

BLENDING LEARNING: LANGUAGE LEARNER PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES

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Abstract. *This paper provides an overview of issues, which are central to the nature of blended learning, and suggests looking at it through the prism of learner experiences. It also reports on the study which explores learners' perspectives on the experience of blended learning and, in particular, on problems students have and the strategies they use while taking Moodle activities as part of their self-study as required by the institution. Thematic analysis of the open-ended semi-structured interviews revealed that students experience various problems when they are left one-to-one with online assignments, such as the level of difficulty of learning material, time constraints, lack of feedback and lack of support together with motivational issues. To solve them they employ a range of strategies, such as getting help from outside, using networking and group work. These findings illustrate the necessity for the task designers to take such issues as information sharing among learners and their need for adequate support into account when designing Moodle activities.*

Key words: *blended learning, Moodle, language learners, strategies*

1. INTRODUCTION

The idea of blending traditional face-to-face instruction with online activities is gaining more popularity in language education. As a consequence, it has become necessary to ensure that this blend is effective and justified, and that the 'optimum mix of course delivery' (Sharma, 2010, p. 458) provides language learners with effective ways to improve their learning experiences. One of the ways to do this is to take learner perspectives into account and listen to their experience. Starting with an overview of issues that are considered central to the nature of blended learning, this paper focuses on looking at this method of learning through the prism of learner experience. This focus is supported by a study conducted at the Language Centre of Sultan Qaboos University in Oman where the idea of blended learning is being increasingly promoted and Moodle is being actively used as a virtual learning environment to supplement face-to-face language instruction. The study explored students' perspectives on the experience of blended learning which involved problems they had and the strategies they used while taking Moodle activities as part of their self-study.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become an indispensable attribute of modern life with its influence spreading to virtually every domain of human activity including education. An ever increasing number of students and teachers use ICT technology in one way or another transforming the process of learning and teaching. This transformation blurs the boundaries between learning and e-learning where the latter is striving to become an integral part of the learning experience.

Such terms as 'e-learning' and 'blended learning', are becoming increasingly popular and are being used differently by different scholars and practitioners, sometimes interchangeably, creating certain ambiguities. In this paper the term 'e-learning' is viewed as a broad concept which can be applied at two different levels. One level is an individual level when teachers use technology in their teaching practice as their individual initiative and students use different e-devices in a self-regulated way creating their own personal e-learning environments. Another level is an institutional level when shifting some part or whole of the face-to-face instruction online becomes part of the institutional policy and is carried out in a systematic and deliberate way. On both levels various e-media (e.g., computers, mobile devices, interactive boards, etc.) and e-tools (e.g., Web, CALL software, Moodle, mobile applications, etc.) are used to make learning more effective. In this view e-learning is no longer a separate strand but an essential part of the learning experience which can be gained through a variety of contexts: face-to-face (f2f), self-directed, blended and distance (Beetham & Sharpe, 2007).

2.1. Blended learning

The idea of blended learning (BL) has been gaining increasing popularity among scholars and the public. Thus, Ross and Gage (2006) predicts that it will become the "new traditional model" (p. 167). Watson (2008) echoes them saying that "blended learning is likely to emerge as the predominant model of the future" (p. 3). Whether it is going to happen or not, it is important to have better understanding of this phenomenon and its impact on learning experiences (Strauss, 2015).

The most effective teachers and learners have always applied a mixture of different methods, approaches, and strategies to boost knowledge acquisition and skills development (Claypole, 2003; Marsh, 2012). The ever-increasing involvement of information technology has changed the shape of the educational environments by incorporating virtual learning environments into physical ones. As a result, a new dimension has been added to the well-established practice of blending different teaching approaches and strategies. The modern concept of blended learning embraces new instructional delivery mechanisms which allow for creating new blends.

Despite, or probably due to growing popularity, and to the fact that the area of BL continues to develop, the term blended learning is used differently in different contexts with one common premise that within the BL framework traditional face-to-face instruction is combined with online instruction.

