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Title

The Importance of Using Blended Learning to Improve EFL Learners' Acquisition in the Era of COVID 19

The Case of First Year Students of English at Biskra University

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages in Partial

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Dedication

This dissertation is lovingly dedicated

To the soul of my late beloved mother who wanted to see me graduated

I really miss you, I wish that you are happy for me

May Allah grant you 'Al Jannah'

To my father for earning an honest living for us, whom always be my side and who always supporting me. My deepest Love and thanks for his sacrifices

To my beloved Fiancé Borhane, who has supported me and believed in me. I'm grateful for being with him.

To my handsome Brothers: Mohamed, Youcef and Amar who have always been at my disposal whenever I needed them

To my cousins: Abir, Aida and Ines

To my dearest aunt wh always advised me

To my friends: Amina, Boutheyna, Rayane and Chaima for their love, help and encouragement

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Abstract

From the beginning of 2020 the educational sector including the higher education have been closed due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, this pandemic forced the higher education to shift to distance/online learning. Moreover, EFL teachers and EFL students were forced to apply Blended Learning as a method of teaching/learning because learners' acquisition process has been interrupted and they seem to have difficulties in their process. This current study aims at exploring the importance of using Blended Learning to improve EFL learners' acquisition especially in the era of COVID-19, and to investigate the attitude of both learners and teachers of the English Division at the university of Mohamed khider (Biskra) towards this educational method. Therefore, this study hypothesized that Blended Learning would improve the acquisition process and both learners and teachers would have a positive attitude toward BL. In this respect a qualitative approach is used to conduct this research, as well as a questionnaire for 20 first year EFL students at the English Division and an interview to three EFL teachers in the same division, were designed to check the validity of the hypotheses. Additionally, the findings proved that both learners and teachers totally agree on the importance of Blended Learning to improve EFL learners' acquisition.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

EFL: English as Foreign Language

ICT: Information and Communication Technology

BL: Blended Learning

LMS: Language Management System

F2F: Face to Face

FLA: First Language Acquisition

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

LAD: Language Acquisition Device

UG: Universal Grammar

WGU: the University of Western Governors

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

L2: Second Language

L1: First Language

SL: Second Language

TL: Target Language

NL: Native Language

CLT: The Communicative Language Teaching Method

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General

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic represents an unprecedented challenge for all societies and has impacted all facets of life, including educational institutions. It is evident that during this pandemic, educational institutions were shut down all over the world, which impacted over 60% of students and caused a massive disruption for both teaching and learning process (Alqahtani and Rajkhan 2020). Faced with the need to learn English because of its importance, EFL learners found themselves incapable to fulfill their acquisition process because of the corona virus widespread.

With the advancement of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), it becomes possible and easy to create a flexible learning environment. Such a flexible environment would make a successful acquisition process for EFL learners. Blended learning (BL) is considered to be one of the recent used teaching methods in Algeria during the COVID 19 pandemic. According to Graham (2006, p. 5) "blended learning systems combine face to face instruction with the computer-mediated instruction". But, Garrison and Kanuka (2004, p.96) see blended learning as the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences. Therefore this approach is used by practitioners to facilitate the process of acquisition for EFL learners

1. Statement of the Problem

Before the emergence of CODIV-19 pandemic, EFL teachers at the University of Biskra were relying on the traditional approach in their teaching process, but during the pandemic, the traditional classroom practices have become less effective for them, thus, first year EFL learners' acquisition process has been interrupted. And it is observed that these learners faced difficulties during their learning process. It is believed that the implementation of Blended Learning in EFL classroom at the University of Mohamed Khider at Biskra would be an alternative method to improve EFL learners' acquisition in the era of COVID 19.

2. Research Questions

The present research study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How would be important to rely on blended learning in order to provide solutions to improve EFL learners' acquisition?

RQ2: What is EFL learners' attitude towards using BL to improve their acquisition process?

RQ3: What would be teachers' attitude towards the use of Blended Learning method?

3. Research hypotheses

Based on the above research questions, we suggest the following research hypotheses

RH1: We hypothesize that relying on blended learning would provide first year EFL learners with a flexible learning environment to improve their acquisition.

RH2: We hypothesize that first year EFL learners' would develop a positive attitude towards the use of BL in their acquisition process.

RH3: We hypothesize that EFL teacher's attitude towards the use of Blended Learning method would also be positive.

4. Aims of the research

The present study sought to investigate the effectiveness of using blended learning as a method to improve language acquisition, especially during COVID 19 pandemic. Furthermore, this

work aims to provide a clear picture of the issue in order to understand it better. It also highlights how EFL learners and their teachers would react to the use of the BL in the learning/teaching process.

5. Research Methodology

This research will be a purely qualitative one, since it tries to describe an educational phenomenon which is Blended Learning and its importance in improving learners' acquisition. Furthermore the qualitative approach is more appropriate for the nature of the research study that belongs to the social and human sciences. The present study is totally concerned with first year EFL students at Biskra University (Mohamed Kheider) because of their large number which represents a real challenge during the spread of such a pandemic. Therefore, in order to put into consideration the health of the researcher and students, this sample is limited to 20 students only who were selected randomly.   In this research the researcher will use tow data collection tools: a questionnaire and interview. First a questionnaire directed to First year students at Mohamed Kheider university of Biskra to survey and exploring their attitude toward the importance of using BL on their acquisition process during the COVID 19 pandemic. Second an interview prepared and administered to teachers to see their perception and opinion about the role of BL in their teaching process during the COVID19.

6. Significance of the Study

The present study would significantly contribute to bring a considerable interest to EFL learners and their teachers in the English division. The conduction of this study seeks to provide an opportunity to a better understanding of blended learning and help EFL learners to become aware of its importance in their acquisition process during the COVID-19. Moreover, this study serves to

sheds light for teachers on some new and updated teaching methods in order to facilitate for them the process of teaching by using some of nowadays' technologies.

7. A Provisional Structure of the Dissertation

The present research consists of two basic parts including the theoretical and practical part. The subsume for the theoretical part includes two main chapters. The first chapter attempts to review the background of blended learning and its various definitions, models, components and so on. The second chapter discusses EFL learners' acquisition process by examining the main features that are related to the study including definitions, forms, obstacles that face learners during their acquisition process. Finally, the third chapter is devoted to the practical part of the study where a focus will be given to the description and the analysis of the tools and its aims.

Chapter One

Blended Learning

Introduction

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Introduction

This chapter is an attempt to highlight elements that are related to an educational method regarding Blended Learning (BL); in brief, acknowledge the historical background, different definitions of BL, and its components. In addition; defining its model, course design, also identifying its main characteristics. Besides that, it discusses some challenges that may occur while using this method. Therefore, the present chapter ends with the significance and importance of BL and its advantages and disadvantages.

1.1. The History of Blended Learning

Blended learning is one of the alternative methods used to replace the traditional instruction during the pandemic of COVID19. Moreover, before going in-depth about BL, it is necessary to know how it all got and to have a clear idea about its development.

According to Guzer and Caner (2014), the first educational course where Blended learning was used was in 1840 by Sir Isaac Pitman, who used to send shorthand texts to his learners via mailed postcards in form of assignments and they were required to send them back to be assessed. However, both authors confirmed that from the 1960s' to the 1970s' was the first time that training came with a mainframe and mini-computer in which workers log into their character-based terminals to approach the information instead of the traditional instruction (face to face). They added that one of the most used systems at that time was *PlatoSystem* which was developed in 1963 by control data in the University of Illinois. Moreover, this system still exists nowadays.

From the 1970s' to 1980s' Bersin (2004) asserted that the next step in the evolution of the approach occurred when companies began using video networks for training the workers by using what is called Satellite-based live video. Moreover, he indicates that learners could sit in

the classroom to communicate with their peers and watch the instructor on TV, also pose some questions to their instructor. This made the experience more interactive and engaging.

Maddy (2016) states that the CD-ROM era started from the 1980s' to the 1990s' in which schools and organizations began using it to deliver larger quantities of information (graphics, sound, video…etc). Besides, Bersin (2004) asserted that the learning experience at that time was rich and comprehensive, but he acknowledges that people at that time faced a problem with what is called CD-ROMs which was; how to cover all the copies? Thus, this problem leads to the need for a "Learning Management System" (LMS). This system helped to monitor all the CD-ROM courses. Nowadays it is obvious that the use of CD-ROMs have a significant impact on learners' learning process in which they can have a large quantity of information inside it, both learners and teachers cannot neglect the benefits of CD-ROMs.

In the past two decades, from 1998 some changes have occurred, Bersin (2004) indicates that Web-based instruction was everywhere in other words, computers have been developed, and these new technologies solve many issues that have been occurred during the CD-ROM era. Graphics, sounds, and videos became more immersive and people could access the internet without much effort, though learners could access courses and assignments with just a click of a mouse button.

From the 2000s until today technology is rapidly changing, Bersin(2004) acknowledge that blended   learning appears and have been used, though organization and institutions began to see its benefits. According to Maddy (2016) the integration between face-to-face (F2F) instruction and technology-based learning could enrich the educational experience and make it beneficial.

1.2. Blended Learning Definitions

Blended learning is known as the integration of two types of learning/teaching methods which combine the use of technology with face to face-to-face traditional classroom. In fact, several scholars and researchers have defined BL in different perspectives. For instance, Bersin (2004) gave a definition to Blended learning as "the combination of different training media to create an optimum training program for a specific audience" (p.59). He asserted that mi1xing online learning experiences with traditional methods of learning would enrich learning/teaching process for a particular group of people.

Another definition suggested by Procter (2003) in which he states that" Blended learning is the effective combination of different modes of delivery models of teaching and styles of learning". In other words, BL is a pedagogical method that integrates E-learning to traditional classroom for the purpose to solve learning/teaching difficulties.
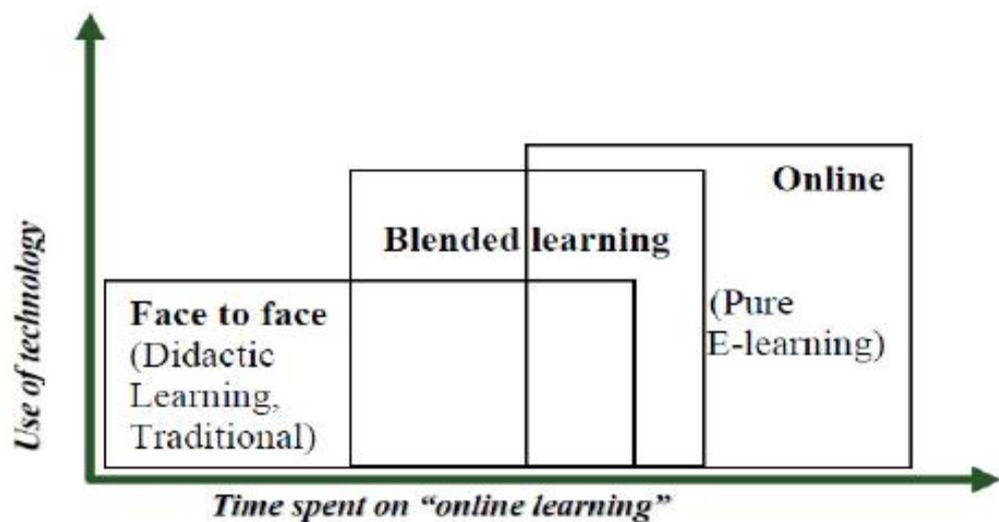
Figure1.1. Conception of Blended Learning (Heinze and Procter, 2004,p.1)

As Heinze and Procter, (2004, p.1) demonstrate, BL combines online and face-to-face approaches. There is interference between face-to-face courses which use some online tasks; likewise, the online learning mixes some kind of face to face activities.

