

Practice and Principle of Blended Learning in ESL/EFL Pedagogy: Strategies, Techniques and Challenges

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Abstract—The present study aims to investigate the efficacy of the Blended learning or Hybrid learning. It also explores the practical challenges and suggests strategies to implement in the actual classroom. Additionally, the study throws light on the advantages and disadvantages of online pedagogy following qualitative method based on interview method of individuals using or utilized Blended learning in the classroom. The interview was conducted through sending emails and the response was recorded and received. The responses of participants were thoroughly evaluated, analyzed and discussed in detail. The article significantly helps in implementation of Blended learning in classroom pedagogy and allows offering a broad view of how the amalgamation of online teaching is possible in an effective way. It also explores pedagogical concerns of actual classroom situations using Blended learning or relying on online teaching. Learning outcomes depends on how well the approach, method, and technique is used or implemented followed by formative and summative assessments. The study highlights the use of blended learning and difference of relying on online teaching. It is important for the stake holders to realize that here is no escape but to find effective way which can ultimately deliver the expected learning outcomes.

Keywords—blended learning, flipped classroom, self-directed learning, pedagogy, strategies

1 Introduction

The acceptance of English language as lingua franca demands the teachers and students to become a proficient facilitator and active learner. It is the language that creates a kind of bridge between the speaker and listener through which they can exchange their thoughts, feelings, emotions, and information. However, students often face problems to uttering the appropriate language structures despite of having the necessary competency. This happens because students are adapted to what they have been taught over the years in the classroom. The traditional methods of teaching English barely develop or enhance the language skills and its usage in real-life situations. Then, the

questions arise what is the solution? How can it be solved? And what are the measures that need to be taken care of?

Moreover, the introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in classroom pedagogy has positively influenced language teaching across the world. It has simplified the process of learning through its flexibility of accessing anywhere in the world. Simplifying the ICT concept in education is receiving the information through the web, creating educational material on the internet, transmitting among others, communicating with the peers, and collaborating with others to understand it in a better way. Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) also exist in the segment of ICT pedagogy.

Additionally, there are two models of teaching and learning which have emerged or evolved in recent time, the first has been used and the second has still been evolving. One is learning through typical classroom teaching and other is teaching-learning through the internet. The argument is that if there is any existing praxis with the mixture of both the platforms where the learning process of students can be intensified by the effective implementation of strategies in the classroom. Here comes the idea of Blended Learning in the classroom pedagogy because it blends or creates a mixture of both the models like traditional model of teaching in the classroom and modern idea of learning through the online materials and courses.

1.2 Blended learning: Concept and background

Blended Learning integrates the traditional classroom experiences with new innovative learning methods and ideas that have the potential to democratize language learning. It is supported by an intelligent adaptive technology that enables learners to achieve the competence with ease. Adaptive learning technologies are the way through which the learners learn as they want to learn not as the teachers want to teach. Alamri and Watson [1] define adaptive learning technology as “software and online platforms that adjust to individual students’ needs as they learn. Through interacting with the technology, behavioral and cognitive patterns are recorded and personalized learning experiences are shaped accordingly” (p. 7). It also offers student friendly materials accordingly. Through Blended learning, one can support, scaffold learners irrespective of the different background of knowledge and level of understanding.

The concept of Blended Learning can be defined as using online materials and sources as a tool for learning and not necessarily learning about computers or online materials. Garrison and Kanuka [2] defined Blended Learning “the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online experiences” (p. 96). Bliuc et al. [3] describe blended learning as “activities that involve a systematic combination of co present (face to face) interactions and technologically mediated interactions between students, teachers and learning resources” (p. 234). Blended learning can simply be defined as the mixed approach of teaching which incorporates the traditional classroom teaching and online learning in the classroom. It can be explained as an amalgamation of ‘face to face learning’ and ‘web-based learning.’

Blended learning helps to unlock the learning potential of the students and help them to learn with the mixture of real and virtual pedagogy. Amalgamation of online and

web-based materials in the real classroom provides authenticity of the materials which are adapted and graded by the teacher and it also provides an opportunity to have a range of activities, lessons, and topics which can be improvised and used as teaching materials. The students can make use of the content and develop their creativity and appropriateness of language usage in real authentic and spontaneous situations that they encounter in day to day life.

