Impact of Synchronous Approach on the Development of Iranian EFL Learners' Vocabulary Knowledge: Students' and Teachers' Attitude in Focus

Shokooh Kashefizadeh, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Foreign Languages, South Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
khorshid98sh@gmail.com
Hossein Rahmanpanah, Assistant Professor, Department of Foreign Languages, South Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
hossein_2003@hotmail.com
Alireza Ameri, Assistant Professor, Department of Foreign Languages, South Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
a_ameri@azad.ac.ir

Abstract
The main purpose of this study was to find out the effects of synchronous (online) approaches on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary development and attitude. To this end, a population of 75 homogeneous students studying in Iranmehr English Language Institute, cooperated as participants. As for the collection of the needed data, a blended learning questionnaire was employed, The collected data were analyzed through one-way ANOVA and independent-samples *t*-test. The results displayed that there was a significant difference between synchronous and conventional methods of learning vocabulary in reading context. They also revealed that synchronous approach provided the learners with a chance to get the teachers' feedback immediately, and take part in learning and self-monitoring process of their progress actively. The results also indicated that students and teachers view synchronous approaches as more effective than the conventional approach, and thus can assist language teachers to make a more creative learning atmosphere and ease the learning processes in terms of vocabulary retention and use.

Keywords*:* *Blended learning, vocabulary learning, distance learning, synchronous approach*

Introduction

Teaching is a process under the supervision of a teacher limited by the boundaries of place and time, requiring both learners and teachers to be in a shared location such as a classroom. This traditional face-to-face method of teaching has been the backbone of education in most of the countries throughout the world. But the question is if it has been the most practical and efficient method to learn different aspects of a language such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and others or considering its limitation, if there could be better methods to do so.

According to Tu (2015), one of the most favored ways to use is blended learning, that is using computer as a communication tool to improve motivation and productivity of the learners in the language learning processes. Tu (2015) adds that combination of education and technology can improve both conventional and CALL teaching. Blended learning is a term used to incorporate technical and modern teaching combinations. Cleveland-Innes and Wilton (2018) believe:

A combination of classroom and web-based teaching and learning provides access to the widest range of learning modes and strategies to improve learning skills and knowledge. Some results of blended teaching reflect an increased ability of students to collaboratively learn, think

creatively, study independently and adapt their own teaching experiences to suit their personal needs.

Seaman, Allen and Seaman (2018), state that distance teaching is getting much higher in comparison with past years. They add that formats of learning online steadily have increased, whereas the overall number of higher education enrollment have decreased in the past four years, actually much faster than before. They believe, further, that since the rates of registration in higher education are decreasing, the formats of learning online are getting considerably very popular with growing rates, that is, millions of students have grown the inclination to take at least two or three courses that are completely blended or online.

In the present study, synchronous approaches which are variants of blended learning are focused. The synchronous teaching happens in a real time, in which all students and attendees receive the experience simultaneously and have a mutual reaction.

Based on the above points, the current study focuses on blended learning (BL) technique; namely, synchronous approaches, and concentrates on how combining technology with traditional teaching method would improve learners' and teachers' understanding and motivation towards learning new vocabulary. Thus, the following research questions are addressed:

Q1. Does synchronous approach have any significant impact on vocabulary knowledge of Iranian EFL learners?

Q2. Is synchronous approach more effective than conventional approach regarding students' Attitude?

Q3. Is synchronous approach more effective than conventional approach regarding teachers' Attitude?

Literature Review

Blended learning is the utilization of traditional classroom teaching together with the use of online learning for the similar learners studying similar material in similar course (Tu, 2015). Based on research results, the first usage of the term blended-learning goes back to early 2000s. In the year 2000, the first cases of blended learning started, when Cooney, Gupton & O'Laughlin (2000) attempted to combine work and play in a school to form blended activities. Voci and Young (2001) utilized e-learning in combination with instructor-based learning of a five-month course of training of leadership development. As it is mentioned, the term BL (blended learning) is used for a method of combining vocational learning with different forms of e-learning, while pure e-learning which concentrates solely on technology as primary way of learning. It is found out that using blended learning is an influential and progressive way for encouraging and motivating students.

