

Blended instruction for EFL learners: Engagement, learning and course satisfaction

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Offering blended courses has increasingly become common at tertiary education though it is relatively new in the field of language teaching. This paper describes the design of a blended language course through Moodle in an EFL context with an emphasis on students' perceptions. In a survey based approach, a total of 68 university students' experiences with blended language learning for two consecutive terms were examined. The questionnaire items focused on the effect of blended design on students' engagement, learning and overall course satisfaction. Student responses revealed that technology-assisted language instruction provided in parallel with face to face teaching could create efficient learning environments.

Keywords: Blended language learning, Course management system, Moodle,

1. Introduction

The advent of e-learning and concomitant development of software such as Course Management Systems (CMS) has revolutionized instruction methods in education in more ways than one. Internet based innovations have helped to remove the rigidity of time and space requirements from the delivery of instruction, and these have brought about new forms of distance learning, as well as new terms such as online learning and, more recently, blended learning to convey these newly adopted methods of instruction.

Blended learning, in its basic sense, refers to a design which combines self-paced learning generally through web based applications and face to face classroom teaching

(Alonso, López, Manrique, & Viñes, 2005; Oliver & Trigwell, 2005). Although there is a huge body of literature on face-to-face instruction and an extensive body of research about learning in fully online environments, blended designs in higher education is still a developing area (Stacey & Gerbic, 2008). In the emergent body of research, the efficacy of blended courses has been studied across various disciplines ranging from computer science (Goverder, 2010), physic (Martin-Blas & Serrano-Fernandez, 2009), communication science (Campbell, 2010) to biology (Riffell & Sibley, 2005). However, with regard to the field of language teaching, there is still a relatively limited amount of research exploring blended environments (Daniels, 2008; Grgurovic, 2011; Jia, Y. Chen, Ding & Ruan, 2012; Klemsen & Seong, 2013; Snodin, 2013; Wu & Liu, 2013).

Though mostly promotional in nature, much of the available literature on blended courses for language learning suggests the use of CMSs in creating blended environments (Baskerville & Robb, 2005; Godwin-Jones, 2003; Motteram & Sharma, 2009). Among the current CMSs, Moodle especially is noteworthy because it is free, user friendly and it avails itself to multimedia support that enables to create any language learning activities easily (Brandl, 2005; Cole & Foster, 2008; Dougiamas & Taylor, 2003). Moodle seems to be an effective tool to create a blended course design as it has great potential to foster students' engagement and learning (Ausburn, 2004). This paper reports on a blended language course through Moodle in a higher education setting. More specifically, this study attempts to gain insights into students' perception of blended language learning with a focus on their engagement, learning and overall course satisfaction.

2. Review of the literature

2.1 Blended learning

Integration of computer technologies and the Internet into education has dramatically changed the means of course delivery. Offering fully online courses and distance education have been a trendy feature of higher education, which has brought up a plenty of research studies comparing online courses with the traditional face-to face course delivery methods. While in most such studies, online courses are claimed to be favourable due to their potential in removing physical barriers (Blake, Wilson, & Pardo-Ballester, 2008), in saving class time and cost efficiently, and in enhancing the self-paced learning (Y. Chen, N. Chen, & Tsai, 2009), cautious remarks about online course delivery are also present in the related literature as it eliminates or greatly reduces face-to-face interaction that is desired for effective teaching and learning (Sitter et al., 2009). Blended courses were developed in order to fully exploit both online and traditional learning environments.

Although blended learning may mean different things to different people (Driscoll, 2002; Motteram & Sharma, 2009), a commonly used definition in higher education context is "the integrated combination of traditional learning with web based online approaches" (Oliver & Trigwell, 2005). Blended courses inherit the convenience and flexibility of fully online courses without eliminating interactional aspects of face to face language lessons; therefore, this course design is generally considered the "best of two worlds" (Dziuban, Hartman, & Moskal, 2004; Sitter et al., 2009).