To define BL it is necessary to address four issues which Graham (2013) identifies as central to the nature of blended learning. They are components of blend, quantity of online instruction, reduction of seat time and quality factors. These issues of BL phenomena are still being debated (Oliver & Triggwell, 2005; Sharpe et al., 2006; Allen & Seaman, 2007; Picciano, 2009) and common agreement has not yet been reached.

2.1.1. Components of blend

The issue, which is central for defining BL, is to determine the nature of the two or more things, which are mixed by teachers and learners. Possible components of the blend discussed in the literature include mixing e-learning with traditional learning, online learning with f2f learning, mixes of media, context, learning theories or learning objectives (Oliver & Tiggwell, 2005; Driscoll, 2002; Sharma, 2010).

Succinct definitions of BL that are related to language teaching and learning also predominately focus on the ‘what is being blended’ part. Thus, Neumeier (2005) and Stracke (2007) in their studies use almost identical definitions of BL describing it as a combination of face-to-face teaching and computer assisted language learning. Other ELT practitioners replace ‘computer assisted language learning’ with the word ‘technology’ (Sharma & Barrett, 2007), or with ‘online delivery’ (Dudeny & Hockly, 2007). Although these definitions contribute to the on-going process of defining the phenomenon of blended learning, “operational definitions ... developed for BL environments currently lack the widespread consensus or maturity that researchers desire” (Graham, 2013, p. 3). Oliver and Tiggwell (2005) point out the fact that often definitions of BL address forms of instruction, teaching approaches or pedagogies, while the perspective of the learner is rarely the subject of the blended learning. In their opinion, a significant shift is needed in our understanding of BL from teacher to learner and from content of the blend to the variation in the experiences of the students, which might lead to learning in the blended learning environment. By using the word ‘learning’ it seems logical to put the learner in the center of the concept and look at BL as a blend of learning experiences.

2.1.2. Proportion of blend parts

Two other issues mentioned by Graham (2013), such as quantity of online instruction and reduction of seat time can be combined into one entity as both of them deal with the problem of defining the proportion of the parts of the blend.

In the course classification suggested by Allen and Seeman (2007) the courses are defined as traditional if they deliver 0% of content online, web-facilitated if 1-29% delivered online, blended if 30-79%, and online if 80+% of content is delivered online. However, Graham (2013) argues that the task of setting percentage thresholds is a challenging one as the amount of content is not easily and accurately measurable. Moreover, if we look at this issue from the learner’s perspective, for example, 5% of content delivered online might require significant effort and time from the side of the student changing noticeably his/her overall learning experience.

In terms of seat time reduction, it seems relevant to describe blended instruction as an intentional shift in the course design when the time spent online replaces some of the classroom or self-study time. In this case, the exact amount of time being reduced is not as important as the fact that online activities become part of the curriculum and students’ performance online becomes a part of expected outcomes of learning and is assessed. As in the example above, even 5% reduction in the seat time can make a significant difference in a learner’s experience.

2.1.3. *Quality of blend*

The final issue related to the definition of BL raised by Graham (2013) is whether the issue of quality should be part of the definition. In the learner-centered view of blended learning presented in this paper, the notion of learner's effectiveness is seen as one of the characteristics of quality. It includes such considerations as whether the online activity leads to improved learning, whether it leads to learning of what is intended to be learnt and whether the use of online activity provides a learning experience different from the learning experience gained through the traditional f2f mode of instruction.

While making no claims of finality, this paper defines BL as a range of learning experiences gained through a combination of face-to-face and online instruction which is carried out at the level of curriculum with the aim of providing increased learning opportunities, which can lead to improved learning.

2.2. **Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)**

One of the technological pillars that shapes blended learning now is e-learning education systems which are sometimes labeled as Learning Management Systems (LMS), Course Management Systems or Virtual Learning Environments (VLE). For the context of this paper the term "Virtual Learning Environment" seems more preferable as it shifts focus from management aspects as in LMS or CMS to learning.

