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DEVELOPING AUTONOMY THROUGH THE BLENDED LEARNING APPROACH

CAXIAS DO SUL

2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 TOPIC

Blended Learning Model fostering autonomy in English Learners.

2 PROBLEM

In what ways does the application of the Blended Learning Model foster the development of autonomy in students of English as a Second Language?

3 MAIN OBJECTIVE

This paper aims to determine how the Blended Learning Model assists the development of autonomy in students of English as a Second Language.

4 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Discuss the concept of autonomy;
- ✓ Present the technology in education;
- ✓ Study the technology in the Blended Learning Model;
- ✓ Determine the benefits of the Blended Learning Model to develop autonomy based on the materials used in this method.

5 JUSTIFICATION

One of the first places where the human beings learn how to express themselves is the school. There, students are supposed to be the protagonists of their own knowledge and school is expected to support them with the best resources.

However, the traditional method, old method or classical method[1] presented in schools is quite often not capable of meeting the needs of the students, especially

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[1] This approach emphasizes reading, writing and translation, rather than speech; it uses the native language as a major means to explain the words and structures of the foreign language; It teaches

when it comes to a second language, such as English. Since the beginning of times, the human beings invent technologies to facilitate their lives, such as tools to create fire, to hunt or technologies in planting and harvesting. The concept of the word technology has changed after the Internet was created, in 1969, and gadgets that supported it started to appear, such as computers, smartphones, tablets. But even if it is part of the most people's lives, neither teachers nor students seem to be aware of how to achieve the greatest results they are capable of, using this ordinary tool as it is.

The technology we use nowadays, the Internet, has been shaping people's behavior in a way that was almost unimaginable for the previous generations. It is one of the reasons why the gap between teachers and students seems so big in schools. If students are different, there is no point in keeping the same model of classes we had one hundred years ago.

In addition to it, the students' personality traits, background and filters to understand reality also influence new learners and new approaches. By my familiarity with education, it is likely to realize that every individual has its unique pace of comprehending things. It means it is almost impossible to have only one formula to teach contents and present new topics when it comes to education. On the other hand, it is plausible to find a model where the peculiarities are taken into account but at the same time make students learn from each other, learn from the different. This way they can get more conscious of their own learning processes and help their classmates with each different ability.

My interest in this theme is due to some problems I have been facing, as a teacher involved with this model of learning. Some students, especially adults who come from many years of experience with the traditional method, have some resistance when Blended Learning Model[2] is presented. They believe it is not possible to learn English properly if there is not a person in front of them (the

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grammatical rules or generalizations to control students' correct usage of the Foreign Language; It employs some kind of grammatical analysis of the Foreign Language sentences (ALKHULI, 2006).

[2] Blended learning, briefly explained now, and further better explained, is a model of teaching that involves two other methods, the on-line and the traditional.

teacher) telling them what to do and how to do. Usually they are shy to express their questions and opinions, they are afraid to be mistaken and they still believe the teacher is the center of attention.

What has led me to write this monograph was the need to understand how it is possible to develop students' autonomy through Blended Learning Model, showing its concepts and its applicability when teaching English. This way, learning English can be more attractive and the difficulties presented before are not a barrier to learn the English language anymore.

6 RELEVANCE

It would be expected that those responsible for the school administration are informed about the most current models of education, in order to identify which ones bring more advantages to students. This way, teachers and students will be more engaged to take part of the teaching-learning process of English, accomplishing more fluency and comprehension of all its aspects.

With the advancement of digital technologies, it is common to have students who are interested in methodologies that use the Internet as a learning resource. If these students have already been born in this environment, they will be using it easier. However, with past generations, for those the use of gadgets was not part of their lives, these people may face difficulties to understand that it is only one more tool to help them in the English learning process.

However, either it is the current generation or the past ones, the student needs to understand that any technology substitutes the learning process. The cognitive such as processing information, thinking ability, speaking, memory and reasoning still need to be developed by the individual's brain in its own pace. Therefore, digital technology helps to fill the gaps of knowledge and curiosity, making the learning more attractive and more dynamic. On the other hand, it is also necessary to know if the student knows how to use the available resources for this purpose. It is important that the learners have in mind how they can search for information to clear their temporary doubts, through technology. Therefore, the

attention is not on the teacher anymore and the student becomes the protagonist of the classroom, achieving autonomy.

