Utilizing a Blended Learning Strategyto Enhance EFLStudents' Listening Comprehension Skills at the Faculty of Specific Education

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UTILIZING A BLENDED LEARNING STRATEGYTO ENHANCE EFLSTUDENTS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION SKILLS AT THE FACULTY OF SPECIFIC EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of utilizing a blended learning strategy indeveloping EFLlistening comprehension skillsamong sophomores at the Faculty of Specific Education. To achieve the study aims, the researcher adopted a quasi-experimental design on participants of forty (40)sophomores at the Faculty of Specific Education, Zagazig University, Egypt. The participants were divided into two groups. Both groups were pretested to assure that they were equivalent. The experimental group was taught using the blended learning strategy while the control one was taught using regular instruction during the Academic Year 2019-2020. The experiment lasted for ten (10) weeks in which the researcher implemented the study instruments to investigate the effect of the blended learning strategy. The results were statistically analyzed by SPSS to get the final results. The results revealed that there were statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in the post-listening comprehension test favoring the experimental group's results. There were statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group pre-post-listening comprehension test favoring the post-test's results. This positive result was attributed to the effectiveness of using the blended learning strategy. According to the findings, the researcher recommends that the English Language instructors need to activate the blended learning strategy in order to develop EFL listening comprehension skills among sophomores.

*Keywords:*EFL listening comprehensionskills, blended learning strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1.Background

Different types of language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, are used in daily life communication. These skills are called the four main language skills. When people learn their native language, they usually learn to listen first, then to speak, read, and finally write. In

Utilizing a Blended Learning Strategyto Enhance EFLStudents' Listening Comprehension Skills at the
Faculty of Specific Education

PJAEE, 17 (7) (2020)

order to be good in using a language, EFL learners should successfully perform these skills. Thus, listening comprehension should be developed.

Research in the field of TEFL indicated that listening comprehension is an essential language skill that is naturally developed prior to speaking skill and that affects the development of both reading and writing skills. Listening comprehension plays an important role in daily communication and in the educational process too. Though its importance, developing listening comprehension has received less emphasis in language instruction.

Kurita (2012) andRost (2001) pointed out that the main difference between more and less successful learners is related to their ability to use listening as a way of learning. Listening skill is an important process in learning a foreign language,as the key to learn successfully any language is to correctly receive languageinput. Helgesen, et al. (2003) asserted that listening is an active skill. While learners listen, they are not only processing what they hear but also they are connecting itto other information they already know. As listeners, they combine what theyhear with their own ideas and experiences; they are creating meanings in theirown way.

Chen (2005) stated that there are four main difficulties that face EFL learners in improving their listening comprehension skills. The first one is related to the misunderstood vocabulary items. The second one is related to speakers losing their spoken skills. The third one is about listeners losing their own attention and concentration. The last difficulty is the one related to the duration of listening; whether it is enough or not.

Blended learning is an instructional technique that combines the use of online learning and classroom instruction. It was originated initiallyfrom efforts to improve distance-learning environments. Blended learning is considered one of the modern trends based on employing information technology in designing new learning situations that increase active learning and learner-centeredness. ToBersin and Associates (2003) blended learning combines the advantages of face-to-face learning and e-learning to meet individual differences.Banados (2006); Sharma and Barrett (2008) agreed that blended learning includes the use of technology and face-to-face classroom.

According toBonk and Graham (2006); Tomlinson and whittake (2013);Voos (2003) blended learning is an educational method that uses technology to blend face-to-face and online teaching strategies to develop the learning process.Graham (2004) stated that the crux of blended learning is the blending of both face-to-face instruction and computer mediated instruction. Blended learning is not just about using technology because it is available; it is about finding better ways of helping students to achieve the learning objectives, provide them with thebest learning and teaching experiences, and support teachers in performing their roles.

Bates (2001) reported that using technology should not replace the teacher's role or classrooms but develop what would be done in the classroom in any case. Thus, it is clear that blended learning is recommended for achieving the educational targets by making the best use of both technology and face-to-face education. The use of technology, especially computers, e-learning, and blended learning in teaching foreign

Utilizing a Blended Learning Strategyto Enhance EFLStudents' Listening Comprehension Skills at the Faculty of Specific Education

PJAEE, 17 (7) (2020)

languages has spread fast as a reaction to some of the problems stemming from the use of traditional approaches in the foreign language classroom.

