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Reconceptualizing Blended Learning to Promote English Language Teaching

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Abstract

This paper aims to reconceptualize blended learning as an appropriate approach to teaching and learning to promote the teaching of English from grades 1 to 12. Therefore, it aims to identify the essential components that should be integrated into blended learning models to learn English. In addition, it aims to highlight best practices for integrating blended learning components into ELT contexts. Methodology: A reflective thematic analysis was used to reach the conclusions this study. Textual data collected from various theoretical and empirical publications were categorized and coded to reveal themes and patterns that answered the research questions. Results: Three main components were identified that should be integrated in any blended learning context: digital content, digital environment and digital pedagogy, in addition to physical and traditional content, environment and pedagogy. In addition, these components must be integrated into the framework of instructional design strategies to ensure that learning activities serve the ultimate goals of personalized and engaging English language learning. Recommendations: The reconceptualization process is an incremental process that requires policy makers and educators to continually refine and shape blended learning to achieve its optimal goals.

Keywords: Blended Learning, ELT, K-12 Students, Personalized Learning, Flipped Classroom, Connected Learning

Introduction

Since then, English language learning has faced the challenge of creating opportunities for students to engage in meaningful real-life experiences. The practical application of the knowledge and skills already acquired in authentic contexts makes language learning more relevant and engaging, as it allows students to develop a deeper understanding and better levels of linguistic competence (Cecel-Murcia, Brinton & Snow, 2014). The classroom environment and the virtual environment provide rich learning experiences if well combined. Blended learning is a game changer in English language teaching and learning (ELT) as it provides authentic experiences for English learners (Huang et al., 2020).

The American Society for Training and Development (2003) predicted that blended learning would be "one of the ten emerging trends in the knowledge-based industry" (cited by Stansfield and Connolly, 2009, p. 3). Today, blended learning and its other variants, the flipped classroom and connected learning permeate various paths of learning, from higher education institutions to schools and professional training and development programs.

However, the inconsistent use of the concept of blended learning confuses teachers who do not understand the function and true nature of this educational approach (Fuller, 2021). Blended learning includes both traditional face-to-face teaching and online learning. However, if it is used to refer only to online or distance learning, it may result in ineffective implementation of that learning strategy. Without a clear understanding of what blended learning is and the effective components to include in a blended learning strategy, educational entities miss the benefits of a true blended learning model, such as increased flexibility and the improvement of learning outcomes (Bervell and Umar, 2018). It also creates a state of confusion for students, as they may have different expectations of what blended learning means, leading to dissatisfaction or disengagement.

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The purpose of this paper is to reconceptualize blended learning as an appropriate approach to teaching and learning to promote English language teaching from grades 1 to 12. Therefore, it aims to identify the essential components that should be integrated into blended learning models for learning English. In addition, it aims to highlight best practices for integrating blended learning components into ELT contexts. To achieve these goals, the following research questions were answered through reflective thematic qualitative analysis.

1- What are the essential components to be incorporated in any successful blended learning model for English language teaching?
2- How should these components be incorporated to maximize the benefits of blended learning in ELT settings?

Literature Review

Blended learning can be considered one of the most confusing educational strategies of all time. This can be attributed to the idea that it was introduced by subjects outside the educational field (Liu et al. 2024). Liu et al. (2024) emphasized that blended learning is "a product of social, economic and technological development" that "will become the new norm in education" (p. 4).

In fact, blended learning was introduced by a political decision during the Cold War between the United States and the USSR, when the United States decided to use talented students from American universities for its space program (Kinzer, Sherwood and Bransford, 1986). Later it was implemented jointly by higher education institutions and ICT companies, as they were able to use and manage computers at the time (Kinzer, Sherwood and Bransford, 1986). It was later adopted and developed by companies to provide large-scale training (Woolley, 1994). After that, higher education institutions adopted this strategy and tried to establish their own rules and define it in different ways (Bersin, 2004).

Although it has not been easy for educational institutions to adapt blended learning to pedagogical needs, they have been able to articulate it as a learning approach based on constructivism and learning environment theories open (OLE) and the intervention of modern educational technologies. The main principles of constructivism assume that students are responsible for their own learning because they can do so by asking questions, exploring facts, evaluating knowledge and reflection on their learning; this is essentially the inductive approach to learning (Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess, 2012). On the other hand, and through different learning systems, teachers are expected to assess students' questions and interests, take advantage of primary and extensive learning resources, and develop students' previous knowledge in an interactive way (Bailey & Pransky, 2005). They also emphasize the use of progressive assessment that takes into account student work and observation and emphasizes the learning process as well as outcomes and end products. Most importantly, teachers argue that students collaborate to solve problems and create final products (Bailey & Pransky, 2005).

