Blended Learning in English Language Teaching Contexts

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ABSTRACT

The use of Blended Learning in English language teaching (ELT) contexts has increased significantly during the past decade .The present study reveals an overview of Blended Learning in ELT by considering where the term originated and by seeking to define what it means. This study also demonstrates an overview of Blended Learning through relevant literature and the current studies on Blended Learning in ELT contexts. Different blends and strategies used in implementing Blended Learning in ELT contexts are presented. Literature survey in recent study reveals that Blended Learning is more favorable than pure face-to-face or online instruction and offers advantages of Blended learning approach over them. Besides, the researcher demonstrates an overview of the limitations of the Blended Learning approach in ELT. Finally, the researcher concludes that Blended Learning might be an efficient instructing approach and recommends conducting further research on teachers' required skills for using Blended Learning in ELT contexts.

Keywords: Blended Learning, English Language Teaching Context, face-to-face instruction, on- line instruction**.**

INTRODUCTION

Making practical and effective use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in educational processes evidently paves the way to adaptations in the roles of both teachers and learners, and leads to the emergence of new teaching and learning environments and methodologies (e-learning, web-based learning, open and distance learning, and blended learning).

Research over the past few years has indicated that students learn as successfully in online environments as in traditional face-to-face classroom settings (Donnely, 2010). However, recently, it has also been accepted that online learning with a single course delivery mode cannot provide ideal conditions for successful learning. Therefore, educators have combined face-to-face instruction with online learning components and online course management tools in a blended learning format, to join the best features of in-class teaching and to promote

active, self-directed learning opportunities with added flexibility (Garnham & Kaleta, 2002). The rising of Blended Learning which integrates the best of face-to-face and ICT applications is a revolution in education. Since pure on-line learning or sole traditional one holds some weaknesses and strengths, it is better to mix the strengths of both learning environments to develop a new method of delivery called blended learning (Azizan, 2010).

Thorne (2003) indicates that blended learning is a natural evolution of the learning agenda and one of the most important advancements of this century. Masie (2006) argues that blended learning may become so ordinary and integrated into everyday instructional practice that we will drop the 'blended' prefix and simply refer to it as learning. According to Brew (2008), Blended learning has become a popular form of education. A learning that means integrating the online and face-to-face formats to create a more effective learning experience. Ross and Gage (2006) go as far as to claim that in the long run, almost all courses offered in higher education will be blended. According to them, it is almost a certainty that blended learning will become the

new traditional model of course delivery in coming decades.

In view of that, the application of blended instruction has quickly increased because instructors believe that varied delivery methods can increase students' satisfaction from the learning experience as well as their learning outcomes (Geng 2011).

Iuliana (2012) assures that blended- learning has been a popular topic in English Language Teaching and that it has expanded in many other academic subjects due to its usefulness. Recent studies indicate that blended-learning technology into English for Specific Purposes(ESP) classes helps   students learn quicker and better and offers them self-pacing according to their interests and needs (Iuliana 2012).

According to Ross and Gage (2006), what will differentiate educational institutions from one another will not be whether they have blended learning but rather how they do the blending and where they fall on the blended learning spectrum . Taking these points into consideration, the researcher thinks that Blended Learning is a valuable, innovative instructional approach that deserves to be researched in depth. This study provides an extensive review of Blended Learning particularly used in ELT contexts by considering where the term originated and by seeking to define what it means. This study will also demonstrate an overview of Blended Learning through relevant literature and the current studies on Blended Learning in ELT contexts. Different blends in ELT contexts will be presented side by side with strategies used in implementing Blended Learning .In addition, advantages of using Blended Learning over pure face-to-face and pure online learning are presented .The study will conclude with stating the limitations of applying Blended Learning and suggesting resolutions and recommendations relevant to applying Blended Learning effectively in ELT contexts.

Significance of the Study

Based on the growing body of knowledge of blended-learning in education, it is clear that blended- learning is

significant for both learners and teachers. Blended-learning can permit students to learn in ways that work best for them. It also empowers teachers to move into deeper learning through small-group work, or one-on-one discussions with students who need it most.