Azizan (2010) pointed out that poor traditional classroom learning has been a major concern in the teaching and learning process. This traditional chalk and talk method is replaced by pure online learning. E-learning is an approach which is developed from distance education and has received special attention from public universities. However, e-learning must be combined with the other forms of learning, such as face-to-face learning to be effective. This combination leads to a new methodology called blended learning.

Furthermore, Azizen (2010) assured that e-learning has become an important part of the teaching process and learning experience of both teachers and learners. E-learning helps teachers handle difficulties and limitations posed by the traditional classroom learning. It provides a variety of resource avenues and facilitates sharinginformation among educational communities. However, e-learning has also its own limitations. It requires greater punctuality from students and sometimes it can be boring as actual communication between teachers and studentscan be limitedwhich may result in lower attendance and interaction. It is also difficult to make sure that students had actually completed a course.

All these constraints and limitations lead to lower teaching and learning efficiency. As both the traditional classroom learning and pure e-learning offer strength and limitation, it is better to combine the strength of face-to-face learning with that of online learning creating a more effective blended learning.By doing so, educators may achieve benefits of both types of instruction through a harmonious balance of virtual access to knowledge and physical human interaction (Graham, 2003). The target of using blended learning is to unite the best features of in-class teaching with that of online learning in order to promote more active, self-directed learning opportunities for students (Kaleta, 2002).

1.2.Aims and Significance the Study

1.2.1. Study Aims

The aim of the Current Study was to investigate the impact of the blended learning strategy on EFL learners' listening comprehension skills performance.

1.2.2. Significance of the Study

This study could be significant to each of:

1. EFL sophomores as it might enable them to improve their listening comprehension skills performance using multimedia.
2. EFL teachers as it might provide them with a list of some EFL listening comprehension skills and some suitable strategies that could help them develop those skills. It also provides them with practical procedures to improve their teaching of listening comprehension and their use of e-learning in combination with face–to-face instruction.

Utilizing a Blended Learning Strategyto Enhance EFLStudents' Listening Comprehension Skills at the
Faculty of Specific Education

PJAEE, 17 (7) (2020)

2. LITERATUREREVIEW

2.1.Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension plays a crucial role in verbal communication inside and outside EFL classrooms. Learners practice listening comprehension for both social communication and/or educational and academic purposes. In the field of EFL learning and teaching, listening comprehension plays a significant role in increasing students' linguistic proficiency.

Listening comprehension is one of the most important skills, which EFL learners are supposed to acquire.Listening is hearing, perceiving, and understanding heardutterances through the auditory system. Different definitions of listening comprehension have been made. According to Newton (2009), listening comprehension is the way of learning a language.O'Malley et al. (1989,as cited in Gilakjani&Ahmadi, 2011) viewed listening comprehension as a process in which listeners construct meanings through using both current information and pre-existing knowledge. In doing so,they rely upon numerous strategies to enable them toeffectively engage in the oral communication process.

Nadig (2013, as cited in Gilakjani&Sabouri, 2016)viewed listening comprehension as the different cognitive processes of understanding the spoken language. These processes include recognizing speech sounds, understanding the syntax of utterances, and comprehending the meaning of individual words.To Hamouda (2013) listening comprehension is listeners' ability to understand heard textsand talk about those texts' purpose, main ideas, and details.

2.1.1. Importance of Listening Comprehension

El-Koumy (2002) assured the importance of listening comprehension reasons. First, listening influences the development of writing and reading. Second, it plays a major part in the academic success. Third, it is an essential requirement for oral communication success. Abo-Essa (2005) supposed that listening comprehension is a main skill for effective oral communication in particular and for language learning in general.

