offers for teachers and learners is lifelong learning opportunities through diversity, a set of attainable resources, giving them a chance to teach and study flexibly. Above all, technology assists them with access to education no matter where they are and what time it is (Gandel, Katz & Metros, 2004).

Due to the transformation from a structural basis into interactive perspectives in language teaching, the Internet and computer technologies could be implemented into EFL classrooms as the Internet offers millions of authentic materials to enrich EFL instruction (Watson, 2006). Abelle (1973) made observations and stated that the use of technology could be a tremendous support for the traditional way of instruction, learning contexts, and methodologies. To put it differently, technological tools and instructional technology could empower teachers and learners by increasing the efficiency of the learning settings. Computer technologies bring a countless number of benefits into EFL classrooms in order to enhance EFL learners' language skills effectively offering them access to millions of online activities on the path to success.

WEB-BASED INSTRUCTION

Internet technologies carry an excellent possibility to be an indispensable constituent of educational institutions. Khan (1997) emphasized that this is "a new learning approach to convey the instruction to a distant group of people through web-based instruction." (p. 1). Khan's description of web-based instruction indicates an attempt to deliver pedagogy with a set of resources attainable on the web. However, it is essential for teachers to learn how to make the most of this potential and adapt themselves to technological advancements to be skilful enough and benefit from web-based instruction to enhance both teaching and learning (Fisher, 2000).

Pugaale and Robinson (1998) emphasized that teachers are the most critical and indispensable part of web-based instruction since they are the ones creating suitable contexts and coming up with original ideas to support students' engagement and learning. It is therefore suggested that once Web-based instruction is well-designed, it could increase teaching and learning outcomes correlatively. Moreover, according to Morrison and Gunter (2000), the active role of web-based instruction has a great impact on learning a lot better than just the topic and instruction alone.

COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION

As known, instruction stands for an integration of information and context to back up and quicken the educational process. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is a fundamental component of the development, improvement, and even maintenance of social relations. Computer-mediated communication is regarded as 'an interaction between different people in remote places with a separation in place and/or time substantiated by a chain of mutually connected computers' (Romiszowsk & Mason, 1996, p.439). Computer-mediated communication appears to have the underlying potential to enhance the effectiveness of group learning offering them a chance to reflect upon previous debates, talks, as well as learning experiences and to come up with thought-through ideas and responses to different problems by offering learners a chance for instant sharing and exchanging of ideas with equal participation. Furthermore, it also helps learners improve their communication skills, exterminating social fragmentation and difficulties. More importantly, it helps students have a sense of belonging with a sense of non-formality (Pfaffenberger as cited in Jonassen, 1996).

ELECTRONIC LEARNING (e-LEARNING)

According to Galyen (2011, p.130), the emergence of e-learning is not exactly known. Therefore, it is claimed that it might have emerged throughout the 1980s at the same time as online learning. Khan (2005) asserted that electronic learning could be regarded as a new approach to creating a student-centred classroom at any time in which learners could make the most of technological resources with a set of different materials and practices. For clarity, it is a learning platform that could take place at any time with a live person through the Internet technologies and access to collect information along with a way in which educators, learners, other professionals, and a variety of institutions may gain knowledge and share their ideas (Zhang & Nunameker, 2003).

DISTANCE LEARNING

When the related literature is analysed, it is no surprise to come across a great number of descriptions of distance learning/education. To depict it simply, distance learning could be said to be a form of education with a set of methods and approaches aiming at educating learners and enabling them to gain knowledge not physically being in a traditional class. Knowledge, skills along with information depending on a network with a computer are transferred in a distance learning session. Course content is delivered and presented through a set of technological tools such as the Internet, video, and audio recordings, or even through intranet or extranet supported by electronically designed learning and teaching.

