Improving Listening Comprehension for EFL Pre-Intermediate Students through a Blended Learning Strategy

Heba Mustafa Abdullah

Abstract—The research aimed at examining the effect of using a suggested blended learning (BL) strategy on developing EFL pre-intermediate students. The study adopted the quasi-experimental design. The sample of the research consisted of a group of 26 EFL pre- intermediate students. Tools of the study included a listening comprehension checklist and a pre-post listening comprehension test. Results were discussed in relation to several factors that affected the language learning process. Finally, the research provided beneficial contributions in relation to manipulating BL strategy with respect to language learning process in general and oral language learning in particular.

Keywords—Blended learning, English as a foreign language, listening comprehension, oral language instruction.

I. INTRODUCTION

RECENTLY, network mediated learning environments have provided new opportunities for language learning and teaching. Incorporating such emerged technologies into traditional face2face (f2f) teaching has attracted attention of educational specialists. Recently, BL is considered as a new instructional approach. Basically, it considers exploring the most suitable mix of teaching environments where f2f learning is still the building block in the educational process. It aims at optimizing the learning environments of language teaching and learning through the integration of various technological tools. Such integration induces shifts in the role of learners, teachers, and the curriculum design.

The idea of BL is not new to the language pedagogy. Technology mediated language learning courses have been investigated since the 1980s through the emergence of the computer assisted language learning approach (CALL). Computers have been used within classrooms, outside classrooms, or both as a medium that supports foreign language learning (FLL) processes [1]. However, the concept of BL is relatively new when associated by deploying web 2.0 tools. The immediate network tools offer opportunity to mix different learning environments which in turn explore a wide range of learning experiences. BL is a term that includes a number of approaches to teaching and learning. Most of them built around using online resources blended with f2f elements [2]. It aims at integrating learning experiences for students via different learning environments.

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According to Educational Technology Service, Berkley University [3] "Blended courses combine f2f and online methods to varying degrees, depending on the discipline, the size of the class, student demographics, and the preferences of the instructor, there are no rules in place to prescribe what the ideal blend is". Such combination is the reason beyond the variety and flexibility of BL as an instructional approach. It also sheds light on the importance of investigating BL within the English as foreign language (EFL) teaching contexts.

As far as EFL is considered, "English language teaching no longer consists simply of traditional f2f classroom instructing" [4]. With regard to language learning, "BL model does not reject the usefulness of traditional model, but rather improves its possibilities" [5]. The objective of BL implementation is to optimize the process of language development through providing learning environment that reinforce classroom language instruction. BL can be described in foreign language education as an approach that enables learners to "utilize online tools and materials out of class to complement the f2f interactions that they encounter in a traditional classroom environment" [6].

TABLE I
AN OVERVIEW OF STUDIES REVEALED AN OVERALL POSITIVE IMPACT OF BL
IN TERMS OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

BL Tools	Language focus	Studies
1. Podcasts	ESP course (language skills)	[23], [24]
2. Websites	Communicative competence	[25]
3. Simulations & virtual laboratory	EAP Course (language skills)	[26]
4. Videogame like app.	The four language skills	[27]
5. Model platform	EAP course (language skills)	[28]
6. Online activities	Writing skills	[29]
7. Video recording	Speaking skills	[30]
8. Wikis	Writing skills	[31]
9. Software modules	The four language skills	[32]
10. Mobile app.	Reading comprehension	[33]
11. Wiki	Public speaking skills	[34]
12. E-dictionaries	Reference skills	[35]
13. Online course (website)	Critical reading	[36]
14. E-portfolio	Vocabulary learning	[37]
15. Courseware material	Reading comprehension skills	[38]
16. Watsapp	Reading skills	[39]

A general goal of foreign language education is to develop learners' acquisition of a target language. In order to achieve the desired learning outcomes, various aspects of language

learning have to be considered. With regard to BL approach, recent studies in language education have shown positive outcomes regarding; students' achievement [7], autonomy [8], [9], teachers' perceptions [10], speaking anxiety [11], self-regulated learning [12], learning needs [13], students' perceptions [14], students' motivation [15]. In addition, studies have found a positive association between BL models and language development; reading skills [16], communicative competence [17], reading efficiency [18], language proficiency [19], oral communication skills, [20], writing proficiency [21] and intercultural skills [22]. In relation to the utilized technological tools, language skill development has been investigated within a BL framework. Results of such studies revealed an overall positive impact with respect to the specific language focus and the used tool as illustrated in Table I.

