

Tapping Iranian EFL Students' Self-Regulation and Listening Skill through Implementing Blended Learning Practice

¹Leila Kiani, ²Ali Akbar Jafarpour, ³Mortaza Taheri-Ardali, ⁴Bashir Jam

¹Department of English, Shahrekord University, Iran

²Assistant Professor, Department of English, Shahrekord University, Iran

³Assistant Professor, Department of English, Shahrekord University, Iran

⁴Associate Professor of Linguistics, Department of English, Shahrekord University, Iran

kiani.lili98@gmail.com

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Abstract: The present study was designed to investigate the effect of implementing blended learning practice on EFL students' self-regulation and listening skill development. The convenience sampling method was applied for the selection of 40 intermediate EFL students from Fazilat and Afarinesh public high schools in Andika, Khuzestan, Iran. Four instruments were used in this study including Quick Placement Test (QPT), a listening test, a self-regulation questionnaire, and WhatsApp social media software. To conduct this study, all the participants were randomly divided into two groups: An experimental group (n=20) and a control group (n=20). Before the instructional phase, the listening test and self-regulation questionnaires were administered. The instructional phase lasted for an academic semester for about three months once a week in 12 60-minute sessions. The experimental group of the study received blended learning practice in which the listening instruction was presented in both face-to-face and virtual modes. In this study, The Flex model of blended learning was practiced. On the other hand, the control group did not receive any special treatment. At the end of the instructional phase, the listening test and self-regulation questionnaires were administered again. The results of the study revealed that practicing a blended-learning approach to teaching enhanced Iranian intermediate EFL students' self-regulation and listening skill. This study might have some implications for EFL learners, teachers, and teacher educators.

Keywords: Blended Learning, EFL students Face-to-Face Learning, Listening Skill, Self-Regulation.

1. Introduction

In many countries, schools and faculties have been locked down since the beginning of March 2020 and others since February 2020 because of the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic (Zhang et al., 2020). In addition, Iranian education was not an exception during this international disaster. It has been decided to temporarily suspend face-to-face instructions in some provinces and continue the rest of the education on a virtual platform. Depending on the state of the COVID-19 pandemic in different areas, educational systems combine both face-to-face and virtual modes around the country depending on the pandemic severity. During this state of chaos and confusion which challenged our mission to teach, we have dealt with new problems, demanding flexible solutions. In this state, virtual education can be a good alternative (Betthäuser et al., 2023).

Information and communication technology (ICT) has flourished recently in the field of TEFL in Iran. Following the application of this technology into teaching, some shortcomings have been identified and this has led to the "blended learning" phenomenon. Lately, the term "E-learning" has appeared as a result of the incorporation of ICT in the education field. Since e-learning environments show some flaws such as impeding the socialization process of individuals leading to a lack of face-to-face communication; a new environment has emerged. This new environment combines e-learning and classical learning settings. It has been named blended learning, hybrid or mixed learning, and web-assisted or web-enhanced instruction (Shaturaev & Khamitovna, 2023).

In the Iranian context, the English is instructed as a foreign language. There is a salient boundary between learning English and using it in a day-to-day routine. It means that Iranian EFL learners have very scarce exposure and opportunity to use the English language in their community and society for real-life purposes. The other problem is about the material

accessibility in which students have a few chances to access to the new and up-to-date supplementary materials.

Given the importance of distance learning in a nowadays pandemic situation, this study aimed to investigate the accountability and potentiality of blended learning in language learning classrooms that focused on the listening skill. Also, the significance of the psychological factors in language learning leads the researcher to consider two important elements of the autonomy concept, i.e., self-regulation. Thus, this study was designed to investigate the effects of implementing blended-learning, to find out whether it has a significant effect on EFL students' self-regulation, and listening skill development or not. Based on aforementioned problems, the following research questions were generated in the current study.

RQ₁: Does implementing blended-learning have any significant effect on EFL students' self-regulation?

RQ₂: Does implementing blended-learning have any significant effect on EFL students' listening ability?