In connection with the focus of the present study, it should be stated here that vocabulary is a very important part in language learning, since vocabulary is the core of any language, Without sufficient amount of vocabulary, even with good level of grammatical resources, learners are not able to achieve the potential in their preferred communication levels (Gorjian, Alipour, & Saffarian, 2012). Throughout the years, because of the nature of traditional rote learning of vocabulary, learning vocabulary is reported to be one of the most difficult and boring parts of a language to learn (Nguyen and Khuat, 2003; Shahriarpour, 2014). Learning vocabulary via repetition and not thinking about it carefully or using it or seeing it used, has not proved to be sufficient or even motivating. There are, however, many research to investigate more motivating methods to change this cycle around and change learning vocabulary into an exciting and enjoyable process.

Lin (2002) states that studying English vocabulary creates a lot of problems. This includes losing new vocabulary since such vocabularies are not utilized by learners in their everyday lives, as the students are not actually exposed to native English speakers. Learners have, in fact, problems and difficulty with memorizing new words, combined with difficulties in pronunciation as well (Lin, 2002). CALL programs are utilized in educational systems to help language learners solving these difficulties. It assists learners in vocabulary learning via online and offline approaches.

Scholars like Anderson (2008) have significantly provided support for using blended learning technique in learning vocabulary. The results of their studies have shown that those learners who use blended learning are able to remember more vocabularies than those who do not use it. In fact, the advantages of using blended learning in learning L2 words and also in helping L2 comprehension are indicated in recent studies such by Hubackova, Semradova, and Klimova, 2011; Zhang, Song, and Burston, 2011). According to Zhang et al. (2011) who did an experiment on two different groups of learners learning the same sets of vocabularies, through paper-based and cell phone text-based methods, learners approach higher levels of vocabulary learning in a short period of time by cell phone.

Abrams (2003) remarks that blended learning approaches provide expanding learner-to-earner negotiation and interaction, a huge volume of output in comparison with conventional method, and also much time spent on talking for each learner. Based on an empirical study done by Roblyer, Freeman, Donaldson, and Maddox (2007) to compare the variant methods of synchronous approach in teaching vocabulary, students feel more comfortable with asynchronous method in comparison with synchronous, whereas teachers reported that both synchronous and asynchronous methods provide more flexibility in comparison with the conventional method. This supported Hrastinski's (2008) finding that many e-learners regard synchronous approach as "more like talking" in comparison with conventional approach, that is, the higher sentences the learners use when they communicate synchronously, the more aroused they feel psychologically and became encouraged and motivated because this type of communication is closely similar to conventional communication. Actually, the use of synchronous communication tools (including video and audio) is really common in higher education and most teachers are making use of these methods to replace classroom sessions.

Generally speaking, due to its interactive nature, language learning has been traditionally integrated with the necessity of conventional instruction. Therefore, in modern age, using technology to decrease conventional contact hours would be crucial to the teaching-learning program survival. Hence, the current study investigated the role of synchronous approach in vocabulary acquisition and students and teachers' attitude towards synchronous learning. The significance of the study lies in the authors' belief that it may provide useful implications for EFL learners, teachers, and educational authorities concerning the application of appropriate methods of blended learning in language classrooms.

Method

Design

The present study has a quasi-experimental design, with pretest–posttest control groups (one control group and two experimental groups), which utilizes available subjects.

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 75 male and female Pre-intermediate EFL learners studying at Iranmehr Language Institute, Tehran, Iran, who were selected via available

or purposive sampling from a population of 180 students. They were all within the age range of 20-25 years. For the purposes of the study, they were randomly assigned to 3 groups: one control group (conventional group, No. 25) and two experimental groups (computer Lab, group= No. 25 and Skype group= No. 25). Actually, the experimental groups were exposed to two completely different instructional methods: synchronous via using the technology of videoconferencing in a lab in a shared location, and Skype.