However, the OLE theory established the foundations for the use of technology in the classroom and the pedagogies that accompany the use of these tools (Hannafin et al., 1999). It is fundamentally based on the theory of constructivism and "grounded" learning systems that correspond to the key dimensions of psychology, pedagogy, culture, technology and pragmatics to make learning happen (Hannafin et al. , 1999). It also benefits from the basic concept of Dewey's thinking, which puts a lot of emphasis on the development of students' thinking skills and especially on thinking as the result of any learning process (Dickey, 2010). Dewey (1910) organizes reflection at different levels which are uncertainty, observation, suggestion, reasoning and verification. To achieve a valued reflection with its different phases, the OLE theory includes four main components that support self-learning and students' autonomy. These components, which address the values needed to develop 21st century skills, are enabling contexts, resources, tools and scaffolds (Hannafin et al., 1999).

Favoring contexts, Hannafin et al. (1999). where students are only given the context and must discover the underlying problems in that context, or "individually created contexts" (p. 13) where students also produce the context and the problem. The teacher's role in all three scenarios is mainly limited to guidance and advice, and students are given more space to apply the following skills: personal inquiry, divergent thinking and multiple perspectives, self-directed learning and learner autonomy with metacognitive support, mediation of learning through individual experience and personal theories, practical and concrete experiences involving realistic and relevant problems, provision of tools and resources to aid student learning. efforts. (Hannafin et al., 1999, p. 117).

Empowering resources, Hannafin et al. (1999) suggest that the teacher should focus on the appropriate use of different resources, whether they are "static or dynamic" (p. 16). Static resources are represented in books, images, videos, encyclopedias and newspapers where students are only allowed to look at these resources and use them in their learning process without modifying anything (Hannafin et al., 1999). However, dynamic resources are those whose values and information are constantly changing based on a set of variables such as virtual laboratories, weather websites, calculators, databases, etc. (Hannafin et al., 1999). Using dynamic resources, students can observe, analyze, experiment and build models that simulate different learning concepts.

Using support tools, Hannafin et al. (1999) suggest that the teacher finds the right tools that serve the learning process well. Tools are divided here into three main categories: "processing tools, manipulation tools and communication tools" (Hannafin et al., 1999, p. 22). All three types of tools address the natural learning process that students must rely on to process information cognitively, to manipulate and test the validity of beliefs and theories, and communicate with others, with their teachers, and with real-life experts (Hannafin et al., 1999). Computers and the Internet are central to these tools because they help accomplish difficult tasks that were difficult to accomplish with conventional tools in the time and space of a regular classroom (Hannafin et al., 1999).

The last element, suggested by Hannafin et al. (1999), is scaffolding, which may be the most complex of all OLE components to enable. However, the use of technology makes it smoother and more accurate. Scaffolding functions as a guide and support for learning activities (Linn, 1995). Therefore, there are different types that support and guide students' learning at any time, namely "domain-specific scaffolding, generic scaffolding, conceptual scaffolding, metacognitive scaffolding, procedural scaffolding and strategic scaffolding" (Hannafin et al., 1999, 31). The use of these types of scaffolding is highly dependent on the complexity of the contexts and problems presented to students (Hannafin et al., 1999).

Blended learning, a blended teaching approach that combines traditional face-to-face teaching and online learning, is emerging as a response to constructivism and OLE. It has evolved into a dynamic educational model that uses the power of technology to improve the educational process (Graham et al., 2013). In the early days, blended learning consisted mainly of supporting classroom instruction with digital resources such as online courses, quizzes, and discussion forums (Ghazal et al.,2018). It has helped make it easier for students to access online learning resources and maintain face-to-face interaction with their teacher or peers.

Based on student-centered approaches, blended learning integrates a variety of models and practices that take advantage of digital tools and resources to create personalized learning experiences tailored to individual learning needs (Owston et al., 2019). Current blended learning models emphasize active learning strategies, collaborative activities, and project-based work to allow students to take ownership of their learning process (Edward et al., 2018). Integration Online platforms for self-directed learning and classroom activities for group discussions and hands-on projects, educators can cater to different learning styles and promote deeper engagement and understanding (Kaur, 2013).

Materials and Methods

As part of this collective case study, reflective thematic analysis (RTA) is used to identify patterns, similarities and differences in the use of blended learning to promote English learning. This approach is particularly suited to the study of educational practices and experiences, as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the subjective experiences and interpretations that shape the meaning of blended learning in real-world educational contexts (Braun and Clarke, 2019).

Reflective thematic analysis involves comparing and contrasting different components and approaches discussed in textual data generated from different research sources such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Sage, Tylor & Francis, Springer and Wiley. The collected studies covered various dimensions of blended learning, including strategies, effectiveness, components, delivery styles, and limitations and challenges. Each of these dimensions provided valuable information about the different aspects of blended learning.

Reflective thematic analysis was used to code and categorize the data collected to identify key themes and patterns related to blended learning. This process went through four stages: familiarization with the collected data, generation of codes, identification of themes and presentation of results. The triangulation of the data collected from the process of observation and interviews with the textual data collected from different research sources and the theoretical foundations of blended learning allowed to validate and validate the information about the use of blended learning in English lessons.

Familiarization with the Data

Understanding the data is essential to generate meaningful themes and insights later in the analysis process (Braun and Clarke, 2019). This step begins with an in-depth analysis of the generated data, which helps build a solid foundation for subsequent analytical steps. The process involves reviewing, reading, and re-reading all data generated through the observation process, teacher interviews, and textual data collected to become fully familiar with related ideas, concepts, and knowledge using integrated learning in English lessons. This ensures that the insights derived are based on a thorough understanding of the data collected on the components and delivery styles of blended learning.