Besides, the above figure shows that in Blended Learning process there are two important factors that should be taken into consideration, the time spent on online activities and the use of technology.

Another attempt by Boelens.R et al., (2015), where they tried to define the term Blended learning as the deliberation of traditional classroom activities and, online activities to have an effective learning environment. Blended Learning represents an opportunity to opt for the optimum learning/teaching process. Based on the above definitions from different perspectives, it is evident that BL consists of two elements; face-to-face learning and the online learning.

1.3. The Components of Blended Learning

According to different perspectives of scholars like Bersin and Graham, it is obvious that Blended Learning consists of two major components; F2F Learning and the Online Learning which are summarized as follows:

1.3.1. Face-to-face learning

The traditional classroom is the one where the learning/teaching process occurs in a synchronous environment, which means that learners should be in the same context at the same time with their instructor in the sake of learning. Besides, in face to face learning, the interaction happens between learners and the instructor and learners among themselves (Black G. 2002). Barindra (2018) acknowledges that various advantages of traditional learning such as; learners could share their opinions towards a subject or directly with their teachers and peers, though they could ask some questions and get the answers immediately.

*1.3.*2. The Online Learning

Online learning is the situation in which learners could learn outside the classroom at anytime from any location, students could create virtual classroom with their teachers and peers to gain feedback. Learners who cannot attend schools can gain advantages from this mode by following their schools' provision (Lalima 2017) .

Smith and Brame (2014) asserted that online learning is one of the most useful ways of technology that educational institutions opt for. Online learning is an educational approach in which students learn through an internet-based learning environment. It demands for students to use electronic tools such as; computers, cell phones, and tablettes, with online learning students from different geographical places and anytime could engage and study with their academic institutions in which those institutions use *LearningManagementSystems* (LMS) to facilitate the process. The LMS takes two forms: Synchronous and Asynchronous; Synchronous online learning is in which students and their instructors are connected and learn in the same period of time from different locations, it is like learning in class but in form of virtual classes relying on video conferencing, live chat…etc , in contrast, Asynchronous online learning is in which students learn on their own time and they are not obliged to connect and learn with their instructors in the same time whereby they could access to platform, blogs, emails and other sources to get feedback from their teachers (Glossary of Higher Education Terms A-Z, n.d.)

1.4. Models of Blended Learning

Innosight institute examined a report "Classifying K-12 BL" which was written by The Senior Research Heather Clayton Staker and The Co-Founder and Executive Director of Education of Innosight Institute Michael B. Horn whereby they have defined BL as well as

divided it into three models, and they have classified it into four models as follows: rotation, flex, self-blended and enriched-virtual model. (see the diagram in the above figure)
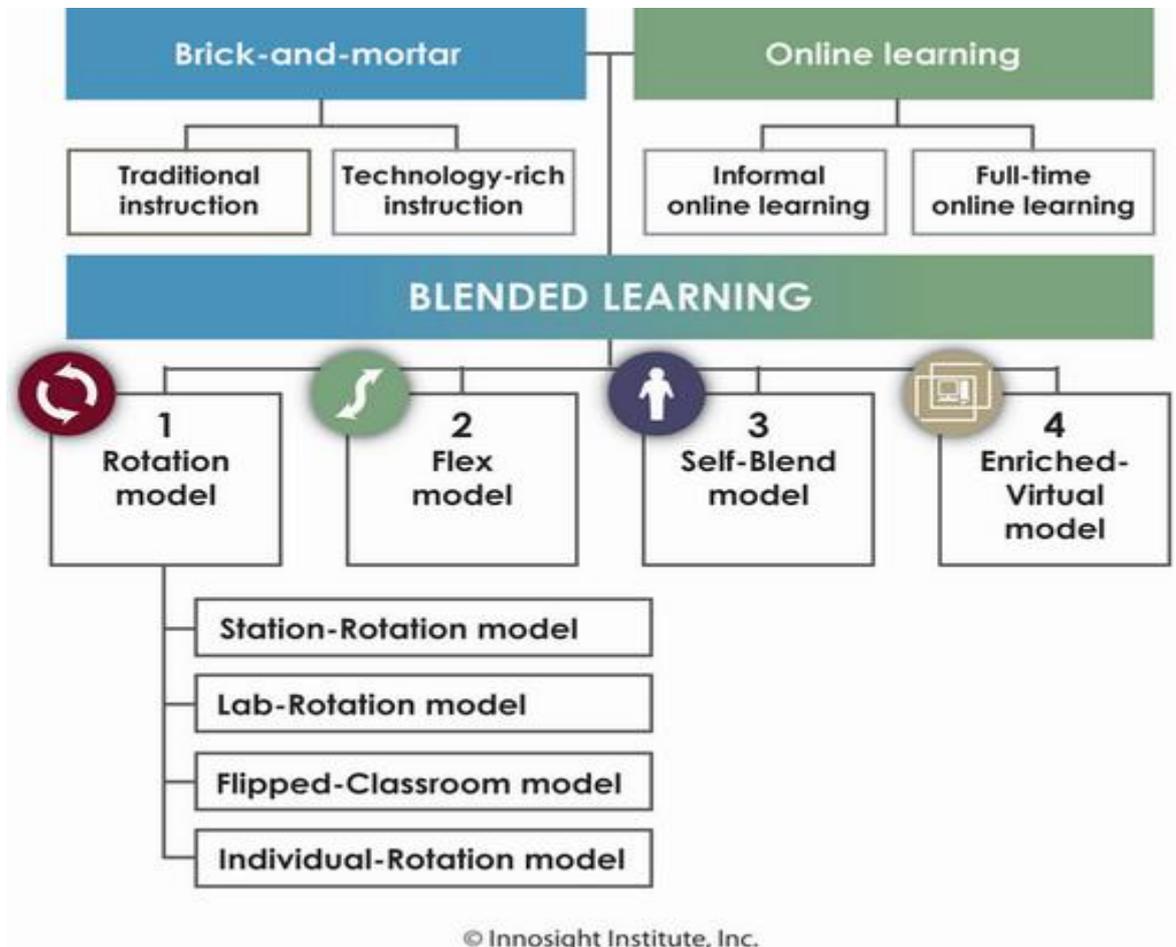
Figure1.2.Models of Blended Learning (Classifying K-12 Blended Learning by H. Staker and M.B. Horn, 2012, Innosight institute, p.8)

The four models are described further below:

1.4.1 Rotation Model: is about rotation between learning modalities, students rotate at least one of which is e-learning and classroom setting such as groups, full class instruction, group projects, and individual training …etc.

1.4.2 Flex Model:a program in which students work independently, they are provided with online content and instructions that they should follow, conditionally, the supervision of the teacher must occur face to face.

1.4.3 The Self Blended Model: in this model students work independently, choose one or more courses online, however they should take that course within their school campus and receive assistance from their teacher.

1.4.4 Enriched-Virtual Model:with this model a whole-school experience-occurs, in which within each course students can divide their time between attending school and learning online, in other words, this experience begins with face-to-face learning (in school) and then completes the lesson on the work online to enrich the virtual experience.

1.5. Blended Learning Course Design

Graham and Stein (2020) acknowledged that " there is no single best model for Blended Learning courses, a number of variables specify to technology-enhanced teaching will influence Blended course design decision throughout the process"(p.28). In other words, different strategies and steps have been settled by different scholars and researchers to have an effective BL course design.

According to Hurix Digital 30 March, (2020) in a blog post, 7 steps have been defined to design a BL courses as follows:

1.5.1 Define the Outcomes of The Course:

The first step, like every learning strategy is to determine the aims and goals that any teacher wants to accomplish with Blended Learning method. Teachers and students should work together to achieve the outcomes.

1.5.2 Create Outline for The BL Course:

Having an outline will be advantageous for both learners and teachers. First the outline will help learners to remain on track with their teachers, second the teacher/course creator can use it to know and ensure that BL course progresses at the optimal rate.

In the outline, the teacher/instructor should determine the course objectives, assignments, papers and tests that are related to each lesson for learners to do, as well as the deadlines that learners should respect. Besides, the teacher should clarify his/her expectations about learners' attendance and engagement. Finally, the teacher must decide which instructional tools, materials and resources to be used to provide the desired content.

1.5.3 Determine The Level of Interactivity:

A significant benefit of Blended Learning is to increase learners' autonomy; learning does not only involve using online and offline tools depending on feedback provided by the teacher. Instead, to students can advance themselves by self-paces instruction.

The teacher/course creator should determine the level of interactivity of the course, in other words, the balance of the two components of Blended learning (face-to-face learning and online learning). Here, the teacher may have some questions in mind that should be answered to arrive to the interactivity; how much face-to-face learning will be imparted? And how much time it will take place through e-learning? How much of it would be self-directed learning through interactive activities?

Choosing BL method will help teacher to access to diverse a set of online learning tools and implementation methods. In fact, there are several options for teachers; they need to spend some time selecting one method that is best tailored to the Blended Learning course.

Evaluate the modules and then determine which exercises should be used to better express the ideas would be the best way (Hurix Digital 30 March,2020).

1.5.4 Integrate Group Collaboration Activities

In team learning, learners create with their peers an environment of communication and discussion in which they share knowledge and benefits from each others. Teachers may facilitate group activity by using a variety of online resources and applications, for example: the target group log into a chat room to discuss and communicate specific issues, they can also use social media platforms to express their opinions and share ideas with others.

Before creating a successful Blended learning course, the teacher should design an effective social learning strategy to take learning outside the classroom and open discussions and debates to a wider audience. The interaction between members of the group can also help learners to solve their problems, analyzing and rational thinking skills.

1.5.5 Facilitate Communication:

In this step, the teacher should be sure that learners understand how to communicate online with him/her if they have a question or an ambiguity about something. For example, when the learners have a question and they send it via email to their teacher, thus the learners can wait for an email response from the teacher within 24 to 48 hours.

Moreover, the teacher does not have to be present in the virtual classroom around the clock, and the learners are aware that they have a strong support system to which they can turn to if they encounter any difficulties. Finally, the teacher should take into consideration how to gather feedback from learners, may be through periodic live chats or a survey at the end of each Blended learning course. It is very crucial for teaches to obtain feedback

from their learners on that Blended learning course to ensure that the course is on the right track and running at the right pace.

1.5.6. Compile a List of Resources to Support Learning

At this stage, when creating the course the teacher should make a choice of a wide range of resources to support his/her course to show for the learners the authenticity of his/her feedback. When providing learners with resources, this would help them to access to the provided information to understand more the lesson and get more information from different perspectives.

1.5.7 Create an Assessment Plan

Assessment is a crucial stage in creating a Blended Learning course because:

- It helps teachers to check the progress of the learners, the effectiveness and development of the target course.

- It gives learners the opportunity to recognize their weaknesses for improvement.

The assessment plan could include a quiz at the end of each module, besides that, the teacher may ask his/her learners to summarize their findings from a self-learning activity to assess both learners and the course itself. Another strategy to assess learners is that, they may be invited to engage in group discussion on chat forums. For example the teacher create a chat room (online) and add their students than ask them may be direct question than the teacher get feedback and asses them easily.

1.6. Characteristics of Blended Learning

Blended learning refers to an educational program that mixed of two different delivery methods; Face-to-Face learning and E-learning. Therefore BL links the two methods and represents a mixed type of education approach which is used in wide range of institutions and organizations especially in the era of COVID19.