VLEs emerged in the mid-1990s as a way to support learning and teaching activities across the Internet. This way of organizing the learning environment is based on different technological configurations which are supposed to facilitate learning and communication between different agents. The ongoing development of the internet and its surrounding technologies has led to a significant rise in the use of VLEs which are currently widely used across many educational institutions worldwide. According to the Survey of Technology Enhanced Learning for higher education in the UK (USICA, 2010), all 167 UK higher education institutions participating in the survey were using a VLE.

The evolution of Internet technology is mirrored in the ways that the term VLE has been used by practitioners. Thus, in 1998 Mark Peterson used a phrase 'Virtual Learning Environment' for a website he created for language learning which basically was a collection of links to other language learning sites.

In 2002 O'Leary (as cited by Morris & Rippin, 2003) defined VLE as a particular form of e-learning technology that used networked computers to provide a range of functions to tutors, students and other users and these functions were mostly related to course management (distribution of course documents, ordered storage of learning materials, automated assessment packages, file transfer and sharing arrangements, tracking facilities to monitor staff and student) or communication (e-mail tools and chat room facilities).

Mark Stiles in his article (2007) cites Wikipedia in order to gain a 'consensus view' of VLEs. At the time of the article Wikipedia defined a VLE as "a software system designed to facilitate teachers in the management of educational courses for their students, especially by helping teachers and learners with course administration", where the main focus was still on the teachers and course management.

In its definition the JISC Steering Group (n.d.) shifts the focus of VLE onto students' needs and learning, viewing VLE as an environment which "is designed to act as a focus for students' learning activities and their management and facilitation, along with the provision of content and resources required to help make the activities successful". This

focus on learning was also reflected in the Wikipedia entry at the time when the paper was in progress (2014): “A virtual learning environment (VLE), or learning platform, is an e-learning education system based on the web that models conventional in-person education by providing equivalent virtual access to classes, class content, tests, homework, grades, assessments, and other external resources”.

All these illustrate the tendency of the amplifying context when more and more learning possibilities are included in the concept of the VLE and the word ‘environment’ is not any more used just for one particular site, tool, software but to a system of different learning contexts.

According to Dillenbourg (2000), there are several specific characteristics of the VLE. He describes VLE as an information space which is specifically designed to follow functional requirements (information, communication, collaboration, learning and management). At the same time, it is a social space where social interaction happens about or around information. It includes synchronous versus asynchronous communication, one-to-one versus one-to-many or many-to-many, text-based versus audio and video, indirect communication (e.g. sharing objects). This virtual space is explicitly represented employing various tools and can overlap with the physical environment. Dillenbourg (2000) specifically emphasizes the potential of VLE to make students not only active, but also actors, i.e. members and contributors of this social and information space.

2.3. Student experiences and importance of students’ voices

While research into blended learning has mostly focused on the institutional and pedagogical implications of using technology, such as effectiveness of blended learning in general and effectiveness of various virtual learning environment tools and modules in particular, the student perspective remains “under-represented” in e-learning research (Sharpe et al., 2006). In their study, Sharpe et al. (2006) review research into e-learning focusing on those studies which “allowed the learner’s voice to shine through”. They indicate that the majority of e-learning research is carried out from practitioners’ perspectives and mostly focuses on “observable learner behaviors” whereas a much smaller number of studies use learner’s voice as the basis of the research.

A comprehensive study was conducted by the team of scholars (Creanor et al., 2006) to explore learners’ feelings, beliefs and intentions towards e-learning. The aims of the project were to identify what characterizes an effective e-learner, what beliefs and intentions effective e-learners display, what strategies and techniques effective e-learners use. Fifty-five students were interviewed to express their own detailed story. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was applied to get a rich dataset of student experiences. Within the scope of this research, some issues are of particular interest, such as using networking to get help, the emotional response to technology, the impact of technology on learner’s confidence and self-esteem, and the importance of tutor support. An interesting observation was made about how students use technology for study, communication, and entertainment, often at the same time. This fact makes their study mode different from the traditional quiet study mode which is normally supported within institutions.

