The Impactof Blended Learning in EFL Teaching Grammar for Intermediate School Students

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أثر التعليم المدمج في تدريس قواعد اللغة الإنكليزية لطلاب المرحلة المتوسطة

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المستخلص

تسلط الدراسة الضوء على ما إذا كان التعلم المدمج يمكن أن يؤثر على تحسين نتائج تعلم القواعد النحوية للطلاب متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. تم استخدام تسعين مشاركاً من طلاب الصف الأول المتوسط في مدرسة الصديق المتوسطة للبنين، محافظة ديالى، في المدارس العراقية الحكومية لتحديد أي فروق في تحصيل الطلاب قد تكون مرتبطة بالتعلم المدمج. تم استخدام الاختبار القبلي والاختبار البعدي في القواعد النحوية لتقييم اثرالتعلم المدمج على تحصيل الطلاب. أشارت النتائج إلى أن الطلاب نجحوا بشكل مفيد في تطبيق التعلم المدمج، وبالتالي قد يؤدي إلى تحسين تعلم القواعد النحوية. أجريت الدراسة بتصميم شبه تجريبي، واستمرت لمدة ٨ أسابيع. بينما تعرضت المجموعة التجريبية للمعالجة خلال الكورس الأول للعام الدراسي (٢٠٢١–٢٠٢٢)، تم تدريس المجموعة الضابطة باستخدام استراتيجيات التعلم التقليدي. أشارت النتائج إلى أن استراتيجيات التعلم المدمج أثرت بالتأكيد في تحسين اللغة الأجنبية لدى الطلاب في نتائج اختبارات التراكيب النحوية

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعلم المدمج، تدريس التراكيب النحوية, تدريس التقليدي.

Abstract

The study shed light whether the blended learning can affect the improvement of students' outcomes in learning grammar rules in EFL education. Ninety male participants of first-year intermediate school students at AL-Sediek Intermediate School for Boys, Diyala Governorate, Iraqi public schools were utilized to decide any variances in students' achievement that might be connected with the blended learning . Grammar pretest and posttest were employed to evaluate the effect of blended learning on students' achievement. The findings indicated that students were useful and succeeded towards applying blended learning, and thus, it may lead to developing learning of grammar structure. The study was performed with a quasi-experimental design and continued for 8 weeks. While the empirical group was exposed to treatment through the first course of the academic year(2021-2022) , the control group was taught by using regular learning strategies. The results pointed out that blende learning strategies affected the development of foreign language in the grammar tests' outcomes

Keywords: Blended Learning , Teaching Grammar ,Traditional Teaching.

Introduction

The combination of education with technology and due to the fast rapid growth. So there is a need to confirm the outcomes of these technological tools in the EFL teaching and learning context. Thus ,open the gate for effective teaching / learning methods . Blended learning is one of these tools which draws the attention of both instructors and students . In current years , blended learning has been utilized as an appropriate method of teaching .It is a blend of regular teaching approaches of (face-to-face)student and teacher lessons with multimedia-based approaches. Pappas (2018:23) stated that , "aligned with the traditional language teaching and learning approaches, blended learning has been broadly applied as another module of education by schools and universities since the 1980s. Indeed, it is an integration of traditional face-to-face education and technological approaches which benefits both teachers and learners besides providing massive online educational resources" . Recently, blended learning has been used as an appropriate approach to education because of its relation between traditional approaches of face-to-face education with technological-integrated approaches .In fact, the shortcomings of some traditional methodologies in the language teaching so, blended learning emerged as an innovative instruction in teaching and learning EFL in the language teaching context (Güzer &Caner, 2014:32). In addition, blended learning allows the instructors to design some cooperative tasks that can save time and effort for students and teachers especially in crowded classes .Beside that , the teaching material is available at any time /anywhere .Although, it is still not applied widely , it is a flexible learning that provides language users opportunities to practice language inside and outside classrooms.

Zhang & Zhu (2018:11) "stated that by integrating features of technology and traditional learning, blended learning is an initial teaching and learning factor for higher education".

Aims

The research intends to:

1-To determine the effectiveness of blended learning in teaching grammar structure for EFL first- year intermediate students.

2-Is there any significant difference between the post-test marks of students who are taught traditionally and the students who are exposed to blended learning instruction concerning to their grammar structure development?

Limitation of the Study

The current study is limited to:

1-   The first course of the academic year 2021-2022.