During this phase, notes were taken and important conclusions, suggestions and recommendations were recorded. This step was necessary to effectively organize and summarize the information. This methodical approach facilitated a deeper understanding of the content and provided a clear point of reference for subsequent stages of analysis, including code generation and theme identification. The notes and highlights were valuable tools for keeping track of important information and allowed me to easily review and revise key aspects of the studies.

As a result, contextual knowledge that takes into account the cultural, social and organizational context of the data generated allowed the identification of initial patterns or recurring themes. These identified patterns and themes were used in the coding process. Therefore, recognizing the patterns and themes identified, a preliminary coding framework was created. The preliminary framework helped in the systematic and thorough categorization and analysis of the data generated. Insights obtained through the discovery

process were important in shaping the coding process and helped to identify proposed themes. This step made it possible to place the results in a broader framework such as the TPACK model of Mishra and Koehler (2009). It also identified the factors that influenced teachers' views and attitudes towards the use of blended learning in their English lessons.

Generating Codes

The initial stage of coding began with dividing the data into meaningful segments. This is a meticulous process in which the collected data is carefully broken down into smaller, more manageable pieces. This involved dividing the larger mass of data into smaller and more meaningful segments so that they could be easily analyzed and interpreted and not overwhelmed by the volume of information collected for the purposes of this study (Anthony et al., 2022).

The process was carried out by highlighting phrases, expressions or even words related to the components, benefits, characteristics, delivery methods, results and other important aspects of blended learning. Highlighting these specific pieces of data helped to distinguish important details about different aspects of blended learning. This detailed approach allowed for a more accurate identification of key data elements (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Looking at particular phrases, expressions or words, it was ensured that no essential information was overlooked during the coding process.

For example, the initial codes covered the components to be included in any blended learning model. These components include various elements such as teaching strategies, technological tools and teaching approaches. By identifying these components, the essential elements that make up effective blended learning models could be determined. This categorization helped answer the first research question to understand the basic aspects of blended learning and its implementation in educational settings.

Initial codes also included mixed styles of course delivery. Different delivery styles such as synchronous and asynchronous learning, hybrid models, the amount and nature of face-to-face versus virtual activities, and flipped classes were among the aspects coded. By identifying these delivery styles, I was able to analyze the different approaches used in blended learning environments. This helped me answer the second research question understand the diversity and adaptability of blended learning models, emphasizing the different ways in which they can be implemented.

All possible codes were created to ensure that all models and topics related to blended learning were covered. Generating frequent codes was essential to account for the diversity and complexity of the data. The creation of a good range of codes allowed a comprehensive analysis, ensuring that all possible themes and models related to the concept of blended learning were considered (Anthony et al., 2022). This comprehensive approach to coding helped build a rich and detailed understanding of the data, which is essential for subsequent stages of analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Table 1 shows some examples of initial codes generated from the data.

Table 1
Samples of the initial codes

	Code	Definition	Examples
1-	F2F activities	Refers to the activities that are implemented within the classroom environment based on physical presence of both teacher and students.	- Students benefit from group discussions as they communicate and collaborate with each other face to face. - Lab experiments provide students with dimensions that are not available in the virtual labs like smell and sense of touch of the real material.
2-	Virtual activities	Refers to activities that employ digital tools, spaces and content as part of the learning process.	- Interactive games motivate students to work actively, - online collaboration allows students to collaborate outside the classroom boundaries and at any time, - online practice exams can help in preparing students for general exams.
3-	Digital content	Refers to all sorts of digital content of texts, images, videos, audios, graphs…etc.	- E-books are dynamic enough to support student learning as they present texts with videos and animations to illustrate certain concepts. - Students can use video tutorials as remedial and enriching learning resources.
4-	Digital spaces	Refers to all the spaces that allow students access digital content like websites, applications, simulators, digital libraries…etc.	- Learning management system helps in tracking student learning all the time. - Simulators approximate difficult concepts and make it easier for learners to understand abstract concepts. - Employing search engines in the learning process is part of the real-life learning.
5-	Digital tools	Refers to all the tools that enable creating or accessing digital content over the digital spaces like computers, tablets, cameras, microphones…etc.	- Classrooms should be equipped with various digital tools and basically computers, Internet and smart screens. - Cameras and microphones enhance virtual collaboration as it makes it more realistic and not dependable on text collaboration only.
6-	Coursebooks	Refers to all printed and digital books that are designed to cover the course material.	- Many publishing companies offer coursebooks in both printed and digital versions.

	Code	Definition	Examples
7-	Notebooks	Refers to paper and digital notebooks	- Students need to keep a notebook to jot down ideas and take notes. It is an essential learning tool for every student. - Digital notepads can help using the notes for various purposes.
8-	Teaching aids	Refers to physical and virtual aids used to illustrate concepts and skills.	- The physical aids like drawings, models, and realia are efficient tools to illustrate learning concepts. - Virtual aids cannot replace physical aids but they can complement them.

