Effectiveness of Blended learning in redefining the learners' attitude and motivation towards Second Language learning

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Abstract

Teaching English as the second language to the millennial learners is of a great challenge. The students of today prefer highly interactive, experiential and collaborative learning which they find it comfortable with the use of technology. They are simply called as digital literates. Blended Learning is a great platform for the present generation learners which allows to achieve better performance of the learners through both the instrumental and intrinsic motivations depending on their attitude towards acquiring the second language in varied atmosphere with them providing flexible schedule of learning, and for the educators to have a set clear expectations and goal to teach by knowing how to teach the target language to the current generation learners. This study is a descriptive review based study which would impose the gratification of the second language educators, challenges faced by the second language educators, blended learning tools, motivation and attitude of the learners and the educators, technological awareness of the learners and the educators, with the defensive support of the study conducted by Victoria R. Hamilton University of Northern Iowa on Blended learning and second language acquisition in the classroom.

Key words: Blended Learning, Motivation, Attitude, Language acquisition

L2-Language two (second language)
CALL- Computer Assisted Language Learning
SLA- Second Language Acquisition

Introduction

Teaching the twenty- first century brains: "Modern Learners are highly challenging and that the learners are smart using their smart phones for getting just-in-time responses for their queries. Here is where the need for a

shift from a monotonous way of instruction and command to an innovative method of what and how to do it newly strikes a person's mind, especially in the field of education. This striking thought has brought in a fabulous trend of mixing teaching and learning to have a change in the better achievement of the learners and that is what is called as Blended learning. It is synonymously known as hybrid, technology mediated, web-enhanced, mixed- mode instructions of learning.

The beginning of this hybrid method was first developed in the 1960's, but did not get its shape till 1990's. The hybrid method of learning underwent many changes in name and initially the term blended learning sounded vague and in the year 2006, with the publication of the first handbook of blended learning by Bonk and Graham where Graham challenged the wideness and vagueness of the term's definition and hence termed as 'blended learning systems'. It is in a report 'defining blended learning' Norm Friesen states that in its present form blended learning designates the variety of possibilities presented by combining internet and digital media with an established classroom forms that needs the physical co-presence of teacher and students.

Blended learning is an organised educational programme with three parts integrated in it which are, firstly students could learn with some elements of students control over time, and the three Ps' (place, path and pace).An individual learner has his own liberty of learning which would produce learners autonomy to a greater extent ,secondly a straight forward element where online, that is away from classroom learning happens and thirdly an integrated learning experience which links the face-to-face and the web-based learning.

Why do we need blended learning?

The technological innovations have influenced its impact in teaching and learning as shown in studies that have strongly defended the greatness and effectiveness of blended learning. This effectiveness was initially connected to the quality of the learning experience, which as Wend (2006) said the variety of experiences within the university's concerns wherein students perceive and interact; thereby in turn affecting their learning chances. In order to provide good learning experiences few factors to be taken in to consideration such as technology, the structure of the course, the instructor, technical aid, assignments (Lionarakis and Parademetriou 2003), student engagement (Oliver and Herrignton 2003) and learning flexibility.

As blended learning has shown a positive and considerable effect on the learning process. Harvard Business School faculty DeLacey and Leonard (2001) stated that students not only learned much when online sessions were added to traditional courses, but their interaction and satisfaction of learning improved as well. Young (2002) stated that not all students learn the same way; therefore traditional approach of learning is not ideal for all students. Blended learning gives good guidance to online learning by collaborating the face-to-face learning, it supplies flexibility and accessibility to traditional learning by implementing the web-based learning.

Blended learning is an appropriate method for distance learning programmes which may not provide the good learning atmosphere that the students may need. Sharpe et al. (2006) stated that this type of learning would be helpful to handle larger group size. Owston, Garrison and Cook (2006) conducted a study on blended learning in Canadian Universities where it was observed that face-to-face contact was needed for some first-year students who needed guidance to a greater extent which gave rise to a transformation of fully online course to a blended format. This was supported by the studies conducted at Stanford University and the University of Tennessee, which was further recognised by Singh and Reed (2001,6) stating that "these researches give us great support that blending not only provide us the ability to be more efficient in delivering learning, but more effective."

Blended learning is a method or an activity that mixes online and traditional face-to-face (de leng et al. (2010). In order to create an effective teaching and learning online learning is fused with traditional face-to-face instruction. So and Brush (2008) claims that this method is effective in facilitating collaborative learning. Besides, cooperative learning which takes careful designing of activities for learners allowing them to reflect on and evaluate their work in the group, while giving suggestions for better improvisation (Liao,2006). Liang (2010) and Warschauer (1996) stated that the online assessment for peer evaluation as an interchange to face-to-face communication could increase learners' motivation, better involvement, and mingling. Lee (2008) stated that L2 teachers must be careful of their assessment practices' influence on students' attitudes and opportunities.

