

The Role of Blended Learning in Promoting Students' Learning Autonomy

Le rôle de l'apprentissage mixte dans la promotion de l'autonomie d'apprentissage des étudiants

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Abstract

The current study aims to investigate teachers and students' attitudes towards the role of blended learning (BL) in promoting students' learning autonomy (LA) at the Department of English Language and Literature at Mohamed Lamine Debaghine Sétif 2 University. A quantitative research approach was used through implementing a focus group discussion, a questionnaire designed to 100 Master 1 students specializing in Language Sciences, and a questionnaire addressed to 15 teachers from the same department. The results revealed that both teachers and students have positive attitudes towards the role of blended learning, and they considered it as a useful learning method that promotes students' learning autonomy. Following the obtained results, the researcher suggests that forthcoming investigations can explore administrators and families' perceptions of the immediate transition to online learning.

Key words: Blended Learning, Learning Autonomy, EFL Classrooms, Online Learning.

Résumé

La présente étude vise à examiner les attitudes des enseignants et des étudiants du département de langue et littérature anglaises de l'Université Mohamed Lamine Debaghine Sétif 2 vis-à-vis du rôle de l'apprentissage hybride dans la promotion de l'autonomie des étudiants. Une approche quantitative a été employée, combinant une discussion de groupe, un questionnaire destiné à 100 étudiants de Master I spécialisés en sciences du langage et un questionnaire adressé à 15 enseignants du même département. Les résultats révèlent que les enseignants et les étudiants ont une attitude positive envers l'apprentissage hybride, qu'ils considèrent comme une méthode pédagogique utile favorisant l'autonomie des étudiants. À la lumière de ces résultats, la chercheuse suggère que de futures études explorent la perception, par l'administration et les familles, de la transition immédiate vers l'enseignement en ligne.

Mots-clés : Apprentissage Mixte, Autonomie D'apprentissage, Classes D'anglais Langue Etrangère, Apprentissage en ligne.

Introduction

BL plays an important role in students' collaboration, motivation, autonomy and interaction with subjects and skills. BL studies experienced a great desire over the years to examine the usage of BL in higher education contexts (Anthony Jr. et al., 2020). Accordingly, there is a great prove to adopt BL as it blends the advantages of each traditional and online learning settings. Moreover, distance education became one of the alternatives to traditional teaching methods because it fosters Learning Autonomy (LA). The concept of autonomy was first defined as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" and a potential capacity to act in a learning situation (Holec, 1981). Therefore, an autonomous learner is the one who continues learning when teaching stops. In the process of seeking to foster learner autonomy, the integration of BL model is highly recommended; language-learning websites have impressive potential to promote and reinforce learners' autonomy (Turula, 2017). The purpose of this study is to explore students and teachers attitudes regarding the role of BL approach in promoting students' learning autonomy. In addition, it aims to investigate the extent to which students are ready to foster their independent learning in a BL environment. This makes it significant to the on-going efforts to improve the quality of higher education in Algeria through integrating innovative

teaching-learning methods. The findings of this study will contribute to the fields of teacher-student training and the scope of BL research.

1. Review of Literature

The review is provides information about previous research studies that were done regarding both variables of the present study.

1.1 Blended Learning

1.1.1 Blended Learning Definition

BL emerged in 1960s directly after the emergence of computer, and it was applied at first in companies because of its effectiveness, adaptability and flexibility. After it gained popularity, traditional educational classrooms adopted BL. The latter is synonymous to hybrid, inverted, and flipped learning. It is defined as “a combination of face to face and computer-assisted language learning (CALL) in a single teaching and learning environment” (Neumeier, 2005, p. 164). This means that learners sometimes learn through online lessons, and sometimes they go to classrooms. Yet it can be defined as more than a combination of face-to-face learning and CALL, for BL comprises of both a class meeting along with some activities outside the classroom and an online lesson. The focal focus of BL is learning through self-direct learning activities (Idée, 2013).

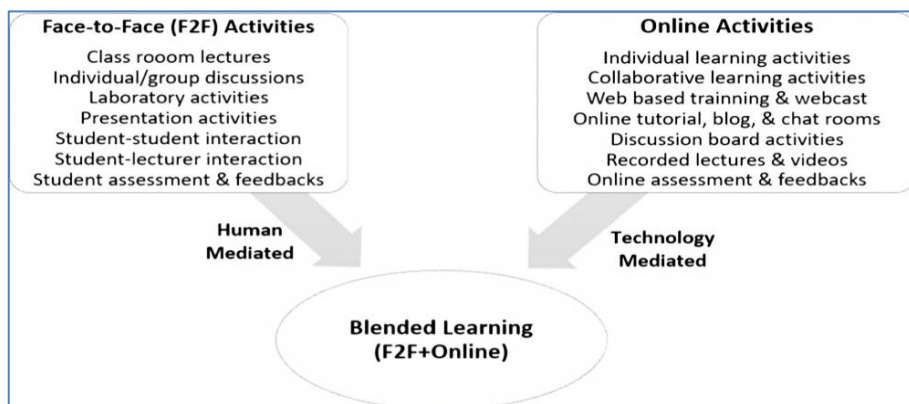


Figure 1. Key aspects of BL (Graham 2013)

In addition, BL can be defined as an integration of online experiences with classroom face-to-face learning experiences. Therefore, this integration minimizes online distance and maximizes the interaction between teachers and learners (Rasheed, et al. 2020). This combination promotes proactive behaviours in learning such as self-regulated learning, task definition, goal setting, monitoring of knowledge of cognition and better performance.