The practical significance of this study refers to the fact that English language teachers in different levels, administrators and researchers in the field of education may get use of the current study in adopting blended-learning in English Language teaching classes in order to facilitate the learning process of language skills. Also this study might motivate them to conduct more specialized training and preparation programs for English teachers related to blended learning strategies and models which may lead to having better quality of English language teaching.

Where the Term Originated

The term blended learning originated in the business world in connection with corporate training (Sharma and Barrett 2007), then was employed in higher education and lastly it appeared in language teaching and learning. According to Tian & Fu (2004), blended learning is a term first employed in enterprise training for its convenience and flexibility with combination of online and face-to-face training in 1990s.

He Kekang (2004) introduced the idea of "blended learning" to China and defined it as combination of advantages of traditional learning and e-learning: to perform full play of teacher's leading role in guidance, inspiration and supervision, as well as the learner's body role in their initiative and creativity.

What is Blended Learning?

Based on literature review, there is no unity on the definition of blended learning. Smith (2001) defined blended learning as a method of educating at a distance that uses technology such as television, the internet, voice mail or conference calls joined with traditional education. Procter (2003) argues that identifying blended learning

with distance learning is a mistake that has significant implications for program design and delivery and he gives a simpler definition of blended learning as being an effective combination of modes of delivery including e-learning.

Driscoll (2002) defines blended learning as a combination of instructional methods; whereas Delialioglu and Yildirim (2007) claim that blended-learning is a systematic and strategic combination of ICT tools into academic courses that introduces a new way to approach instructional goals.

According to Neumeier (2005), Blended learning is a hybrid teaching strategy that combines technology and teacher instruction in the 21st century classroom where students are given a certain level of control over the time, place, pace, or path of online instruction. Students can skip forward, rewind or pause online content.

Smith and Kurthen (2007) define blended learning as Subjects that utilize some significant online activities in otherwise face-to-face learning in less than 45 per cent of the class time.

With reference to blended learning in higher education, it has been defined as a combination of technology and classroom instruction in a flexible approach to learning that recognizes the benefits of delivering some training and assessment online but also uses other modes to make up a complete training programme which can improve learning outcomes and/or save costs (Banados, 2006)

According to Allen, Seaman, and Garrett's (2007), to be called blended learning, 30 to 79% of a course's content should be delivered through ICTs with typically using online discussions, and typically has some face-to-face meetings.

In their book**,** Barrett and Sharma (2007) suggest a broader definition, taking blended learning to mean a combination of classroom teaching and the appropriate use of technology.

Badawi (2009) defines blended learning as a flexible approach that combines face-to-face learning activities with online learning practices that allow students to exchange collective and individual feedback and responses in four specific areas, namely, learner feedback, learner strategies, and alternative assessment synchronously or asynchronously.

Colin and Moonen (2010) define blended learning as a hybrid of traditional face-to- face and online learning so that instruction occurs both in the classroom and online, and where the online component becomes a natural extension of traditional classroom learning.

According to Iuliana (2012), the term "blended learning" is a buzz term that means different things to different people. According to her, the classic definition of blended learning is a course consisting of traditional face-to-face language lessons; combined with the opportunity to study beyond the classroom.

Based on the previous review, blended learning can be defined as an educational approach applied for enhancing learning environments where traditional face-to-face instruction is combined with online one. Blended learning requires the presence of both the teacher and the learner with the learner control over time and place. Learning outcomes are evaluated through assignments, activities and assessments.

Review of Related Studies in Blended- Learning

In a study conducted by Ghazizadeh (2017), the researcher aimed at determining the effect of blended learning on the reading proficiency of Iranian EFL learners. A quasi-experimental design was adopted to reach this goal. Sixty intermediate-level Iranian EFL learners were randomly assigned to two groups. The control group received conventional classroom instruction in General English, whereas the experimental group received classroom instruction in General English including blended instruction in the reading skill. The blended learning material was developed by the researcher. Both groups were tested for their reading skills before and after the treatment using the reading section of the Preliminary English Test (PET) and their

scores were compared through an independent t test. The results indicated that blended learning has a statistically significant positive effect on the reading proficiency of Iranian EFL learners. Blended learning can be adopted in the English language classes, in order to facilitate the learning process especially that of the reading skill.