Second Language Acquisition

Language is the mode to convey our thoughts both verbally and nonverbally. It is easy for anyone to learn the mother tongue which is known as the first language but when it comes to acquire the other language especially English which is commonly called as the second language or a foreign language it is difficult and the psychological factors of an individual play a major role in acquiring the second language.

Figure.1: The major psychological factors in second language acquisition: attitude and motivation.
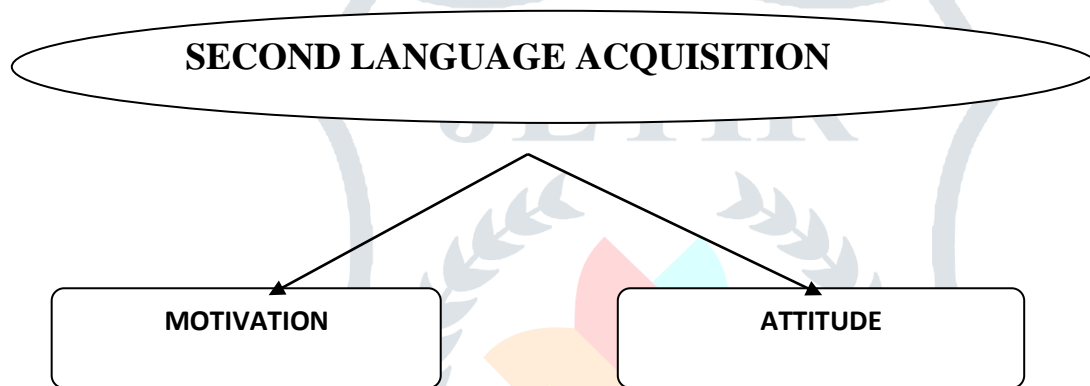
The above given figure 1 shows that the two major psychological factors affecting second language acquisition are motivation and attitude. In the process of learning a language it is easy if the learner is found with right motivation. To state the reviews all learners, educators, material developers, researchers say that motivation plays a major role in mastering a second or a foreign language.

Motivation

According to Pourhosein Gilakjani, Leong and Saburi (2012), the achievement of anything relies on the extent to which a person tries to reach their goal, along with their drive to do so. In general it is referred to as the impulse that generates the action- as motivation. It is the force that arouses, stimulates, and triggers the action of a person. To define motivation Pardee (1990) said that it is what induces a person to do in a particular way or develop a liking for specific behaviour.Oxford and Shearin (1994) defined motivation as a desire to fulfill an objective, combined with the energy to work towards that set objective.

To state further, motivation can be divided in to two basic types: intrinsic or integrative and extrinsic or instrumental motivation. Gardner and Lambert (1959) as cited in Pourhosien Gilakjani, Leong, and Saburi, 2012 , who stated that integrative motivation refers to self drive for achieving any desired goal , whereas instrumental motivation arises out of essentiality to do things either for functional or for any other external reasons leading to attainment of goals, rewards etc.

Attitude

To define attitude it is a set of beliefs and can be classified in to three as positive, negative and neutral attitude. In the process of language learning learners' attitude play a significant role that is attitude determines the learners' ability and desire to learn a language. Transforming negative attitude to positive attitude towards learning is a challenging task of the educator or the teacher. 'Attitude' is one of the most essential and influential characteristics of one's personality comprising of psychological, emotional and behavioural features. Attitude plays a significant role in learning a foreign language. It has a major impact in the arousal of interest and drive towards learning. EFL has been an area of interest for research for so many years and most of the researchers have exerted their ability to research on it, but Gardener (1985) presented the real way for many researchers to undertake studies that focus on motivation and attitude. The researcher says that attitude is a component of motivation in language learning. According to him, motivation comprises of favourable attitudes to learn the language. The researcher further says that learning a second language is determined by the attitude of the learner's attitude towards foreign people in general and language in specific.

There are few challenges to define attitude in learning process. The successful incorporation of CALL is based largely on the educators' attitude, who eventually determines how they are used in the classroom (Albirini, 2006). Having the psychological factors in mind, to enhance the learning process, to transform the traditional classroom teaching to an innovative teaching-learning process it is suggested that blended learning would be effective.