2. Review of the Related Literature

2.1 Theoretical Background

Blended learning seeks to integrate online and face-to-face learning experiences to help the learners to benefit from both virtual and physical classroom potentialities (Kemp, 2020; Suartama et al., 2019). One of the newly developed learning approaches is the blended learning approach which seems to have many potentialities in the improvement of motivational, conceptual, and functional aspects of learning for language learners (MacDonald, 2017; Tawil, 2018). Such an approach enables language teachers to allocate their teaching time more effectively. The practice of blended learning provides the opportunity of implementing both holistic and individualized learning for language teachers. They can teach the main theme of their lesson in a face-to-face class and support it through online supplementary classes (Wong, 2019).

According to Albiladi and Alshareef (2019), blended learning is an upgraded educational approach that integrates traditional teaching methodologies with distance and online learning. In fact, blended learning is a revolution in teaching and learning EFL because of the unfair use of traditional methodologies in the language teaching context before. According to Ju and Mei (2018), due to limited class hours, technological approaches facilitate life-long learning. Hence, the blended learning approach provides this opportunity for EFL educators and encourages them to practice the language inside and outside the classroom. Indeed, blended learning can function as an essential method to learn a foreign language aligned with the current demands of education globally. The blended learning approach provides the opportunity for language learners to use their brains effectively with ICT spaces to practice the language more authentically (Sharma & Barrett, 2018).

Zimmerman (2015) viewed self-regulated learning as an effective approach towards constructing autonomous performance among students. The underlying process for self-regulation is including metacognitive engagement, motivational determination, goal setting and adjustment, execution of planned learning strategies, self-refinement of materials in use, self-management of instruction, and modification of desired contribution and performance. According to Hu and Zhang (2017), the concepts of self-regulation and learning autonomy has a close relationship with each other in defining the responsibility of learning for learners because both of them are concerned with learners' capability and competency for initiating, holding, monitoring, and controlling the process of learning.

The notion of self-regulation of academic learning is a multidimensional construct, including cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, behavioral, and environmental processes that learners can apply to enhance academic achievement (Csizér & Tankó, 2017). On the one hand, self-regulation has a long tradition in psychology in general, extending to educational psychology, thus there is merit in claims that it offers a somewhat stable perspective within which to explore strategic behavior (Jackson, 2018).

Listening is a fundamental language skill, but it is often ignored by foreign and second language teachers in the classroom. Listening is the process of constructing the meaning by using the current, available data in mind or before the eyes; it depends on many factors especially depending to the given input. Listening skill is one of the crucial skills used in communication activities. It is a vital skill to acquire pronunciation, vocabulary, word stress, and syntax (Bingol, 2017). Listening to a second language has been regarded as the most widely used language skill in normal daily life (Rost, 2001).

Rost (2002) states that there are four perspectives that can define the listening process, namely receptive, constructive, collaborative, and transformative. First, listening is a receptive process, which means capturing what the speaker is saying or accepting the transfer of thoughts, ideas, or ideas from the speaker. Second, listening is a constructive process, which means building or constructing the meaning of what is conveyed by the speaker. Third, it is a collaborative process, meaning that there is a speaker (interlocutor) or voice input (aural input) so that the listening process occurs. Fourth, listening is a transformative process because there is a creation of meaning through involvement, imagination, and empathy.

2.2 Related Studies

Eggers et al. (2021) explored the literature about self-regulation strategies in blended learning environments in higher education. They analyzed 21 studies in which self-regulation strategies were taught in the context of blended learning. Results show that most studies focused on metacognitive strategies, followed by cognitive strategies, whereas little to no attention is paid to motivation and management strategies. To facilitate self-regulation strategies non-human student tool interactional methods were most commonly used, followed by a mix of human student-teacher and non-human student content and student environment methods. Results further show that the extent to which students actively apply self-regulation strategies also depends heavily on teachers' actions within the blended learning environment.