In a study conducted by Abdulrahman M., Abdulrhman A. & Abdullah S. (2015), the researchers investigated EFL Secondary School Teachers' Views on Blended Learning. It also aimed at investigating the teachers' views on blended learning content and process, and the effectiveness of blended-learning in developing teachers' performance. The study sample included 35 EFL Saudi teachers in Tabuk City, KSA. The results indicated that the teachers' views toward blended learning were generally positive and very promising in both sections. Moreover, EFL teachers were highly optimistic about how blended learning would help them in improving their performance and how it would motivate their students to learn English. Finally, there were no significant differences between teachers' responses to the content and process of blended learning, with regards to qualification, experience, and the amount of training done.

In another study, Kazu and Demirkol (2014) investigated the effect of the blended learning environment on high school students' academic achievement. At the end of this study, they concluded that the students who had studied in the blended learning environment were academically more successful than those who studied in a traditional learning environment.

Ghahari and Ameri-Golestan (2014) conducted a study investigating the impact of blended and classroom teaching methods on Iranian EFL learners' writing performance. The students in the experimental group received traditional methods of teaching writing along with learning through the web. Students in the control group, however, were taught by only the traditional teaching methods of writing and received the instructions, materials, and feedback just through traditional methods.

The results of this study showed that using a blended teaching method can make a more desirable condition to improve the EFL learners' writing performance.

Aldalalah and Gasaymeh (2014) explored the effects of locus of control and anxiety level on Jordanian educational technology students' perceived blended learning competencies and obstacles. The findings indicated that students with internal locus of control performed significantly better than external locus of control students in blended learning competencies (Knowledge &Technological) and blended learning obstacles. Furthermore, the study showed that moderate anxiety students performed significantly better than low and high anxiety students in blended learning competencies (Knowledge &Technology) and blended learning obstacles. Finally, the study found that there was no significant difference between the low and high anxiety students in blended learning obstacles.

In a study conducted by Sejdi Sejdiu (2014), the researchers evaluated the effectiveness of blended learning versus face-to-face instruction. three research questions were raised: 1. Does the use of blended learning in English language teaching support the adoption and use of better teaching methods than those used in face-to-face instruction?, 2. Are the blended systems of assessment used during English language teaching better than those used in traditional face to-face English classrooms?, 3. Does the use of blended systems of instruction and assessment result to better student outcomes when compared to face-to-face instruction? The study was conducted using the case study approach which was supported by the collection of qualitative and quantitative data. The results showed that the blended learning techniques were accepted by students of the experimental group much more positively than the conventional face-to-face instructional methods were. The comparative advantage of blended learning in contrast to face-to-face instruction was also supported by differences in students' performances which showed that the experimental group performed better by scoring

higher means and recording lower variances.

In a study conducted by Ma and Jiang (2013), 543 non-English majors have experienced blended learning of English listening course and then finished a questionnaire designed by the researcher. They were asked about their view, wants and problems in blended learning process. It was found that 60% of the students thought blended teaching model was helpful in improving their listening ability since it was very flexible for them to arrange self-learning time.

Alseweed (2013) research results indicated that there were significant differences among the instructional approaches in the achievement test scores in favor of blended learning. In addition, the results show significant differences in students' attitudes in favor of blended learning.

Liu (2013) described and evaluated blended learning in an Academic English Writing course (AEW) in terms of course design, material development and presentation, assignment submission and grading, student involvement, teacher reflection, and student evaluation. Findings indicated that students favored and appreciated blended learning in many ways, such as increasing student-student and student-teacher interactions, reducing or even eliminating communication anxiety, motivating them to become more independent and autonomous learners, and enhancing their academic English writing ability.

Djiwandono (2013) investigated the effectiveness of blended learning in vocabulary lessons and the students' opinions about the blended learning experience. Results showed an apparent gain in students' command of 5000-level English words. However, they did not make a similarly encouraging achievement in new words from the texts.

Soltani, Tehrani and Tabatabaei (2012) designed a study in order to determine the effect of blended online and face-to-face instruction on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary achievement. The result of t test between pretest and posttest showed a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control group regarding their vocabulary knowledge. The experimental group outperformed the control group.