This model of learning empowers students and boosts their confidence. Furthermore, by practicing the complex linguistic structure and their usage inside or outside classroom scenario minimizes the hesitation of the students. “Blended learning will be the new traditional model for course delivery in higher education” [3] [4]. “Courses that integrate online with traditional face-to-face class activities in a planned, pedagogically valuable manner; and where a portion (institutionally defined) of face-to-face time is replaced by online activity” [5] (p. 8).

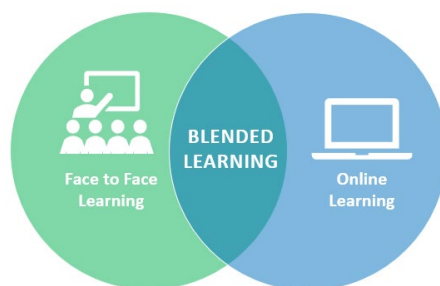


Fig. 1. Blended learning as a model of pedagogy

Furthermore, the idea of using blended learning as a model of pedagogy in the classroom has become an essential requirement in this era of globalization where English is not considered as only a language but a vehicle through which one can access the entire world. It has also become the reason of employability nowadays and is considered a status symbol too. In a situation like this where traditional teaching approaches failed to develop the mutual intelligibility and confidence among students to use language in a spontaneous situation, there is a need to rethink the teaching pedagogy and implement the new trends and techniques which can offer unique ways to express and learn the language in real-life situations. Blended learning as a teaching methodology has the capability and potential to develop the confidence and creativity of the students and also to promote self-directed learning (SDL). It is a purely learner-centred approach which engages students in the classroom and outside to develop language skills.

2 Literature review

Blended learning approach is a latest trend because of the unprecedented situation created by Covid-19 and an unprecedented situation requires an unprecedented measures. Contactless teaching learning can only be possible if one switches regular classroom into a virtual one.

The application of blended learning module in the actual classroom demands a number of aspects which can collectively and collaboratively contribute in achieving the learning outcomes. Osguthorpe and Graham's [7] suggested six reasons: pedagogical richness; access to knowledge; social interaction; personal agency (i.e. learner control and choice); cost effectiveness; and ease of revision. Interestingly the term 'pedagogical richness' is used rather than 'pedagogical effectiveness' [8] (p. 13). As discussed above the module does not have a clear strategy and techniques rather it is a mixture of different aspects which constitute a space or learning environment and the outcomes can be achieved through the effective implementation of necessary strategies. There is a significant gap in the BL approach and its implementation because it is a new phenomenon that is evolving in the academics and still needs a significant effort which can help the academia to learn how to utilize in the classroom pedagogy. The above statement can be supported by the scholars like Graham, [9]; Graham and Allen [10]; Graham, Allen, & Ure, [11], and Osguthorpe and Graham, [12] as they say blended learning module has begun to appear in academic circle recently.

However, a significant amount of research articles and books has been published in the area, but there is no simple and straight forward formula how to implement it in the actual classroom. This is because this approach is amalgamation of a number of factors like classroom infrastructure, students' competence, teachers' technological competence and so on. Individual instructors or facilitators make use of whatever the limited resources available. The present study however discusses and elaborates on use of the blended learning and its advantages and disadvantages. After exploring pertinent literature available on the subject, the researcher has found that the challenges and strategies are not discussed in detail until now. The studies that discuss the challenges of implementing blended method of teaching are limited and insufficient.

BL requires a collective collaboration of a number of aspects which functions as a catalyst. It is a systemic synchronization of factors like the platform which the individual teacher is using, adaptability and accuracy of the teacher and students, internet connectivity so on and so forth. Hofmann [13] accentuates "institutions also need a solid grasp of the advantages and disadvantages of the various delivery methodologies from an instructional perspective, understanding that a single delivery method will probably not be the optimal solution" (p. 7). It is evident by the description given by Hoffmann that the module is a mixture of components which collectively work to ensure the maximum learning outcomes but the need of the hour is to channelize and design process of blending the individual course. The concept is well elaborated by Stein, and Graham, [14], "blending a course is very different from just simply online teaching because it requires a careful evaluation of online and offline environments and requires learning outcomes over technology alongside keeping students engaged" (p. i).