Soleimani and Rahmanian (2020) examined the role of self-control and self-regulation in a blended course with 64 EFL university students in Iran. Self-control as the potentiality of the learners in achieving their goals and self-regulation as their actual practices in achieving it were investigated through self-control scale and motivated strategies for learning questionnaires respectively. The multiple regression analysis unraveled that learning achievement was significantly correlated with self-regulation ($r = .41$) but not self-control. The frequency of the posts and total words used did not behave similarly for self-control and self-regulation. It is implicated that educational parties can resort to some programs to develop the students' planning, self-monitoring, and reflection which are variables of self-regulation.

Van Laer and Elen (2020) investigated learners' self-regulatory behavior profiles in blended learning environments and to relate them to designs of blended learning environments. Learners' ($n = 120$) self-regulatory behavior in six ecologically valid blended learning courses was captured. Log files were analyzed in a learning analytics fashion for frequency, diversity, and sequence of events. Three main user profiles were identified. The designs were described using a descriptive framework containing attributes that support self-regulation in blended learning environments. The results of the study highlighted the value of integrating features that support self-regulation in blended learning environments.

3. Method

3.1 Sample/ Participants

The population of the study included all Iranian intermediate EFL learners. A convenience sampling procedure was used for the selection of the sample members. For conducting the current study, forty Iranian intermediate EFL learners were chosen from among a number of EFL learners ($N=78$) studying English in two high schools (Fazilat and Afarinesh) in Andika, Khouzestan, Iran. They were only female learners with an age range from 17 to 19. Quick Placement Test (QPT) was run to identify subject pool members' level of proficiency. Forty intermediate EFL learners identified through QPT were randomly divided into two groups i.e., an experimental group ($n=20$) and a control group ($n=20$). Regarding ethical consideration, all participants of this study were assured about their data and information confidentiality and were participating in their own decision desirably.

3.2 Instruments and Materials

Quick Placement Test (QPT): To ensure the homogeneous entry of participants, a placement test i.e., Quick Placement Test (QPT) was administered to measure the participants' language proficiency. QPT was developed by Oxford University Press and the University of Cambridge Local Examinations. It took 30 minutes to administer the test. The reliability of QPT has been confirmed by many Iranian ELT researchers (Hamidi, Babajani Azizi, & Kazemian, 2022). All questions were in multiple-choice format. According to the rubric of the test, participants whose scores fell within 25-36 were identified to be intermediate level.

Listening Test: The items were selected from the exercises of *Developing Tactics for Listening* (Richards, 2012). It included 40 items (multiple-choice, filling the blanks, and true or false items). Participants responded to the items in 40 minutes. This researcher-made listening comprehension test was reliable since the Cronbach Alpha index was 0.72. In order to determine its validity, two TEFL experts in the Azad University analyzed the test and finally some slight changes were made.

Self-Regulation Questionnaire: Originally, this questionnaire was developed by Gaumer-Erickson et al. (2015) with twenty-two items in the Likert scale (not very like me = 1; not like me = 2; neutral = 3; like me = 4; very like me = 5). The researcher reshuffled the statements of the questionnaire order for the post-test. Regarding the reliability of this test, first, this questionnaire is the standard one in existing literature, and its reliability was more than 0.95. Second, to localize this questionnaire, the researcher piloted this questionnaire before the study administration. Out-of-study samples were asked to take the questionnaire. Then, the researcher ran item analysis for the questionnaire's items and calculated the reliability of the test data through the Cronbach Alpha formula which was about 0.92. It means that this questionnaire was qualitative enough to use for measuring the trait under investigation.

WhatsApp Social Media Software: Launched in 2009, WhatsApp is one of the most popular text and voice messaging apps. It is free to use, and the user can send messages, make voice calls, and host video chats on both desktop and mobile devices. Also, it is very popular and user-friendly in Iran. Regarding these advantages, the researcher used it as a medium of instruction for a blended learning group.