Another learner centered study was conducted by a group of researchers (Conole et al., 2006) focusing on learners’ experiences of e-learning in different subject contexts. This study employed both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, and was based on a survey of 400+ learners, 85 audio logs and 14 follow-up interviews. One of the aims of

this study was to explore how e-learning contributes to the whole learning experience of the technology-savvy group of learners and how they fit e-learning around their traditional learning activities. The researchers identified several factors that are salient for effective digital learners' practice such as pervasive use of technology, participation in a range of communities of practice, personalization of technology, etc. The researchers also claim that there is an evidence that the concept of "time" for these students is changing – "both in terms of expectation of information and results on demand" (Conole et al, 2006, p. 96).

Another claim was made regarding changing working patterns. According to the study, new working practices are emerging when students employ an integrated range of tools to gather, use and create knowledge.

There are a number of other studies that draw attention of the educational community to such aspects of learner experience as students' satisfaction, performance, attitudes and perception (among many Ocker & Yaverbaum, 2002; Flynn, Concannon & Bheachain, 2005; Sung & Mayer, 2012; Fryer, Bovee & Nakao, 2014). However, little attention has been paid to the exploration of actual students' experiences and what exactly happens when they are left one-to-one with technology, whereas with the increasing presence of technology in educational contexts and students becoming more experienced in their use of technology, it is extremely important for practitioners and decision makers to have better understanding of learning experiences.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. The study

The initial impulse for this small-scale study was a desire to find out what is going on when students are left one-to-one with VLE activities. This desire predetermined the purpose of this study which is to investigate learners' experience and to find out directly from learners how they cope with Moodle activities which are assigned as part of their self-study required by the institution.

Following the constructivist assumption that learning is subjective, a learner-centered focus has been chosen to allow learners to highlight the issues which are important to them.

Such a focus on learners' experience seems important as it can help course creators, who usually do not have their own experience of learning on-line, to optimize the ways technology is used and to narrow the gap between assumptions made from a teacher-centered view and actual student experience.

An exploratory methodology was used in this study, as the aim of this methodology is to build a better understanding of the phenomenon in question (Punch, 2009). Exploratory research allows finding out "how people get along in the setting under question, what meanings they give to their actions, and what issues concern them. The goal is ... to investigate social phenomena without explicit expectations" (Schutt, 2011, p.103).

Thus, this research employs an exploratory methodology within the interpretive paradigm and is centered on the following research questions:

- What problems do learners have while using Moodle activities as part of their self-study required by the institution?
- What strategies do they employ to solve these problems?

3.2. The context

The study was conducted at the Language Centre of Sultan Qaboos University where the idea of blended learning is being increasingly promoted and Moodle is being actively used as VLE to supplement f2f instruction. Currently, there are about 80 Moodle courses at the Language Centre. In addition to course management and communication, Moodle is used for e-portfolios, the extensive reading program, vocabulary development and other purposes.

This study focuses on the learners' experience while using three Moodle courses. These courses were assigned by their programs as compulsory component of students' self-study to accompany F2F courses. Each week learners were supposed to take a number of quizzes aimed at developing their reading and listening skills. These quizzes use a range of tasks (multiple choice, true/false, matching, gap filling, etc.) and are related to topics discussed in f2f classroom. These practice activities are open to students' limited time and they have 2 attempts to complete them. There is a 24 hour delay between attempts. This delay is supposed to encourage students to work more with reading/listening texts before they complete the activity focusing on vocabulary and language structures.

3.3. The participants

As this was a small-scale research which does not seek to generalize about the wider population, a non-probability sample (Cohen et al., 2000) was used which included 10 participants. To add diversity to the sample, participants were selected according to their gender, number of courses taken, and their level of academic progress. Participants were assured of their anonymity and were informed that they could suspend their involvement at any time.