The function of blended courses in broader context of education has thoroughly been investigated in a large number of disciplines, and main themes regarding the effectiveness of blended courses are identified as learning outcomes, student engagement and course

satisfaction (Campbell, 2010; Govender, 2010; Vernadakis, Antoniou, Giannousi, Zetou, & Kioumourtzoglou, 2011).

Regarding the field of language learning, the same themes have also been the focus of studies, though relatively fewer in number. Banados (2006) reports on a study involving 39 EFL university students, where the course offered in a blended format was a communicative English course aiming at developing integrated linguistic skills. The relevant data were collected through diagnostic tests and a perception questionnaire. Analysis of the data demonstrated that blended language learning yielded “a substantial improvement in the students’ language skills as well as high satisfaction levels with the communicative English program” (Banados, 2006 p. 544). The findings also imply that blended design can provide a good solution for language instruction in settings with limited class time. Similar conclusions can be drawn from a study carried out by Stracke (2007). Through a qualitative design, the researcher gathered data about the experiences of learners in a blended language learning environment within a German higher education context. The results showed that the students surveyed (n=190) and interviewed (n=32) had an overall positive attitude towards blended course design. In a similar vein, Klemsen and Seong (2012) investigated students’ satisfaction in blended learning environments. The analysis of the data collected from 19 university students through questionnaires indicated that overall student perception of blended learning is positive. In a recent study with a total of 360 university students, Wu and Liu (2013), drawing attention to the importance of selected technology as an influential factor, concluded that offering blended instruction creates positive impacts on students’ course satisfaction.

With regard to the technology-related part of blended instruction, Neumeier (2005) rightly noted that “approach of blending CALL applications with face to face teaching is as old as CALL itself, and most language learners experience CALL within a [blended] environment” (p.163). What differentiates blended language learning from any kind of simple technology-enhanced environments is closely related to the type of web tools chosen for the course delivery. In blended language learning, web applications should enable the instructor to deliver a significant proportion of course content (more than 30%) through e-learning activities including online quizzes and synchronous-asynchronous discussion complementary to a carefully planned in class language teaching (Allen, Seaman, & Garrett, 2007; Vernadakis et al., 2011). The technology employed in blended courses should fit appropriately into each lesson plan, create interactive and motivating lessons for the students, be a source of instant feedback, and effectively manage students’ assignment (Sharma & Barret, 2007). While there are several options available for teachers, Moodle has been shown to be suited to the requirements of blended courses.

2.2. Moodle for blended language learning

Moodle is one of the most popular Course Management Systems currently available, and has “...great potential for supporting conventional classroom instruction, for example to do additional work outside of class, to become the delivery system for blended (or hybrid) course formats...” (Brandl, 2005 p. 17). Through its template-based, user friendly nature, multimedia support, student progress tracking and feedback options, Moodle offers a lot to facilitate language instruction through blended designs.

Table 1 summarizes the major modules in Moodle to create blended language learning

environments (for a comprehensive explanation on using Moodle in language teaching, see Cole & Foster, 2008; Stanford, 2009).

Table 1: Major modules to be used in creating blended environments

Blended Learning	
Modules	Potential Uses in Language Learning
Lesson Module	Various reading activities to check the comprehension
	Noticing the points
	Dictation through a listening activity (Rice, 2006; Stanford, 2009)
Quiz Module	Creating different types of quizzes (e.g. multiple choice, true/false, matching, cloze tests) to practice language skills, vocabulary and grammar structures
	Assessment through the "statistics" button (Stanford, 2009)
Glossary Module	Creating a dictionary specific to the target course
	Creating personal glossary to individualize the learning environment (Brandl, 2005)
Forum Module	Asynchronous discussion in the target language, peer review
	Any kind of writing activities
	Increasing interaction between the instructor and the students (Motteram & Sharma, 2009; Robertson, 2008)
Assignment Module	Any kind of assignment requiring to submit a file
	Giving feedback (P. Wright & G. Wright, 2011)
Gradebook Module	Presenting the results of students' activities in detail
	Helping students to monitor their own progress (Lin, 2011; P. Wright & G. Wright, 2011).