The following benefits of BL have been identified in relation to higher education in general and language learning in particular [9], [21], [40].
- Maximizing the students explore language.
- Providing more individualized learning experiences.
- Increasing opportunities of sharing experiences
- Providing opportunities for differentiated instruction to take place.
- Providing a friendly environment for language use.
- Increasing the likelihood of fulfilling students' needs through variety of takes and flexibility of interaction.
- Supporting independent as well as group work learning.
- Maximizing students' opportunities for getting peer and teacher feedback.
- Improving learning outcomes, namely, reducing drop-out rates, raising exam pass rates, raises students' grades, improving students understanding.
- Confirming students' satisfaction and motivation.
- Improving classroom dynamics; particularly; students' participation and willing to learn.
- Improving learning opportunities and flexibility.
- Focusing on students' needs and learning expectation.
- Promoting students' retention and learning.

BL is not a mere shift towards integrating technology into language learning. Rather, the main aim of any BL design is to create learning environments that works as a whole in terms of its components and the overall educational system. Consequently, the following key changes are made in terms of teacher's role, student's role, learning materials, instruction, and assessment [41], [42].

Materials: In addition to textbooks, students are provided with e-resources. Materials are available via varied digital formats in order to suit students' needs, preferences and learning styles.

Learning Process: Students' needs are the driving force of the learning process students centered learning practices are to be promoted inside classrooms and beyond their boundaries.

Teacher's Role: Teacher, traditional roles are not relinquished. Yet, their roles are redefined to match with the requirements of BL as an instructional approach. Main distinctions in teachers' roles with respect to traditional and BL approach are illustrated in Fig. 1.
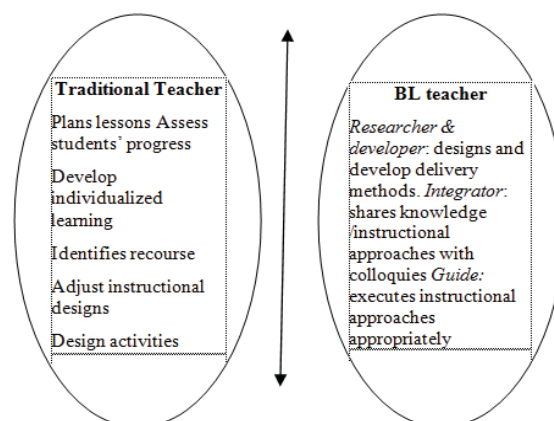

Fig. 1 BL Versus Traditional Teacher Roles [42]

Student's Role: Students have to manage their automatons through planning independent study time, engaging in the online community, and self-monitoring.

Assessment: Assessment tasks are considered as part of the learning process rather than only being committed to grading. The assessment process involves submission, grading and feedback. Assessment tasks should be aligned with course aim, suitable to types of learning activities, and relevant to students. Nature and timing of feedback is much considered especially in relation to self assessment tasks.

Within the TEFL field, BL cannot be considered as a single or separate teaching paradigm; rather it includes a flexible continuum of varied models. With regard to the degree of integration, several models can be introduced [43].
(1) Fully online curriculum with options for f2f instruction.
(2) Mostly online curriculum with sometime required f2f instruction, either in classroom or computer lab
(3) Mostly online curriculum with students meeting daily in the classroom or computer lab.
(4) Mostly classroom instruction with substantial required online components that extend beyond the classroom.
(5) Mostly classroom instruction that includes online resources, with limited requirements for students to be online.

Other classifications for BL are introduced on bases of delivery mode and type of interaction. BL models can be demonstrated [44], [45] as:
(1) Rotation Model: Students mainly rotate between different learning modalities according to a fixed schedule. It includes four types, namely, station rotation, lab rotation, flipped classroom and individual rotation.
(2) Flex Model: An online curriculum where teacher provides tutoring support on as needed bases. It may be applied through a wide range of variations so as to be suitable for learners, instructors and learning goals.
(3) Ala Carte Model: some courses are offered to students via f2f while others are provided Ala carte. Mainly, it isn't a

whole school experience were students are required to get online experience.

