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THE EFFECT OF BLENDED LEARNING TOWARDS PUPILS' VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT AND MOTIVATION IN AN ESL CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

Background and Purpose: Vocabulary is the fundamental aspect of a language. However, second language (L2) learners often perceive vocabulary learning as boring and difficult. As such, various efforts must be made by teachers to empower pupils' vocabulary base to be able to be competent in the target language. Hence, this study attempts to address the use of blended learning on pupils' vocabulary development and motivation.

Methodology: This research adopted the quantitative research design. The research participants consisted of two classes of primary school pupils chosen through purposive sampling. The pupils were divided into the experimental group and the control group. The instruments used were pre-test, post-test, and questionnaires. An independent t-test was used to compare the mean score to see any significant difference in terms of pupils' pre-test and post-test scores whereas mean interpretation was used to determine pupils' level of motivation.

Findings: The results revealed that pupils who learned through blended learning performed better in terms of vocabulary development compared to the pupils who learned through traditional learning. Similarly, pupils have high motivation towards blended learning instructions. It is apparent that pupils become motivated learners when their need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled.

Contributions: This research aids teachers in constructing suitable blended learning environments for content delivery as an alternative way for students to interact with information in preparation for classroom work.

Keywords: Blended learning, vocabulary development, motivation, ESL classroom, purposive sampling.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the educational context, blended learning has become widely used in recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic that hit the world in 2020 has drastically changed the way education institutions conduct teaching and learning. According to UNESCO, more than 50% of the student population around the world has been affected by school closures. Consequently, it has prompted experts to rethink suitable pedagogies using online and blended approaches that are proven sustainable in the global health crises going on. According to Kumar et al. (2021), the general definition of blended learning is the combination of both online learning and face-to-face classroom learning. Likewise, Khodaparast and Ghafournia (2015) define blended learning as a mixture of different learning environments. Thus, the term 'blended learning' is not something new in the educational landscape as various scholars have supported and considered blended learning as the 'new norm' in educational technology and course delivery (Adams, Tan, & Sumintono, 2021; Dziuban et al., 2018; Evans et al., 2020). Currently, blended learning is being implemented at all levels of education, from primary school to tertiary level education. Despite that, little research has been done on blended learning in the Malaysian primary school context.

With the advent of technology, the traditional 'chalk and talk' method of teaching English is no longer viable (Paul & Jefferson, 2019). The traditional method of learning vocabulary entails memorization of lengthy vocabulary lists, derivations, and repetition of individual words, among other activities. Moreover, Ulinnuha and Indartono (2019) stated that such traditional activities will cause students to lose interest in what they are learning in the classroom. They also asserted that the use of a lengthy list of words does not imply that remembering will take place. Therefore, the Malaysian Ministry of Education had taken several efforts to promote the use of technology in teaching and learning. Among them involved equipping schools with high-speed internet access. However, since the inception of 1BestariNet and FrogVLE in 2011 in schools to promote e-learning, many issues pertaining to the use of these platforms are being raised such as the platforms being very user-unfriendly (Rahayu et

al., 2018). Consequently, the Ministry of Education decided to replace FrogVLE with Google Classroom, another e-learning platform that is also the focus of this research.

From 2013 onwards, the Common European Framework of References (CEFR) is introduced in Malaysian primary schools to complement the current Primary School Standard Curriculum (KSSR) syllabus. In relation to that, vocabulary is taught through different themes and topics. However, Alqahtani (2015) argued that there are teachers who are not aware of how to put emphasis on vocabulary. This also may pose a problem for the teachers, especially when teachers seem to be less confident about the ways to teach vocabulary (En-nda & Koumachi, 2022). Moreover, vocabulary learning is also regarded as a redundant learning process in the classroom as language learners are assumed to acquire it subconsciously. Hence, pupils are expected to learn high-frequency words based on the themes and topics of the textbook through different skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing according to the Malaysian Curriculum and Assessment Standard Document (DSKP). As a result, Wong et al. (2019) posited that Malaysian pupils have low English proficiency despite learning English for six years in primary schools.