1.1.2 Blended Learning in Higher Education

Traditional lecturing was the most used approach of teaching in higher education for many centuries, yet it is now considered as a passive approach of teaching because it discourages learners to critically process the information given by the teacher. In addition, it does not provide opportunities for collaborative learning, and it does not allow teachers to include higher level thinking skills in their lectures. Most importantly, students do not feel motivated to study, and they do not participate or interact with either their teachers or their peers and the rarely attend the lessons (Okaz, 2015).

On the other hand, online learning along with the increasing of technology use changed students' attitudes, the way in which they learn, and the way in which they communicate inside and outside the classroom. The availability of personal computers, smart phones, and online games decreased their attention span and occupied them. Teachers were obliged to recharge their ways of teaching in order to accommodate with the new technologies. Therefore, combining traditional learning and teaching with technology was the best method that reinforced both the learning and teaching processes (Okaz, 2015).

BL was adopted extensively in higher education institutions, and it became "the new normal". It was used in order to make education and the learning materials accessible to all learners; to offer students opportunities; and to prepare the learning activities according to their levels of comprehension. Moreover, Mestan (2019) stated that BL in higher education affected not only teachers and students but also systems and structures. It was adopted in higher education institutions, for it provides flexibility to teach students with different learning styles and different backgrounds, facilitates the learning and teaching processes, and offers an effective learning climate (Bruggemana et al, 2021).

2. Learner Autonomy

2.1 Definition of Autonomy

The term autonomy was first used in 1926. It is synonymous to choice, free will, and self-determination. Merriam Webster Dictionary defines autonomy as the state of someone being a self-governor, or the ability of ones' self-direct. It is considered as a self-governing state. Therefore, an autonomous person is the one who has the right of self-

government and who is capable of acting independently unlike the non-autonomous person. Autonomy in learning can be defined as the ability of the learner to take responsibility for his/her own learning; it is the ability of learners to go beyond the limits of their traditional learning environment without the teacher's invention. An autonomous learner is the one who is capable to determine the purpose, content, method of learning, and to monitor the learning progress (Idée, 2013). Learners' autonomy can be developed through three levels: learners' control over the learning management, learners' control over the learning content, and learners' control over the cognitive processes. At the first level, the learner starts to plan, organize, and evaluate the learning; at the second level, the learner builds a metacognitive learning; and at the last level, the learner decides about his/her purposes (Idée, 2013).

2.2 Characteristics of Autonomous Learners

Autonomous learners have some characteristics, which are:

2.2.1 Willingness

It is considered as the most emphasized characteristic of autonomous language learner, for it develops learners' autonomy and enhances their capacity to learn. Learners will not be able to enhance their autonomy, if they are not willing to take the responsibility of their own learning. Willingness consists of two important elements; beliefs about teachers' role and motivation (Nguyen & Habok, 2020).

2.2.2 Beliefs in Teachers' Role

Learners' awareness about their teachers' role is another characteristic of autonomous learner. Autonomous learners are aware not only about their own roles when it comes to language learning autonomously, but also they are aware about their teachers' roles in helping them to learn the language effectively. Learners who consider their teacher to be facilitators are more expected to be autonomous learners, and they are willing to embrace LA easily. Those learners who believe that is the responsibility of the teacher to offer and explain everything are not considered autonomous learners (Nguyen & Habok, 2020).

2.2.3 Motivation

Autonomous learners are always motivated to use metacognitive skills and strategies to effectively reflect and learn by their own. Motivated learners are independent and are willing to learn beyond the traditional methods of learning. For students to be successful autonomous language learners, they have to be motivated. Motivation is a tool that plays also a great role in enhancing autonomous language learning and in equipping the students to enter the learning situation (Nguyen & Habok, 2020).

2.2.4 Ability

Autonomous learners' ability consists of metacognitive knowledge of learners about the English language components such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Autonomous language learners have the ability to understand the tasks, in which they are engaged, to use the different strategies that help them undertake these kinds of tasks, and are aware of their strengths and weaknesses concerning these tasks. This ability is central to autonomous language learning ability (Nguyen & Habok, 2020).

2.2.5 Desire Informed by Specific Purposes

Desire is how learners intend to learn and complete a task. Autonomous learners express their desires by specific action. Students show their desires to study by getting the lessons from somewhere else if they do not go to the university, or if they missed them. This action is the embodiment of learner autonomy (Nguyen & Habok, 2020).

2.2.6 Freedom

Freedom is the extent to which learners are allowed to control their learning by the institutions or by teachers. This freedom is achieved through many ways such as the opportunities given to students to ask teachers to explain things when they do not comprehend. The activities done by students are autonomous activities. Moreover, autonomous learners are able to choose the learning materials and activities and can control over the learning content (Nguyen & Habok, 2020).