(4) Enriched Virtual Model: One of its basic requirements is students' engagement in learning remotely. Students rarely meet f2f through optional arrangements.

BL implementation may include numerous designs, models or modules that can be attributed to the wide range of tools and technologies which in turn provide unlimited constructions of learning environments. Tools of BL can be identified in the following categories [46]: (a) Technologies in the classroom that are commonly used in f2f learning situations, such as PowerPoint, interactive whiteboards and audience response systems; (b) virtual communication tools that enable users to engage in discussions and activities over the internet, including audio files, discussion boards, e-lists, discussion groups, chat or conferencing, email, news groups, poling, questionnaires, web forms and videoconferencing; (c) social-networking software, such as instant messaging and phone calls, podcasts, social –networking sites, video clips, virtual worlds, weblogs and wikis; (d) e-learning systems, that is, online environments that bring together a range of tools to support e-learning, such as BLEs, conferencing systems, group collaboration software and group sites; (e) mobile learning using mobile phones, laptops and tablet PCs. In sum, BL courses in general, and language covers in particular can be numerously designed. There are no boundaries for BL implementation possibilities.

Despite of the prominence given to listening skills in language development [47], [48], many researchers emphasize the difficulty of listening instruction (e.g. [49]). Much debate continued to interpret the source of complexity in listening instruction [50]-[53]. Resulting in a consensus agreement on the interrelation among processes and factors, underline the listening process: listening comprehension has been given a particular focus as fundamental processes of language development. "Listening comprehension is a prerequisite for acquisition teachers need to allow the L_2 to be acquired through listening, not only to allow the learner to understand spoken messages in the L_2" [54]. That is, listening comprehension should be considered within academic settings as students' ability to make sense of overall spoken language rather than perceiving segmented speeches. Similarly, "listening comprehension is more than extracting meaning from incoming speech. It is a process of matching speech with the background knowledge. Listeners rely on their background knowledge in order to interpret a spoken message; they are using 'top-down' processes" [55]. In addition, it involves linguistically decoding the message in order to comprehend the message literally [56].

Listeners extract meaning through linguistic triggers that associate utterances construction. In other words, they are using 'Bottom up' process. However, skilled listeners are through to use 'Top-down' and Bottom up processes more simultaneously and interactively [48]. Listening comprehension can be defined as an interactive process of meaning construction that relay on simultaneous top-down and bottom up processing of spoken language.

Listening has been considered theoretically according to varied aspects. Therefore, different categorizations are to be found within listening research. Based on the method of listening, two types of listening were introduced, namely; intensive and extensive. The former refers to listening with a great focus on aspects of spoken language. On contrary, the latter refers to listener's commitment to listening for pleasure [57]. In addition, listening skill varies according to the context of communication. There are four types of listening in relation to purposes of listening [58]:

▪ *Discriminative listening*: It is usually instrumental type of listening that is primarily physiological and occurs mostly at the receiving stage of the listening process.

▪ *In formational listening*: Listening with the goal of comprehending and retaining information.

▪ *Critical listening:* Listening with the goal of analyzing or evaluating a message.

▪ *Empathetic listening:* It occurs when listeners try to understand or experience what the speaker is thinking or feeling.

Moreover, listening sub-skills can be identified with regard to cognitive processes that listener undergoes. Listening comprehension can be classified sub-skills into three main categories [59]:

▪ Literal comprehension skills
▪ Inferential comprehension skills
▪ Critical comprehension skills

Applying the most appropriate teaching practices plays a vital role in the processes of teaching listening comprehension skill. Research has found that improvement in listening comprehension skills can be attributed to the use of different pedagogical practices. To illustrate, the following elaboration presents some classroom practices that proved to be effective in teaching listening comprehension.

▪ Communicative approach [60]
▪ CALL [61], [62]
▪ Story telling [63]
▪ Authentic listening tasks [64]
▪ Cooperative activities [65]
▪ Extensive listening [66]
▪ Portfolio [67]
▪ Strategy training [68]-[70]

In addition to these classroom practices, developing listening skills has been investigated in terms of the BL approach. Drawing on the results of many studies, it can be concluded that BL implementation has a positive impact on listening comprehension development; ESP online/C.D. recordings [71], video sharing websites [72], online laboratory [73], multimedia activities [74] and language laboratories [75].