After a process of analyzing the initial codes, it becomes clear that some of these codes can be merged under a code based on the given definitions. This refinement process was essential to simplify the coding framework. Merging similar codes reduces redundancy and creates more robust categories. Eliminating codes that were too similar helped to avoid overlap and confusion during analysis. This step ensured that the coding process was both efficient and effective, facilitating a clearer interpretation of the data. Table 2 illustrates some of the cumulative codes.

Table 2
Merging Similar Initial Codes

Number	New code	Merged codes
1-	Digital Environments	Digital spaces (04) and Learning management system (19)
2-	Independent Learning	Learning autonomy (11) and Learning independence (12)
3-	Implementation Strategies	F2F activities (01), Virtual activities (02), Implementation (16), online learning (23) and distance learning (24)
4-	Educational Tools and Aids	Teaching aids (08), Coursebooks (6), Notebooks (7) and Stationary (09)
5-	Learning Styles	Personalized learning (10), Collaboration (13), and Pedagogy (22)
6-	Learning Outcomes	21st Century skills (15), Learning outcomes (26)

In summary, the initial coding step involved dividing the data into meaningful segments, highlighting relevant information, generating more codes, refining these codes, and clearly defining them (Braun and Clarke, 2019). This comprehensive process allowed for a thorough and systematic analysis of data related to blended learning. Initial codes covered key components and delivery styles of blended learning models, providing a solid foundation for further analysis.

Throughout this process, the research questions on the reconceptualizing of blended learning have guided the research towards codes that go beyond the simple description of current

practices and instead capture innovative ideas or suggestions for improvement. For example, a code like "technological frustration" might be relevant, but a code like "alternative strategies for online engagement" would be more important for recognition.

Identifying Themes

English Based on the theoretical foundations of blended learning and the educational, cultural, social, technological and economic demands of the 21st century, a set of topics has been carefully selected. The selection process was guided by the need to align the topics with the core theories of blended learning, namely constructivism and open learning environments. In addition, contemporary educational needs were considered, such as the need for flexible and inclusive learning environments that meet the diverse needs of students (Liu et al., 2024). Recognized the importance of the context in the formation of educational practices (Liu et al., 2024), cultural and social factors were also considered. Technological advances and economic considerations have also influenced the selection of topics, reflecting the dynamic and evolving nature of the 21st century educational landscape (Liu et al., 2024). Table 3 illustrates some of the themes identified.

Table 3
Samples of the identified themes

Theme	Definition	Supporting Codes
Student Engagement	Student engagement refers to the involvement, interest, and active participation of students in the blended learning environment.	- Increased participation in online discussions. - Struggling with staying motivated. - Preference for interactive content.
Flexibility and Accessibility	This theme encompasses the benefits and challenges related to the flexibility and accessibility of blended learning.	- Ability to learn at own pace. - Challenges accessing reliable internet. - Benefits of recorded lectures.
Instructor Role	This theme focuses on the changing roles and responsibilities of instructors in a blended learning environment.	- Adaptation to online teaching methods. - Providing timely feedback. - Facilitating virtual activities.
Student-Teacher Interaction	This theme covers the dynamics of communication and interaction between students and teachers in a blended learning environment.	- Personalized attention through online platforms. - Reduced face-to-face interaction. - Effective communication channels.
Assessment Methods	Assessment methods refer to the ways in which student learning is evaluated in a blended learning environment.	- Flexibility in submission deadlines - Concerns about academic integrity - Effectiveness of online quizzes
Course Design	Course design refers to the planning, organization, and structuring of course content, activities, and	- Clear and structured course layout - Integration of real-world applications

	assessments in a blended learning environment.	- Balance between online and offline activities
Learning Environment	Learning environment refers to the physical and virtual spaces where learning occurs in a blended model.	- Creating a conducive home study space - Distractions in the home environment - Campus facilities for online learning support
Learning Preferences	This theme explores the various preferences students have regarding different aspects of blended learning.	- Preference for face-to-face over online components - Appreciation for blended approach - Desire for more synchronous sessions

Results and Discussion

RQ1: What are the essential components to be incorporated in any successful blended learning model for English language teaching?

Based on the theories of constructivism and open learning environments (OLE) and the intervention of modern educational technologies, modern learning ecosystems are designed to focus more on student engagement and productivity than in the basic perception of information (Marsh, 2012). Berry (2010) defines modern learning systems as students mastering content while producing, synthesizing and evaluating information from a wide variety of topics and sources with an understanding and respect for the world around them. Therefore, they offer new learning opportunities for students that have never been offered by traditional approaches and methodologies.

Blended learning, which combines face-to-face classroom interaction with virtual interaction, creates the connection between classroom learning and real life that constructivists desire. It provides students with the tools to validate academic learning by searching for real-world resources online, connecting with experts for answers to understanding and understanding concepts, collaborating with peers around the world to solve problems, and thinking about them. learn through digital publishing tools. Blended learning supports student learning by transferring learning from the classroom to the outside world by meeting their expectations and motivating them to participate in the learning process; it allows them to perceive concepts and construct meaning more easily than in a traditional school setting (Dziuban, Hartman, Juge, Moskal, & Sorg, 2006). It also offers students more opportunities to learn through it open sources that encourage independence and mobility (Azizan, 2010).