Materials

The material used in the present study consisted of a list of new lexical items belonging to nine units of the textbook, *NEW ENGLISH FILE* (2010) which was prepared by the researcher. In every teaching session, 10 to 15 words of this list were presented to the participants.

Instruments

Oxford Quick Placement Test (QOPT)

Oxford Placement Test (OPT, 2009) was used to homogenize the students. It was administered to 180 students and 75 students were selected based on the mean of +68.35 and standard deviation of -13.41. The KR-21 reliability for the OQPT was .89.

The Face validity and the content validity of the test for this study were also checked and confirmed by three experts. The reliability for the test was found to be 0.89 using KR, 21 (Table 1).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics; The Placement Test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	*Std.* Deviation	Variance
The Placement Test	150	32	90	68.35	13.416	179.988
KR-21	.89					

The pretest and posttest

The pretest and posttest that were administered to synchronous groups as well as to the conventional group consisted of a vocabulary parallel test derived from the textbook, *NEW ENGLISH FILE* (2010). The validity of the tests was checked and confirmed by three experts in the field. The reliability for the pretest was found to be 0.83 and for posttest was found to be 0.77 using KR, 21.

Attitude towards Blended Learning Questionnaire

This questionnaire was designed to analyze learners' views on blended learning approach. It is a Likert scaling (strongly agree=5 to strongly disagree=1) questionnaire designed by Adas and Shmais, 2011, and includes 41 items. Sentences in the questionnaire are classified into three parts. The first 10 statements analyze the learners' attitudes towards blended learning process. Statements 11 to 27 consider the learners attitudes towards the blended learning content. The rest of the statements are related to the domain of learners' attitudes towards easy use of computers.

To ensure reliability and validity of the questionnaire and consequently the results of the study, the following two steps were taken:

1.Piloting the questionnaire on samples.

2.Calculating the Cronbach's alpha value (α= 0.850) which indicated a good relationship between the items of the questionnaire (Table 2).

Table 2
Reliability results for the questionnaire

Version	Sample	No. of Items	Reliability (Cronbach's alpha)
1	Students' attitude	40	.850

Interview

In the synchronous mode classes, teachers were interviewed and the researcher investigated how learning was evaluated in the two instructional approaches. Also, language teachers' attitudes towards various kinds of evaluation in a blended learning context were examined. Interviewing teachers was planned for the last session of the language program (i.e. after they experienced the educational approach). Therefore, they were able to share their perception and attitudes towards blended learning. The questions that were provided for instructors concentrated on what techniques of teaching they applied in synchronous educational approach to achieve the purposes of the curriculum, what problems they faced, and in what ways the blended learning mode would be enhanced in the near future.

Procedures

To achieve the purposes of the study, Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT), was first administered to a population comprising 180 EFL learners studying at Iranmehr Language Institute, Tehran, Iran, and 75 Pre-Intermediate homogeneous students were selected as the participants of the study. They were then randomly assigned to 3 groups: one control group (conventional group, No. 25) and two experimental groups (computer Lab, group= No. 25 and Skype group= No. 25). This placement test has been designed to measure the learners' receptive knowledge of vocabulary and grammar Second, a pretest constructed on the basis of the textbook, *NEW ENGLISH FILE* (2010), was administered to both the synchronous groups and the conventional group. The pretest was aimed to measure the baseline knowledge of each participant of which 20 was the highest possible score. It consisted of 50 multiple-choice vocabulary items, enjoying acceptable index of reliability. The validity of the test was checked and verified by three experts in the field. The test was divided into five parts. Part A including 10 items was related to the recognition of different lexical meanings. Part B including 10 items was related to the choice of the words and their synonyms. Part C including 10 items, required the participants to write the words with their antonyms. Part D including 10 items, was a cloze test which required the participants to complete the gaps based on the 4 options given for each item. Finally, part E including 10 words, asked the participants to write the definitions of each word based on their knowledge of vocabulary. It was administered in about 1 hour and 15 minutes and the participants' responses to each item was scored based on the protocol defined for *New English File* (2010), that is, 1 point for a correct response and 0 points for each incorrect answer, no answer, or answering with "I don't know". Pretest and posttest scores would range from 0 to 50.