The study examined the effect of a suggested BL strategy on improving listening comprehension skills of EFL pre-intermediate learners. Students' weakness in listening comprehension skills has been noticed by the researcher while teaching an academic English course for post-graduate students enrolled in TAFL Diploma in Faculty of Graduate Studies in Education, Cairo University. In order to come to a closer identification, the researcher conducted a pilot study. A

listening comprehension test (designed by the researcher) was administered to a group of 15 post-graduate students enrolled in the TAFL Diploma in Faculty of Graduate Studies in Education, Cairo University. Results revealed that 81% of the students were weak in some listening comprehension skills. Furthermore, listening comprehension questionnaire was answered by the students. Data revealed by the questionnaire indicated students' weakness in listening comprehension skills as shown in Table II.

TABLE III
DATA ANALYSIS OF THE LISTENING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONNAIRE

Item	Percentage		
	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
1. I can understand the main points of an ongoing conversation	74%	26%	0%
2. I can guess the meaning of unknown words while listening.	61%	33%	6%
3. I can follow a clear speech in a real life conversation	61%	33%	6%
4. I can follow the story line of an English movie	87%	13%	0%
5. I can catch some details in an English broadcasts on familiar topics	50%	50%	0%
6. I can understand simple directions and routine exchanges.	47%	33%	20%

Taking into account findings of listening research, the insufficient due care to listening comprehension skills may lead to students' poor mastery of these skills [57], [59]. Therefore, the problem of the study can be stated as follows: TAFL post-graduate students are week in listening comprehension skills. The present study investigates the effect of a suggested BL strategy on develop listening comprehension skills of TAFL post graduate students. Hence, the study overall question: *what is the effect of using BL strategy on improving listening comprehension of EFL pre-intermediate students?*

II. HYPOTHESES

- There is a statically significant difference between mean scores of the experimental group in pre-post administrations of the listening comprehension test in the favor of post administration with regard to the overall listening comprehension skill.
- There is a statistically significant difference between mean scores of the experimental group in the pre post administrations of the listening comprehension test in the favor of post-administration with regard to the targeted listening comprehension sub skills.

III. METHOD

A. Participants

The participants of this study were 26 post-graduate students who are enrolled in TAFL Diploma at Graduate Studies in Education, Cairo University. Students' mastery level of English language was pre-intermediate as results of TOEFL test revealed. Participants' age ranged from 24 to 30 all participants were graduated from Egyptian governmental

schools. Besides, they got bachelors of Arts in Arabic language linguistics. Consequently, they had too limited exposure to English language.

B. Instruments

1. Listening Comprehension Checklist

A listening comprehension checklist was the designed by the researcher. The aim of the checklist was to identify the most important listening comprehension skills to the sample of the study. The initial version of the checklist was administered to a panel of three Jury members of TEFL specialists. The final version only included the following skills;
- Identifying the main idea of a spoken text
- Extracting specific details.
- Drawing inferences
- Recognizing lexical chunks and phrases
- Drawing conclusions
- Recognizing organizational pattern of a spoken text

2. Pre-Post Listening Comprehension Test

A listening comprehension test was designed by the researcher. It aimed at assessing the participants' level of mastery of the identified listening comprehension sub-skills. It included three listening tasks. Each task requires students to listen attentively to a 10 minutes' audio material then answer eight multiple choices questions (total 24 items). Each targeted sub-skill was assigned by 4 items (20 marks). A total mark of the test was 120. In order to determine the suitable time, the researchers administrated the test to a sample of 10 students. Time allotted to each task was calculated with regard to average time taken by students. Moreover, test reliability was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha (0.96).

3. BL Retrospective Questionnaire

ABL retrospective questionnaire was designed by the researcher in order to collect feedback from participants in relation to the suggested BL strategy. It consisted of five columns (Likert scale) corresponding to the 15 items of evaluation (see Appendix A).