Before using Blended learning in EFL context, teachers should know first about its characteristics to create an effective environment of BL. Gupta and Upadhyay (2020) state 6 prime characteristics of Blended Learning which provide an effective outcome of that educational phenomenon which are summarized as follows:

- **Having availability of learning modes:** there are different Blended Learning models (as mentioned before) including Rotation, flex, the self blended and enriched virtual model, these models share the same function in which each program integrates different forms of Online learning with traditional learning. Hence, students can either choose the traditional instruction in the classroom whereby they can get in touch with their instructors and colleagues, or opt for e-learning. The selection of the model depends on the nature of the content and goals focused. Sometime the course designer chooses the satisfactory model after discussion with students, also according to the objectives of each lesson.

- **Teachers become facilitator:** a critical component of Blended Learning is that teachers become to be more prepared enough for both models (the traditional model and e-learning model) especially by using ICT tools; therefore they become unique to use a diverse range of strategies.

- **Students gain complete experience using new technology:** the 21st century mirrors, the ICT century, thus with the enhancement of Blended Learning experiences students gain the ability to take advantage of the available technologies.

- **Students get training in different life skills:** through the use of Blended Learning that aid learners in discovering and developing their life skills, the learner through his/her teachers, friends, utilizing online experiences make him/her understand how to build such skills as well as self-administration, choice making, basic reasoning and so on.

- **Students get extensive exposure and perspectives of the course content:** with a diverse range of experiences, students from the course content get and enrich their knowledge; their information became improved and updated.

- **Blended learning offers the multicultural and multi dimension approach to the teaching-learning process:** blended learning gives chance to learners to communicate and share knowledge, impart their perspectives and emotions with other learners everywhere around the world. Thus, this interaction and relations make the learning/teaching process diverse and multicultural, besides the variety of experiences brings with it the interdisciplinary and multidimensional aspect.

Another attempt by Huang and Wang (2006), in which they identify in general three characteristics of Blended Learning; The first one is flexibility of providing learning resources which means that BL represents an instructional strategy that is developed in a network context. The second one is support of learning diversity, in other words, teachers through the use of different ways and styles of teaching, they make learning styles, learning proficiency and learning ability diverse. The last one is the enrichment of e-learning

experience on campus, in which teaching experiences and practices will be enhanced and improved.

1.7. Challenges of Using Blended Learning in EFL Context

Even though researchers and scholars argue that Blended Learning is beneficial for teaching/learning process, some challenges may face both learners and teachers while involving in this approach. Lim and Wang (2016) have presented different issues and challenges that may happen during Blended Learning practices. They classified them into four sections as follow; learning platforms, learning model, administration and institution collaboration.

1.7.1 learning platforms

 The platform of each university which represents the curriculum resources differ from one university to another, hence if one learning platform is used for a specific university, another university cannot afford it for its students. Besides teachers will be unable to involve in the platform if a new one is launched, thus their effort will be wasted. In addition, the learning platform must be designed to provide learning analytics to minimize the workload of teacher staff to determine students' learning conditions and their needs.

1.7.2 learning Model

Blended learning integrates two models of learning; face-to-face learning and online learning in which the effective integration must be carefully designed to have relevant course features, targeted learning goals and the need of students. Here the teaching staff may not be aware of the suitable blended learning model besides learners remain in doubt if they really learn via on-line learning or attending classes. Best practices are not available for teaching staff from different context areas to learn how to design successful BL

activities inside and outside the classroom, thus the teaching staff practices the approach according to their understanding and experiences.

1.7.3 Administration

Course development, practices and evaluation are the reasonability of teaching staff, though when facing a new instruction model, teaching staff demand aid from administration to know and learn how to better manage the quality of online learning. Another support from the administration is in helping teaching staff to use their teaching hours in a successful manner.

1.7.4 Institution collaboration

Both students and the teaching staff in management agencies and information institutions lack collaboration in their Blended Learning activities. The three different e-learning platforms running to host blended learning activities is indicative of the lack of collaboration between the related stakeholders.

1.8. Significance and Importance of Blended Learning (Why Blend?)

Dusane (2019) acknowledged reasons as to why educational institutions opt for Blended Learning, classified as follow:

- Comparing to purely F2F or solely online lessons blended learning is more effective

- It enhances students' achievement, hence, this is more effective than the traditional learning

- In addition, this learning approach will minimize teaching costs, BL is less expensive than F2F learning

- E-text books may also help to drive down textbooks budgets

- BL enables students to work at their own pace, to make sure that they fully understand new concepts before they face pressure of moving on.

Another attempt suggested by Gitonga (2020) in which she states 6 reasons why educational institutions should pressure BL during the COVID19 period. These reasons are classified as follows:

1. **Individualized Learning:** students' way of learning and maintain content is unique, some of them quickly understand concepts and others are slow. The implementation of e-learning to the classroom enables students to study at their own pace. They have time to go over complex topics or areas which are not well-understood outside the classroom; learners can also get individualized guidance from an online instructor especially for those who suffer from learning anxiety like being shy in classroom.

2. **Immediate Feedback:** teaching in classroom can sometimes prevent immediate feedback, the teacher is expected to teach, give assignments and mark the work done by the students, and this eventually takes time especially with large classroom sizes. Blended learning allows students to do quizzes and tests online and get immediate feedback via auto marking feature online, this also saves teachers a lot of time to support weak students by interacting individually.

3. **Varied Modes of Learning:** students learn in various ways; some do well with learning in classroom and others need more stimulation to understand. Online learning platforms provide students with pictures, videos, podcast and games that are attractive to all senses

4. **Collaboration:** while classroom teaching limits the students and the teacher within its walls, technology opens the door for students to collaborate with colleagues, other schools and even on a global scale. They can exchange thoughts on projects and develop a broader view of global issues; students can also participate in writing competitions which is a great opportunity for them to read more. Besides teachers can also collaborate with other instructors in other schools to enhance professional skills.

5. **Parental Involvement:** the use of technology by younger students demands parents to be their supervisors. In any way mother/father is a major component in the learning process. Technology offers parents' advice and assistance on their home in front of their children to engage in the learning process. Parents also, can collaborate in real time with teachers about their children's' progress.

6. **Attainment of Future Work Skills:** in order to be successful in online learning, this requires a student to inculcate certain life skills. Students must follow their own discipline, time management and online etiquette, they should be technologically knowledgeable to do well in the online environment, and the exposure to technology promotes the transmission of emails and presentations. All these qualifications are important to the 21st century learners and will prepare them for the future, regardless their careers.

1.9. Advantages and Disadvantages of Blended Learning

Blended Learning is an educational approach that integrates two different modes of learning that have developed rapidly during the past few decades especially in the era of COVID19. Many scholars like Graham, Bersin and others argue that r Blended learning has different advantages as well as disadvantages.

1.9.1 Advantages of Blended Learning

Azizan (2010) has indicated 4 major advantages and benefits of Blended Learning which are summarized are follows:

1. Enhanced Social Interaction, Communication and Collaboration: BL links individuals, activities and events through technology. It is a significant tool for constructing and sharing mutual awareness on a global scale, besides the interaction between learners and teachers, as well as learners among themselves may create virtual communities and learning practices where knowledge, ideas experiences and learning items are shared and valued

2. Offers flexibility and efficiency: the internet allows for greater flexibility, efficiency and productivity in teaching and studying. The teaching and learning session can be held by video or teleconference, whereby learners can participate in the class via the internet. The internet makes it easy to find study materials and research references. Learners and teachers can explore the digital medium using internet-based application such e-library, e-book, e-resources among others, therefore blending gives the opportunity to expanding learning materials and optimizing the teacher and learner experience while lowering costs.

3. Extend the research and mobility: the emergence of ICT has changed the learning/teaching process, with the increased use of mobile and wireless devices, learning occurs at any time and any place.

4. Optimizing development cost and time: blended learning integrates different delivery modes that align and maximize the production and execution costs and time of educational process. The internet facilitates a wider variety of learning modes and individual learning differences at lowest cost.

In a study about Blended Learning in the department of Education and early childhood development (2012) conducted by the Ultranet and Digital Learning Branch acknowledges different advantages of that educational method as follows:

1. Blended learning allows students to practise technological skills to navigate online course material and develop their own digital content for assessment.

2. Through the use of communication tools like discussion forums, blogs and shared web content on the electronic whiteboard will ameliorate the interaction between students and the teacher and students among themselves.

3. The capacity to reserve time for F2F interaction activities like higher-level discussion, small group work, debates, demonstrations or lab activities.

4. Flexibility and the freedom to learn at anytime from any location.

5. Students will engage more and they can create and use of their own effort as well as networks to shape.

6. The ability for students to engage and rely on expertise that would otherwise to be accessible to them without expensive travel, such as virtual conferencing with zoo/museum/galley staff or virtual excursions to overseas historical or culturally significant landmarks.

1.9.2 Disadvantages of Blended Learning

Blended Learning as any other educational approaches has its disadvantages. Hunt (2016) highlighted some pitfalls of using Blended Learning at college and they are classified as follows:

1. **The technology can be challenging rather than useful:** one of the most important problems

 is the technological literacy which can be a problem, though not all digital platforms are trusted and easy to use

2. **Blended Learning makes teachers overwork:** there is a significant amount of extra work for teachers involved in all levels of Blended Learning. They must expand their horizons, choose the most appropriate syllabus, and devote considerably more time and effort to find the correct balance between online and F2F learning. Unfortunately, not all teachers are willing to do so.

3. **Students can experience cognitive load, too:** with such a wide variety of options offered by the BL model, teachers may begin to overdo educational activities and content.

4. **Credibility of sources and plagiarism become even a bigger issue:** dealing with a digital environment may cause more plagiarism from online resources. Furthermore, there is a range of unreliable online resources that offer false or misinterpreted facts.

On their turn, both Shcherbakova and Nikiforchuk (2020) have identified simply 6 main disadvantages that may happen in the application of Blended learning as follows:

> **Ineffective time management:** if learners are not able to manage their time, he/she will not get things effectively, due to the two component of BL; learner may found them self need more time to have balance.

Lack of self-discipline: with a great range of responsibilities provided by BL model, teachers and students may find themselves incapable to fulfill their educational activities and content.

Technical problems: these problems need experts to solve them; thus teachers should always be provided with solutions from their administration

Problems of cooperation: teachers and their students need to stay in contact each time so that teachers know their problems and students could ask what they want and get feedback.

Difficulties in using the platform of electronic training: both teachers and students should know how to use technology because not all digital resources are easy to use.

Poor quality of the teaching material: an excellent blended learning course needs sufficient and sophisticated materials.

Conclusion

The present chapter aimed at reviewing the fundamentals of Blended Learning including its historical background from the 1960s', various definitions from different perspectives including Bersin and Procter, furthermore its two main components F2F and Online Learning, its models like the rotation and the enriched-virtual model without forgetting course design in which the teacher should follow to have an effective Blended Learning environment. Moreover, it has also, highlighted its different characteristics including Gupta and Upadhyay with their six main characteristics and has provided some challenges that may students and teachers face during the application of BL as Lim and Wang have stated. Furthermore, it has clarified the importance and significance of BL

especially during certain pandemic circumstances like COVID 19. Besides that, it has spotted some light on the advantages and disadvantages of this substitute type of learning.

Chapter Two

Language Acquisition

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Introduction

The present chapter provides some concepts that are related with language acquisition and deals with some of its definitions and how it occurs. Moreover, the same chapter has concerned itself with exploring first language acquisition and second language acquisition with a certain focus on some theories that are concerned with each one. It also portrays the difference between second language and foreign language acquisition in specific and language acquisition versus language learning in general. The present chapter gives some feedback about teaching/learning English as a foreign language in Algeria, and then it presents some teaching language methods. Finally, this chapter ends with demonstrating some difficulties that may face EFL learners.