Brown (2006) reported that teaching listening comprehension is important as it facilitates EFL learners' ability to get the purpose of the speakerand make proper inferences; as speakers do not usually say what they exactly mean. Sometimes the most important aspects of meaning are not clear. Listeners have to understand implied meaning and be familiar with different cultural cues in order to be able to understand the real meaning of what is being said (Rahmatian&Armiun, 2011).

2.1.2. Types of Listening Comprehension

Hornby (2005, as cited in Ahmed, 2014) indicated that there are many types of listening comprehension which vary according to learners' purpose and engagement level.To Macaro (2002) there are two main types of listening comprehension: one way interaction and mutual interaction.

Utilizing a Blended Learning Strategyto Enhance EFLStudents' Listening Comprehension Skills at the Faculty of Specific Education

PJAEE, 17 (7) (2020)

On the one hand, one way interaction involves no real interaction between listeners and speakers. EFL learners listen to an audio and then perform different listening comprehension tasks. On the other hand, in mutual interaction learners are engaged in a conversation in which they take turns. In doing so, they usually use some techniques, such as:

1. Clarification request in which the listener is asking the speaker to help them understand what has been said.
2. Confirmation checks in which the listener tries to make sure that they have heard words correctly.
3. Comprehension checks in which the speaker checks what the listener has understood, i.e. by asking "do you understand?"

2.1.3. Challenges of Listening Comprehension

Despite the importance of the listening comprehension skill, many learners find it one of the most difficult skills to learn, practice, and develop. Many researchers have focused in their studies on the different challenges that language learners face in listening comprehension (Goh, 2000).Underwood (1989) enumerated some of the challenges of listening comprehension. He indicated that EFL learnerscannot control the tempo of speech,unawareof the keywords in the heard text,miss the signals which clarify thatthe speaker is moving from one idea to another, have poor linguistic habits, and have problems regarding proper interpretation and lack of concentration.

According to Hamouda (2013), EFL learners have crucial problems in listening comprehension because universities pay more attention to grammar, vocabulary, and reading than to speaking and listening. Speaking and listening skills are not significant parts of many academic books and teachers do not consider these skills in their classes. He emphasized that comprehending speech is very difficult activity for students. Learners face a lot of problems when they listen to an authentic text. If teachers are expected to assist learners to improve their listening comprehension, they should first comprehend their learners' listening difficulties in understanding spoken passages. In addition, they need to teach them effective listening comprehension strategies to help themhandle their listening comprehension problems.

2.2.Blended Learning Strategy

The rapid change in the teaching and learning process increased the burden on teachers' shoulders to create and develop new ways of providing more effective instruction. As more content becomes available online, it becomes less adequate to only depend on traditional curricula delivery methods, such as textbook sand handouts. Teachers should learn how to use new technologies, adapt course materials for the new media, and investigate new means of presenting, reviewing, and grading.

Face-to-face learning has the advantage of an interactive learning environment that facilitates the exchange of ideas and experiences and minimizes the possibility of misunderstanding. Yet, face-to-face instruction allows no room for student-centered learning. Thus, it limits the

Utilizing a Blended Learning Strategyto Enhance EFLStudents' Listening Comprehension Skills at the
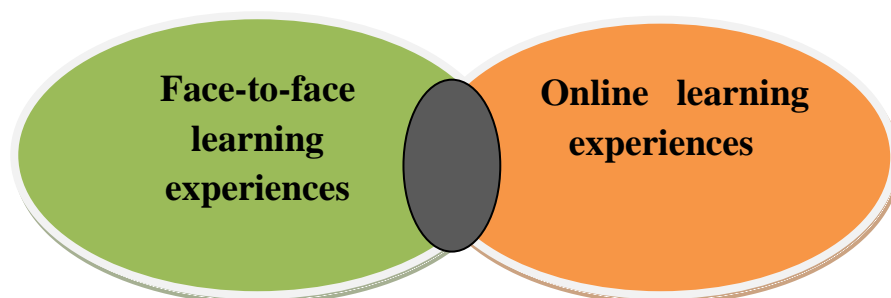Faculty of Specific Education

PJAEE, 17 (7) (2020)

possibility of customizing the course content to suit learners' needs and preferences (Mackay, 2006).