On the basis of the previous discourse in the literature, Moodle has been selected in this study as a convenient tool for designing a blended language course.

3. Method

3.1 Research setting and participants

Following a survey based methodology; this study was carried out in an English course at the Faculty of Engineering of a Turkish university. The university offers a total of sixty hours English courses organized in two-hour weekly sessions in the first year of the university education. No courses at the faculty use English as the medium of instruction, which means that English course is the only source of input in the formal instructional setting. The objective of the English course in the first year, which the present study is related to, is to improve students' vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Due to time-constraints (two hours per week) and overcrowded classrooms, the administration in the research setting foregrounds reading skill rather than writing, listening and speaking skills as it is thought to be logistically easier to present the course on reading. Therefore, integration of writing and listening activities into the course poses difficulties, which forms the rationale for the present study.

Drawn according to the convenient sampling procedures (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 178 2000), the sample for this study consisted of sixty-eight fulltime first year students majoring

in Engineering ranging in age from 18 to 23. Fourteen of the participants were female and the rest were male. Their level of proficiency in English was measured through the Oxford Placement & Progress Test (for a detailed explanation of the test, see Allan, 2004) at the beginning of the term. Students' proficiency levels were identified as beginner (including basic user $n=27$, false beginner $n=9$ and absolute beginner $n=32$).

3.2 Blended language course design

Students' English level was the primary focus in designing the course and deciding on the content of the activities placed on Moodle. In accordance with the course objectives, grammar topics were introduced gradually and the skill based activities centred on the use of grammatical structure and the vocabulary of the related week. Main topic presentations were primarily realized during the in-class teaching; however, extension points were presented on the Moodle site as well. Due to the time constraints in face to face meetings, activities related to language skills remained limited. Therefore, a considerable amount of skill related activities were carried out on the Moodle site. The following is the screenshot of the Moodle site designed for the present study.

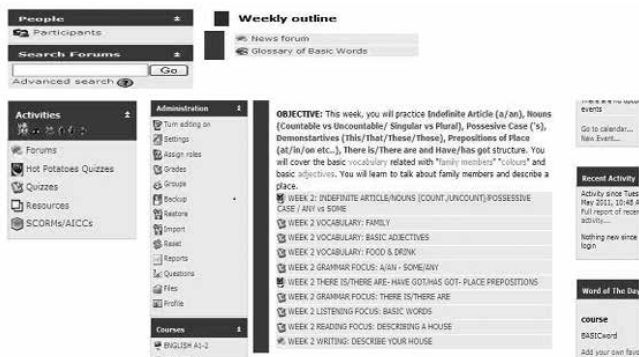


Figure 1. Screenshot illustrating Moodle site

As seen in Figure 1, Moodle was designed in a weekly format, each week focusing on different topics. From the beginning of the course, the glossary module was activated and updated weekly by the instructor by considering the vocabulary used in the activities. As a function of the glossary module, *word of the day* feature which randomly selects a different word from the glossary on daily basis and presents it to the students was activated as well. Additionally, the students were encouraged to make use of the personal glossary and create their own individual dictionaries. Each week on the Moodle began with a brief description of the objectives of the week, which was followed by grammar notes prepared bilingually in either PowerPoint or text-based forms. This allowed students to access and revise the topic at any time and place. Each week included at least two or more vocabulary exercises to make sure that students were going through the target vocabulary of the week. For the vocabulary exercises, quiz module was employed and activities were generally enhanced by the pictures and video files taken from copyright free websites, and crossword puzzles prepared through *Hot Potatoes Quizzes* to address the various learning styles. Similar modules

were also used to practise the grammar structures. For the listening and reading activities, the lesson module and quiz module were utilized as illustrated in Figure 2.