Jia, Chen, Ding and Ruan (2012) modified the open source course management system Moodle to build the individualized vocabulary analysis and assessment functions for English training. Through a blended learning environment, the students' performance in experimental group in the regular and specially vocabulary examinations improved gradually during the school term and was better than that of the control group. One of the implications of this study was that blended learning in English language classes with an individualized vocabulary acquisition and assessment system can make the students' performance improve in vocabulary acquisition and in regular examinations.

Jin, Zhang & Shen (2012) conducted an empirical study on blended learning application in online writing course. 22 PhD students were chosen as the participants. The study showed that face-to-face classroom teaching combined with online course may lessen students' writing anxiety and increase confidence. Moreover, blended learning proved an effective way of strengthening interaction between student and teacher as well as among students.

Bijeikienė, Rašinskienė, Zutkiene's (2011) research revealed that English language teachers display a generally positive attitude towards blended learning. The teachers to a large extent agreed about the efficiency of the blended learning courses in terms of the resources contained there, such as video lectures, theory presentations, interactive exercises for self-check and others. However, they expressed some doubts with regard to the usefulness of the activities in the virtual environment, such as virtual consultations and discussions, which can again be related to their need to improve their overall ICT-awareness and to the fact that the young generation of students embraces technological progress more naturally than most of the teachers.

Shih (2011) used web 2.0 technologies, a subdivision of blended learning, to assist college students in learning

English writing. The survey results showed that the students were able to improve their vocabulary organization, content, structure, grammar, and spelling. The researcher recommended using peer assessment for English writing courses and stated that it can be an effective and practical approach, leading students to constantly gain relevant knowledge and skills.

The effect of blended learning on reading comprehension was also investigated by Behjat, Yamini and Sadegh (2011). They assigned the participants in the control group to read printed texts outside the class whereas the experimental group participants were asked to visit a weblog after class to find their reading assignments. The researchers reported that reading materials on an e-tool like wikis encouraged reading as they had links and were editable, and learners could access them by just clicking on the underlined term or phrase to enter a new webpage, thus they had access to more reading resources. They concluded that reading encouraged learners' autonomy to read more materials independent of what was presented in the classroom.

Moreover, Gómez and Duart (2011) studied a hybrid postgraduate program in a university in Colombia and concluded that students had a very positive opinion of the subjects and the educational model in the program.

Wang (2011) explored the influence of blended learning on English writing proficiency of 170 non-English majors. The students undergoing 18 weeks of blended learning for their writing course performed better than their counterparts with traditional classroom teaching background, and their writing texts were improved significantly in lexical complexity, lexical density and average word length compared with those at the very beginning of blended learning application. Moreover, the experimental group gained more positive intrinsic motivation under the influence of blended learning.

Adas and Abu Shmais (2011) investigated students' perceptions towards Blended Learning environment using traditional methods in conjunction with OCC (Online Course Container), at An-Najah National University. The study used a questionnaire to measure the students' perceptions towards blended learning using (OCC) in terms of, the process, ease of use, and content. Interviews were also conducted to validate the study and elicit more feedback. The results showed a positive attitude from students towards blended learning in terms of the three domains.

Gimeno-Sanz (2010) conducted a study at the Technical University of Catalonia in Valencia, Spain and one of its targets was to establish the impact of blended learning on English teaching. The program allowed language instructors to design materials that are aligned to the students' needs by integrating audio, video, graphics, and text. The study indicated that indeed there is a correlation between effective English teaching and the use of blended learning. The combination of web tools, computer assisted language learning tools, and the face-to face teaching practices resulted to higher levels of learner autonomy in the course of learning. The students were satisfied to a great extent because they were able to locate resources on their own and use them to learn English.

According to Gimeno-Sanz (2010), assessment was also improved when blended learning is used. In this case study, the use of InGenio, which was the developed blended learning computer application, and other blended learning strategies supported better student assessment.