Additionally, the idea of how to blend a course is elaborated by number of scholars but firmly discussed by Graham, et al [15], Porter et al., [16], Porter, et al. [17], Porter and Graham, [18], Halverson, et al., [19]. Additionally, Boelens, et al., [20] asserted that there are four key areas that should be channelize and focused while blending a course. They are fostering an effective learning environment, facilitating interaction, incorporating flexibility, and taking care of students' learning process. The problems faced by students during online teaching-learning and blended learning module have

been addressed by Brown, [21], Broadbent, [22], Prasad, et al., [23], Medina, [24], and Ocak, [25]. They provide a detailed discussion on challenges and problems involved in online teaching-learning and the blended learning. However, they are limited in nature and each one has some limitations. The study of Akçayır & Akçayır, [26] sheds light on the technological challenges of the approach and limitation of flipping the classroom.

“Blended learning offers flexibility, pedagogical richness and increase in cost effectiveness” [27] (p. 3–21); blended learning ensures value interaction and learning engagement [28] (p. 88–89); and it is considered valuable for different sorts of learners [29]. Bernard [30] says that the technical advancement and the role played by artificial intelligence in online platforms changed the scenario. For example it provides a lot of flexibility in the teaching learning process. As Low [31] articulates that the teaching learning process highlights the role of teachers which in post-method era has taken a shift. Like the teachers’ role is to be a guide and facilitator rather than being simply a content provider. From the above discussed literature, it is clear that in post-method era blended learning module is effective in achieving the learning outcome and changing the dynamics of classroom. The holistic approach is capable enough to integrate the language skills and collaborate with the factors which are involved like technological competence of teachers and students, blending course contents, support from the institutions and so on. In this context Allan [32] says “blended learning will make learning more accessible, engaging and relevant. It will provide flexible learning opportunities and reduce time constraint by dropping activities which help students to learn. It will exploit ICT and can be used for big classrooms (p. 2).

The idea of using blended learning in the classroom provides the opportunity to manufacture the learning experiences through the help of online contents and classroom discussions which offer the appropriacy and correctness in learning the language at the suitable time with necessary accuracy for every individual. The term ‘blended learning’ is commonly explained or understood as an amalgamation of traditional teaching plus the use of internet-based teaching.

Blended learning as a strategy and technique of teaching can become effective only if it is used consciously in the classroom pedagogy. It is capable of promoting and developing the group cohesion and collaborative learning. However, in ELT, it can be effective through the integration of the two components i.e. online-learning and face-to-face learning. The idea is to complement each other with the proper use of technology not to replace the efforts of a teacher.

Furthermore, the idea of blending refers to the use of ICT in the teaching methodology because it uses the online web-based learning model. Use of technological advancement and platforms which offer online distance mode learning will have an impact on learning outcomes. Nowadays, at university level ICT and language labs are effectively and rigorously used for English Language Teaching and Training. It is a strong medium which offers authentic materials and native exposure to the non-native students and teachers. O’Toole and Douglas [33] advocate that “Student response to ICT in the classroom is mixed and it is not difficult to find e-learning enthusiasts but hints of concern about the technology are beginning to emerge” (180).

As discussed above, there are no clear instructions of the approach which can be applied. While using it rather as a trial and error method is going accordingly around the globe. Another problem with BL is that there are number of studies which have been done and published in the area which are a repetition of the same idea again and no clear techniques and strategies are established to implement in the classroom pedagogy. It happened because technology is changing at a rapid speed and different platforms are being introduced through which one can teach, conduct, and blend online and offline classes. Take India for example, from 2000 to 2016, there was no such online platform which was used for online teaching but after 2016 the access to the internet and reach to online content increased offering plentiful of options for online pedagogy. And Covid-19 just elevated the game. Platforms like Zoom, Google meet, YouTube, WhatsApp and many more boomed. People started searching for alternatives where they can simply conduct their online classes and share materials. Now the problem is that in ESL settings adequate training is not provided to the teachers and they don't know how to handle the technology in pedagogy. Even in EFL settings teachers are lacking in how to conduct online classes flawlessly. Other related problems faced by teachers are the connectivity problems, unresponsive learners and son on. The respondents for the present study have shared their experiences through an interview questionnaire and the same will be discussed in detail in the present study.

The present study tries to highlight the problems of virtual teaching and importance of blended learning. The study also discusses teaching learning problems and possible solution of how Blended learning can be utilized post pandemic. As discussed above, online options are explored enough to have an idea about what are the ways to use and implement blended learning approach.