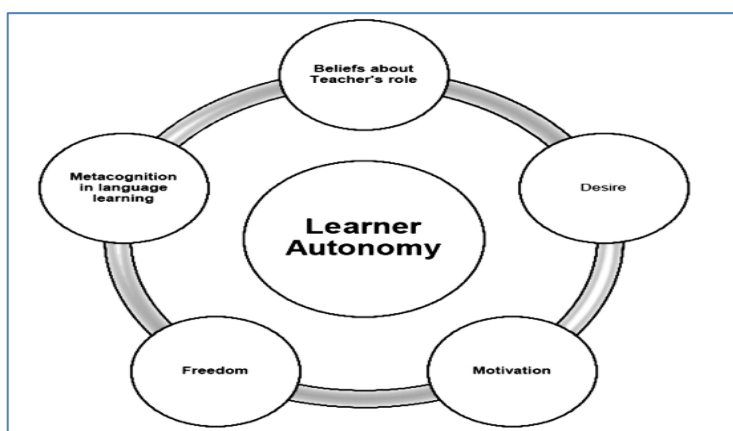


Figure2. Characteristics of Autonomous Learners (Nguyen & Habok, 2020)

2. Methods and Materials

2.1 Aims of the Study

The aim of this research is to shed light on students and teachers' attitudes of the notion of autonomy in the foreign language framework. Additionally, the current study aims at exploring students and teachers attitudes regarding the use of BL approach in promoting students' learning autonomy. Finally, the study aims at investigating the extent to which students are ready to foster their independent learning in a BL environment.

2.2 Research Questions

The present investigation attempts to provide potential answers to the following research questions:

- What are students and teachers' attitudes towards the use of BL in promoting students' learning autonomy?
- To what extent does the integration of BL approach foster students' autonomy?
- To what extent are students ready to learn in a blended environment?

2.3 Research Instruments and Data Collection

All research is based on some underlying conceptual assumptions about what constitutes valid research and which research method is suited to the development of knowledge in a particular case. The process of planning, structuring, and executing research respecting scientific criteria is referred to as research methodology. The current investigation is a descriptive exploratory case study. Its primary concern is to focus on the

role of BL in promoting students' learning autonomy: case of master 1 Language Sciences students of English at Mohamed Lamine Debaghine Sétif 2 University. To fill in the research gap, collect the necessary data, and answer the research questions, a descriptive exploratory design is adopted because the researcher cannot control the variables or conduct the study in a controlled environment and cannot identify all the factors that affect the topic. It is more effective to apply exploratory research methods because this type of research aims to find general principles that explain the data or observations. Additionally, to achieve the study's aims, the current study used a quantitative research approach to explore students' and teachers' attitudes towards the use of BL in promoting students' autonomy.

The study's target population encompasses 465 Master 1 LMD students specialized in Language Sciences and Didactics at the department of English language and literature, Mohamed Lamine Debaghine Sétif 2 University. The sample is 100 master one students, both males and females, who were selected randomly to answer the questionnaire items. The rationale behind choosing this population is that they have already experienced BL through classroom and zoom sessions; and they are supposed to have developed a sense of self-reliance through the project works they used to do more than three years in their previous academic studies, in addition to a sense of awareness of what they are learning. To collect the necessary data, the research designed a students' questionnaire and a teachers' questionnaire to collect the needed data because the existing research tools are not suitable for the topic under investigation.

3.4 Description of Students' Questionnaire

The rationale behind using students' questionnaire is that it provides quantitative data that allows for statistical examination for the research problem. The questionnaire tackles students' attitudes towards using traditional face-to-face learning method in EFL classrooms facing the integration of BL method as cooperation between classroom learning setting and online learning setting. Additionally, it tackles students' attitudes towards learner autonomy and towards autonomous learning. Learners' attitudes of characteristics of autonomous learners, factors that can promote their LA, types of learning environment, factors that encourage them to participate in online classes, and their opinion towards the use of BL in promoting learners' autonomy were also tackled.

2.5 Description of Teachers' questionnaire

Teachers' questionnaire uses a mixture of ten (10) questions of open-ended and closed-ended types that allow the study to gain both types of qualitative and quantitative data. The first question aims to see how teachers evaluate their students' self-reliance in learning. The second question is aims to seek teachers' roles in the classroom when teaching their students, and to see if teachers' roles affect their students' autonomy. The third question concerns teachers' techniques and strategies used to motivate and encourage students to be autonomous learners. The fourth question seeks teachers' points of view about students' heavy dependence on the teacher. The fifth question aims to know the strategies and tools used by teachers to enhance their students' autonomy.

The sixth close-ended question was asked to know if teachers prefer the traditional learning, e-learning or BL. The seventh question is also a close-ended question that was asked to know to what extent English language students rely on themselves. In the eighth question, teachers were asked about the frequency use of online resources and materials when teaching. In the ninth question, teachers were asked to state their level of agreement for whether integrating online learning is effective in promoting students' autonomy. In the last question, teachers were asked about their attitudes towards the role of BL in promoting students' autonomy.