Murphy (1997) put the meaning of distance learning/education into an expression as a description of designated and continuous attempts and experiences to improve learning inputs and outcomes in a context comprised of geographic, temporal, and pedagogical distance. Citrus College in England regards it as an educational method and instruction including learning and accessing information through computer technologies instead of being in traditional classrooms. For clarity, it is considered to be a web-based platform that brings learners and teachers living in different places with different time zones. It is also evident that in

recent years, the non-stop improvement and advancement of the Internet and technology have made educational institutions embrace distance learning to promote their learning and teaching outcomes to move with the times. As Kumaral & Manoharan (2010) revealed that the idea of learning outside the classroom is a newly developed trend in instruction, which definitely results in far more productive outcomes contrasted to compared to traditional teaching.

BLENDED LEARNING

The first implementation of technological equipment as a channel of distance education became known between the years 1960 and 1970. It is emphasized in the related literature that it was the University of Standford that embraced distance learning in the first place by establishing a video network platform letting its learners learn no matter where they are without teachers' presence. Since then, blended learning and how we realize its functions have actually been formed by numerous efforts in technological improvements from the early 2000s to the present time.

Blended learning (BL) is regarded as a teaching approach with a revolutionary integration of traditional ways of instruction with computer technologies inside and outside the classroom. In other words, having computer literacy and being able to use some other devices with an Internet connection synchronously or asynchronously is a vital part of learning through a blended approach. Such a trend in education is also known to be e-learning and regarded as an extension of distance and online learning with a strong emphasis on obtaining knowledge and communication between educators and students. Hence, the blended approach is comprised of an integration of traditional way of instruction with learning through electronic devices suitable for the implementation in the educational process along with a set of materials such as electronic textbooks, virtual laboratories, various multimedia and survey systems and platforms, online control and assessment accompanied by a set of online technologies. Blended learning is put into expression as a teaching approach that exterminates time, location, and geographical borders and limits with a belief and attempt to entitle a more sophisticated level of instruction between teachers and learners (Kanuka, 2004).

Driscoll (2002) stated that the blended learning approach integrates any sort of computer technologies with traditional instruction supported by pedagogical strategies. The blended approach has been gaining popularity in education as it "means combining the online and traditional instruction to promote learning outcomes" (Brew, p.98). Considering the definitions given above, it could be emphasized that blended learning arises out of distance education, web-based instruction, and online learning. As a concept, blended or hybrid learning stands for the integration of traditional instruction with online experiences (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). It could be easily digested from the aforementioned definitions that blended learning means combining a variety of teaching approaches along with a diversity of methods and technologically available and attainable resources.

Carman (2002) brought forward the idea that there are a set of five critical elements constituting a blended or hybrid learning process: (1) *Life events* in which learners and teachers come together to promote learning outcomes, (2) *Self-Paced Learning* where students are supposed to perform learning activities depending on

their pace, (3) *Collaboration* through which learners communicate with each other and study with other students as they wish to do, (4) *Assessment* to evaluate students' knowledge of subject matters taught during blended or hybrid learning processes, and (5) *Performance Support Materials*, the last and the most indispensable component of the process. It enhances and promotes learning with a number of hard-copied materials, PDF downloads, coursebook resources, and video-audio recordings. Driscoll (2002) claimed that blended learning could be attributed to some characteristics like the mixture of forms of computer technologies and the integration of a variety of pedagogical approaches to teaching (e.g., constructivism, behaviourism, cognitivism, etc.) to make the most of instructional technologies for better learning outcomes with or without integrating computer technology with face-to-face classroom instruction. Henceforth, it could be pointed out that an effective framework with the best combination of the points mentioned above is a necessity to accomplish the desired goals in a blended learning or hybrid environment.