It is to be noted here that as a part of treatment, a list of new words belonging to nine units of the same textbook was prepared, and in every teaching session, 10 to15 new lexical items were presented to the participants. The two experimental groups received treatment via using computers in two different methods, and the conventional group was taught without using computer. At the end of the treatment, all 3 groups received a posttest, that is, the very pretest was administered again to check the participants' vocabulary development.

The procedure for the treatment was as follows: As for the synchronous method, the classes were parted into two different groups. The first group was taught in an audio-lingual lab using headphones and computers (computer-assisted learning) and the instructions were delivered by the teacher simultaneously through their computers. The students were able to ask questions and also share responses. The teacher introduced lexical items in a reading text and showed related photos or videos, added collocations, used quizzes and exercises online, and had discussion via headphones with the students in the class. The second group was connected to their teacher by a microphone or a video camera. Here, the learners were able to interact with their teachers by speaking directly through microphones or by typing. It should be added that in the synchronous method, the teacher had a more active role in the controlling and observing the class, and the students could felt more supported by the presence of the teacher when they needed help. Also, due to the nature of skype in which the learners are not in a class and there is no eye-to-eye contact among the students, they felt more comfortable to ask their questions. As for the third group (control group), the conventional face-to-face method was uses, in which students and the teacher shared the class and the time for giving and receiving the instruction. In this method, the teacher has the most active role in controlling, observing and giving the instructions in a direct way.

Finally, in the last session of the treatment, the questionnaire mentioned above was given to the participants and the teachers were interviewed to measure their attitude towards synchronous approach.

Data Analysis and Results

The data obtained in this study were analyzed using one-way ANOVA and independent-samples *t*-test. Both of these statistical techniques assume normality of data and homogeneity of variances of groups. Table 3 below displays the skewness and kurtosis statistics and their ratios over the standard errors for vocabulary pretest and posttest. Since the absolute values of the ratios were lower than 1.96, it can be claimed that pretest and posttest met the assumption of normality.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics: Testing Normality of Pretest and Posttest of Vocabulary

Group		*N*	*Skewness*			*Kurtosis*		
		Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio
Computer	Pretest	15	.306	.580	0.52	-.360	1.121	-0.32
	Posttest	15	-.389	.580	-0.67	-1.356	1.121	-1.20
Skype	Pretest	15	.306	.580	0.53	-.360	1.121	-0.32
	Posttest	15	-.075	.580	-0.13	-.994	1.121	-0.89
Conventional	Pretest	15	.377	.580	0.65	-.995	1.121	-0.89
	Posttest	15	.533	.580	0.92	-.652	1.121	-0.58

Table 4 below shows the skewness and kurtosis statistics and their ratios over the standard errors for the total score on attitude questionnaire. Since the absolute values of the ratios were lower than 1.96, it can be concluded that total score on attitude met the assumption of normality. It could be pointed out that the assumption of homogeneity of variances will be discussed when reporting the main results.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics: Testing Normality of Total Score on Attitude Questionnaire

	Number	Skewnesss			Kurtosiss		
Group	Statistics	Statistics	Standard. Error	Ratio	Statistics	Standard. Error	Ratio
Synchronous	30	.158	.427	0.37	.854	.833	1.03

Comparing Groups on Vocabulary Pretest

An analysis of one-way variances (one-way ANOVA) was run to compare computer lab, Skype and conventional (control) groups' means on the pretest of vocabulary learning in order to prove that they were homogenous in terms of the vocabulary knowledge prior to the administration of the treatments. Before discussing the results, it should be noted that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was retained on pretest of vocabulary learning. Table 5 below displays the results of the Levene's test. The non-significant results of the test ($F_{(4, 70)}$ = .313, p = .868) indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was retained.