2.6 Limitations

Although the current study reached its aims, there were unavoidable limitations and difficulties. First, time constraints, since any research is limited to a specific period, the researcher was obliged to handle both processes of data collection and data analysis and interpretation within a precise period. This study focused on exploring the role of BL in promoting students' learning autonomy: case of master I Language Sciences students of English at Mohamed Lamine Debaghine Sétif 2 University. Thus, the results are specific to master one level and not any other level. Additionally, the sample of the current study is only 100 students, making it a small sample. Larger sample would allow for more comprehensive results. Furthermore, some teachers were unable to take part in the study because of lack of time, or they were not interested in answering the research tools questions.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Students' Questionnaire Results

Q01: Students' Gender

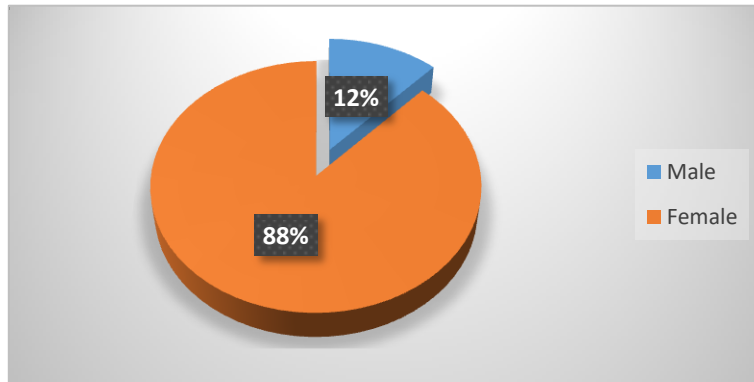


Figure3. Students' Gender

The figure shows that the majority of the participants are females (88%) and the minority of the participants are males (12%). This means that there is a gender imbalance with female students outnumbering their male counterparts.

Q02: Students' Age

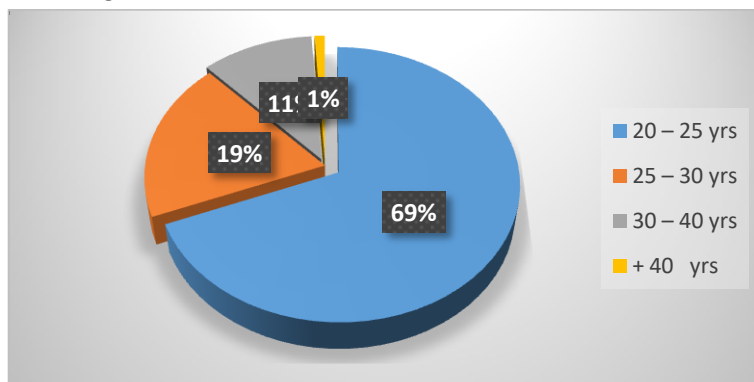


Figure4. Students' Age

Figure 4 shows that the majority of the participants (69%) are between the age of 20 years old and 25 years old and (19%) of them are between the age of 25 years old and 30 years old. (11%) of them are between the age of 30 years old and 40 years old and only 1 participant is above the age of 40. This suggests that most of the participants are in their early years of academic studies.

Q03: *Do you plan effectively your time for study freed from the teacher.*

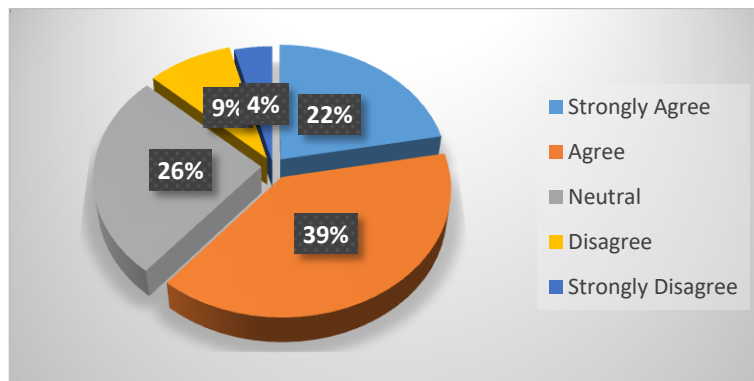


Figure5. Planning Effectively Time for Study Freed from the Teacher

Figure 5 shows that (39%) of the participants agree that they plan effectively their time for study freed from the teacher. (22%) of them strongly agree and (26%) of them were neutral. Only (13% both disagreeing and strongly disagreeing) do not plan effectively their time for study freed from the teacher. According to Nguyen & Habok (2020), autonomous language learners expresses their desires to study by getting the lessons from somewhere else if they do not go to the university, or if they missed them. This action is considered as the embodiment of learner autonomy

Q04: *Do you set your learning goals and objectives?*

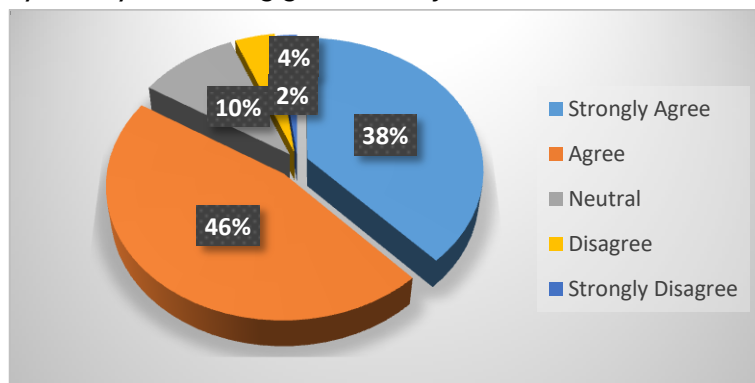


Figure6. Setting Learning Goals and Objectives

Figure 6 above shows that (38%) of the participants agree that they set learning goals and objectives and (46%) of them strongly agree. Yet (10%) of them were neutral whereas (4%) of them disagreed and (2%) of them strongly disagreed. Nguyen & Habok (2020) suggest that learners will not be able to enhance their autonomy, if they are not willing to take the responsibility of their own learning. Willingness consists of setting goals and objectives for learning.