Zhao and Yuan (2010) made an investigation on the factors affecting students' satisfaction in blended environment. Students from 29 departments participated in the investigation by way of questionnaire and they delivered a high satisfaction rate for the blended learning environment. The analysis showed that e-learning adaptability, perceived usefulness, timely responses from the teachers and course applicability are key factors that affect their satisfaction.

Alebaikan (2010) proposed a study to identify Saudi female undergraduate students and lecturers perceptions of the advantages, challenges and future of blended

learning. Qualitative methods were used to obtain rich descriptive data to facilitate the exploration of the phenomena. The data was analyzed in the form of explanation and interpretation of the participants' perceptions of blended learning.

The study concluded that blended learning has the potential to offer a successful learning experience in Saudi Arabia. The researcher provided insight into how the challenges of implementing blended learning in Saudi Higher Education could be addressed. A theoretical blended learning framework was introduced to provide the factors that influence the implementation of blended learning. One of the major conclusions was that a blended learning environment offers Saudi females the flexibility to continue their higher education while maintaining their own cultural values and traditions.

Liu and Zha (2009) conducted a study that focused on the English learning motivation and strategies under blended learning environment. The analysis of questionnaire data from 800 college students showed positive effect of blended learning on students' English performance and learning motivation. But students' poor choice and employment of online learning strategies indicated that it is very important for teachers to guide students in employing proper learning strategies in their individual study process since strategy choice has great effect on their English performance.

Badawi (2009) investigated the effectiveness of the blended learning model in developing EFL prospective teachers' pedagogical knowledge and performance. To collect the data required, a blended TEFL course, a pedagogical knowledge test, and a pedagogical performance scale were designed and implemented. Results showed that the blended learning model surpassed the traditional model group in developing prospective teachers' pedagogical knowledge. However, there were no significant differences between the two groups in developing the prospective teachers' pedagogical performance.

Usta, and Özdemir (2007) studied students' opinions

about blended learning environment and their findings proved that students have generally positive opinions about blended learning environment. The results of the study also proved that high interaction between students and instructor exist in this type of environment

In a study conducted by Zygadlo (2007), the researcher aimed to establish the influence of blended learning on the acquisition of new vocabulary and in turn the development of language. The researcher selected 46 students from a school in Izabelin, Warsaw Poland. The researcher used pretests and posttests. Before these tests were administered, the students in the experimental group were taught using blended learning with strategies such as self-study, use of computer tools, and face-to-face instruction. The researcher wanted to establish whether using blended learning promoted higher levels of student autonomy in the course of teaching than traditional face-to-face instruction. The study indicated that students learned better when blended learning was used, than when it was not used following the dynamism of strategies used to learn. The study also showed that student autonomy was promoted and motivation was improved.

Al-Jarf (2006) investigated the effect of blended learning on college readers. Significant differences were found between the experimental and control groups in their reading skills as measured by the posttest, proposing that reading achievement in the experimental group improved due to using online instruction.

Leakey and Ranchoux 2006 investigated learners' attitudes towards blended learning. They found that the students in large measure found the blended CALL experience a positive and motivating one and tended towards preferring [this approach] to the traditional classroom based learning.

Akkoyunlu and Soylu (2006) examined students' view on blended learning environment and discovered that students enjoyed participating in a blended learning environment through which face-to-face classes supplemented with online classes. Moreover, they

emphasized on (delete on) the significance of communication and interaction for successful learning in online education.

In a study by Garcia-Ruiz (2005), the advantages of teaching information management systems with blended learning methods were investigated. They reported that the advantages of Web-based learning combined with traditional learning include all other kinds of technology-based training. Some of these benefits were that the training is usually highly interactive, self-paced, and the rate of the results is increasing.

Dziuban, Hartman & Moskal (2004) in a three-year study between the face- to-face, fully online, and blended teaching methods found that blended teaching always give better success rates than the other two methods.

Another study on English teaching using blended learning was carried out by Chatel (2002). The researcher conducted interviews and made observations that sought to enunciate whether blended learning which combined face-to-face instruction and technology based instruction facilitated instruction that was culturally, socially, and linguistically aligned to the needs of the students. The researcher involved eight classroom teachers and four English as additional language (EAL) teachers. The findings of the study showed that the process of instruction was improved considerably. Through the use of blended learning, teachers were able to ensure that the process of language instruction was aligned to the cultural, social, and linguistic needs of the students. Besides, the study established that the students were able to collaborate through the use of technology. In addition, the instructional process was characterized by flexibility and it supported the development of technology skills. Chatel (2002) found that the blended instruction was better than face-to-face instruction because the instructional processes were improved and so were student outcomes.