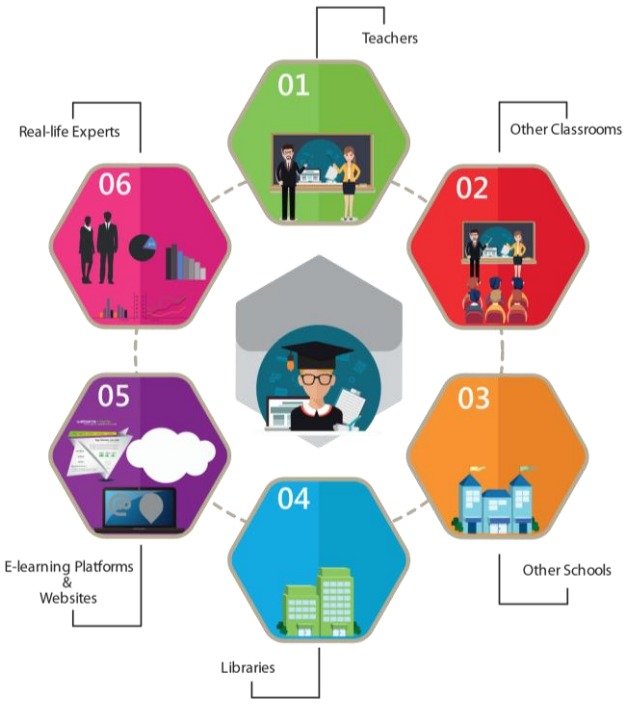

Fig. 1: Student Centered Learning

The 21st century, heavily dominated by a technology-driven economy, demands a learning ecosystem that meets its demands and needs. Therefore, the learning ecosystem should include digital learning components such as digital content, digital environments and digital pedagogy in addition to physical learning components such as classrooms, school tools, printed book materials and teaching materials (Costley & Lange, 2017). These components must be integrated into an organized learning process to enable students to pursue learning independently and develop a connection between what they are learning and the demands of the real world (The NETS, 2008). These components should support the acquisition of 21st century skills that focus heavily on the appropriate and effective use of technology, digital citizenship and learning skills in reading, writing, numeracy, creativity, critical thinking, communication , leadership and collaboration (Ellis, 2017).

The content must include changes that ensure diversification, which means the transition from full reliance on printed texts to the use of digital content. Digital content surpasses traditional content in that it is extremely dynamic. This dynamism means that digital content can constantly evolve and interact with students, keeping up with all the new developments in different subjects. Unlike traditional static content, which can become outdated, digital content can be updated and expand in real time to include the latest information and research. This ensures that students always have access to the most up-to-date knowledge, making their learning experience more relevant and comprehensive.

In addition, the digital content does not rely mainly on a single source of information, but extends to several sources characterized by their authenticity and relevance to the practical reality of different sciences. This multidimensional approach enhances the learning process by diversifying perspectives and innate knowledge. It gives students the opportunity to relate information, critically analyze different perspectives, and develop a more comprehensive understanding of the topic.Integrating diverse and reliable sources also improves the

reliability and accuracy of information that interests students, further consolidating their learning base.

Digital learning environments, such as smart classrooms and open learning spaces, facilitate interactive and flexible learning experiences. Smart classrooms combine physical and digital learning tools that promote the learning process to improve student engagement and participation. In the smart classroom environment, tools such as interactive smart screens, tablets, virtual reality glasses and cameras are integrated with a physical environment that includes printed texts, notebooks and real objects, creating a dynamic and immersive learning environment. Together, they enable real-time collaboration by allowing students to actively participate in discussions, share their work instantly, and receive immediate feedback from their peers and teachers.

Using both physical and digital components, the smart classroom environment promotes a deep understanding of the material as it requires students to actively contribute to the learning process. Such an environment gives students the opportunity to interact with externally imposed contexts, externally induced contexts or even individually created contexts, highlighted by (Hannafin et al., 1999).

Open learning spaces are an essential part of blended learning because they provide a more tailored and learner-centered learning environment. These spaces are dynamic and can be configured to accommodate different teaching methods and learning activities, such as project-based learning, personalized learning, flipped learning, collaborative learning, multiple intelligences and differentiated learning. The flexibility of open learning spaces encourages creativity and innovation as learners have the flexibility to choose the framework that best suits their learning styles and needs. These spaces help students access digital resources, conduct research and collaborate with others while fostering interactive and engaging learning experiences.

Learning management systems (LMS) are another important digital environment in blended learning environments. These systems support personalized learning journeys by responding to the different needs and abilities of students. LMSs allow teachers to provide personalized lessons for each student, track their progress, and provide personalized feedback. The personalized approach ensures that each student can learn at their own pace, review difficult concepts and explore topics of interest more deeply.