Singh (2003) indicated that a single mode of instructional delivery may not provide sufficient choices, engagement, social interaction, and relevant contexts needed to facilitate successful learning. On the one hand,e-learning provides learners with less restricted learning environment.They can learnat anytime from anywhere with reduced cost and faster learning delivery along with serving unlimited number of learners. On the other hand, low motivation to complete courses, lower learners' satisfaction, reduced levels of interaction, difficultyof using real tools, and high initial costs for developing courses can be attributed to the negative aspects of e-learning (Mackay, 2006).

According to Al-Huneidi and Schreurs (2011) blended learning arose to overcome the disadvantages of traditional learning and to obviate the failure of e-learning by providing a combination of various learning strategies or models. It mixes various event-based learning activities including face-to-face classroom, live e-learning, student-centered learning, and self-paced learning. Doing so may increase learning qualityand improve learners' interactivity. Blended learning is an evolution of e-learning; it does provide the best mix of traditional learning and e-learning.

Bladed learning represents a shift in instructional strategies. As online learning represents afundamental shift in the instructional model of distance learning, blended learning offers the possibility to significantly change how teachers and administrations view online learning within a face-to-face learning environment. The availability and widespread use of technologies of digital learning has led to increased levels of integratingcomputer-meditated instructional elements with traditional face-to-face learning (Bonk & Graham, 2004).

According to Keshtaand Harb (2013) blended learning is a modern strategy that blends the advantages of face-to-face method and e-learning. It moves from teacher-centered class to learner-centered class. This alternation leads to developing the quality of teaching and learning process, enhancing its outputs, opening new potentials for self-learning as well as long life learning, and raising learners' achievement level in English. Garrison and Vaughan (2017) assured that blended learning is the organic integration of thoughtfully selected and complementary face-to-face and online approaches and technologies as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Integration of Face-to-Face and Online Learning Experiences

Utilizing a Blended Learning Strategyto Enhance EFLStudents' Listening Comprehension Skills at the Faculty of Specific Education

PJAEE, 17 (7) (2020)

Kahiigi, et al. (2008) illustrated that e-learning is a broader entity that involves the use of information and communication technologies to transform and support the learning process. E-learning can include any acquisition and use of knowledge by electronic means, such as TV,internet, CD, DVD and personal organizers. Leal (2009) pointed out that when considering traditional versus e-learning, professionals and training mangers shouldseriously consider blended learning as a more feasible, effective option. Blended learning is the combination of multiple approaches in the learning environment. It can be accomplished through blending both virtual and physical resources;the process which sometimes referred to as hybrid e-learning.

2.2.1. Advantages of Blended Learning

The technological development and revolution in information technology has led to quick growth in all domains of knowledge. Thus, educational institutions, companies, and universities have to use such advanced technology to enhance learning environments as well as cope with the ever increasing demand for education and training. Hence, educational institutions and private companies have to be quick to offer distance educationalprogrammes(Sonwalkar, 2002).

Garrison and Vaughan (2017) summarized blended learning as the thoughtful fusion of face-to-face and online learning experience. Waston (2009) stated that blended learning combines the best elements of both. While the implications models vary, the benefits are clear. Whereas, online learning is individualized and flexible and presents one-on-one support, face-to-face learning has the merits of group instruction;it is motivational, has the merit of social environment and provides the opportunity of one-to-one or small group remediation and enrichment support.

Kaur (2013) stated that blended learning is about establishing a balance between face-to-face leaning and e-learning. It captures the best of both worlds by allowing learners to pick and choose how they want to learn and offers them greater flexibility and convenience about when they want to learn. Rikkinen and Virtanen (2009) summed up the ultimate goal of blended learning as to build and open-access web-resources that could support lifelong learning and give students the opportunity to come back to their own study material and continue to construct their knowledge indefinitely. The flexibility, quality,and cost of learningarethe main reason of adopting blended learning strategy in the hope ofprovidinglearners with better learning outcomes.

2.2.2. Approaches of Blended Learning

Bersin (2004) pointed out that the goal of blended learning is to synthesis face-to-face and technology-based teaching into an integrated method. In doing so, he presented the following two types of blended learning approaches:
- The Program flow model that is regarded as a step-by-step curriculum that integrates several media into a chronological program or syllabus.