The above-discussed ideas clearly hint at the technological competence of the students and teachers who want to use blended learning as a strategy of pedagogy in their classroom. In addition, a country like India which is in the transition phase of technological advancement in education still needs infrastructure, fund, and training courses which allow enriching the teaching learning process. However, very few public universities or some private universities have proper infrastructure and latest technology in their classroom but in semi-urban or rural areas universities do not even have their language labs.

3 Methodology of the study

The hypothesis of the present study is to enquire and investigate the use of Blended learning in a more interesting way along with the holistic process of language teaching/learning in an ESL/EFL classroom and discuss the aspect of using and relying on online based teaching and blending the classroom.

The present study follows the qualitative method of data collection through interviewing the respondents. To collect the responses from the participants, the researcher has developed an interview based questionnaire. Because of the pandemic it was not possible to conduct the physical interview, so digital platforms and email were used to collect the responses. The respondents were given flexibility to record the responses

and sent it through emails and so on. To check the reliability and validity, a pilot study was conducted before the main study. Participants were chosen using the purposive method and questionnaire were sent to collect the responses. Accuracy and appropriacy of the questions were checked after the pilot study. Post pilot study some of the questions were deleted, merged, and some were changed. The ordering of the questions was changed and long questions were shortened. Questions were randomized to seek the exact experiences of the respondents.

Since the study comprises of ESL/EFL aspects of blended learning the participants were chosen taking care of the same. Similarly, the participants were selected using purposive sampling technique. The main study includes twenty-eight (28) participants teaching in ESL and EFL classroom using online or blended learning module. They discussed their experiences and ideas about the approach through the questionnaire. Later, the responses were collected, analyzed and discussed in detail. The inferences of the individual responses are elaborated and made to conclude the present study.

4 Collaboration, synthesis and group cohesion data analysis, discussion, and inferences of questionnaire

The questionnaire for the present study is developed by the researchers in the form of interview. The questionnaire comprises of open-ended set of questions seeking detailed answers from the respondents. It has sixteen questions (16) and each question is dynamic in nature asking more than one aspect of online and hybrid teaching. The participants were provided ample time to reflect and record their experiences about online teaching or blending their courses. The participants were chosen using the purposive sampling technique and only those were chosen who teach online or blend their course using different platform available to them. As the study requires ESL/EFL data, so the aspect of mixing both the pedagogues has taken care and participants were chosen accordingly. Each question is discussed in detail with the responses that was collected from the samples.

The first question in the questionnaire asks general information about online teaching to get an idea of what the respondents think about it. The respondents firmly said that online teaching is something which can be done with internet and virtually. Teacher and students are connected through different platforms. As the nature of the question is dynamic it asks about the platform which respondents generally use to conduct their online classes. The data says that Zoom meetings, Google duo, Google meet, Google classroom, YouTube, WhatsApp, Telegram, Skype, Facebook and Messenger are the platforms which are used in ESL classrooms. They further said that they use pdf materials for uploading and sharing materials, assignments and evaluation. Furthermore, the data shows that teachers who responded to the questionnaire are connected to their students through WhatsApp for better monitoring. The participants from EFL classroom responded that they use Blackboard and Zoom to conduct their classes. The purpose of asking the question is to have an idea about the experiences of the respondents and which platform they used to conduct their classes. This question also serves to get a

familiarity with the idea of online teaching and blended learning and which platforms are used in ESL/EFL context.

The second question asks about the perspective of virtual classes to seek the information whether the participants find it effective or not. However, participants raised concern over the lack of physical classroom atmosphere and presence of students. Even some of them compared online classes to distance mode of learning. Because of the pandemic there is no choice left but to use these options to continue teaching learning process. The second part of the question seeks to know about the effectiveness of the virtual classes. Almost each participant responded negatively and they said if the students are technically good then it helps the teaching process to a great extent for the classroom community and teacher. The number of such students is fewer who are good in managing online classes and most of the students' do not get any assistance from their parents, not knowing how to use the online platforms, and technical problems such as internet speed issues.

One of the participants said virtual classes may work for a short time but isn't fit for a long-term as physical interaction and rapport building is essential in teaching and learning processes. However, it cannot be considered a cost-effective medium as such platforms cannot be accessed by those from unprivileged sections of society. Also, Virtual classes are prone to conditions such as short attention span of the student, technical barriers and so on which can adversely affect such interactions. Moreover, the participants' responses indicate that there is no check and balance in online teaching and accurate assessment is not possible as compared to physical classroom. It is working as a substitute because of the pandemic only. It will take time to develop infrastructures and most importantly mindsets of both teachers and students to have positive impacts on the teaching-learning process.