Digital learning environments also include online forums and virtual classrooms that help students extend their learning experience beyond the physical classroom space. Allow students the continuous interaction and support that Hannafin et al. (1999) described as tools for cognitive processing and manipulation of information and communication with their teachers, peers and real-world experts. Digital pedagogy is the third element that must be integrated into blended learning contexts. Digital pedagogy promotes smart learning more than just using technology in the classroom. This means that the smart classroom involves a transformative strategy that exploits the existence of technology "to enable and transform teaching, learning and the curriculum" (Carril, Sanmamed & Sellés, 2013). It presents a methodology for "working in the digital world" more than the acquisition of ICT skills (Istrate, 2022, p. 3). It is also defined as the process of converting “technical skills, teaching practices

and knowledge of curriculum design to make them more suitable for digital learners" (Tondeur et al., 2017, p. 562). If digital pedagogy is used effectively, it helps to support, improve, facilitate and transform teaching and learning "to provide rich, diverse and flexible learning opportunities for a digital generation" (Bećirović,2023, p. 5). It also helps create meaningful and focused learning and provides contextualized and authentic assessment. Digital pedagogy combines a mix of different modern teaching and learning strategies and aligns them with curriculum and assessment systems; it focuses on "personalized teaching and learning, intellectual rigor and engagement, connection to global contexts, and supportive and collaborative classroom environments."(Bećirović, 2023, p. 9).

Digital pedagogy is a combination of traditional pedagogy and technological practices in the educational process. It takes into account contemporary learning objectives and new teaching tools that require the improvement and improvisation of new teaching strategies (Bećirović, 2023). When planning blended learning lessons, digital pedagogy replaces traditional pedagogy as it requires teachers to effectively use various digital tools and virtual activities in their practices. Teaching (Kinchin, 2016). Must be able to evaluate and select appropriate tools and activities, physical or virtual, to be used to achieve different learning outcomes, taking into account certain issues, such as the role of students in the learning process, the time available for face-to-face activities, extending learning beyond the boundaries of the classroom and using tools available in the school environment (Kinchin, 2016).

RQ2: How should these components be incorporated to maximize the benefits of blended learning in ELT settings?

New educational technologies have a real impact on the creation of "effective teaching and learning" (Mirra, 2018, p. 3), although the excessive use of tools without a clear strategy for their use raises some concern (Mirra, 2018). For this reason, several learning and teaching approaches have been introduced to meet the requirements of the application of these technologies in the classroom and outside the classroom, such as blended learning (Mirra, 2018).

Blended learning, which involves the integration of physical and virtual activities and interaction, may be the best answer to the demands of modern learning ecosystems. Like any learning approach, it involves setting clear learning objectives and designing activities that meet these objectives. However, it differs from the traditional approach in that the activities are arranged to be provided in a face-to-face environment and in a virtual or online environment; is an integration between traditional pedagogy and digital pedagogy (Shibley, 2014), where virtual activities can be carried out before, during and after face-to-face lessons in a blended learning environment (Istrate, 2022, p. 3)

Like other approaches involving virtual learning, blended learning aims to expand the time and space in which students collaborate, communicate and reflect (Chigeza & Halbert, 2014). It gives them the opportunity to use the tools available, digital or physical, in their learning process. Blended learning responds to the need to fill the gap that may arise due to the particular use of face-to-face or online approaches. Therefore, blended learning can be considered an effective equivalent of the two formats because it is characterized by the optimal integration of face-to-face and online learning or combining their advantages to produce a highly effective learning environment (Adams, Randall and Traustadottir, 2015).

It is easy to see that in the blended learning model, no approach, face to face or online, is superior to the other; they are both equally important and play distinct roles in creating better learning opportunities. Neither can replace the other and both functions respectively as part of a holistic design that carefully integrates learning activities to serve optimal student learning (Saghafi, Franz, & Crowther, 2014).

Bolsen, Evans and Fleming (2016) believe that online learning, both synchronous and asynchronous, without a face-to-face learning environment, reduces the physical and personal interaction between students and teachers, which is a particularly important part of the learning process. will learn regarding the aspect of communication as part of the learning experience. At the same time, online learning environments still have unique advantages in relation to "changing the learning environment into a more social, flexible and personal space" (Gonzales-Gomez et al., 2016, p. 70) which help support a student centered., problem solving, and the social constructivist approach to learning that characterizes contemporary learning models (Gonzales-Gomez et al., 2016). As a result, blended learning offers a model associated primarily with "the accessibility and flexibility of 24-hour seminar spaces - virtual or face-to-face - which are recognized as essential for students."(Nortvig, Petersen, & Hattesen, 2018, p. 49).

Depending on the nature of each of the face-to-face and virtual environments, learning activities can be sequenced accordingly. Since the face-to-face setting requires the physical presence of students and teachers, the activity must meet the needs of this learning space. Thus, learning activities should include proactive skills that require physical activity, collaboration that includes discussion, group and pair work, and spontaneous responses. However, and because virtual activities can be carried out inside and outside the confines of the classroom, these activities should focus on extending the learning process to a less rigidly constructed and controlled learning environment. These virtual learning activities provide “constructive discussions, archiving of design development, and review of individual or peer progress” (Saghafi, Franz, & Crowther, 2014, p. 566). Therefore, the sequence of activities must follow a careful process so that no there is no overlap and virtual learning does not become a repetition of what was learned in face-to-face learning. Figure 2 illustrates a suggested distribution of face-to-face activities and virtual activities in blended learning.