3.4. Methods of data collection and analysis

As this research focuses on exploring the experience of individuals, an open-ended semi-structured interview was chosen as a qualitative data collection method because it elicited a dialogue between the interviewer and the participant, whereby the interviewee's responses give the interviewer the opportunity to delve more deeply into the issue. In this case, participants are viewed "as the experiential experts on the subject, and should therefore be allowed maximum opportunity to tell their own story" (Smith & Osborne, 2003, p. 59).

All interviews were conducted in English which might be considered as a possible limitation because the participants' level of English proficiency could have limited the way they expressed their ideas.

The interviews were recorded with the participants' permission and subsequently transcribed.

Thematic analysis was used to identify important themes that emerged in the interviews and to provide a basis for interpretation following the aim of the study which is to explore experiences of participants through personal accounts. In other words, the aim of the qualitative data analysis was to uncover emerging themes, patterns, concepts, insights, and understandings (Patton, 2002) and allow data to 'speak for themselves'.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Problems

The analysis of the interview data revealed a number of recurrent problems which were mentioned by participants while they were talking about their experiences of using Moodle activities assigned as a compulsory part of their self-study.

4.1.1. *Level of difficulty*

One theme that came across from all participants was the level of difficulty of the practice activities under discussion. Within this theme, participants were talking about problems with understanding the language: difficult vocabulary, long difficult texts in reading, problems with understanding long lectures. In addition to language problems, some interviewees mentioned problems with understanding the subject of the texts. For example: "In this course topics of the reading more specific and have a lot of new words about science. You know ... related to specialization - agriculture. They are very difficult... and new for us" (Amna). "Sometimes I translate all words... Yes... But don't understand them... I mean I look at translation in Arabic but no idea what it about" (Nader).

Finally, some participants mentioned a big difference in the level of difficulty between different courses. To exemplify: "Moodle activities in 230 [lower-level course] are easy. It's like a play. Not like in this semester, I don't want to open Moodle because that's very difficult and I read, I read and I read but I don't understand" (Muna). This concern about the level of difficulty was quite predictable as participants belong to the cohort of students who at the beginning of the academic year were placed at the lowest level of the English language foundation program at the Language Centre.

4.1.2. *Time constraints*

Another recurrent problem experienced by participants was the necessity to fit Moodle practice into the busy schedule of their study, and moreover to do it on a regular basis, as Moodle activities stay open only for a limited period of time. For example: "I do it in free time, in weekend, between classes and we still not have time and every time we late" (Omar).

Participants also reported some problems with following the deadlines expressing the need to have some sort of support service which will alert them regularly on what they are supposed to do during the week. To exemplify: "We have not information which quiz close. For example for me, I didn't solve the quiz because I didn't know it close" (Nader).

Also, Moodle practice is perceived by participants as a time-consuming and effort-consuming activity and here there is a relation to the above-mentioned problem of difficulty of the material. There is a big gap between participants' level of English language proficiency and the level of the language used in the tasks, as a result they spend much time completing the assignments.

4.1.3. *Lack of feedback*

Some participants mentioned the lack of feedback as one of the problems they had when doing Moodle assignments. The current design of Moodle activities in the courses under discussion does not indicate which question a student answered false, it gives just the overall result for the activity. Many participants reported it being a problem. For

example: “We know that we answered wrong but we don’t know where... we can only guess...I want to see exact place where is this mistake and what I do wrong” (Amna).

4.1.4. Lack of support

Several interviewees highlighted lack of teacher’s support especially at the beginning of the academic year. To exemplify: “At the beginning we didn’t know how to solve these quizzes. We asked teacher. He say go to lab and solve it. This is the first time and we don’t know how to solve Moodle” (Yasser). One participant mentioned that when he approached his teacher to ask about Moodle, the later could not help him as he did not know much about Moodle activities. Other issues such as lack of task variety, lack of integration of Moodle activities with f2f instruction, some flaws in the task design were also reported by participants.

4.2. Solutions

As activities under discussion are compulsory and students are supposed to get marks for them, they came up with several solutions for the problems mentioned above.