The previous literature review provides clear evidence that blended-learning is a mixture of learning methods that utilizes varied teaching modals in ELT contexts; on-line and traditional face-to-face learning. Blended-learning is a natural development to the growing accessibility of on-line resources and the continual need for a human component in the learning experience. In addition, the previous literature review indicates that blended-learning instruction ensures the learner engagement in the individual learning process according to his individual learning needs. Besides, this review showed positive learners' and teachers' attitudes towards the use of blended-learning instruction in ELT contexts appreciating opportunities to practice and extend their language abilities.

Different Blended Learning Models, Strategies and Tools in ELT Contexts

Once the educational decision has been taken to employ a blended learning approach then the next stage is to determine the blend itself which can only be determined relative to whatever goals and constraints are presented in a given situation (Shaw and Igneri, 2006).According to Tomlinson & Whittaker (2013), there are distinct blended learning models suggested by some researchers and educational think-tanks. These models include:

- Face-to-face driver – where the teacher drives the instruction and augments with digital tools.

- Rotation – students cycle through a schedule of independent online study and face-to-face classroom time.

- Flex – Most of the curriculum is delivered via a digital platform and teachers are available for face-to-face consultation and support.]

- Labs – The entire curriculum is delivered via a digital platform but in a consistent physical location. Students usually take traditional classes in this model as well.

- Self-blend – Students choose to augment their traditional learning with online course work.

- Online driver – Students complete an entire course through an online platform with possible teacher

check-ins. All curriculum and teaching is delivered via a digital platform and face-to-face meetings are scheduled or made available if necessary.

Tomlinson & Whittaker assured that even blended learning models can be blended together and many implementations use some, many, or even all of these as dimensions of larger blended learning strategy. These models, for the most part, are not mutually exclusive.

Banados (2006) provided a study into a working model of blended learning used to teach English in the Universidad de Concepción (UdeC), Chile, which considers the design at course level rather than lesson level. The course is comprised of four elements, which are: a. Learners' independent work on a dedicated platform with the UdeC English Online software. b. Face-to-face English as a foreign language (EFL) classes led by teachers who are also students' online tutors. c. Online monitoring carried out by these teachers. d. Weekly conversation classes with native speakers of English.

According to Pardede (2010), some of the blends are designed for teaching general English while some others are for teaching reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar, vocabulary-building, cross-cultural communication, pronunciation, English for specific purposes, TOEFL preparation, etc. Many of the materials are also accompanied with motivating and interesting activities. These activities could be done alone or interactively by students and teachers or by one student with other students in the classroom or from different places.

In her study, Allan(2007) identified a range of tools and technologies that can be used in constructing effective learning environments for blended learning, namely: (a) technologies in the classroom that are commonly used in face- to-face learning situations, such as PowerPoint, interactive whiteboards and audience response systems; (b) virtual communication tools that enable users to engage in discussions and activities over the internet, including audio files, discussion boards, e-lists, discussion groups, chat or conferencing, email,

news groups, polling, questionnaires, web forms and videoconferencing; (c) social-networking software, now extensively used by students and staff in their personal life, and becoming more prevalent in the context of learning and teaching, such as instant messaging and phone calls, podcasts, social-networking sites, video clips, virtual worlds, weblogs and wikis; (d) e-learning systems, that is, online environments that bring together a range of tools to support e-learning, such as VLEs, conferencing systems, group collaboration software and group sites; (e) mobile learning using mobile phones, laptops and tablet PCs.

Blended Learning is More Favorable than Pure Face-to-Face & Online Instruction

A survey for the related literature revealed that blended learning is more favorable than pure face-to- face or online learning, and it offers many advantages for learners like producing a sense of community or belonging. Those who use blended approaches base their pedagogy on the assumption that there are inherent benefits in face-to-face interaction (both among learners and between learner and instructor) as well as the understanding that there are some inherent advantages to using online methods in their teaching. Thus the aim of those using blended learning approaches is to find a harmonious balance between online access to knowledge and face-to-face human interaction (Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003).