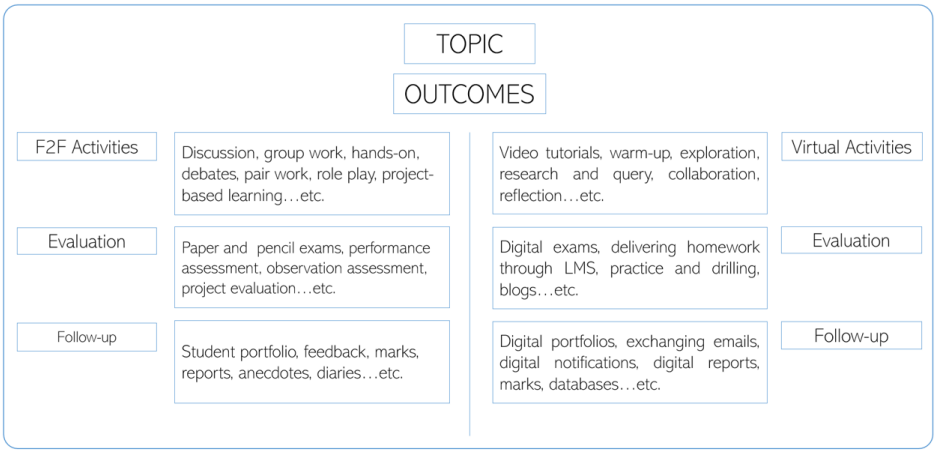

Figure. 2: Outline for the Face-to-Face Activities and Virtual Activities

This leads us to the fact that teachers, in this sense, are mainly responsible for the success of the blended learning framework (Olsson et al., 2016). For example, Randall and Traustadottir, (2015) stated that blended learning had little impact on student performance in a microbiology course implemented under blended learning. They were less successful than students who took the same course in a face-to-face setting. They show less interaction with course activities and less participation as they feel they could deal with topics outside the classroom, which consequently affected their overall success. Similarly, Powers et al. (2016) reported that students in a psychology course implemented with blended learning also scored lower than students taking the course in a face-to-face setting due to the fact that the concepts of Difficult Questions were omitted for students who understand them without direct and clear instructions. by the teacher during face-to-face sessions. In contrast, Ryan et al. (2016) pointed out that students performed better using a blended learning framework because their learning is supported by virtual tools that give them a better chance to collaborate asynchronously and independently with Facebook and Web 2.0 media. It can be concluded that blended learning is influenced by the different circumstances and contexts that surround it, such as the attitude, knowledge and skills of teachers in mixing their subjects, as well as the attitude of students towards this. These are really the dominant factors influencing their success. Fang et al. (2024) found that insufficient teaching skills of teachers pose a challenge to the success of online learning.

Abugohar et al. (2019) pointed out that English language teachers have weaknesses and insufficient real experience in the integration of technology in their teaching process, which affected the benefit of these technologies to improve the language learning process. Therefore, English teachers should be trained and prepared to integrate different technologies in their classroom environment, as indicated by Ab Rashid (2016), to achieve better results with their students. From another perspective, Tengku Sharif et al. (2022) indicate that the needs of the students also have an impact on the success of the application of blended learning, as they are influenced by the gender, age and maturity of the students.
Flipped learning, which is a variation of blended learning, increases the learning space of students. Although this is a new strategy, its deep roots date back to the theories of cognitive psychologists such as Piaget, Neisser, Pearson and Anderson in the 1970s and 1980s, who agreed that a student's knowledge helped him to better learn new concepts. easier, which is the basic concept of flipped learning (Alan, 2005). This gives us an idea Modern learning systems overlap with conventional teaching and learning approaches because they "overlap with active learning, cooperative learning, inquiry-based learning, and flipped learning" (Mary, 2016, p.4784).

Flipped learning can be defined as a learning model in which most classroom activities take place outside the classroom and before the lesson begins. However, face-to-face interaction in the classroom is mainly aimed at discussing the proposed lesson (Honeycutt, 2014). It aims to give students more time, space and opportunities to observe, perceive, research, evaluate and reflect on the different concepts they are expected to learn. It helps overcome the barriers of time and space that prevent personalized learning (Honeycutt, 2014).

Through flipped learning, teachers can provide students with prerequisite learning to ensure they cover the basics and can learn new concepts fluently, introduce concepts that require analysis and reasoning, and give them the ability to manipulate their learning so that when

they come face to face. face with the class, they are ready to answer different questions and collaborate with others to develop their skills and knowledge (Honeycutt & Garret, 2014).

The flipped classroom can be administered with or without computers and the Internet; the idea is to shift the power of learning from inside the classroom to outside the classroom and to the student who is at the center of the learning process; which shows that "educational tools are not limited to technology and computers" (Bergmann, & Sams, 2012). Through the rotation process, teachers work to engage students in the learning process by introducing them to lower-level thinking skills. Represented in memorization, understanding and application before the beginning of the lesson and working with them on higher level thinking skills, represented in analysis, evaluation and innovation during the lesson (Honeycutt & Garrett, 2014); the activities that can be reversed are those that do not require the existence, knowledge or skills of the teacher to be, they can be perceived by the students themselves (Bergmann, & Sams, 2012).