2-   First-year intermediate school students at AL-Sediek Intermediate School For Boys, Diyala Governorate, Iraqi Public School.

3-   Blended learning instruction in teaching EFL grammar structure language.

Significance of the study

The emergence of blended learning is due to COVID-19 ,teaching is changing from the traditional classroom to online. Hence, was a novel model for most teachers and students , to benefit from the advantages of e-learning , blended learning as an instructional strategy was shown. It has been sought that a few studies have been observed in this current field of learning. Therefore the study may be significant :

1. To organize valuable learning setting in the brightness of employment blended learning to improve learners' grammar achievement.

2. To support students utilize e- media to develop their language grammar learning.

3. To work out the findings of the current study could help to shed the lights on the importance of blended learning regarding teaching grammar structure for First –year EFL Iraqi intermediate students.

Blended Learning

Firstly**,** blended learning as a concept appeared in the trade and business world ,then in connotation with education (Sharma and Barrett, 2007:12) and involved in higher studies (MacDonald, 2006:11) ,later on it was presented in language educational settings. Despite, of difficulty to give a definite definition of the term(blended learning), since several educationalists dispute that it was essentially the word implied with practising rather than being an instruction of teaching / learning Oliver and Trigwell (2005:65) . Masie, in Bonk and Graham (2006: 22) comes into agreement with this speech and "declares that all education is blended learning". at the same time Masie (2006: 22) "stated that blended instruction (is) a main component of the training, learning and instruction which occupied different teaching strategies". Nevertheless of its practice in association with training and higher education , then in the field of educational settings. (Kerres and de Witt, 2003; Oliver and Trigwell, 2005; Sharpe et al., 2006; MacDonald, 2006; Sharma and Barrett, 2007) they agree that it is hard to give a final definition. Many of them like(Stracke, 2007: 57) "stated that it is ,as a mixed of learning, or e-learning" " (Shepard, 2005:21) or ,b-learning (Banados, 2006: 534)." Smith and Kurthen (2007) in Gruba and Hinkelman (2012: 4) try to distinguish among these concepts by using percentages" .

Taxonomy of terms related to blended learning (Smith and Kurthen 2007, in Gruba and Hinkelman 2012: 4)

Term	Definition
Web- enhanced	A minimal amount of online material like sending a curriculum and semester messages.
Blended	specific important accessible tasks in or else.
Hybrid	face-to-face learning, but less than 45 per cent.
Fully on line	Hybrid Subjects in which online activities replace 45–80 per cent

Sharma and Barrett (2007: 7) "refer to the blended method in a language course as a combination of student- teacher instructions through suitable use of electronic knowledge. The word electronic knowledge now covers a broad array of recent e- education, such as the internet, CDs, and smart white boards" . Dudeney and Hockly (2007: 137) assured that "use the word online delivery as a substitute of the term technology" . They reach agreement "that blended method is a mixture of e-learning and learner- instructor delivery course".

Application of Blended Learning

 Hockly (2011: 58) ,Sharma and Barrett (2007,P.34) state reasons for employing   blended learning in teaching the English language :

1-   It offers students the chances to use technical tools to be involved in their linguistic classes.

2-   Suppleness , students can outfit education to their required lives, particularly expert younger and college learners.

3-	Ministry of Education : Teachers are expected to offer blended learning varieties.

The advantage of Blended Learning

Many studies documented benefits of blended learning(Osguthorpe & Graham as cited in Bonk & Graham, 2006, pp. 8-10 ,Riel and Paul, 2009, Pape et al, 2012, Mackay and Stockport, 2006).   These are:

1- It presents instructional fruitfulness. Several activities are planned to have three stages, i.e:

 (a) online self-paced learning to gain prior knowledge,

 (b) student-teacher lecturing lab fixated on effective knowledge and presents skills instead of lessons,

 (d) Shifting the learning to the workshop setting.

 2- It offers contact to knowledge.

3-It simplifies social communication.

4-	It enables individual intervention.

5-	It offers cost-effectiveness and an opportunity for receiving huge, internationally distributed listeners in a short period .

6-	 It permits teaching to remain when schools close .

7-Learners come to be energetic students. They can interconnect their desires and safety to their instructors to become more effective .

8-It can lessen the negative influence of weakly planned online programs with high excellence lecturer ran lessons .

Barriers of Blended Learning

Riel, Lawless & Brown (2016,P.23) as cited in Naim. R.(2019,P.2)state factors that the teachers face while using the blended learning approach ,They are:.