Table 5
Test of Homogeneity of Variances: Pretest of Vocabulary Learning by Groups

		Levene Statistic	*df1*	*df2*	Sig.
Pretest	Based on Mean	.407	4	70	.803
	Based on Median	.313	4	70	.868
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.313	4	64.931	.868
	Based on trimmed mean	.389	4	70	.816

Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics for the three groups on the pretest. The results indicated that the computer lab (M = 19.47, SD = 3.20), Skype (M = 19.47, SD = 3.20) and control (M = 19.67, SD = 2.46) groups had almost the same means on the vocabulary pretest.

Table 6
Descriptive Statistics: Pretest of Vocabulary Learning by Groups

	N	Mean	*Std.* Deviation	*Std.* Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Computer Lab	15	19.47	3.204	.827	17.69	21.24
Skype	15	19.47	3.204	.827	17.69	21.24
Conventional	15	19.67	2.469	.637	18.30	21.03
Total	75	19.15	2.958	.342	18.47	19.83

Table 7 displays the main results of the one-way ANOVA. Based on these results, F (4, 70) = .487, P = .745, partial eta squared = .027 indicating an effect size that is weak. there were not significant differences between the means of the three groups on the pretest. Therefore, it is claimed that there was homogeneity between the three groups in terms of their ability in learning vocabulary.

Table 7
One-Way ANOVA:Vocabulary learning Pretest by groups

	Sum of Squares	*Df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Between Groups	17.520	4	4.380	.487	.745
Within Groups	629.867	70	8.998		
Total	647.387	74			

Exploring the First Research Question

An analysis of one-way variances (one-way ANOVA) was done to compare the means of computer lab, Skype and conventional (control) groups on the vocabulary posttest in order to probe into the first major research question and its minor research questions. Before discussing the results, it should be noted that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was retained on the posttest. Table 8 below displays the results of the Levene's test. The non-significant results of the test (Levene's F (4, 70) = .231, P = .920) indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was retained on the vocabulary posttest.

Table 8
Test of Homogeneity of Variances: Posttest of Vocabulary Learning by Groups

		Levene Statistic	*df1*	*df2*	Sig.
Posttest	Based on Mean	.267	4	70	.898
	Based on Median	.231	4	70	.920
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.231	4	65.469	.920
	Based on trimmed mean	.262	4	70	.901

Table 9 below displays the descriptive statistics for the three groups on the vocabulary posttest. The results indicated that the computer group (M = 26.80, SD = 2.27) had the highest mean on the posttest. This was followed by the Skype (M = 23.73, SD = 3.17), conventional (M = 22.80, SD = 2.73). It indicated that the two groups had almost similar means on the vocabulary posttest.

Table 9
Descriptive Statistics; Posttest of Vocabulary Learning by Groups

	N	Mean	*Std.* Deviation	*Std.* Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Computer	15	26.80	2.274	.587	25.54	28.06
Skype	15	23.73	3.173	.819	21.98	25.49
Conventional	15	22.80	2.731	.705	21.29	24.31
Total	75	22.29	4.139	.478	21.34	23.25

Table 10 displays the main results of the one-way ANOVA. Based on these results (F (4, 70) = 18.81, P = 000, partial eta squared = .518 indicating a large effect size), there were significant differences on the vocabulary posttest between the means of the three groups Therefore, it is claimed that the answer to the first research question is on the positive.

Table 10
One-Way ANOVA; Posttest of Vocabulary Learning by Groups

	Sum of Squares	*Df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Between Groups	656.747	4	164.187	18.816	.000
Within Groups	610.800	70	8.726		
Total	1267.547	74			

The significant *F*-value of 18.81 was followed by a-priori (panned) contrasts displayed in Table 11 below. The three contrasts are compared as follows:

- Synchronous vs. conventional groups, and
- Computer lab group vs. Skype group

Table 11

A Priori Contrasts Coefficients: Posttest of Vocabulary by Groups

	Group		
Contrast	Computer	Skype	Conventional
1	-.5	-.5	0
2	1	-1	0
3	0	0	0

Based on the results displayed in Table 11, it can be concluded that the synchronous groups (Mean = 25.26, i.e. 28.80+23.73/2=25.26) significantly outperformed conventional groups (Mean = 19.07, i.e. 19.47+18.67/2 = 19.07) on the vocabulary posttest (Mean Difference = 6.20, t = 8.12, p = .000).