Bonk and Graham (2006) accentuated that teachers are offered a chance to establish and design traditional ways of instruction in a blended learning context for several critical and primary reasons such as a way to enhance pedagogy, a variety of accessible materials, and a chance to work flexibly with affordable means. They also stated that blending learning could happen differently based on levels like *Instructional Level* which offers a great chance for educators to establish and design models for blended learning settings where student gain knowledge traditionally at the beginning and the end of the course through a set of web-based activities and tasks in between*. A*ccording to Graham (2006), "blending learning occurs at the program level in higher education" and they also indicate that it is a program allowing learners to take a chance to select taking the course completely online or online supported by traditional classroom instruction*. Course Level* that is composed of a combination of the traditional way of instruction and computer-based practices as a part of a course and universities could be good examples of this, *and the Activity Level* in which blended learning occurs when a learning activity consists of the traditional way of instruction together with computer-based elements.

Blended learning appears to have a great potential to assist educators with a way of re-designing and establishing educational activities and take teaching to a much better stage where learners can play a significant role in their learning process being more autonomous. To put it differently, blended learning is believed to maintain the current educational practices paving the way for improving the capacity of both teachers and learners. Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) believed that blended learning approaches could assist learners with a countless number of benefits such as letting students benefit from the selected pedagogy in the traditional way of instructional contexts. Therefore, it is evident that learners also learn from the teachers and the other students. As could be understood, the critical point blended learning offers to learners is that they may have access to knowledge effectively based on the course requirements with a consistent balance between face-to-face classes and instructional technologies.

Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning, as mentioned through the development of blended learning, could be performed for any sort of educational activities, practices, and exercises. According to Ghirardini (2011), synchronous learning is in real-time and limited to back up by video conferencing, chat, discussions, and

debates only. Thanks to synchronous learning, students may remain motivated, and their concentration levels get higher, so they become able to focus on their studies better. Besides, this helps them develop a sense of belonging and stay united. In such kind of learning setting, they work in harmony, they are given feedback, they make comments on each other progress in education encouraging and supporting decision-making and it keeps them updated by offering assignments and more importantly, it provides discipline. In other words, synchronous learning comes into existence when teachers and students establish communication in different places through a computer and the Internet at the same time taking advantage of online materials at all once in different places.

Asynchronous learning, on the other hand, was defined by Littlefield (2013) as an approach supported by media tools that may be used offline. Another difference is that it takes place when teachers and students interact with each other at different times, which means they do not have to be online at the same time or in the same place. Moreover, it means flexibility for learners and a chance to reflect on themselves along with its being cost-effective. All these mean that the learners could attain course materials easily and reflect upon their previous studies at any time appropriate. This sort of learning is not based on a specific time to carry on learning whereas synchronous learning happens between two people with computers connected to the Internet at the same time, in different places. Henceforth, Littlefield (2013) emphasized the fact that synchronous learning is the most appropriate option offering a chance to those who would love to make plans on their schedule for their studies. It is for those learners who would love to have structured and scheduled courses that pay more attention to student interaction. In contrast to synchronous learning, asynchronous learning is the most suitable one for learners with more heavy timetables or weekly programs and absolutely for those who are highly motivated and who do not need to be directed to finish their projects, tasks, and assignments.

THE INFLUENCE OF BLENDED LEARNING IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING CONTEXTS

Educational institutions, universities, and schools seem to have gone through a breath-taking transition from the traditional way of instruction to a new teaching model of educational instruction which combines the traditional way of teaching with online forms of learning to promote learning outcomes making use of attainable computer-based technologies based on student-teacher learning dynamic resulting in synergy with the help of these methods, and they could be really effective in language teaching and learning (Graham, 2003). Weindorf-Sysoeva (2017) pointed out that the pertinence of the implementation of innovative computer technologies in educational systems is increasing day by day. In other words, the number of universities, schools, and other educational institutions where courses are delivered with a combination of traditional instruction and distance and computer technologies is dramatically going up.

Osguthorpe & Graham (2003) contended that blended learning not only offers great opportunities to educators to benefit from the pedagogical richness of the traditional way of instruction but also it helps learners have easy access to knowledge of subject matters by making social interaction more convenient for them. Bonk and

Graham (2006) emphasized that it is highly advisable for educators to choose blended learning in terms of a much better pedagogy, an enhanced level of accessibility, and flexibility.