1- lack of cooperation among students to complete a given task.

2- mismanagement ,it is also difficulty for the teachers to keep the learners focused on the given task

3- It is difficult to give the roles for the learner in an activity.

4- It is need a time for instructors precisely when they are required to teach all instructional activities.

5- There is a problem for instructors to control the students' participation in outer-classrooms tasks.

6- The absence of information communication Technology knowledge of the lecturers .

٧- Negative respondents for students to some technical difficulties such as server problems or mistakes in sent resolutions.

Teaching Grammar

Generally speaking, there are two methods that can be employed these are deductive and inductive in teaching English grammar, while each of them has its merits and demerits in teaching structures to EFL students. The first is a deductive method, which teaches grammar rules directly, also called rule-driven learning. It includes presenting learners with a precise clarification of structures and making students training to utilize them. (Fortune, 1992, :1). On the contrast, the inductive approach starts with presentation of an instruction and lasts in examples of the rule's presentation. Students are thought to interrelate by it and then, employment of examples. It is a bottom-up method , students became responsible for their

knowledge . In its place, they cautiously chosen of subjects that demonstrate the use of the target language in a delivered context. Interpreting to Harmer (2007:2), stated that"learners attempt to figure out how language is constructed through skills practice on reading and listening materials, which is especially beneficial.An inductive approach involves reasoning from observations to theories"..

There are (4) stages that can be utilized to teach English grammar through implemented of the inductive approach(Abdullah,J.,M.,:2024) .

1. Offer students with information about a specific subject in English grammar .

2. Tell learners to find structures from the presented sentences.

3. Tell learners to examine and prove the rule from applying newly contexts around the English language.

4. Require students to review and correct the linguistic structures to comprise the novel material.

Previous Studies

Some previous studies related to the present study are:

1- The merits and demerits of blended learning were discovered by Hamad (2017). The researcher asked the students to full a questionnaire concerning their perceptions on the usefulness of blended learning about their performance in English. She discovered that blended learning helped students in gaining teaching subjects more willingly, learning from the errors of their peers in online chats. Students feel safe , reliant and satisfy with the advice that comes from the e-leaning exams.

2-Another study by Bukhari and Basaffar (2019), while the writers did not refer to e-learning .They studied the efficiency of mixing blended methods with motivation, communication and

self-sufficiency among EFL learners, they collected students' views about these mixed methods comprised of questionnaire. They explored that the mixture of methods was comfort learning in a collaborative instructional context, motivating learners, improving their self-assurance to study e-learning. In addition, learners recommended to use of mixed methods when somatic presence demonstrated awkwardness.

3- Also Wayegh et al. (2019) employed empirical design. They searched the effect of using blended learning with traditional teaching aids to enhance participants' listening and speaking skills. They discovered, that the participants had fun with the instructor's commendations concerning appropriate websites to get English knowledge, showing the instructor's role in getting support to increase listening and speaking skills. They also discovered that blended method tasks upkeep self-paced student's development.

4- The study was conducted by Al Bataineh et al. (2019) they explored the effects of blende learning on the grammar achievements of EFL Jordanian students. They fellow an experimental design. The researchers found that blended method presented the testers with a flexible learning environment, connected to a relaxed teaching activities through using technical aids which helped them in comprehending grammar rules .In addition, students favored e-learning assessment to regular teaching methods.

Methodology& Sample

The quasi-experimental design is followed by the researcher in the current study **.**

The Sample of the Study

A sample of(90) male students from the first intermediate school at AL-Sediek Intermediate School For Boys, Diyala Governorate was participated in this study . The sample of the study is EFL Iraqi Public School students, who have studied the English language for 7 or 8 years, aged between 13 to 14 years old.

The Instruments of the Study

Pre and post-tests were employed in this study . The items of these tests have been selected from the textbook of the first course(1st Intermediate class, English for Iraq) , the researcher taught activities and exercises in the four textbook chapters on various grammar structures. For the sake of homogeneity, the participants were pre tested of thirty multiple- choice items. Then, they post-tested at the end of the course with the same questions . Three experts of the English language revised the test items, to assure the validity of the test questions. To test the power and consistency of the internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the test, a pilot test study was conducted. The reliability coefficient for the pilot study was found at(0.93).This indicated the test was completely reliable.