Strong constructivists are against flipped learning because they believe that students are not qualified enough to take control of their learning process as this approach requires (Honeycutt and Garret, 2014). It is claimed, which is almost true, that the information provided by various websites and platforms are not always complete and accurate, while students do not have enough knowledge to distinguish the correct information and what is not. They find that it breaks the norms of education, because they do not have a strong control over what is presented to students (Honeycutt & Garret, 2014). However, these concerns can be addressed by emphasizing the role of teachers as facilitators (Moiso, 2024). Teachers, in this instructional framework, are required to provide students with appropriate learning resources, enhance students' critical thinking skills, assess and evaluate students' understanding, and provide appropriate and immediate feedback (Moiso ,2024).

Flipped learning makes the teacher's job more interesting, but not easier. This requires careful planning, rigorous implementation and monitoring. With flipped learning, the student and teacher work on a context rather than a specific concept or skill. This means that a given context can include a variety of skills and concepts to be learned in a framework that emphasizes the relationships between these skills and concepts (Honeycutt & Garret, 2014). Connected learning, which uses the latest technology, is another variant of blended learning. It gives students more space to collaborate, share and explore new experiences outside of the classroom environment. It moves learning from the confines of the classroom into the real world, as students can meet virtually with each other or with adult experts to discuss ideas, research information, brainstorm, and build experiences real life (Moran, 2018). Linked learning is supported on sociocultural learning theory, which places a high value on learning embedded in real-life experiences and practices; it is "learning that is socially anchored, motivated by interest, and oriented toward educational, economic, or political opportunities" (Ito et al., 2013 p. 6). Through this approach, students have the opportunity to connect with real-world experts as part of their academic learning to broaden their learning and make it more meaningful and useful. They work in real projects that can be adopted by companies and help them advance in their professional career; "they can access a large amount of knowledge and be participants, creators and artists engaged in active and direct inquiry" (Ito et al., 2013 p. 9).

On the other hand, connected learning, which relies heavily on digital media and the virtual world, is seen as a distraction from "academic learning, civic engagement and future possibilities" (Ito et al., 2013, p.25). There are also problems related to "social injustice" (Ito et al., 2013, p. 25) related to obtaining different levels of education that differ from one social background to another. Policy makers, parents and educators are concerned about the dominance of uncontrolled forms of education and learning that can lead to a worsening of the situation in schools, since students can surf the Internet and find resources and meet experts outside of teachers' advice (Ito et al., 2013).

These concerns can be addressed by providing a balanced approach that utilizes virtual learning resources within the traditional teaching approach. This balanced approach must integrate digital technologies into the structured curriculum. Again, emphasizing the facilitator role of teachers, they can select and recommend reliable and quality online resources that match the curriculum. In addition, this approach should focus on digital literacy and critical thinking skills to allow students to assess the credibility of sources, recognize misinformation, and surf the Internet responsibly. Finally, the approach should include clear guidelines and policies to address issues such as screen time, appropriate content, and academic integrity.

Conclusion

Re-conceptualizing blended learning involves a comprehensive and progressive approach that pushes the traditional boundaries of education. Rapidly evolving digital technologies and growing student diversity require more tailored and personalized blended learning frameworks. These frameworks should consider the components that will be involved in blended learning contexts, such as content (digital and traditional), environment (virtual and physical) and pedagogy (digital)and traditional), and how these components should be integrated to obtain optimal results from the use of blended learning. Blended learning is a student-centered learning approach that benefits from the use of digital technology and didactic strategies that support the differentiation represented in learning styles, learning rates and teaching preferences.

Identifying the right digital tools to integrate into blended learning is not enough to make blended learning courses successful. Teachers need to know how to properly integrate these components. Therefore, instructional design strategies become more suitable for blended learning than traditional planning strategies. Teachers must acquire the skills and knowledge to combine and use different digital technologies and physical tools in their teaching practices. It is not only technical skills that are needed to succeed in blended learning courses, but also a deep understanding of how to design and implement inclusive and equitable blended learning experiences. Therefore, the professional development of teachers is one of the essential factors of this reconceptualization.

Policy makers, educators and high technology professionals must collaborate to improve and introduce more flexible and appropriate blended learning models. The educational community can identify best practices, address current challenges, and introduce new solutions through a process of progressive assessment and evaluation of current practices. The ultimate goal of reimagining blended learning is to create educational ecosystems that support lifelong learning and adaptability. Reconceptualizing blended learning in depth gives

teachers the ability to successfully achieve the proposed learning outcomes. It also equips students with the skills, knowledge and mindset needed for the complex and dynamic learning environment of the 21st century.

In conclusion, re-conceptualizing blended learning is an ongoing process that requires engaging in student-centered learning approaches that include flexibility, creativity, and collaboration. This requires putting students' needs at the center of every learning process and supporting them with digital technologies and face-to-face interactions to present more inclusive, effective and engaging learning experiences.

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