This project aims to present how the Blended Learning Model can contribute to the development of the autonomy in the classroom, once teachers discuss this term frequently. In this model of teaching, the main role of the teachers is to mediate knowledge. They oversee and guide students towards the paths they can follow to reach their goals, besides providing contents and materials that support the discussions in class, also contributing to the individual study. The building of this knowledge will be essential to perform academic projects and researches in the future, besides contributing to the job market now and with the one that is still going to be developed[3], in addition to contributing to build a more mature and active personality.

Moreover, the time in classroom is better used, since the teachers can present the contents before the on-site class, allowing the teacher to promote debates in an interactive moment with the great group. With more participation of the students, it becomes possible to identify the biggest questions and difficulties they have, making the difference in the results of tests and evaluations.

7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It is common to discuss autonomy in any period of life and it is not different at school environment. In order to guarantee a successful development of an individual's skills, the school, through the role of the teacher, can contribute with some points, such as comprehension, tolerance, empathy, incentive to build curious thinkers and questioner students, besides working with values that helps the personality and character, becoming a certain path to autonomy. For this reason, schools have always tried to add the available technologies to help develop autonomy. In order to understand how to achieve autonomy, some concepts are

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[3] According to a research made by the Institute for the Future to Dell Technologies estimates that 85 percent of jobs in 2030 have not been invented yet. HAGAN, Jean. Realizing 2030: Dell Technologies Research Explores the Next Era of Human-Machine Partnerships. 1. 2017. Disponível em: <http://www.iftf.org/future-now/article-detail/realizing-2030-dell-technologies-research-explores-the-next-era-of-human-machine-partnerships/>. Access in: 14 out. 2018.

going to be defined in this section. Initially, there will be some definitions about what autonomy is and how interactive experiences, such as the Blended Learning Model, can contribute to develop it. Then, there will be a section to talk about the technology in education through the years so that it is easier to understand how the Blended Learning Model works with the traditional and the modern.

7.1 AUTONOMY

The word *autonomy* comes from Greek and its meaning relates to independence, liberty and self-reliance. According to Little (1991) autonomy is "a capacity - for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action".

Schranm, (2005, apud CASTRO, 2011, our translation)[4] also defines autonomy:

> [...] the word "autonomy" has Greek origin, formed by the adjective autos, which means "the same", "himself", "by himself" and by the word nomos which means "to share", "institution", "use", "law", "convention", human skill, "offer yourself to your own laws" and implies constitutive property of the human being, as far as it fits you to choose your rules and values, make projects, take decisions and act according to the consequence of these choices.

It means that the autonomous person is able to take decisions using the available information. Inside the school context, the autonomy is necessary because society is marked by individuality, independence and it demands more and more that people know how to take initiative and solve problems. The school is the environment where not only does the student need to reproduce knowledge, but also understand and create it. Freire, (2014) states that:

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[4] A palavra "autonomia" tem origem grega, formada pelo adjetivo *autos*, que significa "o mesmo", "ele mesmo", "por si mesmo" e pela palavra *nomos* que significa compartilhar", "instituição", "uso", "lei", "convenção", competência humana, "dar-se nas suas próprias leis" e implica propriedade constitutiva da pessoa humana, na medida em que lhe cabe escolher as suas normas e valores, fazer projetos, tomar decisões e agir em consequência dessas escolhas (SCHRANM, 2005)

> [...] teaching is not to transfer knowledge, but create possibilities to its own production or its construction. When I enter in a classroom, I must be an individual that is open to questions, to curiosity, to the students' questions, to their inhibitions; a critical and inquirer individual, restless towards the task I have – the one of teaching and not transfer knowledge.

It can be said that the teaching must aim to develop in the children and after in the youngsters, situations that can contribute to develop their own autonomy, becoming less and less independent from the teacher. The author makes it clear that it is necessary to create these possibilities, making that the external experiences contribute to the learning. Of most concern, however, is to determine that not all school environments are suitable to provide these experiences. It is not an exaggeration to say that the knowledge is at stake, once students have more and more access to fast and new information, they become demotivated for not having clear the curiosities inside the classroom. As mentioned above, the teacher must know his role as a mediator and not only the one who transfers contents and answers.

That is why the interactive experiences must be explored, in order to test hypothesis to solve problems, therefore:

> [...] learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement. (VYGOTSKY, 1978, p. 90).