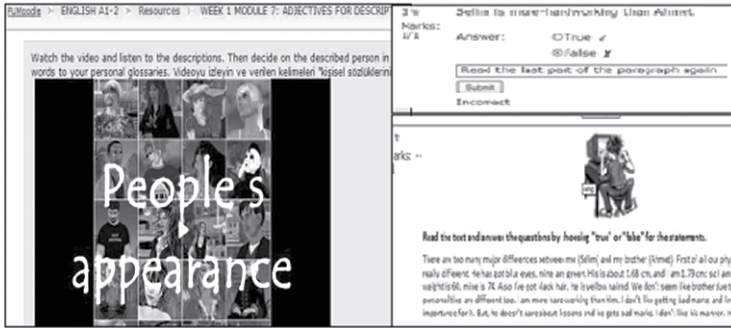


Figure 2. Sample listening and reading activities

YouTube videos which could be easily integrated into Moodle made a great source for audio and video files as also suggested by Lin (2011), and special attention was paid to ensure the materials were authentic and related to the theme/topic of the week. Students were provided with constant feedback for all the responses they produced for any activity. Each week ended with a writing activity which was realized through the forum module. In connection with the topic of the target week, students were required to produce a short writing piece and share it on the forum module as shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Forum module for writing activities

Both teacher and peer feedback were given on the students' writing and the students were allowed to communicate in English on any topics they chose to enhance the interaction among them. Email button was always kept functional for the interaction with the instructor. The amount and the content of all the activities varied from week to week and were revised depending on the students' reactions throughout the term. At the end of the study, the students were given a post-instruction perception questionnaire.

3.3 Data collection: Post-instruction perception questionnaire

A post-instruction perception questionnaire developed through the related literature (Campbell, 2010; Chenoweth, Ushida, & Murday, 2006) consisted of 25 statements in a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (totally agree) to 5 (totally disagree). The statements were centred on three main categories: engagement, learning and course satisfaction, which are included in the criteria for holding high quality courses in universities (Ausburn, 2004; Cole & Foster, 2008). Each category in the questionnaire ended with an open-ended question through which students could share any additional comments about their experiences. The final part of the questionnaire was for demographic data asking about respondents' age, gender, access to the Internet, computer and Moodle.

Each student enrolled in the course was required to complete the questionnaire before the end of the semester. Data were collected within the last three weeks of the second term in a paper-based format. A research assistant working in the department administered the questionnaire. Each questionnaire included brief information about the purpose of the study, a statement that students would remain anonymous and the data collected would remain confidential, and instructions for completing the survey. Considering the students' level of English, questionnaire items were written bilingually (Turkish and English), and students were allowed to use their L1 to answer the open-ended questions.

The data were analysed by utilizing descriptive analysis (frequency and mean scores). In the discussion of the findings, response categories "strongly agree" and "agree" and the categories "strongly disagree" and "disagree" were collapsed into broader categories of "agreement" and "disagreement" respectively to interpret the results in a practical way. The results were presented in the following section.

4. Results and discussion

The first part of the questionnaire was related to the students' perceptions of whether this blended course through Moodle was effective in keeping them engaged. They were asked to reflect on their experiences in this blended course using Moodle as compared to courses where they had not used Moodle. Engagement category consisted of 6 statements regarding student interaction, interest, challenge, participation, connectedness and effort, which are considered to be the characteristics of engaged learners (Egbert, 2007; Lekoko, 2013).