2.1. Definitions of LanguageAcquisition

It is evident that language is a structured system made of several rules that people use to communicate. Moreover, it has been researched that language is a complex skill that a human being will ever master. To build the ability to understand a language, humans go under the process of acquisition. Hence; many definitions of language acquisition have been introduced from different perspectives. The Audiopedia (2016) (a YouTube channel) has provided a clear and comprehensive definition of language acquisition and stated it as follows:"language acquisition is the process by which humans acquire the capacity to perceive and comprehend any language they want, as well as to produce and use words and sentences to communicate. Language acquisition is one of the key characteristics of humanity, because non-humans do not communicate by using a specific language."It can be noticed that communication is considered as the core of language acquisition as it distinguishes humans from non-humans.

Language acquisition usually refers to first-language acquisition, which studies children's acquisition of their native language; this differs from second-language acquisition, which covers the acquisition (in both children and adults) of additional languages. Wagner (n.d) has defined language acquisition as "First language acquisition that refers to the way children learn their native language. Second language acquisition refers to the learning of another language or languages besides the native language." In other words, she asserted that language acquisition may take two forms; First language acquisition (FLA), which simply refers to the first language acquired as an infant and second language acquisition (SLA) which refers to the process whereby both children and adults acquire and learn extra languages apart from their first language.

2.2.First Language Acquisition

 According to Sureshkumar (2002), the scientific study of language acquisition started around the same time as the birth of cognitive science in the late 1950, furthermore; how humans acquire language is a question that has been asked for many years and there is still doubt about it. Scholars like Chomsky and Krashen argued on that first language acquisition process is related to children's FLA and it started when children utter their first words.

2.2.1.Theories of First Language Acquisition

It has been observed that there are different theories about how children acquire their first language and the four well-known ones will be discussed briefly. So, these theories are classified as follows: the behaviorism, the nativism, the constructivism and the social interactionism.

2.2.1.1.The Behaviorism Theory

According to Lim (2019), the notion of behaviorism holds that human or animal psychology may be objectively investigated through observable activities (behaviors.) This branch of research arose as a reaction to 19th-century psychology, which examined human and animal psychology via self-examination of one's ideas and feelings. She asserted that there are two main types of behaviorism which are; the *methodological behaviorism*, which was strongly inspired by John B. Watson's work, and the *radical behaviorism*, which was inspired by the psychologist B.F. Skinner

Furthermore, Lim (2019) acknowledges that behaviorists believe that human beings acquire and learn behavior via conditioning which combines an environmentally motivated stimulus like a sound with a response, and what a person acts when they hear that sound. In addition, studies in behaviorism provided two types of condition, classical conditioning, which is related with psychologists like Ivan Pavlov and John B. Watson, and operant conditioning, which is connected with B.F. Skinner. Lim (2019) provided the Pavlovs'dogs experiment which indicated the classical conditioning which is a known experiment; he used dogs, meat and the sound of a bell. The dogs would be supplied with meat at the beginning of the experiment and they would be salivating. But, they did not listen to a bell. Besides, the dogs heard a bell for the following step before food was brought. Over time, the dogs learnt that a ringing bell signified food, and they began to salivate when they heard the bell, therefore they did not responded to the bells previously. The dogs progressively learnt to link the sounds of a bell with food as a result of this experiment, despite the fact that they did not react to the bells previously.

In other hand, Lim (2019) has also provided an experiment that demonstrates the operant conditioning. A hungry rat was put inside a box with a lever by psychologist B.F. Skinner. When the rat walked around the box, it sometimes pressed the handle, thus found that when the handle was touched the food would fall. After a while, the rat began to move directly to the lever when inside the box, suggesting that the rat had discovered that the lever

provided food. Furthermore, in a similar experiment, a rat was placed on the electrified floor of a Skinner box producing discomfort for the rat. The rat discovered that the power was interrupted by pressing the lever. Few time later, the rat realized that the lever would stop electricity and the rat started going directly towards the lever when it was placed inside the box. The experiment on that Box shows how an animal or a person learns a behavior through the operant conditioning (e.g. by using a lever) with consequences (e.g. dropping a food pellet or stopping an electric current.) The following are the three forms of reinforcement:

- ✓ **Positive reinforcement**: When something good is added (e.g. a food pellet drops into the box) to teach a new behavior.

- ✓ **Negative reinforcement**: When something bad is removed to teach a new behavior.

- ✓ **Punishment**: When something bad is added to teach the subject to stopa specific behavior. (Lim 2019)

2.2.1.2.The Nativism Theory

Litchfield and Lambert (2011) in their book "*Encyclopedia of Child Behavior and Development*" have stated that according to nativist beliefs, language is an innate core aspect of the human genetic make-up, and they also believe that language acquisition proceeds as a natural feature of human experience. The writers emphasize that this nativist belief argues on that infants are born with an inherent aptitude to arrange linguistic laws, allowing them to acquire a native language effortlessly; they also theorize that children have language-specific capacities which help them learn and master a language. Another view of a popular nativistis Noam Chomsky, an American linguist and a major figure in analytic philosophy who supports the nativist view, in his book *Language* and *thought* he states that "Language learning is not really something that the child does; it is something that happens to the child placed in an appropriate environment, much as the child's body grows and matures in a predetermined way when provided with appropriate nutrition and environmental stimulation"(Chomsky 1993, p. 519). To clarify, he means that

language is innate, this process occurs unconsciously in a suitable environment surrounding with their siblings to provide them with support.

Furthermore, the language acquisition device (LAD) and Universal Grammar (UG) are the major arguments for linguistic nativism. First, Bachus and Mojica-Díaz (n.d) acknowledged that; Humans, according to nativists, have a "Language Acquisition Device.", Dr. Noam Chomsky is credited with discovering the "Device," which theorized that infants are born with a specific capacity to process language via an intrinsic language acquisition device. The writers also states that Linguists and speech therapists assume that the device is located in the frontal left hemisphere of the brain, however language activities are performed by the entire brain. The device incorporates universal principles that apply to all languages, and it appears that only humans have a natural proclivity to learn and reproduce spoken language. Moreover, Bachus and Mojica—Díaz (n.d) added a strong point about that subject it may show the conditions of that process ,When an infant is in the presence of parents, guardians, or siblings, this language acquisition device activates in his or her brain. Conjugating verbs and memorizing dialogues do not help a baby learn a language. Nobody teaches the infant grammar and literature. Instead, the device is activated by language input, which means listening and paying attention as parents, family members, and others speak and engage with the infant. From this perspective it is obvious that children will identify the language they are dealing with unconsciously whereby they listen and engaging with their parents. Second ,Nordquist (2018) has defined Universal Grammar (UG) as a theoretical or hypothetical system of categories, procedures, and principles shared by all human languages and appraise to be intrinsic.

In another hand, Barsky (2018) added that UG is related particularly to generative grammar work and is based on the assumption that certain features of syntactic structure are universal. Universal grammar is a collection of atomic grammatical categories and relations that serve as the foundation for all human language grammars, and upon which syntactic structures and restrictions on those structures are specified. In addition, he advocated that a universal grammar would imply

that all languages share the same set of categories and relations, and that speakers make unlimited use of finite methods to communicate through language (Barsky 2018).

2.2.1.3.The constructivism theory

The leading figure of constructivism was the French developmental psychologist <u>Jean Piaget</u>**,** who claimed that learning occurs as a result of the formation of mental models based on experience (Simonson and Gary 2016). Similarly, Arends (1998), as cited inMcleod, (2019) maintain that constructivism is based on the learner's personal creation of meaning via experience, and that meaning is modified by the interaction of old knowledge and new experiences. Additionally, learning is an active process, not a passive one.

The passive perspective of teachers consider the student to be an "empty vessel" to be filled with information, whereas constructivism asserts that learners construct meaning only via active engagement with the environment (such as experiments or real-world problem solving), understanding, on the other hand, cannot be passively received since it requires drawing meaningful relationships between existing information, new knowledge, and the processes involved in learning, it is clear that Learning is built in such a way that learners build new information on the basis of prior experience.

This theory has been classified into three main divisions: *cognitive constructivism* based on the work of Jean Piaget, *social constructivism* based on the work of Lev Vygotsky, and radical constructivism which was developed by Ernst von Glasersfeld. First, *Cognitive constructivism* is based on the premise that learning should be matched to the stage of cognitive growth of the learner. These strategies assist students in learning new knowledge by linking it to what they already know (prior knowledge), allowing them to modify their current intelligence to suit the

new knowledge. Jean Piaget's studies on cognitive development in children inspired *cognitive constructivism* (The University of Western Governors (WGU), 2020). Typically, this type considers learning as a process of active discovery. Second,(WGU, 2020) simply defines *social constructivism* as the focus on the collaborative nature of learning, meaning that people's interactions with one another, their culture, and society at large all contribute to the development of knowledge. It also added that students depend on others to help them build their foundations, and learning from others helps them develop their own knowledge and realities. It has been argued that *social constructivism* was developed by Lev Vygotsky and is closely related to *cognitive constructivism*, with the addition of social and peer impact (members of family, friends, neighbors and so on), this particularly apparent in every conversation or meeting between two or more individual as a chance to acquire and construct new knowledge or improve on existing information. However, *radical constructivism* is totally different from *cognitive* and *social constructivism,* it is based on the idea that learning is invented not discovered though it focus on the assumption that learners and the information they produce inform nothing important, but solely assist to operate in the environment (WGU, 2020).

To sum up and have a clear idea, constructivism theory emphasizes the importance of "experiences" as a primary source of knowledge in people's lives.

2.2.1.4. Social Interactionism Theory

The *social interactionism* theory also known as the *socio cultural theory* advocates that children are able to learn language because they want to communicate with their surroundings and the world. Indeed, language is dependent on and arises through social interaction. According to this notion, because our language evolved from a need to communicate, our language is influenced by those whom we are hanging out with and with whom we wish to talk (Bohren , 2018). She also added that according to that notion, the environment has a significant impact on how quickly and successfully people learn to

speak. For instance, a newborn raised by a single father will learn the words "dada" or "baba" before learning the term "mama" and vice versa.

Broadly and simply put, World heritage Encyclopedia (n.d) has defined this notion as the description of development of language stressing the influence of social interactions between children and adults, who are developing with language skills. It is based in large part on Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky's socio-cultural views. Apparently the social interactions play a crucial role in the language acquisition process. Supporting this approach, Vygotsky, a leading psychologist and social constructivist suggested a *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD) in which learners create new languages through socially mediated interaction (WorldHeritageEncyclopedia,n.d).

The following is the definition of the zone of proximal development (ZPD): "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Meaning that there is such a difference between what a learner can do autonomously and what they can do if they are guided by someone more competent.

2.3.Second language acquisition

Many scholars and researchers like Krashen and Pienemann has argued that second language acquisition is about acquiring or learning any second language (L2) after a First language(s) (L1) is already established. Stefánsson (2013) has defined SLA as the study of how learners acquire/ learn a second language (L2) in addition to their first (L1). Although it is called SLA, it refers to the process of learning any language after the first, whether it is the second, third, or fourth language. As a result, any language other than the first language is referred to as a second language (SL) or a target language (TL).

2.3.1.Second Language Acquisition Theories

It is necessary to know the ideas behind second language acquisition in order to determine how humans acquire a language and what characteristics must be present fora successful language learning. There are many SLA theories that describe how one learns, acquires, and uses a second language. These theories include *Krashen's theory*, *the Complexity theory* and *Processability theory*

2.3.1.1.Krashen's Theory

Krashen's theories on second language acquisition are organized into five hypotheses, which are classified as follows:

- *the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis*
- *the Monitor Hypothesis*
- *the Input hypothesis*
- *the Affective Filter hypothesis*
- *the Natural Order hypothesis*.