Utilizing a Blended Learning Strategyto Enhance EFLStudents' Listening Comprehension Skills at the
Faculty of Specific Education

PJAEE, 17 (7) (2020)

Chapters build up each other. Each chapter ends with an exercise or assessment to measure the total learning.

- The Core and Spoke model that is regarded as a fundamental training approach that integrates supporting materials, interactivities, resources, and assessments.

The first approach creates both a deep level of commitment and a high completion rate. Learners feel more engaged and can plan their time to fit training into their existing schedules. It stimulates them to continue until the end of the targeted skill, lesson, unit, or course. This approach enables teachers to track their students' progress and therefore find any potential problems. Bersinadded that this approach fits well into classroom teaching, serves well for a certification programme, and is easy to be modified and maintained.

The second approach enables learners to decide which supplementary material to use. It assumes that students are motivated as independent learners. This model speeds up the development process because the training organization can build the surrounding materials over time. Within this approach, programmesare designed with a single course using a single media- either electronic or live- and use other medium or learning activities as optional or supplementary materials.

The main difference between the two approaches is that the supplementary materials are optional and not explicitly scheduled. Students decide which supplementary material to use and they do not necessarily complete the course at the same time. Using reference material is an easy way to build a core-and-spoke model approach.

Oliver (2005) confirmed that such approaches provide EFL teachers with a wide range of opportunities for creating engaging and supportive learning environments. The key element underpinning a blended learning environment is the scope and nature of the communication channels provided to support learners. The blend often depends on the level of face-to face communication that can be provided for students.

2.2.3.Teacher's Role in Blended Learning

According to Marsh (2012) the teacher's role has always been a central one in providing an engaging teaching and learning environment. Classroom or face-to-face teaching remains central to blended language learningand the teacher's role in the blended learning environment remains indispensable. Teachersare always thereto motivate and organizethe integration of students' online and classroom learning.

Richard (2006) assured that the teacher's role in blended courses has changed from the fountain of all knowledge to learner's guide and facilitator. Teachers may have to change not only their philosophy of instruction, but also their idea about students' nature, needs and, different learning styles.Fryer and Bovee (2016) pointed out that the key factor to motivate students' learning is toblend face-to-face activities and assessment with online ones and hold student's accountable for their own learning.

Utilizing a Blended Learning Strategyto Enhance EFLStudents' Listening Comprehension Skills at the Faculty of Specific Education

PJAEE, 17 (7) (2020)

Ireland (2008) suggested a number of challenges encountered by both EFL teachers and learners while using blended learning. These challenges could be explained as follows:

- Attendance;it is one of the most common concerns about teaching methods involving any element of podcasting whether there is live sessions or not.
- Time taken to convert to a blended delivery;long time of planning and decision making, not to mention work on the technical aspects, is important to redesign intellectual property for a blended delivery. The time required for these aspects should certainly not be underestimated.
- Technical issues;levels of access to and use an ownership of emerging digital technologies among students are certainly significant.
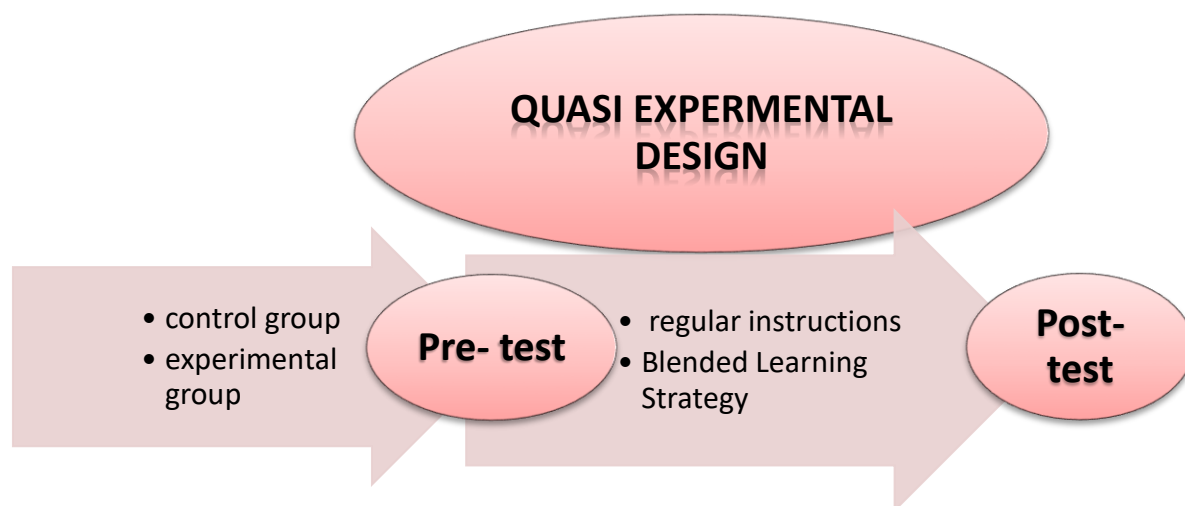 For blended learning environment to be effective in dealing with encountered challenges, Graham (2004) presentedfour key elements to be considered:
- Providinga professional development for teachersto familiarize them with new technologies and techniques for preparing their students for the blended learning sessions.
- Defining teachers'different roles in the blended learning.
- Analysing school local materials andcustomisingthem where possible in order to create a balance between global and local interests.
- Carrying out post-lab follow up activities after lab sessions as they help learners overcome problems they face during lab sessions.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1.Design of the Study

The current study adopted the quasi-experimental design. Forty EFL sophomores were assigned to two groups, experimental and control, (20) participants each. The experimental group participants received instruction through the blended learning strategy for developing EFL listening comprehension skills. On the other hand, participants, in the control group, received regular instruction. A listening comprehension pre-post testwas designed and administered toboth groups before and after the experiment.

Utilizing a Blended Learning Strategyto Enhance EFLStudents' Listening Comprehension Skills at the
Faculty of Specific Education

PJAEE, 17 (7) (2020)

Figure 2: Design of the study

3.2.Participants

Participants of the study included (40) English Major sophomores enrolled in the Faculty of Specific Education, Zagazig University during the second semester of the Academic Year 2019/2020. They were assigned into two groups, experimental (20 participants) and control (20 participants). It was assumed that the participants formed a homogenous group. So, they were expected to have a lot in common and wouldn't differ much regarding the academic quality of experience or their age. In order to be sure that the development of some of the participants listening comprehension skills was attributed only to the effect of the blended learning strategy, researcher pre-administered the listening comprehension test to both groups. t-test for independent samples was used to find out if there any statistically significant difference between the two groups. Results are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Both groups' pre results in listening comprehension test

Group	N	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	t-value	Df
Control	20	9.15	1.73	23.72	19
Experimental	20	9.25	1.62	25.56	19

Table 1shows that there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and that of the control groupsof the listening comprehension pre-test, t-values are (25.56) for the experimentalgroup and (23.72) for the control one.That is to say, the two groups were at almost the same level of performance in the listening comprehension. Thus, any variance between the two groups that might happen after the experiment could be attributed to the effect of the experiment. The pre-test scores revealed the participants had an average low proficiency in listening comprehension.

3.3.Instrument of the Study

Utilizing a Blended Learning Strategyto Enhance EFLStudents' Listening Comprehension Skills at the
Faculty of Specific Education

PJAEE, 17 (7) (2020)

Two instruments were used as follows:

- A listening comprehension checklist designed as a pre-requisite for constructing the instrument.
- A test of listening comprehension.