3.3 Procedure

The participants were familiar with the purpose of the study from the beginning. The goals and procedures of the study were explained to them. The same textbook *Tactics for Listening* was taught in both groups and they had English classes for the same amount of time. The teacher of both groups was the researcher herself. Before the instructional phase, the listening test and self-regulation questionnaires were administered. The instructional phase lasted for an academic semester for about three months once a week in twelve 60-minute sessions. The experimental group of the study received blended learning practice in which the listening instruction was presented in both face-to-face and virtual modes. In this study, the Flex model of blended learning was practiced. It is because of the characteristic of this model that can give students a high degree of control over their learning. This model lets students move on fluid schedules among learning activities according to their needs. Online learning is the backbone of student learning in a Flex model. Teachers provide support and instruction on a flexible, as-needed basis while students work through course curriculum and content. The experimental group, apart from their course materials in face-to-face learning phase received homework exercises, exercises with multiple-choice answers, fill-in-the-blanks, and a comprehension summary of audio material via WhatsApp. Throughout the instructional process, the teachers/researchers monitored students' progress and provided feedback on their strong and weak points. On the other hand, the control group did not receive blended learning practice and was just exposed to the face-to-face instruction in which they were supposed to practice the conventional three-phase approach of teaching listening includes pre/while/post teaching do listening skill. The control group was exposed to audio files twice in the class. They had to answer the questions right after the listening. At the end of the instructional phase, the listening test and self-regulation questionnaires were administered again. The obtained data of the study were recorded and then analyzed through SPSS software.

4. Results

4.1. Analysis of the First Research Question

RQ1: Does implementing blended-learning have any significant effect on EFL students' self-regulation?

In order to answer this question, first, the descriptive statistics for the control and experimental groups' self-regulation pre-tests are presented in the following table.

Table 4.1

The Descriptive Statistics for the Self-Regulation Pre-Test Scores

	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Variance
Control Group	20	38	26	64	41.65	11.056	122.239
Experimental Group	20	46	25	71	42.60	13.024	169.621
Valid N (listwise)	20						

As Table 4.1 illustrates, the means of the control and experimental groups' pre-tests' scores are 41.65 and 42.60, respectively. Here, the mean for the experimental group is more than the control group ($42.60 > 41.65$), but it needs to be checked whether this difference is significant or not. To do so, the calculation of the normality of datasets was required at first. In order to check the normality of the pre-test's scores, the Shapiro-Wilk test was run by the researcher. The normality statistics for the pre-test scores are presented in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2

The Normality Statistics for the Self-Regulation Pre-Test Scores

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-Test Control	.931	20	.160
Pre-Test Experimental	.944	20	.291

As can be noticed in Table 4.2, the sig values of the control and experimental groups' pre-test scores are 0.160 and 0.291, respectively. Both of these sig values are more than critical value i.e., 0.05 ($0.160 > 0.05$ and $0.291 > 0.05$). It means that the scores are normally distributed. Since the pre-test scores are normally distributed, the researcher was allowed to use a parametric test i.e., independent sample T-test (because two sets of scores belonged to two different groups) to present inferential statistics for the comparison of means. Before presenting inferential statistics, we need to check the homogeneity of variances through the Levene test of homogeneity in order to find which row of the sig value should take into account for checking the null hypothesis.

Table 4.3

Levene Test's Statistics for the Self-Regulation Pre-Test Scores

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.954	1	38	.335

As Table 4.3 displays, the sig value for the Levene test is 0.335, and it is more than the critical value i.e. 0.05 ($0.335 > 0.05$). It means that the difference between the variances of two sets of scores are not significant. Thus, the equality of the variances was assumed. However, the sig value in the first row of the inferential statistics table is appropriate for interpretation of the result. In Table 4.4, the inferential statistics for the self-regulation pre-test scores are presented.