These hypotheses have been presented simply by the Brazilian Schütz (2019), he states that Krashen maintains that *the Acquisition Learning hypothesis*, includes two different systems of foreign language performance: the acquired system and the learnt system. The acquired system or acquisition is the result of a subconscious process equivalent to how infants learn their first language; it necessitates meaningful contact in the target language-natural communication-in which speakers concentrate on the communicative act rather than the form of their utterances. However, the learned system is the consequence of formal education and instruction and consists of a conscious process that resulted in conscious knowledge about the target language, such as grammatical rules. Second, *the monitor hypothesis* examines the link between acquisition and learning and the impact of the latter on the former. The monitoring function is an implementation of the previously acquired grammar, according to

Krashen, the acquisition system initiates utterances, while the learning system acts as a monitor or editor (Schütz, 2019).

Manuel (2020) added that the acquired system is capable of producing spontaneous speech, whereas the learnt system is utilized to verify what is being said. Third, Stefánsson (2013) declared that the *input hypothesis* emphasizes the necessity of the learner knowing the language beyond his or her understanding through an impact such as motivation. Moreover the writer also writes about *the affective filter hypothesis* which indicates that some emotional elements facilitate language acquisition, especially positive ones like being mentally stable. Finally *the natural order hypothesis* in which Stefánsson (2013) simply defines it as the acquisition of a language's rules in a predictable order, for instance some grammatical structures must be acquired early and others later on.

2.3.1.2.The Complexity Theory

"The complexity theory intertwines many thoughts and ideas of different ways to learn something new" (Friedrichsen 2020.p15), which means, the influences and the interrelatedness of different factors to produce and process a predictable outcome (Language). Similarly with language as a complex theory which is seen as a dynamic system involves constant change that encompasses all linguistic basic structures: phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatic (Gonsior et al 2014, p31).

2.3.1.3.The Processability Theory

The Processability Theory (PT) was developed by Manfred Pienemannn, Thaine (2015) declares that this theory emphasizes that the language processor in our brains receives language elements in a certain developmental order, adding that learners have a form of internal syllabus that allows them to acquire some language elements before others, meaning that attempting to teach a new language before learners are ready may result in learners being unable to acquire that target language. Simultaneously, learners will create a variety of inaccurate versions while attempting to employ the most sophisticated form before they are ready. Without forgetting an important aspect about this theory, the writer states that with these approach learners will acquire and learn a certain language differently because their internal syllabi vary, also depending on their various backgrounds of L1 they will continue to study the target language in a similar sequence in this area (Thaine 2015).

To sum up, from the above theories it is evident that acquiring/learning a second language differs from one learner to another, may be depending on the situation they are the context, or other factors.

2.4.Second Language versus Foreign Language

The difference between second language (L2) and foreign language (FL), is connected to the role of the language in question in the wider socio cultural context in which learning occurs. A second language is the one that serves major social and institutional roles in a nation despite the fact that it is not the main population's native language (NL), such as English in India and Singapore (Miao, 2015). He added that a second language in the context of language acquisition is a non-native language to which the learner has natural exposure, such as the study of English by many immigrants in the United States. However, the writer asserted that a foreign language is the one that is neither the native language of the majority of the population nor commonly utilized as a means of communication in the nation. Instead, it

is solely used to engage with foreigners or to read written materials. It is often taught as a subject in school. A common example is Algerian speakers learning English in Algeria.

2.5. Language Acquisition versus Language Learning

Many researchers, scholars and theorists like Foppoli and Schütz make distinction between *language acquisition* and *language learning,* every infant learns his/her mother tongue through the acquisition technique of acquiring a language. He/she is not taught grammar in the same way as he/she is when he eventually gets to school. However, it is clear that even when no instructions are given, children learn the original language and do not make grammatical errors during discussions. They learn the language by a subconscious process in which they know nothing at all about grammatical rules but instinctively sense what is correct and incorrect, or they learn by trial and error, constant contact is what makes learning the mother tongue easier for children (Olivia, 2012), thus it is obvious that language acquisition is typically related with infants in which they are unaware of the process as it is happening and when the new knowledge is acquired.

In another hand, language learning is a conscious process, similar to what learners experience in school. Similarly, *language learning* is the product of instructions about language rules and structures; it is not connected to a specific age or period. Furthermore, learning any language requires that learners are fully aware and exposed about the new language and able to speak it, they usually established their L1 grammar knowledge. Learners could make the difference in the intonation of sounds and the right order of word in a sentence grammatically, those words may have many meaning (Limacher ,n.d)

2.6. Teaching/Learning English as a Foreign Language in Algeria

The English language has established itself as a significant means of securing access to anything happens all across the world and in all fields (Benzerroug, 2020) .Algeria, like the other nations, regarded

English as a foreign language (EFL), as opposed to French, which is considered as a second language. While French is taught in elementary schools, English is taught in secondary schools, high schools and higher education.Benzerroug (2020) added that the teaching of English as a foreign language after French has been designated at the official level as part of the overall aims of foreign language education in the Algerian educational system. It strives to achieve two major goals: socio-cultural goals and educational goals both of which promote communication in its different forms and keep people informed about technological and scientific advancement, this necessitates the development of fundamental language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, obviously for both learners and teachers.

From the above perspective, it is evident that the process of learning English as a FL needs the collaboration, interaction and communication between learners and their teachers. The writer declares that, effective teaching strategies are necessary for successfully and efficiently interacting in classroom, the selection of adequate methods and strategies for teaching is therefore necessary since they are the means by which teaching and learning are accomplished.

2.6.1.Language teaching methods

Many scholars and researcher like Gill and Lathan had advocates that there is a large number of methods and strategies that a teacher may follow in his career such as *the direct method*, *grammar translation method* and *communicative language teaching method*.

2.6.1.1 The Direct Method

First of all this method is named 'direct' because meaning should be immediately related to the target language without translation into the mother language (L1). Ghori (2017) has defined this method as "The Direct teaching method is a method of foreign and second language teaching which consists that

only the target language should be used in class and meaning should be communicated "directly" by associating speech forms with action, objects, mime, gesture and situations." Meaning that, using L1 is forbidden if the teachers apply this method following the rule of 'no translation is allowed'.

2.6.1.2.The grammar Translation Method

In contrast with the direct method, this method determines language acquisition as the memorization of a set of grammatical rules and attempting to comprehend and modify the morphology and syntax of the target language, another element of that method is that the mother tongue (L1) is retained as the reference system during second language acquisition, it serves as a vehicle for language instruction (Rhalmi, 2009).

2.6.1.3 The communicative Language Teaching Method

Parrula (2010) has stated that the communicative language teaching method (CLT) maintains that CLT stresses the significance of all four language skills and strives for "communicative competence" (rather than linguistic competency) through extensive learner engagement and communication of "actual" meaning; it is a method that prioritizes fluency above accuracy. To clarify more, the focus of this method is not on the language form but how to use the target language to increase the fluency and the accuracy to be able communicates with people in real life context.

2.7.Challenges faced by EFL Learners

Nowadays, most individuals tend to study English as a second and foreign language, since the capacity to communicate in a second language is becoming an increasingly important skill in today's world. However, in EFL context, learners may face some difficulties/challenges that prevent them to

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accomplish their acquisition/learning process. In a study conducted by Khan et al (2016) at the male colleges of public sector of Districts Mi-anwali and Bhakkar, the remotest Districts of Pakistan who aimed at discovering the obstacles in learning English at that context. Furthermore, after collecting data through two semi-structured questionnaires for both learners and teachers and an interview for the male intermediate students of four public sector colleges of Distt. Mianwali and Bhakkar. The results indicate that learners are facing obstacles in their learning process as follows:

- **Large and Over-crowded Classes:** According to the findings of the study, the difficulties arise as a result of the large size of the classes. The majority of professors have classes with less than 60 pupils.It also demonstrates that a large number of instructors are dissatisfied with the class size in which they teach. It is also worth noting that no instructor has expressed dissatisfaction with his high class size. According to the results of the survey, the majority of respondents teach large classes with more than 80 students. Indeed, there are several issues with large courses**.**

- **Role of Motivation:** The study indicates that the majority of students are interested and motivated to learn English, however many respondents are not motivated due to a variety of circumstances. It implies that the pupils are motivated, but they do not appear to be due to the lack of several necessary demands of learning. It also underlines the need of fostering motivation in students. It is obvious that being motivated is a crucial aspect to accomplish the learning process.

- **Obstacles in Language Skills:** The English curriculum at the Intermediate level is concerned only with reading and writing. According to the responders, the majority of students are struggling with both language skills (reading/writing), which is due to the syllabi's focus on literature. Furthermore, the professors read and explain the topics, but the students are not assigned to do any reading or writing activities as practice or

activities neither at college nor at home. In addition speaking skill has no practical role in that syllabi, and it is clear that neither professors nor students pay attention to this important skill. Finally, all of the teachers and students have stated that the pupils struggle with their speaking abilities. From this perspective, it is obvious that the four language skills should be taught because they are important to improve foreign language learning especially speaking skill since it is concerned with communication.

- **Lack of Interest and Ruthless Attitude towards College Teachers:** from the collected data, it shows that. Teachers have different pay and other allowances. They are deprived of many financial and other facilities that create "anxiety and fear" and this fact creates many obstacles, and if a teacher is not satisfied with his career, how a good teaching of a subject can be expected. This situation is a main cause of occurring obstacles in learning English among most of the students, this study also shows that no teacher is willing to work and serve in the remotest area for so many reasons. It is obvious that the role of teacher is very important in the learning process.

- **Lack of Teachers' Training:** according to the finding of this survey, it shows that only five out of ten English teachers have taken a brief refresher course to equip themselves with the requirements of current teaching approaches, it also indicates that that the majority of instructors do not have the chance to train themselves for the new difficulties of teaching and learning, they are the same as they were many years ago(not updated), therefore, a teacher without training could not bring revolution in teaching English and could not foster the learning process.

- **Shortage of College Teachers:** in brief**,** it has been noticed that no English instructor has been assigned to this college in many years. According to the findings, English is taught here by other subject professors or by the principal himself, who occasionally attends English classes at this college. This point also shed light on the

role of teacher, it is essential to afford a large number of good teachers to fulfill the learning/ teaching process.

- **Discouraging Behavior of Teachers:** from the findings, the majority of respondents stated that their professors are "uncooperative," and as a result, they have difficulties in understanding and learning English, then many of the respondents stated that their professors have a negative attitude toward their learning. In addition one student has not specified the identity of his class instructor; however, he has stated that his instructor's behavior is unpleasant in this respect. For that reason, the fear of unfavorable evaluation obstructs learning. It is obvious that English instructors should receive support, encouragement and especially reinforcement so that they would have good attitude to teach learners and provide them with feedback.

- **English Curriculum:** in brief, if the English syllabi did not serve for the need of learners it may prevent the learning/ teaching process. It is suggested for the sake of helping learners to accomplish their process the design of the syllabi should be created by take into consideration the need of learners.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed at presenting some aspects that are related to language acquisition including some definitions like what Wagner has state; the way children learn their native language or the learning of another language or languages besides the native language. In addition its two forms: first language acquisition and second language acquisition and gave some ideas about each one and dealing with some theories that are related to each concept like behaviorism, nativism and so on. Furthermore, in the previous chapter, the researcher tried to indicate the difference between second language and foreign language that have been thoroughly clarified by Miao (2015) without forgetting the difference between

second language and foreign language. Moreover, it has provided some ideas about teaching/learning English as a foreign language in Algeria that have portrayed by Benzerroug (2020), indicating some methods that may be used to teach English like the direct method and grammar translation method. The final point in this chapter states some difficulties that EFL learners may face and could prevent them from accomplishing their language learning process.

