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Research Article

The Effect Of Blended Teaching Method On Iraqi EFL Students' Performance In Learning English Language

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Abstract: The study intends to investigate the benefit of applying modern method and its effects on learners' learning of English language. Using technology in teaching and learning has developed and used recently which leads to renew methods of teaching by educational directorates and teachers as well. Blended teaching is the most technique which is commonly used nowadays . Since the quick technological progression has emerged, schools try to teach the English to help the students to understand it and equip them with skills to go long and use it in everyday life and communication on internet. Iraqi EFL learners have some problem in understanding and getting English lessons by traditional methods of teaching used by their teachers. To develop students' skills, teachers have to vary their techniques as well as the methods in teaching the language. This study tries to supply an overview of the effect of utilizing blended method on the students' achievement in learning the English through using blended learning strategy.

Keywords: Blended learning,Method, traditional learning, skill, Performance.

1. Introduction

Developing students' skills and motivation in secondary schools is somehow difficult, moreover in learning the English language. Teachers are preferable to use an excellent way/technique so that they feelhappy to study the English language at school. Most teachers teach the English language using printed books; then they will explain orally(1). While teaching students by face to face in the school will makes students forgetting fast. In addition to that, the teacher will be challenged to know the quality of each student.

Using modern technology is limited for presentations only in schools though this will create confusion to develop and improve the learning. Teachers should have an idea about technology as a means that teachers and students can be capable to reach easily for the sources and information, so everyone is being able to access the library, conduct virtual experiments, watch educational films and movies, holding a conference, contacting with experts, and record lessons. Such activities take a week for planning and lots of training and offer in the traditional setting of learning.(2)

Though Modern technology supplies students with multiple of pedagogical answers and helps to do effective learning, many still adapted towards its practicality in educational classrooms, since they can think that technology requires skills to be mastered. Also, nuisance might occur in class at any time which disturbs the procedure that teachers apply in their lessons. All these drawbacks are available, but more advantages can teachers and learners get.(3)

Blended learning permits the students for listening, feeling, visualizing, and interacting with learning subjects and material. It can shift them from theory into practice. They may get a deep understanding of many abstractions that they meet through. Learners will acquire knowledge according to their promptness, that gives chances for extra personalized education. A perfect receiver will increase their learning and learns things not available or delivered in the school syllabus. So, a weak achiever will revise and repeat some notes and can get feedback from the tutor to outdo the problems and challenges that face him/her.(4)

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Most of the educational establishments are working to promote their education programs through using up dated technologies and modern methods of learning (such as blended teaching in educational field, e-learning, and online learning) to keep promptness with developments of technology and to achieve satisfactory results, since, education is regarded as a real fertile for any country and its citizens. This kind of encourages is going to make good applying of technology in helping to prepare students, tutors, curriculum development, and the variety of teaching approach in order to evolve educational system.

Today, most of the teachers cannot finish the curriculum in time because of the limited time given to lessons by schools administrations, and some students become bored of using traditional teaching methods since they do not suit to whole students' ability and do not consider their knowledge background. So, it is important to find solutions to these problems.

Another reason is Corona Virus which forces the educational establishments to use blended teaching and learning strategy in teaching. To cover the whole topics and subjects in the curriculum of the course during this period of the terrible pandemic, teachers have to blend traditional and online teaching methods.

The study tries to detect the effect of utilizing blended teaching method on the achievement of Iraqi secondary school learners .

1.2.**Hypothesis**

The current study is going to hypothesize that there will no statistically significant difference between experimental students mean scores who are taught by blended teaching and learning strategy and control group students who are learned by classic face-to-face method by the teachers in classrooms.

1.3Aims

The aims of this study are:

1. Discovering the benefit of using a blended teaching/ learning strategy on enhancing Iraqi EFL students' achievement in learning the English language.
2. Testing students' opinions towards applying blended learning/teaching strategy.

1.4 The significance of Study

The importance of this research comes out from the truth that it is going to be the first study done by the researcher, in the field of English language teaching and it is the first time to be applied in Iraq compared with other countries. For these reasons, the research is going to be important since it attempts:

1. To regulate an effective teaching/learning atmosphere in applying of blended teaching/ learning strategy to improve students' achievement.
2. To offer students a help to utilize multi-media and updated technology to mend their achievement.
3. To scout the impact of applying blended teaching/learning strategy on learners' achievement in teaching the English language.
4-To show learners' and tutors' attitudes towards utilize blended learning in teaching the English language for Iraqi EFL.