Q05: *I can learn independently without the teacher guide.*

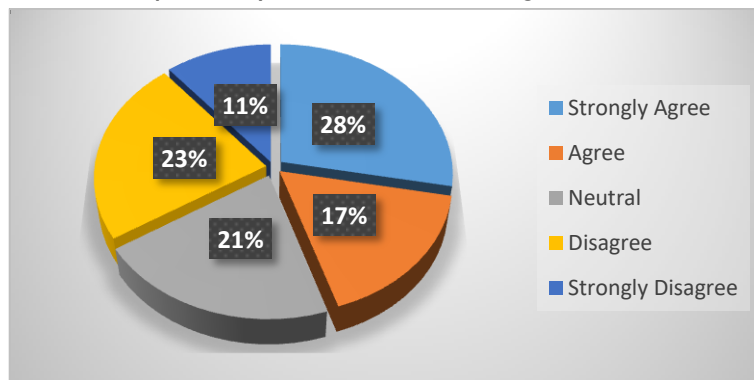


Figure7. Students Can Learn Independently Without the Teacher Guidance

Figure 7 above shows that (28%) of the participants strongly agree that they can learn independently without the teacher guidance and (17%) of them agree t, yet (21%) of them were neutral. (23%) of them disagreed and (11%) of them strongly. Learners who consider their teacher to be facilitators are more expected to be autonomous learners, and they are willing to embrace LA easily. Those learners who believe that is the responsibility of the teacher to offer and explain everything are not considered autonomous learners (Nguyen & Habok, 2020).

Q06: *What type of learning do you prefer?*

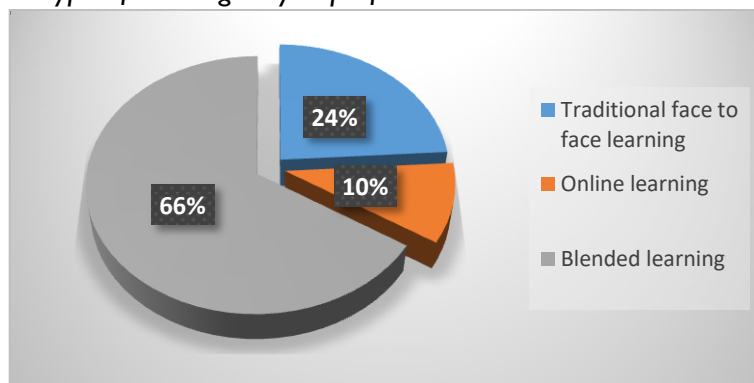


Figure8. The Type of Learning Students Prefer

According to figure 8, the majority of the participants (66%) prefer BL while (24%) of them prefer the traditional learning. Only (10%) of them prefer online learning. Students prefer BL because a research conducted by Yang (2016) showed that the BL teaching delivery method encourages students to achieve their learning goals while still allowing them to study freely. It encourages them also to study independently without the guidance of the teacher, which leads to their autonomy development.

Q07: Do you think the use of BL in promoting students' autonomy?

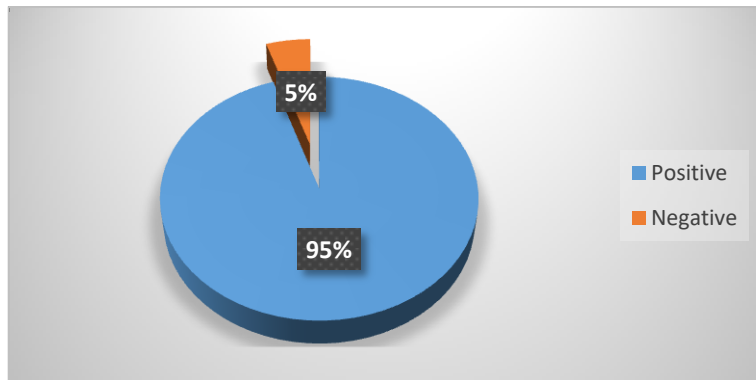


Figure9. The Use of BL in Promoting Students' Autonomy

According to figure 9 above, almost all the students (95%) think that the use of BL is positive and it promotes students' autonomy while only (5%) of them think that it is negative. BL is a combination of online experiences with classroom face-to-face learning experiences, and Rasheed, et al. (2020) claim that this combination promotes proactive behaviours in learning such as self-regulated learning, task definition, and goal setting.