Chapter Three

Data Analysis and Discussion of Results

Introduction

3.1. the reason of choosing the sample

3.2. Description of the Questionnaire

3.3. Analysis and Interpretation of Students' Questionnaire

3.4. Description and Aim of the Interview

3.5. the Analysis and Interpretation of the Interview

Conclusion

Introduction

The present chapter is considered as the field work of the conducted study. It is based on analyzing and interpreting the collected data from the questionnaire for the students and the interview for the teachers. Through collecting data about the importance of using Blended Moreover, this study opted for the qualitative approach to present and describe our data which was collected by using questionnaire and an interview as mentioned before. Thus, the obtained data will be analyzed and presented by using tables.

3.1. The Reason of Choosing the Sample

Because of time limitation, shortage in financial resources, the health of the researcher and students, the sample was limited to small number of twenty students (20N) of First year at the department of English who were selected randomly. The aim of the researcher is to gather the needed data about the importance of using Blended Learning to improve EFL learners' acquisition. Furthermore, the choice of First Year EFL students was intentional because they are in the beginning of the acquisition process and it is new for them to integrate online learning in their studies.

3.2. Description of the Questionnaire

The students' questionnaire includes thirteen (13) questions in form of semi-structured questions. Practically, 10 closed-ended questions in which students are limited to choose the appropriate option among the given options, however two (2) open-ended questions whereby students were required to select from the given options and were given more freedom to state

their opinion and clarification about their choice. The last question was an open one in which students was not given options and they were asked to give feedback when answering.

SECTION ONE: General Information

The questionnaire was divided into three sections; the first one is about general information about students which contains three (3) questions including: their choice to learn English at University, their level in English and their evaluation about learning English at University by giving justifications.

SECTION TWO: Students' Perception towards Blended Learning

The second section is about learners' perception toward Blended learning which consists of six (6) questions. At the very beginning students were asked about their proficiency in technology, and then as the researcher wanted to know if they have ever heard about the concept of Blended Learning or not, they asked a direct question about it. After that, the students were asked whether they agree or disagree with the idea that Blended Learning can improve learners' acquisition process. Moreover, students were asked about their evaluation toward the use of online learning in their University during the COVID19 pandemic. In addition, students were askedwhether they do all the online assignments during the COVID19 or not and they were given enough space to justify their answers. Lastly, the researcher wanted to gather data about the students' opinion about their preference to have more courses using Blended Learning.

SECTION THREE: Learners' Perception towards Language Acquisition.

The third section includes four (04) question, the first question attempts to know whether the COVID19 affects learners' language acquisition process or not and then collecting the needed data about some difficulties that learners find during their acquisition process by

giving them freedom to state those difficulties. After that, they were asked about their satisfaction toward the way English is being taught to them especially during the COVID19 pandemic. The final question aimed to collect the students' opinion about the suitable method they prefer to fulfill their acquisition process.

3.3.Analysis and Interpretation of Students' Questionnaire

Section One: General Information (from item 1 to item 3)

Item1: You have chosen to learn English at University because……

Options	Respondent	Percentage (%)
a. It is a language of development and technology	3	15%
b. You want to have knowledge about English	2	10%
c. You want to use it as a future career	15	75%
d. Total	**20**	**100%**

Table3.1. Students' Choice of Learning English at University

This question was asked to learners to know the reasons that make them choose English at University. Seventy five per cent (75%) which is a big percentage declared that they chose English because they want to use it as a future career; however (15%) chose to learn English because for them it is considered as a language of development and technology and 10%chose it in order to have knowledge about that language. Therefore, it can be concluded that having knowledge about English in itself is not interesting, however the majority of respondents are interested in learning English because they see it as a necessary tool to have a future career.

Item2: how do you consider your level in English?

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
a. Advanced	2	10%
b. Good	12	60%
c. Average	6	30%
d. Poor	0	0%
Total	20	100%

Table3.2.Students' Consideration on their Level in English

As shown in the table above, the majority of respondents (60%) consider themselves as good students in English and 6 respondents see themselves just average. Moreover, 10% of respondents consider themselves advanced in English. However, none of the students responded that s/he is weak in English. We can deduce that the level of students in English differs from one student to another, but being weak on it is something excluded.

Item3: How do you find learning English at University?

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
a. Easy	7	35%
b. Difficult	12	60%
c. Very difficult	1	5%
Total	20	100%

Table3.3.Students' Perception towards Learning English at University

The aim of this question is to know how learners find learning English at university. As it is shown in the table mentioned above, 12 respondents (60%) of students find learning English difficult while 35% see that process easy. In addition, just one (01) student finds learning English very difficult. As a consequence, the majority of students find learning English difficult and the reasons may differ. These reasons are summarized as follows when we have asked learners to justify their answers:

a) For easy:

o Learning a language that you know from your childhood, a language that you love and communicate with would be easy.

o I found it easy because of my previous knowledge of English.

o Everything that we have being taught for is pretty easy and simple; actually I do not have any issues about anything.

o I find it easy because my level is kind of good, and I tried before to talk to native speakers, so I did not find any difficulties at all.

o Because I already know English, understand it and speak it also the courses are easy and interesting, I enjoy learning English.

o Because it is very simple.

o Because Teachers know how to present lessons, they make it easy for me.

B) For difficult:

o Because there is a big difference between studying English at high school and in university, in high school was easy unlike university.

o Because it is a new system for us and we cannot understand all vocabularies

o Because I am too lazy

o Because I don't have enough background about the language that is why I found it difficult

o Well, actually English is not that bad and difficult, but it really need time and energy which is something exhausted a little bit, that is why I said difficult

o Because I don't know how I can revise some modules like study skills, phonetics and grammar

o Because of the situation we are in

o Because we study more details about it, it is boring

o It is somehow difficult because I am suffering from understanding the language well

o Because our university make it difficult

o Because there are some modules that I do not know how to deal with them

d) For very difficult:

o It is all about new techniques, new vocabularies and new modules

Section Two: Students' Perception of Blended learning (from item 4 to item 9)

Item4: how do you consider your level of technology proficiency?

Options	Respondents	Percentage(%)
a. Average	5	25%
b. Advanced	15	75%
Total	20	100%

Table3.4.Students' Proficiency in Technology

The intention behind this item was to know how students consider their proficiency in English. Apparently, 75% of respondents consider themselves advanced in technology and 25% of students see themselves average a. We can deduce that the majority of students are advanced in technology because we are in the century of technology; in addition the use of technologies is preferred especially in the era of COVID19 pandemic.

Item5: have you ever heard about the concept of Blended Learning before?

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
a. Yes	4	20%
b. No	16	80%
Total	20	100%

Table3.5.Students' Knowledge about the Concept of Blended Learning

It is evident from the above table that our aim from this item is to know if the learners have ever heard about the concept Blended learning before. We can observe know that 16

students do not know the concept of BL while only 4 respondents know it . As a consequence, the majority of students do not know it maybe as a concept but in its meaning they already know it because they are dealing with it in the era of COVID19 pandemic.

Item6: in your opinion, using Blended learning can improve your acquisition process

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
a. **Strongly agree**	14	70%
b. **Strongly disagree**	6	30%
Total	20	100%

Table3.6. Students' Opinion about Using Blended Learning to Improve the Acquisition Process

The objective of the above item was to know whether learners agree that blended learning can improve their acquisition process or not. Apparently, 70% of respondents, which is a big percentage, chose *stronglyagree* while 30% chose the answer *disagree*. We can deduce that Blended learning may improve the acquisition process for the majority of learners, but the others may prefer the traditional learning or pure online learning.

Item07: how do you evaluate the use of online learning in your university during the CVOVID19 pandemic?

a. Useful	5	25%
b. Useless	15	75%
Total	20	100%

Table3.7.Students' Evaluation about the Use of Online Learning in Their University during the Covid19 Pandemic

The purpose of this item is to find out the evaluation of respondents about the use of online learning in their university during the corona virus. the majority (15) found it useless whereas Five (5)respondents found it useful .We can deduce that from the responses of the majority, during the corona virus our university did not work well with online learning which may be considered as an obstacle for learners.

Item08: did you do all the online assignments during the COVID-19?

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
a. Yes	6	30%
b. No	14	70%
Total	20	100

Table3.8. Students' Response about whether They do the Online Assignment During the COVID19

The above item indicates our aim, which is to know if students have done their online assignments during the COVID19 or not. As it is shown in the table, the majority of respondents (70%) which is a big percentage chose *no*, while the minority (6) said *yes*. This result indicates that doing an online assignment is not preferable since the majority of respondents' choice was *no*. these are some justifications of students:

a) **For yes:**

o Because it is the only way during the COVID19

o Yes I am supposed to do it because it is about evaluation and I do not want to take risk and have bad grades

o We have two modules that we did their tests and exams online, so yes I did my online assignment to get good marks

o I did all of them, however the professor take a lot of time to reply and evaluate me

o It is much easier by doing assignment in your house , it decreases stress.

o Yes, but I didn't organize them well.

b) **For no:**

- I do not use the online assignment at all

- Because teachers gives us assignment

- I don't have time, I work

- Because Moodle did not work very well, every time I go to moodle I did not find the lessons for doing my assignment

- Because the connection is very horrible in my home , I have a big problem in using the platform

- I do not use it at all

- We do not study online at all

- The internet is poor

- Because teachers did not publish lessons for us

- To be honest, we do not study online at all

- I do not use it at all

Item09: would you like to take more courses that use blended learning?

Options	Respondents	Percentage(%)
a. Yes	9	45%
b. No	11	55%
Total	20	100%

Table1.9. Students' Response whether to Take More Courses That Use Blended Learning

Through this item, our objective is to know whether learners want to take more courses that use Blended Learning or not. So, the data collected shows that 55% of respondents' choice was *no* and 45% of them respond with yes. We can observe that the percentage is somehow close so that taking more courses that use blended learning may be preferable or not, it may depend on the implication of BL.

Section Three: Students' Perception toward Language Acquisition(from item 10 to item 13)

Item10: does the COVID19 affect your language acquisition process?

Options	Respondents	Percentage(%)
a. Yes	16	80%
b. No	4	20%
Total	20	100%

Table3.10.Students' Response whether the COVID19 Affected their Acquisition Process

The above table shows that the data is concerned with students' response whether the COVID19 affect their acquisition process or not.Furthermore, it can be noticed that the majority of respondents (80%) which is a big percentage chose *yes* while 20% chose *no*. It can be deduced that the COVID19 has affected to some extent the acquisition process in a certain way.

Item11: what difficulties have you face during your acquisition process?state those difficulties please

As it can be noticed, in this item the respondents are not limited with different choices, however, they are given enough space to state their difficulties whether with online learning or with the acquisition of the language, because each student differs from the other. These are some difficulties as stated by students:

o   Understanding the language itself

o   To be honest, I did not have any difficulties

o   I became lazy, I rarely get my work done in time

o   Time planning, poor internet,

o   Forgetting information

o   Poor internet, cannot find lessons in Moodle, misunderstanding without the teacher

o   I faced some difficulties in revising before exams, also some difficulties in some modules like phonetics

o   I found difficulties when we study 15 days that we stop, I forget what I have learned

o   I did not understand everything quickly, the connection is horrible

o I have difficulties in understanding the online lessons, I need support from my

   teacher, also I do not have enough time to study

o I did not have any difficulties

o Because of the poor internet I did not access to lessons

o A lot of homework

o I hate phonetics

Item12: are you satisfied with the way English is being taught for you at your university in the era of corona virus

Options	Respondents	Percentage(%)
a. Yes	8	40%
b. No	12	60%
Total	20	100%

Table3.11. Students' Satisfaction with the Way English is Being Taught in their University in the Era of Corona Virus

As it can be noticed from the above item, its aim, the majority of respondents (60%) chose *no* while 40% of them chose *yes*. It can be deduced that the majority are not satisfied with that situation especially during the COVID19.