Exploring the Second Research Question

To answer the second question, i.e. Is synchronous approach more effective than conventional approach regarding students' Attitude. an independent-samples *t*-test was run on the questionnaire to compare the synchronous and conventional groups' attitude towards the instructions received. Table 12 below displays the descriptive statistics for the two groups. The results showed that synchronous group (M = 140.07, SD = 3.80) showed a higher attitude towards blended learning than the conventional group (M = 122.23, SD = 8.53).

Table 12

Descriptive Statistics of Attitude towards Blended Learning by Groups

	Group	Number	Mean	Standard. Deviation	Standard. Error Mean
Attitude	Synchronous	30	140.07	3.805	.695
	Conventional	30	122.23	8.537	1.559

Table 13 displays the results of the independent-samples *t*-test run to probe if the difference between the two groups' attitude towards synchronous learning was statistically significant. The results (t (40) = 10.45, p .000, r = .856 showing a big effect size) indicated that the synchronous group showed a significantly higher attitude towards blended learning than the conventional group.

Table 13

Independent-Samples t-test: Attitude towards Blended Learning by Groups

	Levene's Test for Equality Variances		oft-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	14.745	.000	10.45158		.000	17.833	1.706	14.418	21.249
Equal variances not assumed			10.45140.085		.000	17.833	1.706	14.385	21.282

Discussion

Vocabulary knowledge forms the foundation of any language, and the people who demonstrate knowledge of grammar usually encounter difficulty to communicate due to the lack of comprehensive vocabulary knowledge. Most foreign language learners are aware of not being able to instantly recall the correct word in communication due to the restricted range of words they use. This sense of insufficiency also impedes more development in language. Vocabulary, at the same time, helps learners shape sentences and communicate themselves in practical ways. Vocabulary skill can be gained only with the teaching techniques appealing to different styles of learning. Numerous findings have shown many advantages for successful verbal and written communication from various technology-based instructional materials (Dastjerdi, 2011; Grishaeva, 2015; Pazio, 2010; Smidt and Hegelheimer, 2004). Blended learning can be described as a mixture of a conventional portion of the class with online teaching (Osguthorpe and Graham, 2003). Hence, many institutions of higher education today use blended learning as an alternative means to increase the vocabulary skills of the students. Blended learning method to the teaching of foreign language has actually become interesting to language teachers worldwide. Contrary to e-learning that refers to the use of electronic media for learning, integrated learning combines conventional learning and teaching environment with various types of instruction based on technology. Marsh (2012) notes that we have mostly applied a 'mix' of teaching methods to give our students a rich learning context.

The first research question of the current study investigated the role of synchronous approach in vocabulary learning, and it was found that this kind of teaching has positive impacts on vocabulary learning. This finding can be justified because synchronous approach affects learners' motivation and help them learn in an interactive environment. Such a positive impact has been identified by many researchers studying blended learning method and its leading role in improving vocabulary awareness. As an example, Lu (2008) investigated the efficiency of SMS vocabulary lessons with lexical knowledge on screens of cell phones and compared two groups of guidance school learners in Korea who received two sets of English vocabularies in four weeks, either on paper or through SMS. After reading the daily SMS lessons, learners learned much more words during the posttest than they did after reading the comparatively more detailed print content. Research suggests that learners prefer mobile telephone for vocabulary learning.

The findings of the present study regarding the effectiveness of blended learning are, however, opposed to a number of studies which revealed that blended learning instruction did not

have any effect on students' achievements. For instance, Alshwiah (2009) analyzed the results of a new blended learning approach and investigated the perception of the learners towards English at the Arabian Gulf University. His findings suggested no considerable difference in achievement or perception towards English Language between two classes. Moreover, (Chang, Shu, Liang, Tseng, and Hsu, 2014; Kaya, 2006) conducted studies to investigate the impact of mixed e-learning on the efficiency of electrical machinery. The results indicated that there were no considerable differences between blended e-learning and traditional learning in the achievement test scores.