This way, as mentioned above, the knowledge must be linked to the interaction the individuals experience at school. It is undeniably about creating possibilities so that the everyday individual problems are faced in group, with debates, arguments, testing different hypothesis. It would be a mistake, though, attribute autonomy with the word liberty. This way, it is of utmost importance remember that the autonomous individual must understand his responsibilities as far as his autonomy is conquered. It means the student needs to bear the consequences of his acts, being good or not, once "the school needs to have program contents, but it should be clear that the essential in learning contents is the construction of the responsibility of the liberty in which it is assumed" (ZATTI, 2007).

It can be said that autonomy must be explored in classroom, but always with guidance, since, from the point of view of ethics, students do not have total liberty. Once the teacher has to create possibilities to the students' learning development, they should be substantiated in situations that show the students that their decisions create results, sometimes positive and sometimes not. Of greater concern is the fact that liberty is seen as something with no limits, that is because if the individual has the power of choice he can choose whatever he wants. However, autonomy does not follow this synonym, once it is on a basis where there are limits.

The interactions in group provide the students a range of possibilities, once he can expose his problems and his solutions to the big group at the same time he can learn different solutions with his peers. As Kant (1948, apud CASTRO, 2011) states "the autonomy is built from the individual action, in the degree that it is not found isolated in the individual, it implies sociability, morality and rational choices". That is to say, to be independent is to be able to do something on your own, but to be autonomous is to do something reflecting on your action and also respecting the action and the thought of the others.

Inside the school, there are many actions that the teacher can take to develop autonomy. These actions can vary according to the age range, but all of them are linked to the participation of the students and to the reality and necessity of each group with the use of different modalities such as, for example, the blended learning model.

This way, due to the difficulty in developing the autonomy of the students, this research aims to apply the blended learning model to foster better results in the learning of a second language.

Tarnopolski (2012, p. 14) defines the Blended Learning Model and says why this model can provide a more enjoyable class:

> [...] blended learning has the advantage of being much more flexible than traditional learning. The flexibility is due to the fact that in blended learning a substantial part of instruction is delivered through online resources savings classroom time and intensifying learning because learners can acquire more knowledge faster and easier than they would have done in traditional learning situations.

The traditional model of classes does not provide an ideal learning, as explained above. Students and teachers lose a precious time when working the same things in only one way. The classroom environment is rapidly changing, the technological rise of the 21st century and widespread integration of technologies into our society, combined with access to the internet has changed teaching in just a few years. Our children, and their following generations are already and will continue to grow up in a world that is an important reminder of how rapidly the human civilization has changed, a society and world where smartphones and tablets are widespread, affordable, and replacing most computers and laptops. The author makes it clear that the flexibility of teaching can be acquired by the Blended Learning Model, making learning become faster in classroom.

7.2 THE TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

In order to understand better the Blended Learning Model, some historical facts can be remembered. Since the beginning of the times, human beings have been inventing tools that help them survive and live better and teaching it to the next generations was a matter of survival. Building a time line, the first attempt of the human beings to teach something to others are dated in the cave drawings, as rock paintings. With the evolutions of our society, many years after, in 510 B.C., the Pythagoras academy was the first formal education academy founded in the history. The Pythagoras schools "were created as educational establishments for joint studies under the leadership of the founder of the school (...)" (ZHMUD, 2012, p. 142). The students were taught in an open classroom where they learned philosophy, science and mathematics.

From the times of the invention of writing, the human beings had been creating something easier to write such as the papyrus, invented in Egypt and a different paper from what we know nowadays, in China, becoming the most important tools to register facts. For many centuries, the manuscript transcriptions were used, until it was revolutionized, in 1450, when the Gutenberg Printing Press was invented and made the creation of documents and books become cheaper and faster.

Around the 1700's, when the first public schools – similar to the ones we have nowadays – were opened, they counted with technologies too, such as the blackboard, the chalkboard slates and books. After that, the modeling of classrooms was the same, only adding new materials to use in teaching, such as the audiovisual technology. After the use of training films and other visual aids during World War II, these audiovisual resources – such as pictures, slides, radios, videos - gradually developed in sophistication and its use became more widespread in educational establishments. Not many years later, the Information Era appeared and with it, the television, the videocassette recorder (VCR), the video home system (VHS) tape and the audio tape were included in classrooms to increase the quality of resources used in teaching, specially the teaching of second languages.