Item 13: in your opinion what is the suitable method for accomplishing your acquisition process?

66

Options	Respondents	Percentage(%)
a. Traditional learning	13	65%
b. Blended learning	7	35%
Total	20	100%

Table3.12. Students' Choice of Method to Accomplish their Acquisition Process

As it is noticed, the majority of respondents (65%) opted for traditional learning. However, 7 of respondents chose Blended Learning. We can deduce that the majority of students prefer to study only by attending classes, face to face and so on, while the minority prefers to integrate online learning to the traditional learning. Those are some justifications stated students:

a) For traditional learning:

o   Because with traditional learning we can understand better

o   Because we do not have the best tools for Blended Learning yet

o   Because seeing teachers face to face makes the acquisition process much easier, besides this method have been used since the past

o   You will have opportunity to increase your skills and understand the teacher good, also the lessons will be easy for us

o   Because with traditional learning I can make my learning stable, e-learning make me lazy

o   Online learning is not a solution, I only prefer seeing my teachers and interact with them face to face

o Because it makes my study stable

o For me, studying face to face with our teachers is better, I can understand them without losing attention

o It is more useful than blended learning, I can see myself satisfied

o Because I like to see my teachers, I feel comfortable

o I like blended learning, but I choose traditional learning because BL is not implemented in the right way

b) For Blended Learning:

o Because it makes the acquisition process more easy

o I choose blended learning because it saves time and energy, also makes the acquisition process fun and cool, but I hope that our university apply it in the right way so we will get the best of it and achieve our plans

o Using technology increases my interest in my studies

o The combination of two methods if fun and interesting

o Because in our situation we are in the middle of the pandemic, we are supposed to combine online learning, however our university did not apply it correctly

o Because it is more fun and one of the best methods used by others universities like oxford university

o Because I can get better information and feedback

3.4. Description and aim of the interview

The interview is designed to gather the necessary data from EFL teachers at Biskra University. It is a structured interview that consists of ten (10) questions; the researcher has

interviewed three (3) teachers who really imply blended learning as a teaching approach during the era of COVID19 pandemic. From what has been prepared in the interview, the researcher aimed to check whether BL is beneficial for learners' acquisition especially during the COVID19 and what does it means Blended learning for teachers, in addition it aims to gather data about teachers' thinking about the experience when they dealing with that approach. Besides, the interview aims at explore different challenges that may EFL teachers face while implementing Blended Learning , it also aimed at gathering teachers' evaluation about the process of language acquisition after dealing with that approach. Crucially importantly, the interview aimed at gather teachers' opinion about the situation of teaching using BL during the corona virus , additionally it aimed to know teachers' feeling whether BL has any disadvantages and basically states them if the answer was yes. Lastly, the interview ends with an important question which aimed at teachers' choice of method if the widespread of the COVID19 increases.

Using an interview is typically for gathering more detailed answer, thus to have different views and opinions of teachers about the importance of using of Blended Learning to improve EFL learners' acquisition. Moreover, it aims to know teachers' attitude toward the use of Blended Learning. Practically, interviewing with only three (3) teachers is not enough but due to time limitation and teachers' occupation the researcher opt for small sample; however the collected data was enough to answer and confirm the research questions and hypothesis. Additionally, the reason of choosing EFL teachers because the study is related with language acquisition specifically English as a Foreign Language, in addition the researcher worked intentionally with those three teachers because they dealt a lot with Blended Learning before and during the COVID19.

3.5. The Analysis and interpretation of the Interview

Item1: what is your educational degree?

Educational degree	Number
Doctorate	2
Magister	1
Total	3

Table3.13. Teachers' Educational Degree

From the table above, it is observed that two (2N) teachers hold a Doctorate while one (1N) has the Magister degree. We can deduce that teachers' degree differ, wherefore the obtained data of the interview is credible to the research study.

Item2: how long have you been teaching English?

Period of teaching	Number
13	1
12	1
10	1
Total	3

Table3.14.Teachers' Period of Teaching

The above table aimed at indicating the period of teaching of each teacher, the result showed that one teacher (1) has been teaching English for 13 years and one teach for 12 years while the last one has been teaching English for 10 years. From this result we can deduce that all teachers have a long experience with English which makes them experts and will provide the researcher with reliable feedback about the current study.

Item3: what is your understanding of Blended learning?

The third item aimed at gathering the needed data about teachers' understanding of Blended Learning, the answers was as follows:

Teacher1 (T1): online/ distant teaching with in-class teaching.

Teacher2 (T2): is the combination of in-class learning and distance (online) learning using a clearly set pedagogy that includes well-determined objectives and a long term purpose.

Teacher3 (T3): a mixture of learning strategies (online and traditional learning).

Undeniably, the three teachers argue on that blended learning is the combination of two modes which are online learning and traditional learning. Practically, because teachers have a

clear idea about Blended Learning, this will help the researcher to get credible and comprehensive feedback from the teachers.

Item4: in your opinion, to what extent can Blended learning be beneficial for learners' acquisition process during the era of corona virus?

The above item aimed at gathering data about teachers' opinion about Blended Learning benefits whether it is beneficial for learners' acquisition process during the era of COVID19 or not, as a result the teachers answers was a follows:

T1: there is no better way since due to the pandemic we are obliged to stay home, it can be a good complementary way to help in keeping on learning/teaching process.

T2: Opting for blended learning internationally during COVID 19 has been a revolutionized experience in education that resolved the issue of learning during the lockdown. This experience worked excellently in some countries where the internet is accessible and affordable to learners and policy makers considered it seriously as an optimum alternative to traditional learning. However, in many countries, this experience did not work as expected due to the unfamiliarity with blended learning and the lack of equipment besides the lack of teachers and learners' training to such new way of learning.

T3: It contributes to provide learners with a multitude of strategies to improve his autonomy.

From the obtained data we can deduce that all teachers argue on the benefit of BL to improve learners' acquisition process during the era of COVID19; however T2 added that Blended Learning would not be beneficial if teachers and learners have not enough training about it and also the poor quality of the internet connection may be an obstacle. Moreover T1 declared that Blended Learning considered as the only way to continue the teaching/learning process in this era of the pandemic, thus we can deduce that Blended learning would be

beneficial for learners' acquisition process in the era of corona virus if it is applied with the needed condition.

Item5: what do you think about the experience of creating Blended Learning course during the pandemic?

It is obvious that the above item aimed at gathering data about the experience of implementing and creating Blended Learning course during the COVID19, creating a course using blended learning will absolutely differ from one teacher to another one, many factors may seen as an obstacle for the effectiveness of the course, to know more, those are teachers answers about this experience as follows:

T1: a good idea, sometimes it is a way to diversity methods of teaching to motivate learners, also the use of different sources and materials which can be beneficial for different learners styles.

T2: It is absolutely imperative to go for blended learning in this pandemic especially if there is good preparation and preparedness to consider it as an alternative to the conventional in-class learning.

T3: It is a compulsory requirement to keep up with the modern ways of learning and adapt to the new generation's needs to achieve an efficient teaching & learning processes.

From the above answers, it is evident that all teachers have argue on that the experience about creating course and activities using Blended Learning is good way as T1 said because of the diversity of strategies, however T2 sees that good preparation for BL should be taken into consideration, in another hand T3 declared about the necessity of keeping up with modern strategies since we are in the era of ICT. We can deduce that creating course while

using Blended Learning would be good idea for teachers because of the diversity of strategies especially by using technologies which is something that learners like.

Item6: What challenges did you face when you creating activities and implementing Blended learning as a method of teaching?

The above item is about collecting data about some difficulties that may teachers face while implementing BL, those are the answers of teachers about that questions as follows:

T1: time constraints, practice, evaluation and assessment.

T2: The major challenge is the technical issues related to the internet connection. Other minor issues are mainly related to the lack of familiarity to the online learning applications (Zoom, Google meet, Moodle, etc).

T3: poor mastery of software / poor net connection/ lack of constant connection.

We can noticed that all teachers have state different difficulties, thus there is no evidence that teachers may found same difficulties, it depend on several factors like technology proficiency, time, the quality of internet connection, the familiarity with the approach and so on.

Item7: How do you evaluate learners' acquisition process after using blended learning as a method of teaching?

It is evident that the above item aimed at gathering data about the of teachers' evaluation about learners' acquisition process after dealing with that approach whether it Is useful or not, if it accelerate the acquisition process or not, the following answers of teachers will provide clarification about that idea:

T1: this is difficult to describe but I feel that a lot of students are complaining about Blended learning because of low acquisition.

T2: I can't give a fair evaluation to this experience as it has not been integrated seriously and frequently in our classes. So, I think this experience did not work well in our context.

T3: better, more motivating and beneficial to learners who like it and found it a parallel support besides the traditional learning.

As mentioned above, T1 and T2 reported that is not easy to give a clear judgment about Learners' acquisition process; however they declared that this process is not doing. While T3 advocates that learners' acquisition process doing better, with the word 'better' he maybe means the acquisition process seems better by using BL rather than using only traditional learning. Lastly, we can deduce that the researcher cannot generalize the idea that blended learning accelerates the acquisition process, so learners' acquisition process after using BL can good or not, it may depend on different factors such as learners' capacities in acquiring the language.

Item8: What about the situation of teaching using blended learning during The COVID19 at the Department of Foreign languages at Biskra University?

It is clear that item 8 aimed to know about the situation teachers work on by using Blended Learning during the corona virus pandemic, specifically at the department of foreign languages at the University of Biskra. Those are teachers' answers about that issue:

T1: many difficulties such us programming sessions and duration of sessions, teachers were not trained to use online tools and platforms used for teaching.

T2: Blended Learning was not opted at it should be due to many technical and pedagogical problems (I mentions some of them earlier in item6).

T3: it is really acceptable thanks to Moodle.

It is clearly noticed that all teachers have different point of view, T1 declared that through his experience he find difficulties related to programming sessions, also no trained teachers. T2 advocated that BL is not done as it should be which may affect learners' acquisition process; the third teacher was really satisfied about the situation of teaching using Blended Learning. We can deduce that the situation of teaching English using BL at the department of foreign language at Biskra University during the corona virus is not good enough due to several factors such as technical and pedagogical problems.

Item9: Do you feel that using Blended Learning has any disadvantages? If yes state those disadvantages…..

Options	Respondent
a. Yes	3
b. No	0
Total	3

Table3.15. Teachers' Response about Disadvantages of Blended Learning

As it is observed from the table3.15, all teachers argue on that BL has disadvantages which may make both teachers and learners parry it as a teaching/learning method, these are some disadvantages as stated by teachers:

T1*: lack of motivation, monotony, psychological deficiencies, technical issues (lack of hard ware, internet connection and so on).*

T2*: The main disadvantage of Blended Learning is the lack of interactivity between the teacher and the student. It requires good internet connection which is not accessible to all learners.*

T3*: it cannot cover practical phases as in the classroom, and it provides less rate of discussing between teachers and their students comparing to the classroom and poor internet connection.*

Despite of the different disadvantages that teachers states, one disadvantages has been stressed by the three teachers which is poor internet connection. In addition T2 and T2 has argue on that Blended Learning cause the lack of the interaction between teachers and students. As it is noticed T1 have stated psychological aspects that may Blended Learning cause such as monotony, in which teacher through the integration of this method especially the online one he may feel lazy when h/she stayed at home and work with their learners through different styles of E-learning such as google meet, chat rooms, emails and so on.

Item9: if the widespread of corona virus increase, would you recommended fully distant learning or Blended Learning? Justify your answer please.