Q08: BL enables students to become involved in the learning process

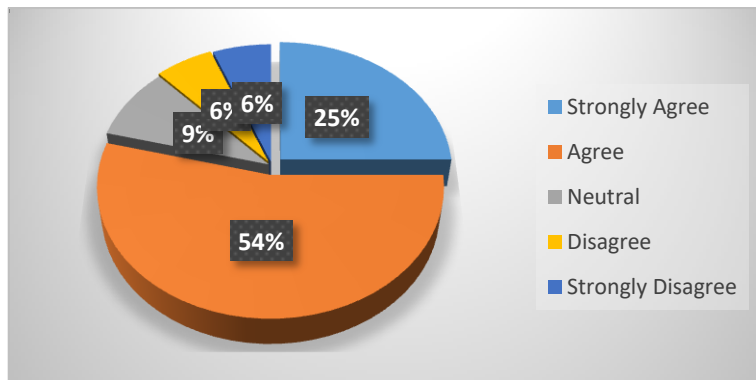


Figure10. BL Enables Students to Become Involved in the Learning Process

Figure 10 shows that (54%) of the participants agree that BL enables students to become involved in the learning process and (25%) of them strongly agree. Only (9%) of the participants were neutral whereas (6%) of them strongly disagree and (6%) of them disagree. BL provides flexibility to teach students with different learning styles and different backgrounds, facilitates the learning and teaching processes, and offers an effective learning climate (Bruggemana et al., 2021).

Q09: *BL offers the possibilities to manage time easily*

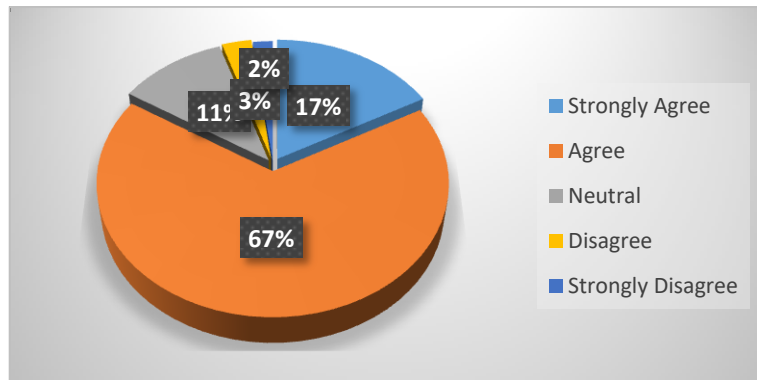


Figure I1. BL Offers the Possibilities to Manage Time Easily

Figure I1 shows that (67%) of the participants agree that BL offers them the possibilities to manage time easily and (17%) of them agree. (11%) of them were neutral while (3%) of them disagreed and (2%) of them strongly disagreed.

Q10: *BL environment promotes students' learning autonomy.*

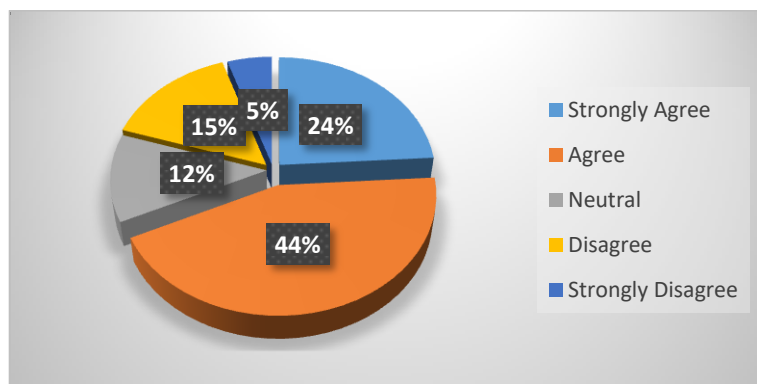


Figure I2. BL Environment Promotes Students' Learning Autonomy

Figure I2 shows that (44%) of the participants agree that BL environment promotes students' LA and (24%) of them strongly agree. (12%) of them were neutral, (15%) of them disagreed, and (5%) of them strongly disagreed. The results of the current study align with the results of Lander and Kuramoto (2013) study, in which they concluded that the use of BL have a positive effect on students' autonomy as it helps them to become more self-reliant. Their study was conducted at a private university in Japan, over a course of 2 semesters where a group of 100 students was the experimental group and 200 students were the control group. The latter

taught with the traditional face-to-face learning method, at the final stage students' performance was increased and they showed signs of autonomous learning.

Q11: *Traditional learning gives students deeper detailed input about the subject.*

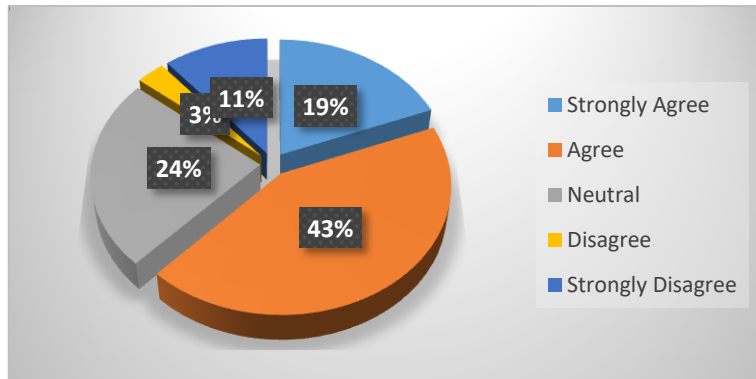


Figure I3. Traditional Learning Gives Students Deeper Detailed Input about the Subject

Figure 11 make it clear that (43%) of the participants agree that traditional learning gives them deeper and detailed input about the subject and (19%) of them strongly agree. (24%) of them were neutral, (3%) of them disagreed, and (11%) of them strongly disagreed.