The third question enquires about having no choice but to conduct online classes using different mediums to continue the teaching learning process. The participants said that they have no choice because of the pandemic but to go for online teaching although they said that virtual classes are prone to conditions such as short attention span of the students, technical barriers of both teachers and students, unavailability of good internet connection and so on which can adversely affect classroom interactions. The particular conditions are not limited to ESL classrooms only. They are even stipulated in EFL context also.

The fourth question seeks to enquire about the advantages of teaching online or blending the course. The participants emphasized that one can get it done anytime anywhere. Lectures can be uploaded, recorded and revisited again and again for future references and revision. Physical space is not an issue in online class. Hundreds of students can come together and join from different locations. It gives teachers an opportunity to deal with innovative technologies and helps in automating various types of assessments sparing more time for significant interactions. Apart from this, it also allows to having collaborative interactions with students. After summarizing the entire responses one can say that it is a flexible medium that allows the stakeholders to conduct classes as per the convenience but there is a gap of training teachers and students to become comfortable with the virtual medium. Computer literacy and knowledge of

the Learning management Systems (LMS) which the individual is using to conduct the class is essential in ESL and EFL contexts.

The fifth question enquires about the problems often faced by the teachers while conducting online classes. The purpose is to collect information about the different problems and challenges faced by teachers while conducting online classes. The participants said that technical barriers could cause communication problems in terms of audio and video, bandwidth and so on which can turn a possibly fruitful interaction into a half-baked idea. Network hindrance is the biggest problem. Prolong use of computer and mobile can have a negative effect on eyes. Another problem is computer literacy which causes a blockage in online teaching or blended learning. Some of the teachers responded that lack of motivation in students is also a problem in teaching. The respondent also said that there is a regular break-down of communication while teaching online because of unstable connection.

The sixth question is intended to know about the preference of the teacher to conduct their online classes post-pandemic because the researcher wants to have a clear idea of the relevance of teaching online. A number of participants said that online classes could not replace the physical classroom. Moreover, each participant said that they will not continue to teach online post pandemic rather will use online mode for assignments and amalgamating syllabi. A few of them responded that they would use online teaching after the pandemic once a week.

The seventh question queries about the problems individual teacher faced while conducting online sessions or classes. This particular question is a replication of question number five to just have an overview of problems on the part of teachers. The participants pointed out the reluctance of students in giving their responses and of course most of them expressed their concern over the technical problems faced during online session. One of the participants opted for audio-lecturing and said it became difficult to know whether or not students are able to absorb all the information provided to them. It was also difficult to know whether they are paying equal attention to all of my lectures or not. The biggest challenge is to keep students engaged and motivated. One could never know if they are actually listening to the teacher or not. Another difficulty is unavailability of the stable internet connection. However, the participants said that online teaching is not a cent percent effective medium but partial use can be effective.

The eighth question introduces the term blended learning or hybrid learning to seek information from the participants if they are familiar with the term or not. The respondents said that they had used it to incorporate different techniques of teaching and to utilize the notion of no one left out. They responded that the hybrid learning module is more interactive and can develop the accuracy and fluency of the students by using PPTs, audio-visual materials, e-resources and so on. It also develops the communication skills of the students. Whereas some of the participants said that they have neither used it nor do they possess the required technical competence and infrastructure.

The ninth question enquires about whether an individual is comfortable in using blended learning approach in the classroom. And the collective responses says that the participants are comfortable but there is a lack of support from the authorities such as providing the necessary infrastructure, language labs with new technology and software, allocation of ample time and so on. Whereas some participants reiterated that

they feel they don't possess the required technical competence to improvise the approach in their classroom.

The tenth question seeks information about the effectiveness of blended learning module. The participants said it was an effective module where the heterogeneous classroom nature would be catered through different assignments and activities discussed in the classroom and practiced online to achieve the maximum learning outcome. It also provides motivation to the students because there is human interaction that works as a force and develops mutual intelligibility. The Blended model is an effective way as it involves activity-based teaching learning which does provide a comprehensive range of ideas and inspiration. An amalgamation of both online and face to face teaching would certainly be effective considering the flexibility it would provide pertaining to the needs of the learners. Furthermore, BL increases the efficiency of the teacher in terms of technological competence. It also increases the interest of the learners as it motivates in learning by doing. Complex topics can be taught through simulation mode which makes the topic easy to understand. It allows students to engage with the material at their own pace, helping to balance a classroom of both slow and quick learners.