The second research question of this study investigated the EFL learners' Attitude towards synchronous learning, and it was found that they have positive attitudes regarding synchronous approach. This is rational because in synchronous situations, the learners are more inspired when they communicate online. In fact, synchronous learning allows learners to spend much more time interacting with the materials that finally enhance better learning. This confirms earlier studies by Binkai (2012), which also indicates high enthusiasm among learners using CALL software and concordance. The finding here is also consistent with a recent finding by Precel, Eshet-Alkalai, and Alberton (2009), which illustrated that college learners like mixed learning as it goes up interactivity, the need to adapt to the content and the learning purposes were emphasized. It is also in agreement with the finding of Li (2010) who investigated learning vocabulary through computer-assisted scaffolding for text processing.

The third research question investigated the EFL teachers' attitudes toward synchronous learning, and it was found that teachers have more positive attitudes towards synchronous than conventional one. The results showed that blended learning could actually make teachers more motivated and interested to teach the tasks and follow instructions more willingly. This finding is in line with Alhazbi's (2016) finding that blended learning builds up teachers' motivation in computer programming courses, and in agreement with that of Tseng and Walsh (2015) that blended learning is effective in increasing teachers' motivation.

It should be mentioned here that in the interviews with teachers, some of them said that that visual aids used with blended learning made learning English more interesting and that online activities were related to the course objectives. Other teachers believed that doing online quizzes and doing blended learning activities provided learners with the opportunity to read, give their own opinions, and have interaction with other students on subjects related to the material. As for using Skype, as a conferencing tool, the teachers remarked that they had difficulties such as weak internet connection and not being able to communicate in an uninterrupted manner. They also reported that these difficulties caused frustration and decreased the level of cooperation with the students. Another disadvantage of Skype, they said, was lack of physical presence of the teacher. They stressed that the students did not feel as supported as when they were in the presence of their teacher, which gave them a sense of confidence.

Conclusions

This study aimed to establish both the expectations of students about synchronous learning and the effect of this approach on the acquisition of vocabulary. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that synchronous methods improve the vocabulary development and knowledge of language learners regarding the paramount significance of computer-assisted instructional materials. In fact, by using synchronous approach, language learners will be exposed to online materials and the teachers who increase their enthusiasm and motivation. In this method, the self-autonomy of learners is increased, and they get pleased since they are assisted to enhance their

knowledge of vocabulary through materials which are selected in line with their interests and needs.

This study may have implications for teachers as well as for learners and teacher trainers. It is essential for them to build up an expanding range of resources related to learning, exercises and activities in synchronous methods to meet the cognitive and affective needs of learners. The researchers suggest that instead of concentrating on the strengths and weaknesses of blended learning, further work be carried out to explore the variables that occur in these two learning styles of the synchronous method. In fact, scholars need to address different needs of the learners at both affective and cognitive levels.

References

Abrams, Z. I. (2003). The effect of synchronous and asynchronous CMC on oral performance in German. *The Modern Language Journal, 87*(2), 157-167.

Alhazbi, S. (2016). Using flipped classroom approach to teach computer gaming. *TALE,* 441-444.

Alshwiah, A. A. S. (2009). The Effects of a Blended Learning Strategy in Teaching Vocabulary on Premedical Students' Achievement, Satisfaction and Attitude toward English Language. *Online Submission*.

Anderson, T. (2008). *The theory and practice of online learning*: Athabasca University Press.

Binkai, J. (2012). An Empirical Study on Corpus-driven English Vocabulary Learning in China. *English Language Teaching, 5*, 131-137. doi: 10.5539/elt.v5n4p131

Chang, C.-C., Shu, K.-M., Liang, C., Tseng, J.-S., & Hsu, Y.-S. (2014). Is blended e-learning as measured by an achievement test and self-assessment better than traditional classroom learning for vocational high school students? *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 15*(2), 213-231.