Q12: *Do you take responsibility for your own learning?*

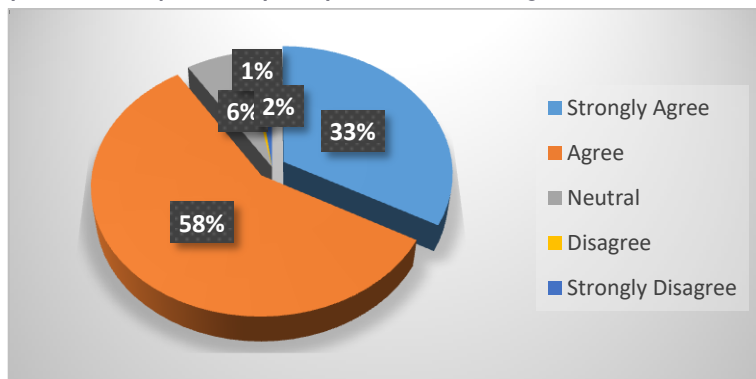


Figure I4. Students Take Responsibility for their Own Learning

Figure 14 shows that (58%) of the participants agree that they take responsibility for their own learning and (33%) of them strongly agree. (6%) of the participants were neutral. In addition, (1%) of the participants disagreed and (2%) of them strongly disagreed.

4.2 Teachers' Questionnaire Results

Q01: *How would you evaluate your students' self-reliance in learning?*

Option	Frequency	Percent
Low	2	13,3
Average	13	86,7
Total	15	100,0

Table I. Students' Self-Reliance in Learning

The obtained data from table I show that the majority of the teachers, (86, 7%) said their students have an average level when it comes to self-reliance in learning. While (13,3%) of them said their students have a low level when it comes to self-reliance in learning.

Q02: *In the classroom, what role do you take usually?*

Option	Frequency	Percent
Monitor	1	6,7
Manager	3	20,0
Facilitator	7	46,7
Resource	4	26,7
Total	15	100,0

Table2. Teachers' Role in the Classroom

Little (1995) claims that learner autonomy does not imply that the teacher takes no responsibility; rather, he argues that the role of teachers in fostering learner's autonomy would be to get learners to the stage where they agree equal responsibility (p.173). Table 2 shows that the majority of the teachers (46, 7%) consider themselves as facilitators in classroom. While (26, 7%) of them take the role of a resource in the classroom. In addition, (20%) of them take the role of the manager in the classroom, and only (6,7%) of them take the role of the monitor in the classroom.

Q03: *How do you encourage and motivate your students to be autonomous learners?*

Option	Frequency	Percent
By giving them individual assignments.	7	46,7
By encouraging the use of the internet	4	26,7
By teaching them new learning strategies	2	13,3
By using feedback to aid their learning	2	13,3
Total	15	100,0

Table3. The Way Teachers Encourage and Motivate Their Students to Be Autonomous Learners

Table 3 shows that (46,7%) of the teachers encourage and motivate their students to be autonomous learners by giving them individual assignments. (26,7%) of them encourage the use of the internet, and (13,3%) of them teach their students new learning strategies. (13,3%) of them use feedback to aid their learning.

Q04: What are the reasons behind students' excessive dependence on the teacher?

This open-ended question was asked to know why students depend excessively on their teachers based on the experience of the teachers who participated in this study. Teachers claimed that students sometimes do not find the time to reflect on what they have studied. Other students, and the majority of them, are spoon-fed from an early age. One teacher said: "unfortunately, the majority of students like spoon-feeding learning, and in my opinion, it is the lack of motivation". Students seem to have never been trained to be autonomous learners, and how and where to find materials, and most of them lack some learning strategies and study skills.

Q05. *What strategies and tools do you use to enhance your students' autonomy?*

This open-ended question was asked to know what strategies and tools used by the teachers to enhance their students' autonomy. Teachers suggested that one of the main strategies they use if when they ask them to revise and reflect on what has been achieved and try to come out with valuable questions that create meaning negotiation inside the classroom. One teacher said: "I give them individual works that need critical thinking". Other teachers provide students with feedback and give them assignments, or they suggest some language applications.

Q06: *What type of learning do you prefer?*

<i>Option</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Traditional Learning	2	13,3
Online Learning	1	6,7
Blended Learning	12	80,0
Total	15	100,0

Table4. The Learning Type's Teachers Prefer

According to table 4, the majority of the teachers (80%) prefer BL and (13,3%) of them prefer traditional learning. Only (6,7%) of them prefer online learning. In their study, Azamat et al (2018) found that students did

not show positive attitudes towards online courses. According to them, online learning without cooperation with traditional learning method was not closely related to BL and this is another reason why BL is preferred over traditional and online learning.