The study tries to discover the advantages and disadvantages of utilizing blended teaching/learning in the classroom of secondary schools. It also aims to provide teachers with new techniques and styles in teaching English as a foreign language through face-to-face or through using new technology learning such as e-learning, online learning, and using social media. The study will answer the questions about if there any dissimilarities between classic learning and new blended teaching/learning strategy.

1.5 Procedures

1.In the current study, the experimental approach will be applied.
2.The sample of the study is going to be chosen randomly from the population.
3. The researcher intends to do pilot study to make sure the validity and reliability of the test.
4.Pre-test design is going to be applied to assess the learners success in using English language in everyday life.
5.Teach the learners who are included in experimental group using the blended teaching and learning strategy ,while controlled group by using traditional method.
6. Pre-test designed is used to assess the learners achievement through using the new strategy.
7.Using Telegram to teach the learners through applying the new strategy and Google Classroom.
8. Data collected will be analyzed appropriately by statistical test.
9. Findings, results, conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions.

2. Theoretical Background and Related Studies

2. 1Blended Learning and Teaching Strategy

Theoretical Concept of Blended teachingand learning definitions.

Blended learning has been defined as the integration of two or more approaches in teaching and learning needs to transfer the knowledge from the teacher to learners.(5)

Another researcher has explained blended learning from a different point of view. Hussein et ,al. define it as the mixture of methods used for designing a learning experience, it is a way of using technologies through integration of traditional face to face and online in learning.(6)

Graham (defines it as a combination of instruction between computer-mediated learning and the normal face-to-face learning modes.(7)

Here are some studies that have explained the blended learning:

1. **Alshwh's (2009)**

This study aims to examine the effect of using a blended teaching strategy in promoting vocabulary at University of Arabian Gulf (AGU) and students' attitudes towards the English language. It attempts to evaluate and assess that strategy on learners' achievement, and attitudes towards the English language. It is conducted at AGU for all premedical students in 2007/2008. The research uses an experimental method to achieve its aims and purposes. The sample that uses in the experiment is 50 students, 15 are male, and 25 are female. The researcher divides the sample into two groups; 28 students are in the experimental group while 22 students are in the control group. In this study, the researcher uses three measurement tests; two midterm exams and a final

exam. The researcher follows the traditional method to teach the controlled group and blended teaching and learning strategy to teach the experimental group.(8)

Finally, the study concludes that no statistical significant dissimilarities among students who are in experimental and those who are in control groups except for the midterm exam. It is also concluded that students who are in experimental group demonstrates a high degree of satisfaction towards online learning.

2. **Hareb's (2013)**.

The study explores the effectiveness of a blended learning program on the development and retention of Palestinian tenth graders' English writing skills. The researcher used an experimental method to achieve his study goals by using a pre-post design test. The researcher used 40 students as a sample from the total population of Al-Shohadaa' Rafah Basic School that are randomly chosen out of (1774) ones. Data was collected by developing such tools and instruments; content analysis, achievement test that contains forty items, and an exam to evaluate the remembering of the skills and blended learning strategy effectiveness on the learners' writing skill in (2012-2013).(9)

Researcher divided the sample into two groups; a control one which consists of 20 learners and an experimental one which contains 20 learners as well who were in the same age.

At last, through applying of a blended teaching and learning strategy program by the research, it was found that the strategy had a strong impact on the learners' writing skills. The researcher recommended the teachers to blend many methods in writing.

3.**Faker's (2015)**

The study investigates the effects of blended teaching and learning techniques on achievement of the English language sixth-grade learners and their behavior towards it. The researcher applied the quasi-experimental method to achieve the study aims. In this study, the achievement tests and questionnaires were implemented to get such aims and learners' attitudes as well. The sample of the study was 50 female learners from Alrai and Alsabelah school in Amman. The researcher had divided the study sample into two groups; an experimental one which contains 25 learners who were taught by the new strategy, and the control one which contains 25 learners who were taught by the traditional teaching method. The researcher selected the sample intentionally for a purpose, since of the relevance for the researcher regarding the tools used.(10)

The data collected by the researcher was analyzed through applying (SPSS) program and covariance analysis by applying (ANCOVA).