Blended learning also aims at focusing on the most crucial aspects of both traditional and computer-based instruction. In that way, blended learning could be enhanced to establish and carry out the portion of the traditional way of instruction more productively. As discussed before, the online portion of courses could be arranged based on timetables of students with a great resource of online materials at any time in different places like computer laboratories, dormitories, students' homes, and even coffee shops in which learners could utilize computer technologies such as the Internet connection together with a computer. It is also asserted that blended learning could lead to an increase in flexibility and accessibility resulting in a high level of students' eagerness to get involved in online courses effectively promoting and empowering learning outcomes (Twigg, 2003).

As for the use of the blended approach in current language education contexts, it offers an interface with an integration of both computer-based instruction and traditional way of instruction in language education as it is in other disciplines. Language learners are offered a great chance to enhance their language skills by effectively communicating and interacting with teachers in traditional classrooms and outside the classroom, they could utilize online audio-video sources whenever they want and wherever there are at their convenient time. According to So and Bonk (2010), students become more autonomous and active through blended learning. Kern, R. and Warschauer, M. (2000) supported the idea that online resources and computer technologies are of high importance and fruitful as they offer a great chance for learners to communicate with native speakers through online platforms and they could enhance their language skills at the same time. According to Beckett and Miller (2006), computer technologies have a continuous positive impact on the development of language skills.

Johnson, C.P. (2014) attached credence to the idea that the blended learning is a model where students actively get involved and engage in online activities to enhance their language skills. Marsh (2012:16) emphasized that blended learning makes students more self-assured as they can get authentic materials through its implementation and it is claimed that if computer technologies are used repeatedly, it turns out to be more effective in developing language skills as it makes students more autonomous and active in their language learning process. They also believe that teaching integrated skills in a blended learning context is more effective. According to Dudeney & Hockly (2016), in the 21st century, students are known to be very interested in computer technologies as they grow up in an environment surrounded by technological devices. Therefore, they can make the most of blended learning as they are always familiar with computer technologies and keen on using them a lot.

Walsh (2016) emphasized that the blended learning approach could maximize language teaching and learning even acquisition due to its countless potential. Akbarov, Gönen, and Aydoğan (2016) investigated what learners understand and perceive about blended learning, and they discovered that EFL students massively chose

blended learning settings over traditional classrooms because they believed that the blended learning model is so effective as it empowers and promotes teaching and learning in an ELF setting.

More vitally, blended learning helps learners develop a sense of belonging and involvement in educational activities and the learning process more than the traditional way of instruction does (Tayebinik & Puteh, 2013). To put it differently, through the use of blended learning, students are given a chance to feel motivated enough to take part in educational activities in and outside as it offers them great chances. Senffner and Kepler (2015) emphasized the fact that the online part of the blended learning approach exterminates all obstacles and borders in terms of time and location without any limitations as it offers flexibility and scalability, and blended learning gives students a chance to get together in online or and offline places to work in collaboration and it also offers them a great opportunity to focus on projects.

According to Zhang and Zhu (2018), establishing an appropriate place in which all students may come together is very challenging; however, they emphasized that a blended learning setting could accomplish it due to several aspects such as providing flexibility, accessibility, active participation and interaction, encouragement, and inspirational atmosphere. As a way of illustration, Marsh (2012) pointed out that the benefits that the blended learning approach offers over face-to-face teaching methods and techniques are undeniably significant. Also, the approach contributes to getting more autonomous learners in terms of language skills developed through collaborative learning and instructional technologies. These may naturally be regarded as contexts in which students interact through tasks, activities, and even projects to practice the target language.