Blended learning and Second language acquisition

The Centre for Language Teaching Advancement (2014), stated that the learning of second language probably include memorisation, application of grammatical structures and lists of vocabulary. It has been stated that languages are thought to be learned by grasping messages and providing an understandable listening and reading chances (Van Patten, 2017; Krashen, 1985).It is closely observed that the second language learners are like babies who would hear lots of language prior to talking, and they are successful as learners. Van Patten (2017) says that   according to him to approach acquisition, the learners must comprehend much input through reading and listening so that they could imitate and absorb the naturality of the language and its usage (Krashen, 1998). It is impossible to separate the four skills (LSRW) and to understand the text being conveyed is the primary stage in acquiring the language and then only comes the appropriate response to establish communication in the context of communication says Chapelle, C .A, (2009), Van Patten,(2017).

Blended learning is one of the learning feasibility for students consisting of multiple fusion of face-to-face (virtual) and in-person and independent student online-time (Conrad and Donaldson, 2012; Rice, 2012). Most of the studies that speak about blended learning comparing to other learning system and terms it as 'traditional learning'. This has made Alasraj and Alharbi (2014), differentiate the terms traditional and blended ways of learning. Traditional learning happens only in a classroom and in –person, and viewed blended learning is a combination of both traditional learning and internet-based learning.

One of the reviews raised three queries regarding perceptions, engagement and the outcomes of learners in a blended learning environment. These are to be focused from the educators' interest to imply this blend to their area of expertise and to explore how this blended learning and language acquisition can go together in creating a positive experiences and outcomes. Blended learning consists of many forms of interactions that needs online activity and can, but do not necessitate, face-to-face time meeting as a class (Conrad and Donaldson; 2012; Rice, 2012).

Learners' opinion about Blended Learning

The perceptions of the learners play a major role in determining the blended learning as it has a great impact on the motivation level, willingness to do the task with blended environment (Isiguzel, 2014). Karabulut et al. (2013), uses the term 'expectations' while talking about the learners perceptions. This would comprise of their opinions, beliefs, attitudes, and choices toward blended learning and language acquisition. The learners' perceptions might be influenced by many factors and one such factor is the learner expectations. When the expectations go hand in hand in a blended environment, their overall views were more positive towards blended learning. Blake et al. 2008 said that students who never have had a blended class looked it as a choice that required less work and time invested. At the same time if experienced a blended learning with more work or investment of time than anticipated, they complained of time and workload as a major issue when analysed after the course (Lee &Wallace, 2018). Goertler et al. (2012), stated that not all learners looked at this learning environment positively, though their expectations went well with what happened. According to him not all the students would benefit from such a course format. This blended learning atmosphere has some commanilities with what the literature highlighted as the best practice within a face-to-face traditional classroom atmosphere, best strategies with best utility of the learning environment would engage the learners involving them in social interactions, sense of being responsible, and many other. These outcomes would be possible when there are well designed blended second language acquisition can bring out better results than the traditional way of learning. This reveals that since this type of teaching and learning could yield better outcomes it is recommended that second language learning and blended learning be used to complement each other. The usage of this mixed environment would make the learners engage through social interactions at their own pace and progress towards better achievement, providing space for the introverts and the extroverts. The instructor should always be careful in designing the content which really would bring out better outcome when given to the learners meeting out their expectations. To continue with there are many platforms available for the educators to build in their content which would interest their learners and the available platforms are accessible both in paid and free mode and that opting for institutional support would benefit the instructors in using the available platforms. Few platforms available are Kahoot, turnitin, powtoon, screencast-o-matic, Socrative,

Kitaboo etc. which would all serve an instructor to create their own content matching their learners' crowd to bring out better results in acquisition of second language.

Conclusion

The rapid growth in technology and its influence on teaching and learning is the great talk of these days. Traditional teaching strategies are inadequate in meeting out the demands of the different types of learners and that to achieve better outcomes with the target language inputs making the learners comfortable with feasible environment is all in demand. It is not longer the time to make or to have the students to be the passive listeners of the teacher-centered classroom. Today's students are highly good at using technology and this is the right time for the instructors to be very vigilant in making use of the best available technological sources to have an innovation in conducting their classes with planned set of activities to reach their students and make them better learners and producers of the second language . This is a descriptive review based study which supports the presenter's idea in enabling the enhancement of the psychological factors attitude and motivation of the language teachers and learners. The papers referred to were all related to second language acquisition. To extend further, one should have in mind the system of education, designed curriculum, content, hours to complete the set or the framed syllabus, better learner outcome, dedication, interest , creativity, time sparing etc. to provide the best for the second language learners to bring in a change in SLA.

Acknowledgement

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