IV. PROCEDURES

To identify participants' mastery level of English language, the researcher administered the TOEFL test to the participant in 15th February, 2015. The allotted time for test was one hour. Afterwards, participants undertook the listening comprehension test for forty five minutes. Hence, the total time of this session was 105 minutes which was devoted for identify student's level prior to treatment. Then, an introductory session took place in February, 21. The session lasted for two hours. It aimed at introducing the BL strategy, listening comprehension sub-skills, importance of listening comprehension, BL utilized tools (Adobe flash player) and the BL design.

The implementation of the BL strategy took a period over three months (one semester). It started in 15 of February and ended up 18th of April, 2015. The treatment included 9 F2f sessions. Hence, participants and the researcher met weekly in

a traditional classroom setting for a two hours' session. Besides, participants were engaged in nine e-listening units, each included a retrospective questionnaire. Each unit included three interactive activities lasting for 45 minutes. Each activity is based on a 3 minutes' audio podcast followed by some questions. Then, participants are asked to answer a retrospective questionnaire. The implementation can be illustrated in Fig. 2.

TABLE III
RESULTS OF PRE AND POST ADMINISTRATIONS OF THE LISTENING COMPREHENSION TEST COMPARING THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP STUDENTS' SCORES IN THE OVERALL LISTENING COMPREHENSION SKILL

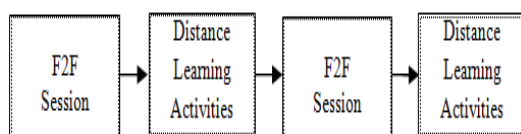| Administration		M	S.D	D.F	t-value	Significance level
Pre	6	30.4	12.5	25	17	Significant at 0.01
Post		79.6	21.7			

Fig. 2 BL Design Implemented in the current study

The total duration of F2F treatment received by the experimental group was 18 hours. In addition, each e-unit needs one hour to be answered resulting in 18 hours of remote learning experiences. Total amount of hours in both learning modes was 36 hours.

The proposed BL strategy includes five main stages, namely; explicit explanation, modeling, guided practice, self-paced practice and reflection. The first three stages are done within the EFL traditional f2f classroom settings whereas the 4th and 5th stages constitute the distance learning experiences.

F2f sessions started with previewing the targeted listening comprehension sub-skill and explaining handout in details. Then, students were engaged in traditional classroom listening activities throughout an hour where modeling was carried out and guided practice was initiated. After words, text-based discussions (TBD) took place promoting more guided practice for another hour. As for the distance learning experience; participants were asked to submit answers of interactive listening activities included in an e-learning unit, via adobe flash player, within 45 minutes. Finally, they have to answer a follow –up questionnaire (reflection stage) within 15 minutes at the end of each unit. The full description of the content of the follow –up questionnaire is provided in Appendix (B).

V. RESULTS

The statistical techniques used in this study were t-test and Eta Square. All the data were statistically treated using statistical package for social science (SPSS). With respect to the first hypothesis, scores of the experimental group on the pre and post administrations of the listening comprehension test were compared using paired –sample t-test formula. The results of this test proved to be statistical consistent with the

hypothesis therefore, the first hypothesis is verified. Table III shows these statistical significances follows:

Considering the second hypothesis, scores of the experimental group on the pre and post administrations of the listening comprehension test were compared with respect to each sub-skill. These t-test results revealed that there were statistically significant differences at 0.01 level for each listening comprehension sub-skill in favor of the post-administration of the listening comprehension test as shown in Table IV.

TABLE IV
RESULTS OF PRE AND POST ADMINISTRATIONS OF THE LISTENING COMPREHENSION TEST COMPARING THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP STUDENTS' SCORES IN RELATION TO LISTENING COMPREHENSION SUB-SKILLS

Sub-skill	Experimental group pre -test		Experimental group post -test		t. value	Eta square value
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
1. Identifying the main idea of a spoken text	6.4	3.0	16.3	3.9	18.9	00.94
2. Extracting specific details	5.2	2.9	15.57	4.5	13.3	00.87
3. Drawing inferences	5	2.2	13.2	5.6	9.45	00.78
4. Recognizing lexical chunks and phrases	5	2.2	13.2	5.6	8.3	00.73
5. Drawing conclusions	3.6	3.3	9	3.4	7.97	00.7
6. Recognizing organizational pattern of a spoken text	5	2.4	11.7	4.8	7.6	00.7