Having carefully reviewed the literature on the implementation of blended learning in English language educational settings, it is highly possible to say that the blended learning approach could be a key tool for learners to enhance their English language skills. For instance, Ghazizadeh and Fatemipour (2017) carried out a study on the impacts of blended learning in improving learners' reading skills. The essential objective of their study was to examine if a blended learning approach could be combined with traditional instruction to enhance the sixty intermediate level of Iranian EFL students' reading skills or not. The study was carried out by choosing the participants randomly and placing them in two different groups as experimental in which courses were delivered by integration of traditional and blended learning instruction with a strong focus on their reading proficiency and a control group in which courses were delivered to students through traditional instruction of teaching English. The participants in these two different groups were evaluated before and after the experimentation to ascertain their language reading level definitely. After the experiment was conducted, a t-test was applied to compare the participants' reading levels, and it was discovered that the implementation of the blended learning approach led to a statistically important impact on the Iranian ELF learners' reading skills and proficiency levels. What is more is that the investigators, depending on their study findings and results, emphasized that blended learning precisely promotes language learning and its outcomes, and it could be effectively implemented in EFL classes to help learners develop their reading skills.

Similarly, in a study carried out by Shih (2010), the researcher scrutinized the impact of blended learning on an English Language course to arrange a setting in which courses were delivered to ESL learners through online

blogging. Forty-four ESL students participated in the study. In the study, participants were interviewed to understand the effect of blended learning on them, including their satisfaction levels, their feedback efficiency, and finally their self-reflection. The findings of the research pointed out that blended learning through an online blogging/video conferencing led to a statistically dramatic increase in learners' speaking skills together with a sense of self-autonomy and an ability to work collaboratively on different projects promoting learning processes and outcomes. Shish (2010) also made it clear that the use of blended learning not only helped learners enhance their speaking skills but also helped them with their subskills of English language.

Another study in favour of blended learning was conducted by Grgurovic (2011) to delve into the efficacy and productivity of blended learning to have a clear understanding of how the blended approach was implemented in ESL contexts and how it was combined with the traditional way of instruction and distance learning. The research was carried out in a setting where the 19 ESL participants were taking an extensive English language course program in America with an English teacher. The researcher implemented observation, survey, and interview methods to have a clear picture of blended learning. The findings of their study indicated that the blended approach could be implemented in ESL classes to teach all language skills effectively as the findings of the study revealed that learners and educators had a positive perception towards combining the blended approach with the traditional way of instruction to promote language learning process and outcomes.

Reviewing the literature on the use of blended learning in language education, it is obvious to emphasize the fact that blended learning keeps students more motivated, satisfied, and engaged in their learning process more effectively than traditional instructional classes do. To give an example, Banditvilai (2016) carried out a study to understand how blended learning could enhance English language skills and if it could really increase students' autonomy and motivation in an Asian University with a number of 60 university students majoring in English language applying progress tests, a questionnaire and online lessons as a research tool to gather data. After the data was analysed, the researcher discovered that blended learning could be used to keep students motivated and keep them highly autonomous as blended learning gives them a chance to learn at any time and anywhere.

Following the favour of blended learning, another study was conducted by Yoon and Lee (2010) and they examined students' perceptions and understandings along with the efficacy of blended learning as a strategy to promote educational process and outcomes in an ESL academic writing context. The participants were forty-seven university language learning students in two writing settings. To gather data, pre-post-tests, mid-term exams, and a questionnaire were applied. The findings of their study indicated that students had a positive perception of blended learning believing that it kept them motivated, engaged, and autonomous paving the way for more interactive writing courses as blended learning was pretty helpful and productive for them.