Options	Respondents
Blended learning	3
Fully distant learning	0
Total	3

Table3.16. Teachers' Choice of Method if the Widespread of the Pandemic Increase

As it is shoed at the above item, all teachers' choice was Blended Learning; their answers were justified as follows:

T1: *because we need to balance between different models of teaching which need to be complementary and done as it should be.*

T2: *if the pandemic continues, all participants in the teaching/ learning process should consider Blended Learning seriously as a solution to the problems related to the lockdown. Online learning will never replace in-class learning because part of learning is interaction. Which cannot provided online as it should be.*

T3: *if possible blended learning as nothing compensates for the advantages of face to face learning.*

Although all teachers argue on that Blended Learning will be the method that they will follow if the widespread of the COVID19 increase, T2 and T3 asserted on the importance of traditional learning declaring that the interaction between teachers and their students is very crucial aspect in the learning/ teaching process. T1 focus on the importance of the integration of models of teaching that should be done correctly.

Conclusion

As a recapitulation, our study was an attempt to show the importance of using Blended Learning to improve EFL learner' acquisition, the third chapter dealt with the reason why the researcher has choose the sample of the current study. In addition a detailed description of the research tool (questionnaire) that was devoted for first year student at the department of English. Besides, it presented the description of teachers' interview and its aim, additionally portrays t the data gathered through the questionnaire followed by its analysis. The obtained data showed that student opinion differ about Blended Learning and Traditional learning in improving their language acquisition process, thus there is a clear balance. Furthermore, the majority of learners agree on that blended learning can improve their acquisition process in the era of COVID19 if this method implemented in the right way with its needed conditions (quality of internet, time planning, and balance between the two modes of the approach). In addition through the presented data the majority of learners have positive attitude toward this approach, the result also indicates that teachers' attitude about Blended Learning is positive but they added that it should be done on the right way .Based on the analysis of the data, the research hypothesis has been confirmed and the research questions have been answered.

General

Conclusion

General conclusion

The wide spread of COVID-19 pandemic has lead the educational institutions for integrating online learning to accelerate the learning process, furthermore the implementation of Blended Learning in Foreign language teaching and learning at our department has become essential.

The objective of our study is to provide a clear picture about the importance of using Blended Learning to improve EFL learners' acquisition process, our study was related to First Years students at the department of English at the University of Mohamed kheiderBiskra. Additionally, this study work for validate and support our research hypothesis through using questionnaire for students and interview for teachers under a qualitative research approach. The present study consisted of three chapters; the first chapter was devoted to the historical background of Blended Learning, its definitions and components. In addition stating its model, course design, characteristics and some challenges that students may face, furthermore it deals with the significance and importance of blended learning and ends with advantages and disadvantages of that approach. As for the second chapter was devoted for language acquisition process, dealing with its definitions and how it occurs. Furthermore, it explores first language acquisition and second language acquisition with some theories concerning each one, it also indicates the difference between second language and foreign language acquisition in specific and language acquisition versus language learning in general. In addition it gives some feedback about Teaching/learning English as a foreign language in Algeria, and presenting some teaching language methods. Finally, this chapter ends with stating some difficulties that may face EFL learners. For the third chapter, it deals with the practical part of our study. It was concerned with the reason behind choosing the sample, the description of the questionnaire and its analysis. In addition, the description of teachers'

interview and its aim. The analysis of our study showed that Blended Learning would improve EFL learners' acquisition if it is implemented in the right way, also it shows that both learners and teachers have positive attitude toward Blended Learning.

To sum up, blended learning is an effective approach to improve EFL learners' acquisition process especially in the era of corona virus, however this approach need to be applied well under certain condition like good quality of internet connection, time planning, balance between the two modes (traditional learning and online learning) and so on.

Limitation of the study

Our study sought to explore the importance of using Blended Learning to improve EFL learners' acquisition. Although this study shows positive result, it is undoubtedly that in conducting any research the researcher may face certain limitation as a challenge to limit the continuity of gathering the needed data for the study. First the small number of the participants (learners and teachers); the result of the study would be more reliable if the sample was longer, our sample was not sufficient due to the gravity of the COVID19 taking into consideration that answering of questionnaire online is not the interest of the learner, moreover our study's result cannot be generalized because of the small number of the sample. Second, due to time limitation, the researcher found difficulties in collecting data from both participants.

Recommendation

Based on the obtained data from the questionnaire, our study aimed at present some recommendation for students, teachers and the administration of our department of English

- ❖ The majority of students are good in using technologies; hence integrating online learning in their studies will improve their acquisition/learning process.

- ❖ The implementation of Blended Learning should be done in the right way.

- ❖ Both administration and teachers should raise students' awareness about the importance of BL in the era of corona virus.

- ❖ Teachers should stay in contact with their students via email, chat rooms and so on.

- ❖ Students should know more about Blended Learning

- ❖ Teachers should engage more with their students online by putting for them lessons and what they need for the accomplishment of their acquisition

- ❖ Students should do their online assignment

- ❖ Our government should work for the betterment of the internet connection so that learners could access easily to their university's platform.

- ❖ Both administration and teachers should give learners more feedback about some module like phonetics and make it for them easier.

- ❖ Moodle platform are not good enough, administration should make adjustment

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Appendix A: Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

You are kindly invited to respond to the following questionnaire which is an attempt to gathering data for the accomplishment of a Master Dissertation which is **"The importance of using Blended learning to improve EFL learners' acquisition"**. We would be highly thankful for the information that you will provide us with. Please tick (√) the appropriate answer (s) and give full answer (s) whenever it's necessary. Be sure that your responses will remain anonymous and used for the achievement of the research objectives only.

Thank you for your effort, time and collaboration.

Definition of Blended Learning:

A method of teaching in which learners learn and acquire knowledge in a mixed manner which integrates two types of learning/teaching method which are: face to face traditional classroom and e-learning.

Is an educational model that combine face to face traditional classroom with e-learning experiences.

Section One: Background information

Instruction: select only one option and put a Tick (√) whenever it necessary

Q1: You have chosen to learn English at University because:

a) It is a language of development and technology. ☐

b) You want to have knowledge about English ☐

c) You want to use it as a future career ☐

Others, please specify

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Q2 how do you consider your level in English?

a) Advanced ☐

b) Good ☐

d) Average ☐

e) Poor ☐

Q3 How do you find learning English at University?

a) Easy ☐

b) Difficult ☐

d) Very difficult ☐

Justify your answer, please

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Section Two: Learners' Perception of Blended Learning

Q4: how do you consider your level of technology proficiency?

a) Average ☐

b) Advanced ☐

Q5: Have you ever heard about the concept Blended learning before?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

Q6: In your opinion, using Blended Learning can improve your acquisition process

a) Strongly agree ☐

b) Strongly disagree ☐

Q7: How do you evaluate the use of online learning in your university during the COVID19 pandemic?

a) Useful ☐

b) Useless ☐

Q8: did you do all the online assignment during COVID19?

a) Yes

b) No

Justify your answer, please

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Q9: Would you like to take more courses that use blended learning?

a) Yes

b) No

Section three: Learners perception toward language acquisition

Q10: Does the COVID 19 affect your acquisition process?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

Q11: What difficulties have you faced during your acquisition process?

State those difficulties, please

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Q12: Are you satisfied with the way English is being taught for you at your University in the era of corona virus?

a) Yes ☐   b) No ☐

Q13: In your opinion, what is the suitable method for your acquisition process?

a) Traditional learning ☐   b) blended learning ☐

Justify your answer, please

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Appendix 2: Teachers' interview

Dear teachers,

This interview is a part of a research work, which serves as a data collection tool to gather data for the accomplishment of a Master Dissertation, entitled "The Importance of Using Blended Learning to Improve EFL Learners' Acquisition in the Era of COVID 19".as for the general aim of this interview is to explore your opinion toward the importance of using blended learning as method to accelerate learners' acquisition in the era of corona virus. You are kindly requested to answer the following questions.

Thank you very much for your collaboration

1. What is your educational degree?...

2. How long have you been teaching English?..

3. What is your understanding of Blended Learning?..

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4. In your opinion, to what extent can blended learning be beneficial for learners' acquisition process during the era of corona virus?..

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5. What do you think about the experience of creating blended learning course during the

pandemic?...

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6. What challenges did you face when you creating activities and implementing Blended

learning as a method of teaching?...

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7. How do you evaluate learners' acquisition process after using blended learning as a

method of teaching?...

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8. What about the situation of teaching using blended learning during The COVID19 at

the Department of Foreign languages at Biskra University ?..

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9. Do you feel that using Blended Learning has any disadvantages? If Yes state those
    disadvantages……………………………………………………………………………
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10. If the widespread of corona virus increase, would you recommended fully distant
    learning or blended learning? Justify your answer, please ……………………….

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الملخص

منذ بداية عام 2020 ، تم إغلاق القطاع التعليمي بما في ذلك التعليم العالي بسبب تفشي وباء COVID-19 ، وقد أجبر هذا الوباء التعليم العالي على التحول إلى التعلم عن بعد / عبر الإنترنت. علاوة على ذلك ، أُجبر معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية وطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية على تطبيق التعلم المدمج كطريقة للتدريس / التعلم لأن عملية اكتساب المتعلمين قد توقفت ويبدو أنهم يواجهون صعوبات في عمليتهم. تهدف هذه الدراسة الحالية إلى استكشاف أهمية استخدام التعلم المدمج لتحسين اكتساب متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية خاصة في عصر COVID-19 ، والتحقيق في موقف كل من المتعلمين والمعلمين في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة محمد خضر (بسكرة) نحو هذه الطريقة التعليمية. لذلك ، افترضت هذه الدراسة أن التعلم المدمج من شأنه أن يحسن عملية الاكتساب وسيكون لكل من المتعلمين والمعلمين موقف إيجابي تجاه التعلم المدمج . في هذا الصدد ، تم استخدام نهج نوعي لإجراء هذا البحث ، بالإضافة إلى استبيان لـ 20 طالبًا في السنة الأولى من طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية ومقابلة مع ثلاثة مدرسين في نفس القسم ، تم تصميمهما للتحقق من صحة الفرضيات. بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، أثبتت النتائج أن كلا من المتعلمين والمعلمين يتفقون تمامًا على أهمية التعلم المدمج لتحسين اكتساب متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

Résumé

Depuis le début de 2020, le secteur de l'éducation, y compris l'enseignement supérieur, a été fermé en raison de l'épidémie de COVID-19, cette pandémie a contraint l'enseignement supérieur à passer à l'apprentissage à distance/en ligne. De plus, les enseignants EFL et les étudiants EFL ont été contraints d'appliquer le Blended Learning comme méthode d'enseignement/apprentissage car le processus d'acquisition des apprenants a été interrompu et ils semblent avoir des difficultés dans leur processus. Cette étude actuelle vise à explorer l'importance d'utiliser l'apprentissage mixte pour améliorer l'acquisition des apprenants EFL, en particulier à l'ère de COVID-19, et à enquêter sur l'attitude des apprenants et des enseignants de la division d'anglais de l'université de Mohamed Khider (Biskra) vers cette méthode pédagogique. Par conséquent, cette étude a émis l'hypothèse que l'apprentissage mixte améliorerait le processus d'acquisition et que les apprenants et les enseignants auraient une attitude positive envers le BL. À cet égard, une approche qualitative est utilisée pour mener cette recherche, ainsi qu'un questionnaire auprès de 20 étudiants de première année d'EFL de la division anglaise et un entretien avec trois enseignants d'EFL de la même division, ont été conçus pour vérifier la validité des hypothèses. De plus, les résultats ont prouvé que les apprenants et les enseignants sont totalement d'accord sur l'importance de l'apprentissage mixte pour améliorer l'acquisition des apprenants EFL.