Procedure of the study

The utilizing of pre-test was to calculate the learners' available grammar information and to ensure that the contributors have the same level of language capability. The empirical group was studied target grammar items through blended learning strategies while the control group was exposed to the same grammar rules through conventional teaching. Blended instructions were planned by the researcher to propose learners' occasions to use

the language in and out the class. Control group was taught in-class session(45 minutes, one lesson period every day) in the first four weeks, presenting activities and structures of the units in their textbooks. While empirical group was studied in a very pleasurable and attractive tasks through an el-learning class in Google classroom, Google meet platforms, or sending videos formed by teacher for period of an one hour to trace the students' advancement online. A post-test was conducted to both groups of students, after 8-weeks of the instructional time. To compute the test scores, independent t-test was utilized to explore the results.

Data analysis &Results Discussion

To elicit the results , it was shown that there was a little or no significant difference between the students' control group performances who were exposed to traditional teaching in both pre and post- tests and due to the fact, that the control group did not receive the treatment "the students did not practice blended learning" the comparison of the marks for both pre and post–tests in control group students , the findings revealed the mean of the pre-test (15.0±8.8; Median=12) is higher than the mean of post-test (16.4±7.1; Median=17), but statistically it was not significant (P=0.417). (Table 1 & Figure 1).

However, when analyzing the data of the students' achievement who were exposed to the blended method, it was revealed that students have better performance when taught in blended learning rather than traditional learning as they participate their thoughts, through their new participations in an e-learning class ,since the comparison between the mean pre and the post-test; mean post-test was 26.0±6.0; Median=29 ranging from 10 to 30

which is significantly higher than the pre-test (15.1±8.1; Median=15; Range=2-30) (P=0.0001), (Table 1 & Figure 1).
For the sake of homogeneity between the two groups, an equal of variance t-test formula for two samples was employed. It was shown no significant differences (P=0.980) in students' scores in pre-tests for both groups, because, the students' achievements in the empirical group didn't have any effect on their performance ,which means that all students had the same knowledge of grammar especially, in first weeks of the treatment.

Table 1:

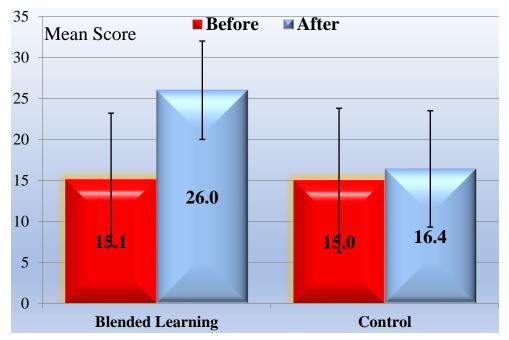|	Blended learning		Control	
	Score before	Score after	Score before	Score after
Mean±SD	**15.1±8.1**	**26.0±6.0**	**15.0±8.8**	**16.4±7.1**
Standard Error of Mean	1.21	0.89	1.31	1.06
Range	2-30	10-30	2-30	2-30
Percentile 05th	2	11	3	5
25th	8	25	9	10
50th (Median)	**15**	**29**	**12**	**17**
75th	21	30	21	21
95th	29	30	30	29
99th	30	30	30	30
P value compared to before	-	0.0001^	-	0.417
P value compared to control	0.980	0.0001#	-	-
#Significant difference between two independent means using Students-t-test at 0.05 level.				
^Significant difference between two dependent means using Paired-t-test at 0.05 level.				

Figure 1:

Conclusion

From the above interpretations of the results between the marks of the empirical group students who studied by blended learning method with the students who studied by the traditional method. The outcomes were presented that there is a better performance of the students who received treatment. This can be interpreted by some of the causes . Firstly, the employment of a blended strategy supplied the chance for the empirical group to learn independently and keenly. It also provided them with the cheering learning environment . Furthermore, during the learning period, learners through the training of implementing a variation of e-leaning in gaining knowledge, collaborating and speaking with their instructors. The blended method depended on interaction between teachers and students in the absence of boundaries of face-to-face classrooms which permitted students

to participate and reply to questions, and offered them self-confidence, a common sense of self-opinionated of their performance as having the ability to answer the teachers' questions. They advanced their grammar knowledge. The research promoted that the blended method was greater than conventional instruction because the instructional processes were progressive and , thus appeared in students' achievements. The significance of this procedure was shown in the students' responses to it . They grasp that they achieved a main part in learning because they have the choice to determine which learning instruction is match to them. Lastly, using the blended technique as a teaching method, duplicates growing student achievement and raising their views and opinions positively towards learning.

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