In a blended learning course, students and teachers engage in using technology for active learning. Furthermore, they are allowed to share their experiences through such a brand environment .In addition, blended learning provides more productive engagement among students in the online environment and in course content as well (Bdawi 2009).

Osguthorpe & Graham (2003) considered designing a blended learning environment to reach a harmonious learning equilibrium between face-to-face interaction and online access essential. They indicated that blended

environment provides an encouraging situation for both the traditional classrooms and the online settings. In other words, it is a range of delivery methods to meet the course objectives.

Marsh (2012) revealed some blended learning powerful potentials teachers will not find in the face-to-face traditional instruction alone such as providing a more individualized learning experience; providing more personalized learning support; supporting and encouraging independent and collaborative learning; increasing student engagement in learning and accommodating a variety of learning styles.

According to Harashima (2012), pure online learning began to lose its credibility due to many reasons. Some of the most notable reasons are: (1) Students tend to get isolated; many of them give up the course early; (2) Facing the computer all the time does not motivate students for learning very much; (3) Communication tools are provided, but it's up to each student to actually use them; lack of communication naturally produces dropouts; (4) Teachers get too busy and too tired with online material development and individual caretaking online; (5) Students don't get chances to learn from real experiences such as lab experiments, guided exercises, and social interactions with classmates; and (6) Information infrastructure is not the same with every student; this could create unfairness.

The Benefits of Blended Learning

Since blended learning combines the best of face-to-face instruction and computer-mediated instruction, it provides many benefits. Osguthorpe & Graham (2003) identified some potential benefits blended learning can offer in ELT contexts such as presenting pedagogical richness; opening access to knowledge and facilitating social interaction.

In the practical level, by moving part of face-to-face learning to blended learning, travel expenses can be reduced, and by moving some of media-rich content to face-to-face learning, the cost for material development

and infrastructure tools can be reduced. Finally, blended learning provides ease of revision (Kazu & Demirkol 2014).

Another advantage of blended learning environments is its potential to offer many sources for learners. Azizan (2010) concluded that utilization of technology in physical classrooms offer extra resources for the students and this is expected to enhance learners' confidence and competence as well as improve the quality of learning. Chen and Jones (2007) outlined other advantages of blended learning in ELT contexts such as deep understanding of topics by using web-based resources as well as active participation of students in class. Furthermore, online learning engagement provides an interactive setting for communication among teachers and students in the classroom and may facilitate cooperative activities even beyond the classrooms (McCarthy & Murphy 2010).

Rovai and Jordan (2004) studied a causal-comparative design to investigate the relationship of sense of community between fully online, traditional classrooms, and blended higher education learning environments. They found that blended courses create a stronger sense of community among learners than either traditional or fully online courses. It is clear that online learning environment offers the effectiveness and the flexibility that cannot be guaranteed in a classroom environment while face-to-face classes provide the social communication that students need for learning. So, the integration of these two environments into blended format reserves the advantages of both learning platforms (Akkoyunlu & Soylu, 2006). Hence, it can be concluded that one of the principal benefits of blended learning is providing a sense of community amongst learners (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004).

Proponents of sole e-learning instruction like McCarth, & Murphy (2010) believe on some benefits of such educational environments like immediate communication, processing learning based on each individual pace, using web technology facilitators.

Delialioglu and Yildirim (2007) claimed that there are many problems for purely online instruction like limited hardware, software, time, money as well as pedagogical problems. This has lead to a new idea of mixing the benefits of face-to-face courses with the benefits of online courses, known as blended learning. They believed that instructors can support their courses by online exercises, instant online feedback, and creating more valuable learning environments through hypermedia and multimedia.

It can be concluded that face-to-face element should not be replaced because of the significant effect of body language, tone of voice, facial expressions and eye contact on communication. Face-to-face interaction communicates a lot of facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, and eye contact. Based on facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice are innate. These two educational settings namely on-line learning and face-to-face learning can complement one another for pedagogical application (Güzer & Caner 2014).