Table 2 (overleaf) presents the frequency, percentage and the means for blended language learning and perceived engagement

As seen in Table 2, 84% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the use of Moodle helped to make the course work and activities interesting. This perception was reflected in the students' comments as well: "Activities based on songs were really fun. I spent good time by listening to the songs and studying the vocabulary in those songs" (S 37). "Doing homework by watching videos on Moodle was different for me. I like it very much" (S 18). Additionally, most of the students found activities challenging ($x=2.10$). Initiating students' interests in the course and creating challenging tasks are among the prerequisites for engaging students (Egbert, 2007). The fact that the activities were varied both in number and content only through the blended design by making use of Moodle helped to address diverse interests of students. Having students interact with each other and with the language itself also contributes to the sense of engagement in the learners (Meltzer & Hamman, 2004). With regard to this aspect of the present study, 75% of the students

Table 2. Students' perceptions of their engagement in language learning

Item	Students' responses										
	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		x
	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)	
The use of Moodle helped me to feel more connected with classmates	10	(14.7)	41	(60.3)	8	(11.8)	8	(11.8)	1	(1.5)	
The use of Moodle helped to make my course work and activities interesting	18	(26.5)	39	(57.4)	8	(11.8)	3	(4.4)	-	-	1.94
The use of Moodle helped me to feel more challenged in my course work and activities.	13	(19.1)	39	(57.4)	12	(17.6)	4	(5.9)	-	-	2.10
The use of Moodle increased my level of participation in this course.	15	(22.1)	35	(51.5)	9	(13.2)	9	(13.2)	-	-	2.17
I believe I can easily communicate with the instructor using Moodle.	15	(22.1)	41	(60.3)	10	(14.7)	2	(2.9)	-	-	1.98
I am pleased with the effort I put forth in this course.	16	(23.5)	28	(41.2)	7	(10.3)	11	(16.2)	6	(8.8)	2.45

responded positively, which can be attributed to the use of Moodle as it allowed students to interact at any time and place, and provided them with a plenty of language activities to accomplish that cannot be realized in a two-hour class time. All these things may have an impact on the level of participation in the course as most of the students agreed that *the use of Moodle increased their level of participation in this course* ($x=2.17$), and 64% of them expressed contentment with the effort they put forth in this course.

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of 12 statements assessing students' perceptions of their learning through the blended language course compared to courses where they had not used Moodle. Table 3 illustrates the results.

The first question in this category was related to the gradebook module and tracking functions of Moodle which keeps report of all activities students engaged in, including the right and wrong responses to the activities, grades, feedback from the other users (e.g., peers and the instructor), the number of attempts and time spent on each activity, etc. All these functions are claimed to help learners to monitor their learning process (Cole & Foster, 2008). This function seemed to be appreciated by the participants of the study as 70% of them responded positively. When asked using different wording, the students stated that the use of Moodle enabled them to have greater control over their learning ($x=2.13$). Additionally, respondents were in agreement that the course design using Moodle promoted effective learning ($x=2.02$) and provided them with a valuable learning experience ($x=2.13$) as also explained in students' comments: "*This system helped me a lot to learn the grammar and to enhance my vocabulary*" (S 7). "*I believe that I wouldn't learn that much if it [English instruction] were just in the classroom*" (S 14). This finding is in line with Hui, Hu, Clark, Tam, & Milton (2007) who reported that web-based language learning support grammar and vocabulary growth because of the learning materials that "students may