It is concluded from last studies that blended learning strategy plays an important role in developing learners' skills.

2.2 Blended Learning and Teaching Properties

Lots of studies had been confirmed the characteristics of blended learning and the basic information of such a techniques in learning-teaching processes. A study had done by Ranteesy and Aqeel explained that BL had many properties; it moves the teaching-learning processes from teacher-centered into learner-centered processes and rises information accessibilities.(11)

A research had been presented at the Second Scientific Conference at Al-Azhar University in Palestine gives a lot of properties; blended learning minimizes the cost of learning opposite to e-learning. It also emphasizes social relationships and human aspects as well among the students, teachers, and students with learners. (11)

Blended learning increased the effectiveness of the regular environment and enriches its scientific content with appropriate technologies.(12)

Troha, said that the most important characteristics of blended learning were its combination of excellent characteristics of e-learning like the ability to access information, and learning in classes through face-to-face and homeliness as well.(13)

2.3**Blended Learning and Teaching Models**

BL comes out in a different kind of models in implementations. This section is going to summarize the blended learning model range. It helps to comprehend lots of ways in which e-learning mixes and backups normal/ traditional learning processes.

1.Model of Face-to-face Driver; in this kind, blended learning was specified on a case-by-case basis; this means that some learners would engage and take part in the program of the study. The instruction of online in that model was introduced with goals to permit both higher-level learners who worked on their grade and low-level learners who worked at their own pace.

2. Rotational Model; this model was proved to develop and improve learners' effectiveness achievement in learning the English language since learners were taught according to a planned schedule that alternated between different stations convention of face-to-face and online courts.

3. Flex Model; materials were given online to learners in that model by schools that used e-learning strategy in teaching; that means learning might happen in a self-guided environment.

4.Online Lab Model; this kind of model was applied by the school that shortens some resources or faced problem, so the learning process mainly occurred online through using school lab to help school got their goals and learners to work on their pace as well.

5.The Model of Self-Blend; this kind was used to show chances for the learners to participate at school and home. It helped learners to complete their educational processes through giving online courses. The learners were motivated highly in that model.

6.Online Driver Model; this model was regarded as an ideal for the learners who were looking to be independent and flexible in their schedule. In this model, the topics were given to learners through the platform and by contacting teachers through the internet online.(14)

2.4**Advantages and Disadvantages of Blended Learning**

Blended learning strategy had lots of merits and demerits that were explained by many researchers in different majors. One advantage of the blended learning strategy applied in the classroom increased interaction time among learners themselves and between the tutor and the students. Teachers were no longer time to be spent on the lecture model. Teachers could notice their students when they worked through assignments.

Students who had a problem in understanding or struggle with the same topics or content could work together for supporting collaborative work. Since the teacher could spend much time assisting his/her students, they would prepare well for the class in blended learning. Students could access the lesson outside the classroom anywhere at any time by using technological devices, like laptops, smartphones, tabs, etc. that could develop the students' reading and writing skills. In addition to students' access to lessons, parents could access the lessons uploaded online to help their children to get a better understanding of the lectures. The most advantage of blended learning that absent students could have a chance to view the missed lecture in the classroom.(15)

There are also some drawbacks had mentioned by many researchers; one of them was that teachers spent much time compared to traditional lectures in making video lectures to be uploaded online.(16)

Special skills were needed to be developed and mastered by students to handle the lecture online, they could be able to regulate their participation and manage the time.(17)

Blended learning could increase screen time. Some researchers were concerned about flipped classroom model learning, teachers would increase screen time. Young students would spend many hours using a computer or smart phone every day.(18)

Bergman and Sams (2012) criticized that utilizing the blended learning model embraced the digital culture of the young, used to encourage them to learn rather than refused the technological tools of the day. Before shifting to a blended learning model, teachers had better study the demographics of the students to make sure that there were resources of technology in study place for students, since lots of demographics could have many problems and challenges for students' access to technology.(19)

Since blended learning depended on online lessons, students had to connect all and at the same time. It required a high-speed connection and advanced workstation as well. The teacher had to have technical skills, authentic resources, and personally made the lesson interactive.(20)

Liyana explained that some of the students had complained about the system which was not stable. They could not access the website easily.(21)