Table 4.4

The Inferential Statistics for the Self-Regulation Pre-Test's Scores

t-test for Equality of Means					
	t	df	Sig. MD SED	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				Lower	Upper
Self-Regulation Pre-test	.249	38	.805	-6.783	-6.783
	.24937	024	.805	-3.517	-6.790

As can be seen in Table 4.4, the sig value is 0.805, and it is more than the critical value i.e., 0.05 ($0.805 > 0.05$). It means that the difference between the two means of pre-tests' scores did not statistically significant. It means that the observed difference between two sets of scores' means is not meaningful statistically. To continue the analysis, the researcher analyzed the post-test scores. To do so, first, the descriptive statistics for the control and experimental groups' self-regulation post-tests scores are presented in the following table.

Table 4.5

The Descriptive Statistics for the Self-Regulation Post-Test Scores

	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Variance
Control Group	20	28	28	56	38.75	15.506	74.092
Experimental Group	20	50	32	82	53.35	8.608	240.450
Valid N (listwise)	20						

As can be seen in Table 4.5, the means of the control and experimental groups' post-tests scores are 38.75 and 53.35, respectively. Here, the mean for the experimental group is more than the control group ($53.35 > 38.75$), but it needs to be checked whether this difference is significant or not. To do so, the calculation of the normality of datasets was required.

Table 4.6

The Normality Statistics for the Self-Regulation Post-Test's Scores

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Post-Test Control	.927	20	.136
Post-Test Experimental	.932	20	.169

As Table 4.6 shows, the sig values of the control and experimental groups' post-tests scores are 0.136 and 0.169, respectively. Both of these sig values are more than critical value i.e., 0.05 ($0.136 > 0.05$ and $0.169 > 0.05$). It means that the scores are normally distributed. Before presenting inferential statistics, we need to check the homogeneity of variances through the Levene test of homogeneity.

Table 4.7

Levene Test's Statistics for the Self-Regulation Post-Test's Scores

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
6.609	1	38	.014

As can be seen in Table 4.7, the sig value for the Levene test is 0.014, and it is less than the critical value i.e., 0.05 ($0.05 > 0.014$). It means that the difference between the variances of two sets of scores are not significant. However, the sig value in the second row of the inferential statistics table is appropriate for interpretation of the result. In Table 4.8, the inferential statistics for the self-regulation post-test scores are presented.

Table 4.8

The Inferential Statistics for the Self-Regulation Post-Test's Scores

Self-Regulation Post-test	t-test for Equality of Means						
	t	df	Sig.	MD	SED	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
	3.682	38	.001	14.600	3.966	6.572	22.628
	3.682	29.694	.001	14.600	3.966	6.497	22.703

As can be seen in Table 4.8, the sig value is 0.001, and it is less than the critical value i.e., 0.05 ($0.001 < 0.05$). It means that the difference between two means of pre-tests' scores is statistically significant. It means that the observed difference between two sets of scores' means is meaningful statistically. However, it can be said that implementing blended learning practice had a significant effect on EFL students' self-regulation.

4.2. Analysis of the Second Research Question

RQ₂: Does implementing blended-learning have any significant effect on EFL students' listening magnitude?

In order to answer this question, first, the descriptive statistics for the control and experimental groups' listening pre-tests scores are presented in the following table.

Table 4.9

The Descriptive Statistics for the Listening Pre-Test Scores

	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Variance
Control Group	20	22	14	34	25.55	5.424	29.418
Experimental Group	20	22	12	36	22.65	6.784	46.029
Valid N (listwise)	20						

As Table 4.9 depicts, the means of the control and experimental groups' pre-tests' scores are 25.22 and 22.65, respectively. Here, the mean for the experimental group is less than the control group ($25.22 > 22.65$), but it needs to be checked whether this difference is significant or not. To do so, the calculation of the normality of datasets was required. The normality statistics for the pre-test scores are presented in Table 4.10 below.