Cleveland-Innes, M., & Wilton, D. (2018). *Guide to Blended Learning*. Burnaby, British Columbia: COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING.

Cooney, M. H., Gupton, P., & O'Laughlin, M. (2000). Blurring the lines of play and work to create blended classroom learning experiences. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 27*(3), 165-171.

Dastjerdi, H. V. (2011). An investigation into the impact of traditional vs. blended teaching on EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition: M-Learning in focus. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*.

Gorjian, B., Alipour, M., & Saffarian, R. (2012). The effect of multisensory techniques on reading comprehension among pre-intermediate EFL learners: The case of gender. *Advances in Asian Social Science, 1*(2), 192-196.

Grishaeva, A. (2015). The use of blended learning in teaching foreign languages to students of non-linguistic specialties. *TSPU Bulletin, 4 (157)*, 70-74.

Hrastinski, S. (2008). Asynchronous and synchronous e-learning. *Educause quarterly, 31*(4), 51-55.

Hubackova, S., Semradova, I., & Klimova, B. F. (2011). Blended Learning In A Foreign Language Teaching. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 28*, 281-285. doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.11.054

Kaya, T. (2006). *The effectiveness of adaptive computer use for learning vocabulary*: Northern Arizona University.

Li, J. (2010). Learning vocabulary via computer-assisted scaffolding for text processing. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 23*(3), 253-275.

Lin, Z. (2002). Discovering EFL learners' perception of prior knowledge and its role in reading comprehension. *Journal of Research in Reading, 25*(2), 172-190.

Lu, M. (2008). Effectiveness of vocabulary learning via mobile phone. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, 24*(6), 515-525. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2729.2008.00289.x

Marsh, D. (2012). Blended learning: Creating learning opportunities for language learners. *Retrieved April, 20,* 2015. \

Nguyen, T. T. H., & Khuat, T. T. N. (2003). The effectiveness of learning vocabulary through games. *Asian EFL Journal Quarterly, 5*(4), 238-245.

Osguthorpe, R. T., & Graham, C. R. (2003). Blended learning environments: Definitions and directions. *Quarterly review of distance education, 4*(3), 227-233.

Pazio, M. (2010). Blended learning and its potential in expanding vocabulary knowledge: A case study. *Teaching English with Technology, 10*(1), 3-30.

Precel, K., Eshet-Alkalai, Y., & Alberton, Y. (2009). Pedagogical and design aspects of a blended learning course. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 10*(2).

Roblyer, M., Freeman, J., Donaldson, M. B., & Maddox, M. (2007). A comparison of outcomes of virtual school courses offered in synchronous and asynchronous formats. *The Internet and Higher Education, 10*(4), 261-268.

Seaman, J. E., Allen, I. E., & Seaman, J. (2018). *Grade Increase: Tracking Distance Education in the United States*. Babson Park, MA: Babson Survey Research Group.

Shahriarpour, N. (2014). On the effect of playing digital games on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' motivation toward learning English vocabularies. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 98*, 1738-1743.

Smidt, E., & Hegelheimer, V. (2004). Effects of Online Academic Lectures on ESL Listening Comprehension, Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition, and Strategy Use. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 17*(5), 517-556. doi: 10.1080/0958822042000319692

Tseng, H., & Walsh, Jr., EJ. (2015). BLENDED VERSUS TRADITIONAL COURSE DELIVERY: Comparing Students' Motivation, Learning Outcomes, and Preferences *Quarterly Review of Distance Education, 17* (1), 43-52.

Tu, Y. (2015). *A Case Study of High School Chinese as a Foreign Language Blended Program.* University of Kansas.

Voci, E., & Young, K. (2001). Blended learning working in a leadership development programme. *Industrial and commercial training*.

Zhang, H., Song, W., & Burston, J. (2011). Reexamining the effectiveness of vocabulary learning via mobile phones. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology-TOJET, 10*(3), 203-214.