4.2.1. Getting help from outside

Many participants shared their experience on how they deal with difficult tasks. The main strategy they used was common for all participants. First, they try to do the task several times on their own; next they use some tools to help them. Many of them mentioned Google translator. To exemplify: “I translate all text in the Google translator and try to understand, then solve the questions” (Omar). “Yes, yes.... but not in the first time or second time, after so many practice” (Nader).

There was a recognition that this way does not help students to master language skills and they admit that they do it only to get the answer and the mark, but not for the sake of practice. Also they admitted that this way was not always helpful. To exemplify: “

Yasser: Often we translate text and questions.

Interviewer: Do you get full mark then?

Yasser: Yes.

Qais: Not exactly. Not always. Because also in Arabic it’s difficult to know the meaning of the text.

Interviewer: You mean that even if you translated the text in Arabic, it was difficult for you to answer the questions correctly?

Qais: Yes, sometimes Google translator not give me the correct meaning.

Another way to get help as reported by the participants is to ask a friend, a group mate, a teacher for help. For example: “I go to my friend, my friend say I am busy now, I have work, I cannot do with you. Then I go to another student - please come and help me. He say - Ok, tomorrow. But Moodle have time - if you don’t solve this quiz this time you will lose mark” (Qais). This example illustrates how the above-mentioned time constraints push students to seek for external help.

4.2.2. Group work

Despite the fact that activities under discussion were implied to be individual practice, all participants reported that often they were doing Moodle activities in groups. This

strategy included several variations. Sometimes students split texts into paragraphs and one student was working with one paragraph, another student was working with another paragraph and then they exchanged information. Sometimes they completed the first attempt individually, then they shared and discussed answers in a group before submitting the quiz. Sometimes they just copied answers from each other. For example: “Sometimes I get an answer from another student, as a result we don’t know, we don’t learn anything” (Qais).

4.2.3. *Underworld of communication*

All participants admitted that while doing Moodle activities they were constantly communicating with each other using different ways. The most popular way is using a smartphone messenger WhatsApp to exchange information and screenshots.

4.2.4. *Withdrawal*

Some participants explained that sometimes when they think that the task is too difficult or it would take much time they made a decision not to take it at all even if they knew that they would lose marks in this case.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study illustrate how differently students approach learning in virtual learning environment and this difference is well seen in the following examples: “I didn’t have problems. It depend on me, if I do Moodle regularly... if I read carefully, it is not a problem” (Majid). “It’s like a crime. I have to solve it - to find the answer” (Abduhla).

From the students’ experience of using Moodle activities as a compulsory part of their self-study, it can be seen that they are drifting from one approach to another, being under time pressures, or having a task which they perceive as difficult. On the one hand, they have some understanding of ‘what is good’ and ‘what is bad’ for their learning; on the other hand, they cannot resist a temptation to get results fast and without effort when any way is good. In this respect the problem of lack of motivation comes to the surface meaning that often students do these activities only if they see a direct benefit to their grade. To exemplify: “Students don’t worry about the quizzes, that they learn something. They just get answers from any student and solve it just to get marks and they are happy” (Yasser).

Participants’ experiences highlighted in this study can be summarized by the chart presented in Figure 1 where the issue of teacher feedback and support requires further consideration.

The Moodle activities discussed in this study were designed to be part of the self-study, but it does not mean that students do not need teachers’ support while doing them. According to Vermunt and Verloop (1999), teachers need to create ‘constructive friction’ which implies gradual reduction of the amount of support they provide on the one hand, and challenging students to develop their own ways of learning on the other hand. However, if too little support is provided, ‘destructive friction’ may occur when students are left unable to bridge the gap to the type of learning required, and when this happens students can employ strategies which are not always beneficial to learning. We can suppose that the latter happened in the situation explored in the research where teachers stepped aside providing minimal

support to students assuming that learners would take full control over their activity. However, probably due to the lack of motivation, insufficient level of learner autonomy and flaws in the activity design, students went counter to this assumption employing strategies with low learning value like using Google translator to translate the whole text and all the questions in the task.