Question number eleven makes an exploratory investigation about the learning outcomes that can be achieved from the utilization of the technology or incorporation of technology in pedagogy. The participants were positive about using or blending technology in the classroom to achieve the desired learning outcome. By using online contents teacher and student can have an additional advantage in grasping the nuances of language and its supra-segmental features. Introduction of ICT in teaching has challenged the pedagogues around the globe to learn how to do it and embrace it enthusiastically. It provides a better teaching learning outcome and experience to both teachers and students.

Question number twelve asks about facilitating the students in the classroom and finishing the syllabus through online teaching. Some participants responded that it is merely a medium of finishing the syllabus leaving the students aside while some said that it depends upon the infrastructure and the support given by the institution.

Question number thirteen highlights and enquires about facilitating interactive classrooms and how to incorporate the learner centred aspect of online teaching. The participants said that interaction in online teaching is partially possible because fewer students actively participate in virtual classroom. Interactive classroom provides an open platform for interpersonal communication and it also inculcates new ideas in students by mutually sharing their opinions. Although the responses collected clearly indicate that interactions are hardly possible in a virtual classroom. One of the participant said interactive classroom and facilitating students mean interacting with them, assessing them, to know their strengths and weaknesses and improve them accordingly. But it is not possible in online teaching. It is indeed challenging to make virtual classroom interactive but it could be done with innovative ideas to facilitate the learner centred classroom. Using quizzes, close ended questions, small surveys, multiple choice can be used to make virtual classes more interactive.

The next question asked was about the problems of monitoring the virtual classroom. The respondents said that monitoring the virtual classroom is a difficult job. It is

mentally exhaustive and unhealthy for both, the teachers and the students. Sometime students are not attentive and serious. Not all students are equally attentive, and they tend to take online classes very casually. While some participants said that often students are passive in online sessions. Further they lack technical competence in managing online tools.

After discussing all the possible aspects of blended learning and online teaching the questionnaire asks about the possible use of think-pair-share in a virtual classroom. The purpose of the question is to collect information about the use of collaborative learning in online teaching. Most of the participants responded that they face a lot of problem while trying to incorporate the collaborative learning strategy in virtual classroom. Students are often not responsive and attentive, network problem, poor connectivity and so forth are some of the problems which were quite visible in the responses provided by the participants.

The final question of the questionnaire asks about the effectiveness of blended learning on students' learning outcomes. The participants said that if the proper measures are taken to conduct the virtual classroom and blending is done by the experts, this module will be a great success in academics especially when it comes to teaching English in ESL and EFL context. To implement the Blended Learning one has to understand that it requires a proper motivation of students and teachers with technical competence to achieve the required teaching learning outcomes.

5 Findings of the study

The key findings of the present study show that there is a gap in the technological competence of the teachers who use the virtual classroom or try to blend their classrooms.

1. Teacher training course (CELTA, TESOL, DELTA), orientation programmes, FDPs, refresher courses which focus on how to blend the course and use the technology in the classroom should be introduced and made compulsory before implementing online teaching or blended learning in the classroom. Proper training will sensitize teachers to use and make the most from BL.
2. Synchronization of technology and platform which are going to be used is essential before changing the medium of teaching. Teacher should know each and every aspect and component of blended learning modules.
3. Clear instruction of course module which allows teachers and students to know when and how the components are switched to online and face to face.
4. Support from the institution to implement the new techniques and strategies of blended learning are essential in order to achieve the maximum learning outcomes in the classroom pedagogy.
5. To achieve all of the above the key components for the teacher and the students is to be motivated throughout the course. Motivation will come gradually when the stakeholders will be positive and supportive in ESL and EFL context.

6. It is a cost effective method as it does not require smart classroom setup. Moreover, with minimum infrastructure, blended learning module can be utilized. It can be effective only if it is implemented seriously.
7. Infrastructure should be developed and new software's and updated systems should be provided by the institutions to incorporate BL in the classrooms.

All of the above findings of the present study are very important and play a key role in the use and implementation of blended learning. The success of the module will depend upon how seriously stakeholders want to implement it to develop the mutual intelligibility and competence of the students and teachers. Because the module is the synchronization of many components, there is a need to channelize it in a proper ways ensuring maximum learning outcome and perseverance should be achieved to remain motivated.

