Chapter 94

To Be or Not to Be Successful?
That Does Not Only Depend on Technology, But Also on Human Factors

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ABSTRACT

The increase of blended learning education has been identified as an important goal in improving teaching-learning technological models. However, when considering this development it becomes essential to take into account the potential characteristics that students must have to be successful in this kind of education. This study is based on this human aspect. Thus, the authors have focused on learners and the fundamental qualities that they must have to study English via a hypermedia modular model and get their goals. Based on the results of this research the authors can indicate that characteristics like reasonable computer skills, ability to work both individually and in groups, capability of being organized and tenacious in their learning, a high level of academic maturity and a reasonable competence in English that allows them to be autonomous in their learning are essential features to be successful in this type of education.

INTRODUCTION

In the last decades the development of technology has resulted in a convergence in two learning environment: the traditional face-to-face learning and the distributed learning systems (Coaten, 2003; García-Peñalvo, 2008; López & Matesanz, 2009). The combination of these two teaching-learning models has led to the development of the blended learning instruction that according to Graham (2006:5) can be defined as '(…) part of the ongoing convergence of two archetypal learning environments. On one hand, we have

the traditional face-to-face learning environment that has been around for centuries. On the other hand, we have distributed learning environments that have begun to grow and expand in exponential ways as new technologies have expanded the possibilities for distributed communication and interaction'. The direct consequence of the convergence of these two learning environments is the development of a different kind of education that exploits the advantages of both types of instruction (García & García, 2005; Graham, 2006; Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003). On one hand, there are face-to-face interactions between teachers and students due to the different face-to-face activities in which they meet in a certain place and in a strict timetable in order to carry out the different lessons previously defined. And on the other hand, the different synchronous and asynchronous technologies (chat, forum, wiki, online glossary or online questionnaires) facilitate the distribution of contents, learning experiences and interaction between the participants of the teaching-learning process without sharing the same time and physical place. As Thorne (2003:18) points out 'blended learning represents a real opportunity to create learning experiences that can provide the right learning at the right time and in the right place for each and every individual, not just at work, but in schools, universities and even at home. It can be truly universal, crossing global boundaries and bringing groups of learners together through different cultures and time zones. In this context blended learning could become one of the most significant developments of the 21st century'.

Blended learning instruction has become the kind of education that responds to the educational demands of the current knowledge society in which people need to carry out lifelong learning, since this instruction eliminates the inflexibility and the spatial and temporal barriers, producing a change in the learning approach towards a more open education in which students are more involved and more active in the construction of knowledge (Arteaga & Duarte, 2010). Moreover, there are studies that conclude similar learning outcomes in content knowledge acquisition between persons receiving blended instruction and other ones receiving face to face instruction, specifically in the English language teacher scope (Kocoglu, Ozek & Kesli, 2011). Lifelong learning also implies the necessity to develop some skills that allow citizens to keep job skills up-to-date and enable them to adapt to different situations and changes in the current society (González, Rodríguez, Olmos, Borham & García, 2013). The European Union in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of December 2006 points out the key competences for lifelong learning in which it is highlighted the competence in communication in foreign languages. Spanish primary schools are trying to give answer to this necessity and for this reason most of them offer a bilingual education (English-Spanish). However, everything is not so positive since the direct consequence of the implementation of a bilingual project is to have teachers with a high level of English. Most teachers do not have the adequate level to be able to teach in this second language and need to prepare and improve their foreign language skills in order to be able to teach different subjects such as Science, Physical Education, Music, English and Art & Crafts, using English as the language of communication. As a result, teachers must continue their studies and need to find a kind of instruction that allow them to study and work at the same time. In other words, a type of instruction, different from the traditional one, that adapts to their personal and professional duties (Sánchez-Gómez, Pinto-Llorente & García-Peñalvo, 2010). On account of this necessity, there is a great educational demand for the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education: English in the blended learning modality. Nowadays, there are a great amount of researches about blended learning programmes that confirm the incredible possibilities and advantages that this kind of education provides to study English or any other language. However, we considered that it is essential to carry out researches that do not only concentrate on the academic potentiality of blended learning modality, but also on the main human factors that are basic to be successful on this kind of education. This is the main goal of our research. It is a more humanistic

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