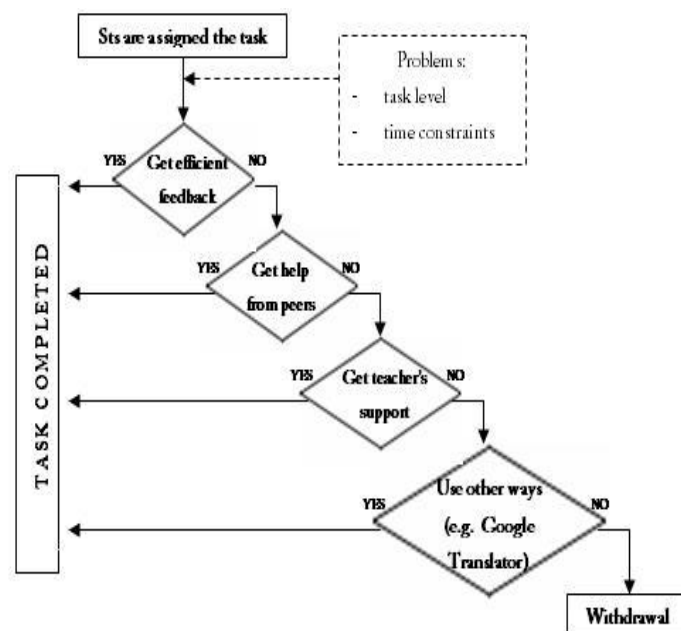


Fig. 1 Students' experience of Moodle activities

The findings of this research can also illustrate how assignments created following a more traditional approach, where the goal (correct answer) is supposed to be achieved individually, are being transformed by students who by their actions prove John Dewey's view that they are "observers, participants, and agents who actively generate and transform the patterns through which they construct the realities that fit them" (cited in Hickman et al., 2009).

The Moodle activities under discussion were developed following principles of traditional education which tends to isolate the learner from all social interaction and views education as a one-on-one relationship between the learner and the objective material to be learned. These activities were set up by teachers as individual practice, however, learners transformed them by using group work and networking working together to understand tasks and complete them.

Certain participants' experiences mentioned in this study goes in line with the observation made by Sharpe et al. (2006) that students often use technology provided for them in ways that are not planned for.

These findings can be viewed through the lens of social constructivist theory, which regards learning as a social process and presumes that meaningful learning is more likely to occur when individuals are engaged in social activities.

The idea of social collaboration in the process of knowledge construction gains even more importance in the BL environment when students while doing on-line activities are distanced from the teacher and the teacher objectively, regardless of his or her wish, has less control over learner's activity.

This study shows that when students are required to do activities online, the fact that they get peer support through networking and communication cannot be ignored. Multiple technologies are currently at students' disposal which they use extensively in everyday life. These findings agree with conclusions made by Conole et al. (2006). They also conform with one report on a study in 2006 of over 400 'technology-savvy' students in the UK that different technologies "create an underworld of communication and information-sharing invisible to teachers" (JISC, 2007, p.11). The fact that students are working together to understand the task, rather than just receiving the teacher's knowledge can be seen as favorable from a social-constructivist perspective. However, teachers often regard such information sharing, which happens out of the teachers' view, as not learning beneficial and consider it as a way of cheating. Such communication in blended learning happens regardless of teachers' wishes, but it is in teachers' hands to influence how meaningful and how successful those interactions are by helping students to deal with it in a more deliberate and purposeful way, by modifying the nature of the tasks, by providing a certain amount of support and feedback. Moodle activities would be more successful and serve their purpose better if this fact is taken into account by task designers.

6. CONCLUSION

The idea of blended learning is increasingly popular in language education. However, language learners face multiple problems when they are left one-to-one with computer and these problems are connected to the level of difficulty, time constraints, lack of feedback and lack of support, together with motivational issues. As a way to solve them, they employ a range of strategies such as getting help from outside, using networking and group work. These findings necessitate taking into account such issues as information sharing and learners' need for adequate support when designing Moodle activities.

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