6 Issues and challenges in implication of blended learning model

The blended learning model, first of all, needs the specific infrastructure of accessing the online content with a high-speed internet facility which should be available to all the students and teachers. Therefore, it should be the responsibility of the policy makers to provide a good infrastructure as language labs, updated software, lab technician, tutorial classes and so forth. Apart from this, teacher training programmes will enable the pedagogues to utilize the potential of blending. The training programmes should focus on content and instructional methods of how a teacher should use instruction in the classroom while using blended learning model.

The next important aspect is content moderation in blending the course as the teacher has to moderate the content which he/she wants to teach. The concern is what kind of material student should be allowed to access and how much should the teacher guide them.

The issue with this approach is the assessment of the students. It is challenging to evaluate students using this model, but one can mix modern and traditional testing tools to evaluate the class. For example, one can give the students portfolios to check the competence level; formative assessment can be extremely helpful.

7 Strategies and techniques used in the classroom teaching

To use blended learning in the language classroom with the use of Bloom's Taxonomy can be effective and efficient. Apart from this, collaborative learning techniques like group work, pair work and think pair share can be utilized using the process of blending. To incorporate the blending process platforms like EDMODO can be used where one can give assignments and receive feedbacks also. Khan Academy, BYJUS, EDX, COURSERA, NPTEL, GIAN are the online platforms that offer a range of course for teaching and self-regulated learning. The teacher can assign online courses from these platforms and moderate the content for better learning outcomes. Training courses

on how to use LMS (Learning Management System) like Zoom meetings, Google duo, Google meet, Google classrooms, YouTube, WhatsApp, Telegram, Skype, Facebook and Messenger should be available for the teachers. Adaptation of materials can be extremely effective if it is done seriously according to level and background information of the students. Teachers and practitioners should make sure that their students can access the content easily.

Students should know how to watch these videos and make notes to discuss in the forthcoming classes. Teacher's job is to enable them to interact with video content in a meaningful way that causes them to reflect and enhance the critical thinking on what they are exposed to. One of the problems encountered while using blended learning and in flipping a classroom is how to ensure that students should watch the video and make the notes. To resolve the issue teachers can make use of google forms; easy way to make sure students are attentive to the lessons that are going to be discussed in the next class. Google Forms can have a different sets of questions related to the video content that is supplied to the students. The answers should be the entrance ticket to the classroom. The idea is to use videos as effective content delivery tools in the classroom pedagogy.

Conversely, these techniques and strategies are only helpful in teaching after proper training of teachers in content moderation and instructional methods. The in-service programmes and induction courses should be made compulsory for the teachers to use blended learning model.

8 Conclusion

The present study clearly delineates the positive aspects of blended learning and the challenges of using it in a classroom scenario. Although, there are challenges of using it in the Indian and EFL context, it can be extremely helpful for the students and the teachers if they use it in a cooperative environment. Teaching is about the relationship between teachers and students and if by any means can maximize the relationship by harnessing the technology that will impact the learning outcome. The findings of the present study are in line with the research carried out by NCERT consists a huge sample size of 34000 respondents. The same has been reported by NDTV [34] anchor Ravish Kumar which was aired on 28 August, 2020.

Blended learning as a teaching strategy enables students to have a clear picture of what they are going to be taught in the classroom. It encourages students to become an independent learner and promotes autonomy where teachers and learners actively and voluntarily engage in the teaching-learning process. Moreover, Castillo-Cuesta et al., [35] article and findings "ICT tools are essential and effective in classroom pedagogy" (p. 11). Li, Z. [36] accentuates "online learning platforms have developed the learning situation analysis function to analyze the relationship between students' learning behavior and learning effect (p. 224). It personalizes the learning for each individual.

9 Limitations and future scope of work

The study is conducted on a small scale and for policy making it is necessary to conduct a survey on a large scale. It is not possible for individual scholars to conduct such a large survey. Government agencies can only conduct these large surveys because they can fund and provide the necessary work force. The approach of blended learning is still evolving and there are a number of aspects which remain explored till date. Further scope of study is there and research is needed and required to ensure how to blend the courses accordingly. As Mu, D., & Guo, W. [37] emphasize in their study about impact of online and virtual learning.

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