In the 1990's, the Computer Era started and it did not take long to the Digital Era become a reality. The exchange of information and data became faster and did not have physical limits anymore, making that people from one side of the world could communicate with people from the other side. From this time on, it was getting faster and faster how new gadgets were invented. Smartphones, tablets, interactive boards are now helping to shape the language classroom.

7.3 THE TECHNOLOGY AND THE BLENDED LEARNING MODEL

By looking at all these facts, it is easy to see that technology has always been part of schools. They have been traditional but always adding new tools to it. The Blended Learning Model, therefore combines these two methodologies, the traditional and the technology, in order to achieve the best results in classrooms. Allan (2007) defines Blended Learning Model as "a mixture of face-to-face and e-learning". As the author exposes, it means the Blended Learning Model is not one hundred percent on-line neither one hundred percent face-to-face, making that this model stays in the middle of these two approaches, as it is presented by the same author in the picture below.

Picture 1: Blended Learning Model

Online learning	Blended learning	Face-to-face learning
100% e-learning	⟵——————⟶	Minimal use of technology
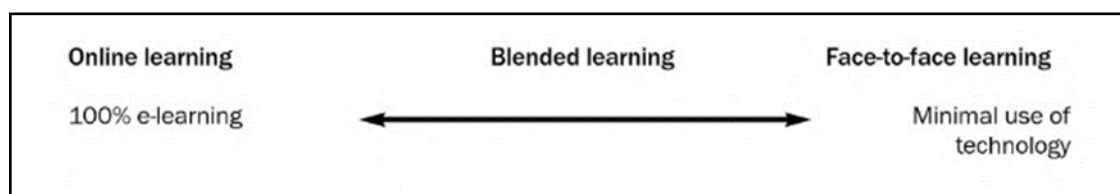
Source: Allen, 2007

The Blended Learning Model, combining the online method with the traditional method, offers autonomy to students, once they can decide the rhythm and the paths to follow of the class. Allan (2007) also includes in the Blended Learning Model "the use of different internet-based tools including chat rooms, discussion groups, podcasts and self-assessment tools to support a traditional course". It is important to say that the online contents have to be linked to the contents in class. Therefore,

> the traditional classroom and the virtual space, become gradually complementary. It happens because, besides the use of varied digital technologies, the individual interacts with the group, intensifying the exchange of experiences that happen in a physical environment, the school. The role played by the teacher and by the students suffers alterations in relation to the teaching proposal considered traditional, and the class configurations benefit moments of interaction, collaboration and involvement with the digital technologies. The blended learning is a methodological combination that impacts in the action of the teacher in teaching situations and in the action of the students in learning situations. (BACICH; TANZI NETO; TREVISAN, 2015. p. 52, our translation)[5].

As aforementioned, it is possible to say that the Blended Learning Model do not exclude the traditional classroom. In this context, it is clear that the combination of both models, the traditional and the online, helps the student to develop the skills in group and individually, increasing the exchange of experiences and opinions. The author makes it clear that, the most important, however, teachers and students' role

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[5] [...] a sala de aula tradicional e o espaço virtual, tornam-se gradativamente complementares. Isso ocorre porque, além do uso de variadas tecnologias digitais, o indivíduo interage com o grupo, intensificando a troca de experiências que ocorre em um ambiente físico, a escola. O papel desempenhado pelo professor e pelos alunos sofre alterações em relação à proposta de ensino considerado tradicional, e as configurações das aulas favorecem momentos de interação, colaboração e envolvimento com as tecnologias digitais. (BACICH; TANZI NETO; TREVISAN, 2015. p. 52).

will change inside and outside the classroom. It is not an overstatement to say that both have to be prepared and open minded to some changes.

Concerning the mixture of both methodologies, Lalima and Dangwal (2017, p. 3), state that

> Blended Learning is the concept that includes framing teaching learning process that incorporates both face to face teaching and teaching supported by ICT[6]. Blended learning incorporates direct instruction, indirect instruction, collaborative teaching, individualized computer assisted learning.