Table 4.10

The Normality Statistics for the Listening Pre-Test's Scores

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-Test Control	.975	20	.861
Pre-Test Experimental	.948	20	.339

As it can be seen in Table 4.10, the sig values of the control and experimental groups' pre-tests' scores are 0.861 and 0.339, respectively. Both of these sig values are more than critical value i.e., 0.05 ($0.861 > 0.05$ and $0.339 > 0.05$). It means that the scores are normally distributed. Before presenting inferential statistics, we need to check homogeneity of variances through the Levene test of homogeneity in order to find which row of the sig value should take into account for checking the null hypothesis. The following table presents Levene test statistics.

Table 4.11

Levene Test's Statistics for the Listening Pre-Test's Scores

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.000	1	38	1.000

As Table illustrates 4.11, the sig value for the Levene test is 1.000, and it is more than the critical value i.e. 0.05 ($1.000 > 0.05$). It means that the difference between the variances of two sets of scores are not significant. However, the sig value in the first row of the inferential statistics table is appropriate for interpretation of the result. In Table 4.12, the inferential statistics for the listening pre-test's scores are presented.

Table 4.12

The Inferential Statistics for the Listening Pre-Test's Scores

t-test for Equality of Means							
	t	df	Sig.	MD	SED	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Listening							
Pre-test	.000	38	1.000	.000	1.715	-3.472	3.472
	.000	38.000	1.000	.000	1.715	-3.472	3.472

The sig value is 1.000, and it is more than the critical value i.e., 0.05 ($1.000 > 0.05$). It means that the difference between the two means of pre-tests' scores did not statistically significant. To continue the analysis, the researcher analyzed the post-test scores. To do so, first, the descriptive statistics for the control and experimental groups' listening post-tests scores are presented in the following table.

Table 4.13

The Descriptive Statistics for the Listening Post-Test Scores

	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Variance
Control Group	20	20	15	35	23.20	4.927	24.274
Experimental Group	20	22	16	38	28.45	6.143	37.734
Valid N (listwise)	20						

As can be seen in Table 4.13, the means of the control and experimental groups' post-tests scores are 28.45 and 23.20, respectively. Here, the mean for the experimental group is more than the control group ($28.45 > 23.20$), but it needs to be checked whether this difference is significant or not. To do so, the calculation of the normality of datasets was required.

Table 4.14

The Normality Statistics for the Listening Post-Test's Scores

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Post-Test Control	.966	20	.555
Post-Test Experimental	.961	20	.678

As can be observed in Table 4.14, the sig values of the control and experimental groups' post-tests scores are 0.555 and 0.678, respectively. Both of these sig values are more than critical value i.e., 0.05 ($0.555 > 0.05$ and $0.678 > 0.05$). It means that the scores are normally distributed. Before presenting inferential statistics, we need to check homogeneity of variances through the Levene test of homogeneity in order to find which row of the sig value should take into account for checking the null hypothesis. The following table presents Levene test statistics.

Table 4.15

Levene Test's Statistics for the Listening Post-Test's Scores

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1.075	1	38	.306

As Table 4.15 displays, the sig value for the Levene test is 0.306, and it is more than the critical value i.e., 0.05 ($0.306 > 0.05$). It means that the difference between the variances of two sets of scores are significant. However, the sig value in the first row of the inferential statistics table is appropriate for interpretation of the result. In Table 4.16, the inferential statistics for the listening post-tests scores are presented.

Table 4.16

The Inferential Statistics for the Listening Post-Test's Scores

t-test for Equality of Means					
t	df	Sig.	MD	SED 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				Lower	Upper
2.982	38	.0055	2.2501	1.685	8.815
2.98236	290	.0055	2.2501	1.680	8.820

As Table 4.16 indicates, the sig value is 0.005, and it is less than the critical value i.e., 0.05 ($0.005 < 0.05$). It means that the observed difference between two sets of scores' means is meaningful statistically. However, it can be said that implementing blended-learning practice had a significant effect on EFL students' listening magnitude.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The main purpose of the present study was to investigate the effectiveness of utilizing a blended learning practice in developing Iranian EFL students' self-regulation and listening magnitude. The results of this study indicated that first, implementing blended learning practice improved Iranian intermediate EFL students' self-regulation level. Second, implementing blended learning practice developed Iranian intermediate EFL students' listening skill.