How effective and productive blended learning is in English Language Education was the focus of Jameel's (2021) study. Depending on a mixed design survey, data was collected at King Abdulaziz University. The participants of the study were only male students studying at Saudi Universities. The study was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic in which all educators were made to teach through an online learning approach

and embrace it in teaching language skills. They went through a complete online teaching experience on electronic learning platforms. Depending on the result of the study, educators emphasized that electronic learning platforms were not productive and functional enough to get the desired result because students felt totally unmotivated and had no enthusiasm to fully carry out online classes. Similarly, as known, in a traditional classroom, when learners miss out on any classes, they don't have any chances to have it and they are left with no options. Henceforth, educators emphasized that a combination of a blended learning approach with a traditional way of instruction resulted in A more effective way of teaching and learning English language skills. All the participants, ELT faculty members from different countries stated that they took advantage of the blended learning approach and found it way more efficient and effectual in teaching language skills compared to fully online or offline teaching approaches. The findings of the survey also showed that blended learning had a great impact on students' listening and speaking skills together with their pronunciation. The student participants also made it clear that they had two learning platforms to improve their language skills effectively in terms of much better interaction and engagement in their learning process. They also believed that they could independently utilize computer-based instructional technologies like videos/audio materials together with the dynamic traditional way of instruction because they mentioned that they had the chance to enhance their pronunciation of tough words by repeating them. Blended learning led them to feel motivated, feel more autonomous, and be encouraged to speak with and listen to native speakers with online and authentic materials continuously.

To sum up, depending on the review of literature on blended learning in English Language education, it is clear to understand that studies demonstrate and show undeniable qualities of blended learning as it could be implemented into EFL/ESL classes to promote the learning process and outcomes and to develop English language learners' skills as they all had a positive and constructive perception on the blended learning approach as a useful, productive, effective, and strategic language teaching and learning approach. They also believed that they had a more interactive way of classroom and educational activities in a blended learning setting because they developed their language skills by establishing much better interactions and communications with an engagement in their learning process believing that the blended learning approach fostered and promoted their learning process giving them incomparable chances to be way more independent students with a sense of responsibility.

CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

In conclusion, it may be stated that the current article presents the fact that blended learning is a teaching method with an innovative integration of traditional instruction with computer-based learning technologies. Furthermore, it is discussed that it offers flexibility which could increase EFL students' motivation and keep them more focused and autonomous by leading them to be more willing to practice the real-life use of English language. More importantly, it is emphasized that blended learning could lead them to be more successful academically when compared to the traditional way of instruction. It also led English language learners to work in collaboration with others both online and offline with a sense of responsibility for their own learning

process. In the current study, it is also stated that blended learning in English language education had a positive impact on students' and teachers' perceptions.

Blended learning has been an increasing trend in education since the early 2000s. Recently, considering the review of the blended learning literature, it is obvious that a variety of teaching approaches have been put into effect to empower the implementation and efficiency of online learning technologies in the world. As discussed earlier above, the blended learning approach neither came into existence overnight nor it fell from the sky; however, like in all the other fields, it appeared to be on the teaching stage as a response to meet nations' needs for educational activities and practices that could promote learning.

Language teaching and learning both online and offline could be promoted by the blended approach as it provides teachers and learners with a chance to individualize and personalize their language teaching and learning experiences so that both could be more autonomous and productive. It is massively possible to promote and improve the productivity of teaching and language skills through the appropriate equilibrium of online and offline sessions. It is also obvious that the role of teachers and students is backed up in blended learning settings by computer technologies which could inevitably broaden the horizon of language skills. The accessibility of a massive number of online resources, and flexible timetables are all the additional benefits of the blended approach that could empower and enrich the way of instruction through computer technologies.

Assessing the review of literature, it is also worth emphasizing that some universities have not only already implemented online learning into their educational policies but also seem to have implemented blended learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In line with the discussion carried out in this article, educators mentioned their best performance of educational instruction as supported by blended learning. Likewise, students performed better language skills through the integration of blended learning along with the traditional way of instruction. In that way, both stated that they felt more motivated, autonomous, encouraged, and mostly engaged in everything done in blended learning settings to promote their teaching and learning process.

ETHICAL TEXT

"In this article, the journal writing rules, publication principles, research and publication ethics, and journal ethical rules were followed. The responsibility belongs to the author (s) for any violations that may arise regarding the article. "

As this article is a review article and is based on literature review as a research method, it does not require ethics committee approval.

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