Table 3. Students perceptions of their learning through blended course design

Item	Students' responses						x				
	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral			Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)		f	(%)	f	(%)
I could assess my progress in the course by using Moodle	13	(19.1)	35	(51.5)	12	(17.6)	8	(11.8)	-	-	2.22
The use of Moodle was important in assisting me with completing course tasks	17	(25.0)	38	(55.9)	3	(4.4)	4	(5.9)	6	(8.8)	2.17
The use of Moodle helped to provide for more timely feedback on my learning	16	(23.5)	42	(61.8)	6	(8.8)	4	(5.9)	--	--	1.97
I learned a lot in this course by using Moodle.	12	(17.6)	44	(64.7)	10	(14.7)	2	(2.9)	--	--	2.02
The use of Moodle provided me with more options that complemented my learning style	9	(13.2)	41	(60.3)	4	(5.9)	11	(16.2)	3	(4.4)	2.38
Studying course content through Moodle I felt I had a more valuable learning experience	11	(16.2)	39	(57.4)	16	(23.5)	2	(2.9)	--	--	2.13
Moodle tools are compatible with the language activities in my class	36	(52.9)	24	(35.3)	8	(11.8)	--	--	--	--	1.58
Using Moodle in this course does not fit the way I learn English	7	(10.3)	5	(7.4)	11	(16.2)	30	(44.1)	15	(22.1)	3.60
I believe that using Moodle helped me to improve my English writing	21	(30.9)	37	(54.4)	8	(11.8)	2	(1.9)	--	--	1.86
I believe that using Moodle helped me to improve my English reading	5	(7.4)	17	(25.0)	16	(23.5)	26	(38.2)	4	(5.9)	3.10
I believe that using Moodle helped me to improve my English listening	6	(8.8)	43	(63.2)	16	(23.5)	3	(4.4)	--	--	2.23
In this course format, I had greater control over my learning	15	(22.1)	36	(52.9)	10	(14.7)	7	(10.3)	--	--	2.13
I am pleased with the effort I put forth in this course.	16	(23.5)	28	(41.2)	7	(10.3)	11	(16.2)	6	(8.8)	2.45

study repetitively at their preferred time and pace" (p. 248). Providing learners with instant feedback is no doubt also a crucial factor to foster language learning (Gass & Mackey, 2007), and it is among the strengths of Moodle, supported by the fact that 85% of participants stated that they were able to receive timely feedback on their learning through Moodle. One of the highest scores obtained from the questionnaire was related to the potential of Moodle in designing language specific activities since the participants strongly agree that Moodle is compatible with all aspects of the English class ($x=1.53$), a fact which is continually emphasized in the related literature (Brandl, 2005; Godwin-Jones, 2003; Lin, 2011; 183

Stanford, 2009). With regard to catering to diverse learning styles, the blended language course through Moodle was perceived positively ($x=2.32$) by the students. This can be explained by the comprehensive multimedia support and variety of the quiz types, which was implied in students' comments: "I like dealing with crosswords, and vocabulary practices through crosswords were very beneficial for me. It was like playing game" (S 23). As for the gains in language skills, writing was perceived as the most improved skill ($x=1.86$). During the study, it was observed that students paid special attention to the writing activities. This could be because of the collaborative learning environment created by the forum module, which allowed students to easily communicate with their peers, share their writing, and comment on each other's work. Regarding the forum module, one student stated that "seeing how other classmates were writing in English was very enjoyable. We also talked to friends in English and this was really encouraging" (S 48). Implying the development in his writing skill, another student commented that "at the beginning, I was able to write just few sentences in the forum and I needed to think hard before making a sentence. But now I can write without making so much effort" (S 25). An interesting finding about students' perceptions of their improvement in language skills through the blended course design is low in the reading-related statement. The students were either neutral (23%) or didn't perceive that their reading skill improved (38 %). This finding is inconsistent with the findings of Hui et al. (2007) who state that web-based courses had a positive impact on the improvement in reading but not on listening skills in their study. One explanation may be that, unlike

Table 4. Students' perceptions of their course satisfaction with blended language learning

Item	Students' responses								x		
	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree			Strongly disagree	
	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)		f	(%)
The use of Moodle allowed me to participate at times that were convenient for me	16	(23.5)	31	(45.6)	12	(17.6)	9	(13.2)	-	-	2.20
The ability to access course information and content through Moodle was important	8	(11.8)	38	(55.9)	15	(22.1)	7	(10.3)	-	-	2.30
In terms of technology, I felt comfortable using Moodle	19	(27.9)	35	(51.5)	7	(10.3)	2	(2.9)	5	(7.4)	2.10
I am satisfied with the course delivery	13	(19.1)	38	(55.9)	15	(22.1)	2	(2.9)	-	-	2.11
Using Moodle in this course was difficult for me	3	(4.4)	14	(20.6)	7	(10.3)	42	(61.8)	2	(2.9)	3.38
I would like to use Moodle in other courses	21	(30.9)	39	(57.4)	7	(10.3)	1	(1.5)	-	-	1.82
I feel that Moodle is cumbersome to use.	3	(4.4)	16	(23.5)	16	(23.5)	23	(33.8)	10	(14.7)	3.30
I am pleased with the effort I put forth in this course.	16	(23.5)	28	(41.2)	7	(10.3)	11	(16.2)	6	(8.8)	2.45