3.Methodology

3.1Research Design

The researcher is intending to use an experimental research design for this study. This type of design is one type of conclusive research which can be classified into five types. Singh declares that a descriptive research is used by the researcher to numerates a descriptive data about a sample of a population being studied. This kind of research gives an accurate and factual descriptive of an event , and provides a number of times something happens. It helps to provide authentic descriptive statistics about a phenomenon. This study focuses on describing and investigating the impact of blended learning and teaching strategy on EFL Iraqi learners in fifth secondary schools.(22)

3.2.Research Sample

Research quality could fall or stand not only by using suitable methodology and instruments, but also by appropriateness of choosing sample strategy adopted by the researcher.(22)

The sample of a research is preferable to be representative and accessible to gain authentic information and get results to be generalized.(23)The population of the current study is the secondary schools in Hilla city center for the fifth stage.

This study sample is going to be students of Al-Jazaar secondary schools for boys in 5th stage . The researcher would like to choose some students as a sample out of each section within population of the study in Hilla city center and put them in experimental group, while the rest of the students are going to be sent to control group .33 students are going to be in experimental group and 31 students are going to be in control group. The age of the students is between 17-19 years old.

3.3.Validity of the Test

Singh states that validity intends to evaluate and estimate whether a measure of an object or a concept exactly measures things or concepts that was designed to measure.(23)

Cohen and et al declares that validity is the key for an effective research which could be improved by careful choosing of sampling, suitable instrument and suitable statistical treatments of the data in quantitative/qualitative research. Hence, validity could be shown as a matter of degree rather than a state. (25) The validity of test is the first concept that needs to be checked when administering any test.

After developing pre and post-tests, the tests are shown to experts in TEFL and Linguistics to make sure that they are valid and suitable to be applied in this study. they give their opinions and suggestions to the researcher to arrange the test.

4.The Results and Discussions

The test is applied to appoint students score in pre and post-tests for figuring out if there is any difference between pretest and post test scores. To achieve the research aims a null hypothesis is formulated.

The outcomes showed that null hypothesis is rejected, since there is a statistically difference at the level of (0.05) as it showed in table below.

Table (1) the learners' scores of pre-test and post-test for control group.

Group	No	Mean	SD	DF	t-value		Level of Significance
					Computed	Tabulated	
st	33	18.20	5.513		1.512	2.02	
Post-test	31	20.55	6.043	32			0.05

Table (2) the students' scores of pre-test and post-test for experimental group.

Group	**No**	**Mean**	**SD**	**DF**	**t-value**		**Level of Significance**
					Computed	**Tabulated**	
st	33	19.22	5.218		5.170	2.06	
Post-test	31	24.51	4.640	31			0.05

In the above table, the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre-test is (19.22) while the post-test is (24.51). The outcomes show that the t-value for computed is (5.170) while the Tabulated t-value is (2.06). This result notifies that both pre-test and post-tests are significantly different at (0.05) level of significant about 31 degrees of freedom. It declares that the post-test of the experimental group is better that the pre-test.

Table (3) the students' scores of the post-test for both groups.

Group	**No**	**Mean**	**SD**	**DF**	**t-value**		**Level of Significance**
					Computed	**Tabulated**	
imental group	33	24.4	4.532		3.338	2.01	
Control group	31	20.36	6.060	63			0.05

By comparing between the experimental group and control group from the mean scores side, it is find that blended teaching strategy which is applied and used in teaching English is more effective and useful than traditional strategy.

4.Conclusion

In this study, the researcher has concluded that blended strategy in teaching English language is more effective than the classic teaching methods used by teachers in the classroom. The researcher compares the students progressing through using the new strategy to old methods by using different questions to know their achievement. The students have mastered and developed the English language skills which can be approved by the pre and post-tests.

5.Recommendations

The below recommendations are raised up depending on the results of the study.

1.Teachers in secondary schools are preferable to apply the new and various techniques to help their students to get the information and understand the target aims in specific topics.

2.Teachers of English are required to apply this strategy at classroom, since it suits to most of the students and circumstances .

3.It is advised that the teachers should be in touch with the developed courses which help students to develop their English skills .

4.Blended teaching strategy requires high qualified teachers who know to use communication programs and computers. It is preferable to train the teachers how to use these updated programs which may play a positive part in developing teaching methods.

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