Q07: In BL, to what extent do your students rely on themselves?

Option	Frequency	Percent
Rarely	2	13,3
Sometimes	10	66,7
Often	2	13,3
Always	1	6,7
Total	15	100,0

Table5. The Extent to which Students Rely on Themselves

Table 5 shows that (66,7%) of the teachers said their students sometimes rely on themselves when learning, while (13, 3%) of them suggest that students rarely rely on themselves. (13,3%) of them said that their students often rely on themselves when learning and (6,7%) of them said that their students often rely on themselves when learning.

Q08: How often do you use online resources and materials in teaching?

Option	Frequency	Percent
Always	7	46,7
Sometimes	5	33,3
Rarely	3	20,0
Total	15	100,0

Table6. The Frequency Use Online Resources and Materials in Teaching

A quick look at table 6 shows that (46,7%) of the teachers said they always use online resources and materials in teaching while (33, 3%) of them sometimes use online resources and materials in teaching. (20%) of them rarely use online resources and materials in teaching.

Q09: Is integrating online learning effective in promoting students' autonomy?

Option	Frequency	Percent
Agree	7	46,7
Strongly Agree	8	53,3
Total	15	100,0

Table7. Effectiveness of Integrating Online Learning in Promoting Students' Autonomy

Table 7 shows that the majority of the teachers (53,3%) strongly agree that integrating online learning is effective in promoting students' autonomy. (46,7%) of them agree that integrating online learning is effective in promoting students' autonomy.

Q10: *What are your attitudes towards the use of BL in promoting students' autonomy?*

Option	Frequency	Percent
Positive	13	86,7
Negative	1	6,7
Neutral	1	6,7
Total	15	100,0

Table8. Use of BL in Promoting Students' Autonomy

Table 8 shows that the majority of teachers (86,7%) find BL as a positive mode of learning while (6,7%) of them find it as a negative mode of learning. Only (6,7%) of them were neutral. The teacher who said that BL is negative explained his viewpoint by saying: "Our students are suffering seriously nowadays than before; thus, BL did not improve their level; on the contrary, their performance decreased considerably. I have not seen any development, and because of BL, they became more dependent on the materials uploaded by teachers to the platforms." While those who found BL positive said that, "it promotes learning autonomy, motivates students, and promotes the use of materials." Another teacher suggested that, "it enhances student's autonomy and self-reliance". In addition, a teacher said, "BL is useful in raising students' interests and motivation: it gives them more space to study by themselves and develop their autonomy.

4.3 General Discussion of the Findings

This exploratory research aimed to explore the role of BL in promoting students' autonomy at Mohamed Lamine Debaghine University, Department of English Language and Literature. To reach the aims, two questionnaires were designed for both teachers and students. Students' questionnaire was distributed to 100 students, and a teachers' questionnaire was distributed to 15 teachers at the same department. The questionnaires brought results that provided answers to the research questions. The majority of the participants prefer BL, and they believe that the use of BL is a positive mode of learning that promotes student LA.

Students agree that BL enhances their learning abilities, improves time efficiency and keeps them focused for longer periods, and offers greater chances for learning. It gives opportunities for shy and introvert learners to take part and participate freely. Moreover, students agree that the integration of BL environment promotes their LA since it reinforces their motivation, curiosity, self-awareness and responsibility which are the main characteristics of an autonomous learner. Also, students are ready to study in a BL environment and prefer it over traditional and online learning, as they feel comfortable and relaxed in attending online courses. Students said that the latter are convenient and encourage autonomous learning.

Teachers expressed positive attitudes toward the use of BL in promoting students' autonomy. 87% of them believe that BL promotes learning autonomy, motivate students, and promotes the use of materials. One teacher commented "it gives them more space to study by themselves and develop their autonomy". The major findings show that teachers try to encourage their students to be autonomous through different strategies such as giving them individual assignments, teaching them new learning strategies, and using feedback to aid their learning. In addition, teachers ask their students to revise and reflect on what has been achieved, and they give them language applications, projects, class, group, and individual assignments.

4.4 Recommendations

This study sought at exploring attitudes towards the role of BL in promoting students' autonomy: case of Master I English language students. The study findings gave rise to pedagogical recommendations related to BL. The recommendations of this study will be to consider and encourage the use of BL as a learning mode. In the first place, stakeholders must be a part of the development of the system-wide understanding about the use of technology to help both teachers and students cope with the new learning methods. Teachers are kindly asked to provide their students with books, references, CDs, videos, assignments to create opportunities for students to be autonomous learners. Students are entitled to having access to educators who are knowledgeable about how one learns to be autonomous learner.

Conclusion

The implementation of BL in foreign language teaching and learning has become a requirement. Thus, this research aimed to explore the use of BL in promoting students' autonomy at Mohamed Lamine Debaghine University, Department of English Language and Literature. It followed a quantitative research approach through designing two questionnaires. Students' questionnaire was distributed to 100 students and a teachers' questionnaire was distributed to 15 teachers. The findings revealed that both teachers and students had a positive attitude toward the use of BL in EFL classrooms. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the use of BL in the teaching and learning process can be motivating for students. It provides them with an enjoyable environment that increases their interaction, which lead to an increase in their autonomous learning.

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