Regarding the first finding of this study, it revealed that practicing blended-learning increased students' self-regulation level. The nature of blended learning approach is the fact that students need to have an opportunity to regulate their learning preferences by blending two modes of learning i.e., face-to-face learning and technology-enhanced online learning. Van Laer and Elen (2020) in their study to investigated learners' self-regulatory behavior profiles in blended learning environments achieved a similar finding. They also found that blended learning environments supported learners' self-regulation capability. In addition, the second finding of this study is in the same line with Soleimani and Rahmanian (2020) finding in their attempt to explore the effectiveness of blended learning approach on self-regulation ability among Iranian EFL university students. As the study showed, blended-learning had the considerable capability to enhance students' self-regulative behaviors.

Considering the second finding of this study, it found that implementing blended-learning practice developed Iranian intermediate EFL students' listening magnitude. One explanation of this finding is seen in Rost (2002) belief about the process and nature of listening to that conceptualized listening process as a constructive process, which means building or constructing the meaning of what is conveyed by the speaker that requires the creation of meaning through involvement, imagination, and empathy. As a matter of fact, the constructivist view on language learning emphasizes the role of social interaction and the negotiation of meanings in the development of language skills. Believing in this way, the researcher believed that by the provision of both face-to-face and distance learning modes, blended learning practice has abandoned educational and developmental solutions for listening skill deficiency among EFL students struggling with the challenging nature of listening comprehension.

The same finding revealed in Syamsuddin and Jimi (2019) study about the efficacy of applying blended learning method on students' listening achievement and development. The result of the research revealed that learning listening through blended learning method could improve the students' achievement. In addition, learning listening through blended learning method also increased the students' learning motivation. Also, a similar finding is reported by Caruso et al. (2017). In their study which was conducted to find the accountability of the integration and effectiveness of blended learning for the development and assessment of listening skills in a second language. Their study revealed that implementing blended learning practice had a constructive effect on learners' listening skill development. However, it is clear that blended learning practice has accountability and potentiality to improve listening skill meaningfully and considerably.

The lockdown in response to COVID-19 has interrupted conventional schooling with nationwide school closures in Iran. While the educational community has made concerted efforts to maintain learning continuity during this period, students have had to rely more on their own resources to continue learning remotely through the Internet, mobile, television or radio. Teachers also had to adapt to new pedagogical concepts and modes of delivery of teaching. The teaching of foreign languages in general and English in particular, has undergone many changes in teaching methods, especially in recent decades, causing the development of a variety of innovative approaches and methods. Language teaching is a dynamic, constantly changing process in which the lack of fixed standards can be observed in comparison with other subjects.

Attaining a high level of foreign language proficiency depends on self-regulatory skills of a learner. Self-regulated learning, is an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features in the environment (Jackson, 2018). Self-regulated learners are described as self-starters who persist in instructional tasks, prevail over problems, and react appropriately to task performance outcomes. In contrast, students who lack self-regulation are self-handicapping typically have low efficacy for learning, avoid failure and damage to self-esteem by seeking easy tasks, procrastinating, or avoiding work all together. They are more likely to exhibit impulsive behavior, set lower academic goals, inaccurately assess their abilities, engage in self-criticism, experience limited academic success, and give up easily (Li et al., 2018).

In the current study, the blended learning refers to a combination of online and face-to-face methods in response to the learners' needs and for the achievement of instructional objectives. This means that multiple approaches, methods and resources to teaching or to educational processes are combined and utilized by the teacher who now expects the students to learn not only from the assigned web pages and communication tools (e.g. email, discussion board and chat rooms) but also from face to face lectures, tutorials, person to person discussions and seminars. The blended learning experience offered to the students was successful due to a combination of factors. The delivery mode of the materials meant that students had access to the listening tasks in a flexible way, which maximized their opportunity for learning, as they could listen and listen again as often as they liked.

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