Table IV shows that there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pre- and post- administrations of the listening comprehension test in each listening comprehension sub-skill in favor of the post-administration, since the estimated t-values for the sub-skills were (18.9), (13.3), (9.5), (8.3), (8) and (7.7) respectively. Moreover, the effect size values were (0.94), (0.87), (0.78), (0.73), (0.7), (0.7), for the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth listening comprehension sub-skills respectively. With respect to the first and second listening comprehension sub-skills, it was indicated that the proposed BL strategy had a large effect on the experimental group students' listening comprehension sub-skills on the post-administration of the listening comprehension test results as compared with the pre-administration. As for the rest targeted sub-skills, it was proved that the suggested BL strategy had a medium effect on the experimental group students' listening comprehension.

VI. DISCUSSION

In the light of the previously presented statistical analysis, it can be concluded that the suggested BL strategy had a large effect on developing the experimental group students' overall listening comprehension (t-value 17) and size effect value (0.9). This was proved by comparing scores of the experimental group on the pre and post administrations of the listening comprehension test. This is consistent with the results of studies which proved the effective role of BL on developing students' listening comprehension [71]-[75].

With respect to BL retrospective and follow –up questionnaires, students' progress in the listening comprehension skills can be attributed to several factors. As for the f2f sessions, students' responses highlighted some factors that positively affected their effective participation. The explicit explanation step in general promoted students' awareness of the listening comprehension. 91% of students declared that they 'strongly agree' that handouts were useful and promoted their deeper understanding of the content. Modeling step also was beneficial as it included clear models and examples. That has been declared by 94% of students choosing 'strongly agree' for the second item, 'classroom explanations, models and examples were clear'. In addition, guided practice step was characterized by challenge and enrichment. Being based on text, oral discussions were debatable enough to promote students' participation. Students found this step one of the most encouraging listening attentively in order to reply and take turns. 87% of students chose 'strongly agree' in respect to the third item, 'I am more motivated to listen attentively in text based discussions' and 81% chose 'strongly agree' with regard to the fourth item 'I got sufficient amount of interaction with other students in activities'. On whole, f2f sessions were beneficial and sufficient for students allowing them to explore oral English in general and listening comprehension in particular. Students responses to the fifth item, 'I likely need more f2f classroom sessions' assured this aspect as 81% of students chose 'strongly agree' and 9% chose 'agree'.

Other factors that contributed to students' progress in listening comprehension can be ascribed to the e-learning units. The simplicity of the e-units design was one of the factors that promoted students' engagement in the self-paced practice step. Clarity of the font, audio recordings, and font and task instructions triggered students towards personalized learning experience. Students responded to the item 'The e-learning units were simple and interesting in relation to font, interface and design' with satisfying percentages (i.e. 94% strongly agree, 4% agree, 2% neutral). Moreover, the audio recordings were interesting enough to catch students' attention as 96% of students 'strongly agree' on the statement 'audio recordings were interesting'. Meanwhile, activities were suitable to students' level and challenging enough to trigger their participation as indicated by the students' responses on item 'e-learning activities were challenging', i.e. 98% strongly agreed. Students had to go through e- learning units according to their pace and suitable time. Such flexibility promoted students' smooth participation which helped improving their listening comprehension. 100% of students strongly agreed on statement 'I like the flexibility of accessing the e-learning units anytime online' and 95% of them also strongly agreed on statement 'I feel more confident when I practice listening comprehension according to my pace'. Finally, the use of adobe flash player was beneficial to the current study. Students found its use easy and technical problems rarely encountered as indicated by their responses on statement 'I encountered a lot of technical problems', 79% strongly disagreed.