Limitations of Blended Learning Approach in ELT

In a study conducted by Abdul Wahed Q. Ismail, K. & Eyhab, A. (2013), students were requested to express perceptions of the limitations and problems they encounter as a result of taking blended courses. Nine statements were presented in the survey in this category, and the students were requested to express their opinions using the five-point Likert Scale as explained in the methodology section. Of these nine statements, Internet connectivity problems and technical problems rated the highest and were the most serious challenges. Such limitations are so crucial and must be considered seriously by institutions before and during introduction introducing technology to ELT contexts.

Conclusion

In consideration of the reviews presented in this study, it can be concluded that the use of blended learning supports better instruction and assessment than pure traditional face-to-face instruction in ELT contexts. It is needed for instructors to use blended learning to support English language teaching and learning and to work collaboratively to come up with blended learning programs that support improved instruction and assessment.

The researcher believes that blended- learning might lead students toward more interesting and highly motivated learning environments which in turn will reflect on the improvement of their language skills. This could be refered directly to the flexibility and accessibility that blended-learning offer. Teachers will have more time to interact with their students in class through communicative activities. Students will be more relaxed and motivated to express their opinions. Blended learning also offers a variety of ways on how to teach and learn for both teachers and students respective.

Blended Learning remains a relatively new concept at many academic institutions; however, recent research appears to indicate that when appropriately implemented, blended learning can significantly improve the learning experience (Marsh 2012). The present study has contributed to proving the strengths of blended language learning for EFL learners. Getting the blend right is important, whilst acknowledging that this is not an easy task and that further research on blended learning is required in ELT contexts.

Online activities are handled by instructors. Both students and instructors require appropriate orientation and training. The limitations and problems mentioned by students and instructors indicate a general feeling of dissatisfaction. These limitations and problems caused more than half of the students to believe that blended learning is less effective than face-to-face learning. Such perceptions must be taken quite seriously by educational institutions. Students' technical problems can be resolved by providing proper training to students, increasing the number of labs, recognizing excellent performance of instructors and students. By overcoming blended-learning limitations, the effectiveness of blended- learning will be enhanced and   more supportive learning opportunities

will be created for language learners.

Recommendations and Suggestions

Based on the current study, the researcher made the following recommendations and suggestions:

- Employing the positive influence of blended learning and its usage in the ELT field in pre-service and in service Teacher Training courses. The courses need to include methods and ideas supporting blended learning use as well as techniques and sufficient training in using the internet, social networks or different kinds of software to familiarize the teachers with the benefits of adopting a blended method to learning English.

- Stimulating educational institutions to invest in the necessary hardware and software such as servers and content management systems, and make these available to teachers and students while providing the needed technical support so that teachers can create quality blended-learning environments

- Conducting further research to investigate the required skills for teaching blended courses in ELT contexts for teachers. Moreover, exploring the perceptions of blended learning in graduate studies is highly recommended in ELT contexts.

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توظيف التعليم المُدمج في سياق تدريس اللغة الإنجليزيّة

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ملخص

إن تفعيل وسائل التعليم المدمج في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية ازدادت بشكل ملحوظ في العقد الماضي. وتهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى عرض الأدب المتعلق بالتعلم المدمج لتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية من خلال عرض أصل هذا المصطلح ومعناه، كما تعرض الدراسات المتعلقة بتطبيق هذه المنهجية في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية. وتقدم الدراسة عرضا لنماذج التعليم المدمج وأدواته، كما تقدم عرضا يستند على الأدب السابق لمقارنة التعلم المدمج مع التعلم المباشر والإلكتروني وعرض إيجابيات استخدام التعلم المدمج، وتقدم أيضا عرضا لمحددات تطبيق هذه المنهجية، وتختتم بتقديم توصية لإجراء المزيد من البحوث المتعلقة بالمهارات المطلوبة لدى المعلمين لتفعيل توظيف التعليم المدمج في سياق تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية.

الكلمات الدالة: التعلّم المُدمج، تعليم اللغة الإنجليزيّة، محدّدات، التعلّم المباشر، التعلم الإلكتروني.