3.4.Materials of the Study

On the one hand, the researcher the researcher used the traditional way of teaching (face-to-face) for teaching the control group. On the other hand, for teaching the experimental group, the study material included PowerPoint presentations designed by the researcher and authentic audios and videos with both American and British accents. These authentic materials were mainly extracted from the following websites:

https://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/
https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/skills/listening
https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/ar/skills/listening
https://leraningenglish.voanews.com

4. RESULTS

It was hypothesized that; there is a statisticallysignificantdifference between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups post-test in the listening comprehension, favoring the experimental group. To verify this hypothesis, one sample t-test was used to compare the mean scores of the experimental group participants who taught through the blended learning strategy with those of the control group participants who were taught through regular instruction, in the post test. Results are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Comparing both groups post listening comprehension test results

Group	N	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	t-value	Df
Control	20	17.3	1.55	21.72	19
Experimental	20	25.5	1.91		

* Significant at (0.05)

Table 2 indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between both groups in favor the experimental group in the post administration of the listening comprehension test, t-value being (21.72) is significant at (0.05) level.So, the first hypothesis was verified, and it is concluded that the experimental group outperformed the control one in the post-test.

It was hypothesized that; there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group at the pre-post test scores of the listening comprehension test,favouringthe post-test scores. A paired samples t-test was used to verify this hypothesis as shown in table 3.

Utilizing a Blended Learning Strategyto Enhance EFLStudents' Listening Comprehension Skills at the
Faculty of Specific Education

PJAEE, 17 (7) (2020)

Table 3: Comparing the experimental group pre to post listening comprehension test

Test	N	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	t-value	Df
Pre	20	9.25	1.62	21.72	19
Post	20	21.30	1.92		

* Significant at (0.05)

Table 3indicates that there is a statistically significant differencebetween the pre and post administration of listening comprehension tests of the experimental group in the favor of the post results, t-value being(21.72) significant at (0.05). The second hypothesis was verified, and it is concluded that the post administrating outperformed the pre one of the EFL listening comprehension test.

It was hypothesized that; blended learning strategy has a positive effect on developing EFL sophomores' listening comprehension skills at the Faculty of Specific Education. Cohen's formulawas used to verify this hypothesis as shown in table 4.

Table 4: Results of Cohen's formula comparing the pre to post administrations of the experimental group

Test	N	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	t-value	Df	Effect Size
Pre	20	9.25	1.62	21.72	19	0.71
Post	20	21.30	1.92			

*Significant at (0.05)

Cohen's formula was used to verify the impact of the strategy. The impact was measured through the Cohen's equation. As indicated in table (4), it is the obvious that the final value of Cohen's equation for the experimental group, comparing its pre to post administration of the listening comprehension results is (0.71) significant at (0.05). Based on that, it is concluded that there is a positive effect of the blended learning strategy in developing EFL listening comprehension skills among sophomores at the Faculty of Specific Education, Zagazig University, Egypt.

5. DISCUSSION

The main purpose of the present study is investigating the effectiveness of utilizing a blended learning strategy indevelopingEFLlistening comprehension skillsamongsophomores at the Faculty of Specific Education. The results of the current study showed that the experimental group taught through blended learning strategy performed better than the control one in the post administration of the listening comprehension test.

The improvement of the experimental group's performance could be attributed to many reasons related to exposing this group to the blended learning strategy. These reasons include moving from lecture to student-centered learning and maximizing teacher-student, student-content, and student-student interaction. Reasons also include the merits of integrating new, interactive evaluation techniques for both EFL teachers and learners, supporting course management activities, and boosting learners' motivation, interactivity, and collaboration.

Utilizing a Blended Learning Strategyto Enhance EFLStudents' Listening Comprehension Skills at the Faculty of Specific Education

PJAEE, 17 (7) (2020)

Participants' progress in the post-administration of the listening comprehension test could be attributed to the interesting and engaging classroom environment created by blended learning. Participants were so interested in improving their listening comprehension skills. They were encouraged to practice various activities of listening comprehension in a more cooperative learning environment in which more emphasis was placed upon students' needs, interest, and preferences. Participants were provided with different and more individualized method of teaching and assessment. They were also given ample opportunities to interact with each other and with the presented material.

Throughout the teaching sessions, the researcher noticed that participants had a positive attitude towards blended learning strategy. Practiced interactive listening comprehension activities changed the way they feel about their listening comprehension. Blended learning strategy increased their motivation and involvement and improved their overall listening comprehension performance.