listening and writing, reading activities were not specifically designed for this particular course. Unlike the listening and writing activities above that were designed for the study, students may not have recognized anything with regards to improving reading skills in this blended language learning environment.

The last part of the questionnaire was to assess students' perceptions of their overall course satisfaction. Students were asked to reflect back on courses where they had not used Moodle compared to the present course. Table 4 displays the results. Student responses in this category reflected a positive level of course satisfaction. Approximately 70% of participants stated that such a course design allowed them to participate in the course at convenient times, and they found easy access to the course content important ($x = 2.30$). According to Martin-Blas and Serrano-Fernandez (2009), course materials delivered in a format which is easy to access and conducive to learning can enhance student satisfaction and learning effectiveness. When asked if Moodle was difficult to use, only 25% of participants found it difficult, and most agreed they felt comfortable in using Moodle ($x = 2.10$). All in all, the students expressed contentment with the course delivery method ($x = 2.11$) which was also clear in their comments: *"To me this system increased our motivation to learn and speeded up the learning process"* (S 24); *"Through this system, I think I learned better because it enabled me to spend more time on English"* (S 59).

5. Conclusion

In the literature of language learning, there are a restricted number of research studies examining the actual role of blended mode of language instruction. In that sense, the present study provided valuable insights into the impact of blended design on language learning. The fact that most of the students responded positively to the statements measuring engagement indicates that a blended course design can create an instructional environment in which the students are more engaged in language learning. Based on the data of the present study, it also seems that student learning is likely to increase when students' interaction with the peers and instructor is promoted, and students' contact with the target language itself is increased. Blended design offers such an environment as it makes it possible to provide students with a myriad of learning materials without eliminating the interaction opportunities of the face-to-face environment (Sitter *et al.*, 2009). Positive perceptions of learning obtained in this study were partly related to the integration of Moodle to add a blended dimension to the course. Moodle offers many tools to create interactive learning materials, to give feedback to the students, to support interaction and to assess the outcomes. Through these properties, Moodle can make language courses different from simple web-enhanced courses "with only course outlines and course announcements being uploaded for the students to have online access" (Vernadakis *et al.*, 2011). Finally, the findings of the study demonstrated that a blended language course can enhance students' satisfaction with the course as "learning satisfaction relates directly to perceptions and feelings about learning effectiveness or outcomes" (Hui *et al.*, 2007).

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that language teachers functioning in instructional settings with limited class time make use of blended language instruction through tools such Moodle to promote engagement and satisfaction in their students. However, further research should be undertaken to determine if university students' positive perceptions towards the blended language course through Moodle actually translate into enhanced learning as measured by instruments other than self-report. Additional

studies could include a larger sample for greater validity and generalizations since this study was a small-scale research study documenting individual efforts in creating blended language course. Future research could also focus on individual differences such as gender, age, motivational levels, learning styles and communication styles while measuring students' perceptions of blended language learning.

Given the fact that the present study focused on students' perceptions of blended learning, which is only one aspect of the topic, further research that explores blended instruction in a broader context integrating teachers' attitudes and competences as practitioners in higher education is necessary. When taken together, studies investigating different aspects of blended learning such as student perceptions, learning outcomes, teacher competences and different instructional technologies could provide a framework for improving quality in higher education.

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