

## Comparing the effect of traditional and blended teaching approaches on creativity, motivation, and learning of non-Iranian learners of Persian language<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Blended learning refers to the use of a combination of diverse educational materials (media and educational technology), and aims to appropriately blend new technologies with educational materials of the traditional classes. Blended instruction is an appropriate integration of face-to-face and online instruction (Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003). Not only could this type of instruction cover the weak points of both face-to-face and online instruction, but also it could help reduce costs and save learning time (Bonk & Graham, 2004; Lily, Arthur & Stephen, 2014). The present research aimed to explore whether the type of instruction, i.e. traditional

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or blended, could significantly affect creativity, motivation and learning of non-Iranian learners of Persian. The definitions of the key terms of this study are as below.

**Creativity:** Until the last century, many believed that creativity was an intrinsic trait and some people were born with this ability. It has now been documented that within an appropriate environment, creativity can be fostered by applying certain principles and techniques to create new ways of thinking (Jalili, 2004). High achievement motivation, curiosity, care for order and arrangement, self-assertiveness, self-sufficiency, perseverance, discipline in work, independence, critical thinking, and intuitive thinking are among the characteristics which have been mentioned for creative people (Seif, 2009).

**Motivation:** Motivation is a very important and often the most important prerequisite for learning. It has a more defining role in learning than general intelligence (Rankin and Stuling, 2000). Factors affecting motivation include learner characteristics, quantitative and qualitative aspects of curriculum, teacher characteristics, the conditions and characteristics of the learning environment, learning activities and tasks, and other environmental factors (Kaveh, 2010). Language learners' self-conscious and unconscious motivations stem from their needs. The relevance and significance of learning programs and tasks for the learners depends on the appropriateness and relevance of those programs and tasks to the learner needs, especially the prioritized needs (Irannejad Parizi, 2015).

**Learning:** In the realm of education, attention has been redirected from teaching toward learning. For optimal learning, a variety of tools and resources are available which are multiplying by the advancement of technology. It should be kept in mind that the success of a society is built on the abilities of individuals who are involved in lifelong learning (Yai & Tang, 2003; Schneberg & Johnson, 2004).

**Blended instruction:** One of the revolutions in the field of education relates to the modern information and communications technology that added remote communication and exchange of information to face-to-face instruction system. Blended instruction is a deliberate combination of face-to-face and virtual instruction. The basic principle of this approach is to properly integrate face-to-face verbal interactions with virtual written communications in a way that an exploratory

learning experience is realized, in line with the instructional objectives (Soma & Reynold, 2014). Blended instruction involves adopting new modes of thinking in course designs which aims to adapt traditional values and activities to technological affordances and expectations. Blended approach to learning brings together a combination of face-to-face and online components and involves blending of instructional methods, media, experiences, informational and educational components, synchronous and asynchronous learning, and self-paced and self-directed learning (Baglien, 2009).

In 2011, Acelajado reported that, in comparison to traditional face-to-face instruction, blended instruction led to better improvements in all the topics involved. A survey of the participants' views showed that using diverse instructional methods improved the participants' learning, attitude, confidence, and motivation .

Fletcher, Lynn, Fouches, and Barnes (2007) found that in teaching vocabulary, blending text with visual images and audio led to more realistic and precise definitions of the word meanings by participants; improved their short-term and visual memory; enhanced the learning, memorization, and recall of words in people with learning disabilities; and improved visual imagination of the participants.

In a study entitled 'Designing and implementing a blended learning system for students of rehabilitation majors', Seyedi and Yaghoubi (2012) found that in comparison to face-to-face and electronic methods, blended learning methods which integrated student-centered learning to face-to-face instruction and employed potent resources such as standard instructional materials could improve the quality of instruction more substantially .

In general, the current researcher could not locate any studies which explored the effect of blended instruction on the acquisition of Persian language by non-Iranian learners, and this study aimed to fill this gap. This study was an applied research which adopted quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design with a control and an experimental group. The study sample consisted of 40 non-Iranian learners of Persian language who studied at the International Dehkhoda Farsi teaching center in Tehran University in the academic year 2013-2014. The participants were randomly assigned to two groups. The control and experimental groups received traditional and blended instruction respectively. For data collection, three

questionnaires were used which included Torrance Creativity Questionnaire, Hermann's Achievement Motivation Questionnaire, and a Learning Questionnaire.

The results of the study showed that in comparison to traditional instruction, blended instruction exerted a more significant effect on the creativity of non-Iranian learners of Persian language. It can be argued that blended instruction could affect the reproduction of thoughts, promote learners' intellectual growth, and lead to dynamism in the instruction of Persian language. In developing blended Persian language instruction programs, due consideration should be given to the characteristics of Persian-language learners. Blended instruction does not involve adopting multiple approaches to learning. It aims at rebuilding classroom transactions, improving class participation, and ensuring broad access to web-based learning opportunities. In turn, abundant learning opportunities promote a goal-directed participatory and exploratory learning culture. Finally, instructors could prevent useless resources which are used in online-only language classes and are less efficient for some skills such as spoken skills, and instead use those resources for learning activities which directly help learners to achieve learning objectives.

**Key words:** Blended instruction, Creativity, Motivation, Learning, Persian as a Second Language