Results of the study were consistent with the results of other studies examining the effectiveness of the blended learning strategy, such as Jad (2013) who proved that biological science program based on blended learning is effective in developing students' achievement, life skills, and critical thinking and Mansy (2018) who confirmed that blended learning programme is effective in developing preparatory school students' EFL listening comprehension skills. Furthermore, Dawood (2013) recommended that teachers should be involved in blended learning strategy training workshops.

Moreover, the current study results' go along with that of Hussein (2012)who proved the effectiveness of teaching physics via using blended learning on the correction of alternative concepts and the development of creative thinking skills and Diabat(2012)who recommended that blended learning models should be adopted as an effective strategy for teaching different courses and specializations.

In addition, the current study results' agreed with that of Grgurovic (2010)who proved the effectiveness of technology-enhanced blended learning in teaching an ESL programme, Abdullah (2015) who examined the effectiveness of blended learning strategy in improving listening comprehension skills and Mashaly (2018) who investigated the effectiveness of utilizing blended learning in developing EFL writing skills.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on results of the current study, it could be concluded that blended learning has been proved to have a positive effect on developing sophomore's EFLlistening comprehension skills. Teaching listening comprehension by using the blended learning strategy has enhanced participants' ability to identify different types of oral texts, purpose of the speaker, details, implied and literal meaning, and cultural cues. It also helped them to properly identify cause and effect relationship and follow the sequence of events.

Utilizing a Blended Learning Strategyto Enhance EFLStudents' Listening Comprehension Skills at the
Faculty of Specific Education

PJAEE, 17 (7) (2020)

The experimental group students became more active in learning listening comprehension. They were actively participating in the activities throughout the treatment. Furthermore, they showed their contribution to the overall teaching and learning process. They were giving their opinions all the time regarding the use of the blended learning strategy and asking for information they did not know. They also enjoyed participating in the blended learning sessions.

Listening comprehension is a challenging skill to be leaned, improved, and assessed. EFL learners encounter some challenges regarding improving their listening comprehension skills, such as insufficient time for practice their listening, limited vocabulary, cultural differences, speed delivery, speakers' different accents, lack of body language, etc. More attention should be givento address such challenges. EFL teachers need to provide their students with   ample opportunities for practicing their listening comprehension skills. They should consider utilizing more interesting, realistic, and engaging study material and teaching activates suiting their students' academic level, interests, and preferences.

Blended learning depends on engaging learners in life like situations by providing them with various online activities. Thus, learning becomes more realistic and interesting to them. Indeed, blended learning does utilize technology, such as Facebook, Whats app, E-mail, etc., that is considered an integral part of the participants' everyday life. Doing so enable learners to practice listening comprehension more smoothly and correct their errors without the threat of face-to-face confrontation. Blended learning strategy facilitates students' practice of various listening comprehension tasks. It provides EFL learners with ample opportunities to work together.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the current study's results and conclusion, the following recommendations could be provided:

1. EFL teachers should pay more attention to teaching listening comprehension skills.
2. EFL textbooks should place more emphasis on improving listening comprehension skills.
3. EFL in-service teachers should get more training on teaching listening comprehension utilizing different teaching strategies.
4. Practicing listening comprehension should include blended learning activities to enable learners to listen in an interactive way.
5. EFL teachers should promote learners' interest towards improving their listening comprehension by using the various activities of blended learning utilizing Facebook, e-mails, Whats app, etc.
6. Extracurricular activities based on blended learning strategy should be used in order to attract learners' attention to the different tasks of listening comprehension skills.
7. Learners should be familiarized with the use of innovative listening strategies and techniques in their classrooms.

Utilizing a Blended Learning Strategyto Enhance EFLStudents' Listening Comprehension Skills at the
Faculty of Specific Education

PJAEE, 17 (7) (2020)

8. Listening comprehension course books taught in schools and universities should include interesting topics that are relevant to young and adults' lives and their rapid- changing world.
9. EFL teachers should continuously encourage learners to employ successful strategies of coping whenever they face a problem in understanding a challenging text.
10. Blended learning activities should be integrated within the taught course books by relating them to the goals of those courses.
11. EFL teachers should be trained on the different techniques of employing blended learning strategy within their EFL classrooms.

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