Then, as the authors mention, the Blended Learning Model does not have the aim to change the classroom to be completely online. Teachers have to continue using what works well in both methodologies. It would be a mistake, thus, attribute the success of the learning only to the technology. This way, it is of utmost importance to say that teachers will never be replaced in a Blended Learning Model. Under this perspective, education "[…] is about the trust and bond between a teacher and young person (and parents) that creates the environment where learning can occur and grow. Virtual learning simply cannot do that". (WRIGHT, 2013).

Besides being aware that teachers will continue developing an important role in classroom, it is also interesting to remember that they still face difficulties in helping the students become autonomous. There is the fact that technology can provide this autonomy, if used correctly. Consequently, it is possible that the Blended Learning Model can be used to develop it, from the point of view that teachers can use the time they have in the traditional face-to-face classroom in addition to the online time students can dedicate to learning.

8 METHODOLOGY

In order to reach the main goal of determining how the Blended Learning Model assists the development of autonomy in students of English as a Second

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[6] ICT: information and communication technology.

Language, is has been observed that this paper is classified as a bibliographical research and documental research. Both are very similar, however Gil (2002, p. 45, our translation)[7] presents that the difference

> is in the nature of the sources: while the bibliographical research is based fundamentally of the contributions of varied authors about certain subject, the documental research is drawn upon materials that did not receive an analytic treatment, or yet, can be reworked according to the topics of research.

Using the bibliographic research to help developing this paper, there are some authors who have researched about the topics to guide on the answer to the main question.

In order to understand the concept of autonomy, some authors such as Schranm (2005, apud CASTRO, 2011) brings the origin of the word and Little (1991) who says that autonomy is "a capacity - for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action". There is also Freire (2000) who states teachers should create situations that can contribute to develop the students' autonomy, making them become less and less dependent from the teacher. Vygostky (1980) discusses how these situations can affect the students' development in class. Zatti (2007) and Kant (1948, apud CASTRO, 2011) also help to define autonomy. In order to help developing it, teacher can take many actions inside the classroom. Tarnopolski (2012, p. 14) brings the fact that the classes can be more enjoyable through the Blended Learning Model and it can be considered as a different approach to develop autonomy.

The classroom environment is rapidly changing and the technological rise of the 21st century and widespread integration of technologies into our society,

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[7] A pesquisa documental assemelha-se muito à pesquisa bibliográfica. A diferença essencial entre ambas está na natureza das fontes. Enquanto a pesquisa bibliográfica se utiliza fundamentalmente das contribuições dos diversos autores sobre determinado assunto, a pesquisa documental vale-se de materiais que não recebem ainda um tratamento analítico, ou que ainda podem ser reelaborados de acordo com os objetos da pesquisa. (GIL, 2002, p. 45).

combined with access to the Internet has changed teaching in just a few years. That is why it is important to debate about technology inside schools. This is not a new term, once it has always existed in schools. They were not as we know now, digital, but has always made part of schools to ease the students' comprehension. These technologies were an addition, not replacing the teacher or the traditional method. As Allan (2007) affirms, Blended Learning Model is "a mixture of face-to-face and e-learning". Bacich; Tanzi Neto and Trevisan (2015. p. 52) propose that the Blended Learning Model do not exclude the traditional classroom yet the teachers and students' role will suffer alterations. Lalima and Dangwal (2017, p. 3) discuss that this model does not have the aim to change the classroom to be completely online. It would be a mistake, thus, attribute the success of the learning only to the technology. Wright (2013) affirms that teachers will never be replaced by technology, which is an issue to be considered.

The second part of this research aims to determine the benefits of the Blended Learning Model to develop autonomy based on the materials used in this method. It will be used a documental research in order to understand how it fosters autonomy in students. Following a qualitative methodology, a set of didactic books from an English School will be analyzed, aiming to verify the possible development of autonomy through the Blended Learning Model and its material.

9 CHRONOGRAM

YEAR	2018					2019				
MONTHS	AUGUST	SEPTEMB	OCTOBER	NOVEMBE	DECEMBE	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY
ACTIVITIES										
Topic definition	X									
Searching and reading of theoretical support	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Justification and relevance			X							
Problem, goal and objectives		X								
Chronogram			X							
Theoretical framework			X	X	X	X	X	X		
Methodology			X	X						
TCC I submission				X						
Qualifying session					X					
TCC I final version					X					
Writing chapters						X	X	X		
Conclusion									X	
TCC II submission									X	
TCC presentation										X
TCC II final version										X

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