In respect to the overall BL strategy, some factors enhanced students' progress in listening comprehension. The sequence of the f2f sessions and e-learning units was logical, consistent and complementary. It allowed the development of skills to occur smoothly throughout the whole implementation. 100% of students chose 'strongly agree' for the item 'classroom practices were arranged in accordance with e-learning units'. Moreover, both modes of instruction were favored by students as indicated in the follow-up questionnaire. In addition, feedback has been given to students throughout the whole implementation. That reinforced students' learning in both modes f2f and online. 91% of students chose 'strongly agree' and 9% chose 'agree' on the item 'I received sufficient feedback in f2f and online'. Finally, the follow-up questionnaire induced students' reflection on their learning whether f2f or only. Students' responses indicated their satisfaction of the given feedback as 96% strongly agreed on the item 'I have sufficient opportunities to reflect on what I've learned in each lesson'. However, there were factors that affected the development of each listening comprehension sub-skills resulting in different effect size values, i.e. large and medium. There were sub-skills required more 'online recourses' which were not included in the e-learning units such as 'Recognizing organizational pattern of a spoken text'. This sub-skill was much related to types of speeches such as dialogue, story, debate, lecture …etc. Consequently, there was a need for a wide range of activities. In addition, responses of students in the retrospective questionnaire on the item 'I need more opportunity to access and use online recourses' were 77% strongly agree, 12% agree, 4% neutral, 7% disagree. Such results are consistent with the students' responses in the follow-up questionnaire with respect to this sub-skill.

Activities included in the strategy can be considered as a factor resulting in enhancing some listening comprehension sub-skills with a medium effect size value; namely, drawing inferences, recognizing lexical chunks and phrases and drawing conclusions. Activities where mainly based on audio-recordings and multiple choices. Same format was used with all e-learning units. Based on the follow –up questionnaire, there was a need for deploying varied kinds of activities such as games, simulations, and video-based questions…. etc. Such varieties may enrich the contexts providing students by more opportunities to listen and think in depth. In the retrospective questionnaire, students' responses also indicated same need as 55% agreed on the item 'There are sufficient amount of choices in relation to kinds of listening activities'.

VII. Conclusion

The study aimed at improving listening comprehension of EFL pre-intermediate students through using a suggested BL strategy. For the purpose of the study, the use of the suggested BL strategy had been investigated for a period of three months. Results revealed that students had listening comprehension has been developed as indicated by statistical analysis of t-test ($\eta2 = 0.9$). Several factors had contributed to the students' progress with regard to f2f sessions, e-learning

units and the overall BL strategy. Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that students' parallel engagement in f2f and online activities proved to be influential in enhancing their listening comprehension skills. The study findings also provide some evidence of the BL positive contribution to EFL learning in general and developing listening comprehension in particular.

APPENDIX

A. BL Retrospective Questionnaire

TABLE V
BL RETROSPECTIVE QUESTIONNAIRE

Domain	Item	S A	A	N	D	SD
F2f sessions	1. Handouts helped me better understand course material	91%	9%	-	-	-
	2. Classroom explanations, models and examples were clear	94%	6%	-	-	-
	3. I'm more motivated to listen attentively in text based discussions	87%	13%	-	-	-
	4. I got sufficient amount of interaction with other students in activities	81%	19%	-	-	-
	5. I likely need more f2f classroom sessions	-	10%	-	9%	81%
E-learning units	6. The e-learning units were simple in relation to font, audio recordings, interface and design	94%	4%	2%	-	-
	7. Audio recordings were interesting	96%	4%	-	-	-
	8. I need more opportunity to access and use online recourses	77%	12%	4%	7%	-
	9. E-learning activities were challenging.	98%	2%	-	-	-
	10. I like the flexibility of accessing the e-learning units anytime online	100%	-	-	-	-
	11.I feel more confident when I practice listening comprehension according to my pace	95%	5%	-	-	-
	12.I encountered a lot of technical problems	-	-	-	3%	97%
	13.Classroom practices were arranged in accordance with e-learning units	100%	-	-	-	-
	14. There are sufficient amount of choices in relation to kinds of listening activities.	-	55%	%	26%	13%
	15.I received sufficient feedback in f2f and online	91%	9%	-	-	-
	16.I have sufficient opportunities to reflect on what I've learned in each lesson	96%	4%	-	-	-

B. Follow-up Questionnaire

Feel free to reflect on your classroom and online learning experiences.

- Which class modality you prefer most in practicing this skill (f2f, e-learning, or both)? Why?
- What did you find the most encouraging/ discouraging in this blended unit?
- What did you find the most useful/ useless in this blended unit?
- In your opinion, does this blended unit need any modifications? If yes? Any suggestions?

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