As such, this study looked at pupils' vocabulary performance after blended learning strategies were implemented. Likewise, pupils' motivation is analyzed based on Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET), which is a sub-theory of the Self-Determination Theory. This theory looked at the intrinsic motivation of pupils after blended learning instructions were implemented based on three main aspects which are competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Therefore, the present research attempted to answer the following research questions:

a) What are the effects of blended learning towards pupils' vocabulary development?
b) In what ways does blended learning motivate pupils to develop their vocabulary knowledge?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Vocabulary Teaching and Learning in Malaysia

Generally, vocabulary is the basis of a language. Researchers have concluded that the necessary vocabulary size for effective language use is approximately 3000 words families and above. Thus, a lack of vocabulary knowledge will affect an individual's listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Since English is taught at all levels, there is an underlying assumption that students would be equipped with an adequate level of vocabulary proficiency by the time they graduate from high school. However, Harji et al. (2015) found that most Malaysian tertiary

students only have mastery of the 2000 words families which is below the expectation of L2 tertiary students. As a result, Malaysian graduates are shown to have a low employment rate by potential employers due to poor communication skills. This problem is echoed by the former prime minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr. Mahathir who expressed his concern about the employability rate of Malaysian undergraduates due to their poor communicative skills in English.

As mentioned by Tan and Goh (2017), the general perception is that learners who know more vocabulary will be more proficient in various language skills. They researched the vocabulary size and performance in listening comprehension using a quantitative approach. Their research participants consisted of 43 Malaysian sophomores from a private university. The result has shown that Malaysian students have an adequate vocabulary size of just over 6000 words which is still insufficient for listening comprehension. Similarly, Ashrafzadeh and Nimehchisalem (2015) investigated the vocabulary knowledge and problems of Malaysian tertiary-level learners in summary writing. Sixty-nine participants were involved in this study to diagnose their main areas of difficulty in writing. The findings of the present study accentuate the urgent need for remedy courses to help these students improve vocabulary skills in ESL writing.

Likewise, Wong et al. (2019) studied the vocabulary level of secondary school students in Malaysia to determine whether students are equipped with sufficient vocabulary proficiency for tertiary-level education. Their study consisted of eighty-five participants from a public school. They used a vocabulary test to measure participants' vocabulary knowledge during a two-period lesson. The results have shown that most of the students have not mastered vocabulary proficiency beyond the 2000-word level. Furthermore, Zheng (2012) investigated the studies and suggestions for English vocabulary teaching and learning. He concluded that students prefer learning vocabulary using traditional methods. Moreover, the result has also indicated that more than 50% of students and 97% of teachers believe that vocabulary plays a very important role in language learning. Thus, he posited that enhanced awareness of cultural differences, metaphorical competence, and learners' autonomy in vocabulary acquisition are the three key elements in vocabulary learning. In accordance with that, he suggested several models for the teaching and learning of vocabulary such as mapping between conceptual domains, acquiring vocabulary on basis of similarity, learning internal relations between language and cognition, learning vocabulary based on embodied experiences, and developing vocabulary through etymology, and teamwork.

2.2 Effect of Blended Learning towards Vocabulary Development

With the current development of ICT, blended learning courses have become quite significant to complement the traditional ways of learning (Tanis, 2020). Many scholars have defined blended learning from various perspectives, but the most widely common and accepted is the combination of both face-to-face (physical environment) and online learning (virtual environment). Horn and Staker (2012) defined blended learning as partly online learning in a formal education program where pupils have some control over the pace, time, and place. Hence, it should be known that blended learning is not merely integrating technology to supplement a learning program, but it is a core part of the course itself (Ghazizadeh & Fatemipour, 2017). Therefore, it is not about using technologies only, but it is about how the technologies are applied to get the best advantages they can offer.

Numerous researchers agreed that blended learning has vast advantages over the traditional mode of learning. Many studies have reported the effectiveness of blended learning in increasing pupils' performance in comparison to traditional face-to-face learning (Rasheed, Kamsin, & Abdullah, 2020; Aldosemani, Shepherd, & Bolliger, 2018). Without a doubt, blended learning certainly benefits both educators and learners. According to Suo and Suo (2018), blended learning allows teachers to access various resources that cater to their pupils' level, knowledge, and interest. At the same time, it also helped to improve teaching, allow collaboration, and improve efficiency. Besides, learners are given the authority and responsibility to set the pace as blended learning allowed pupils to have more flexibility in their own learning (Mulyono et al., 2021).

Many studies have focused on the outcome of vocabulary knowledge after blended learning was implemented. For instance, Katasila and Poonpon (2022) examined the effects of blended learning instruction on the vocabulary knowledge of 16 Thai primary school students. Using a mixed-methods approach, a pre-test and post-test were used to measure students' vocabulary knowledge. Findings revealed that the post-test score was higher than the pre-test score which reflected the positive effect of blended learning on students' vocabulary knowledge. Similarly, Dinara et al. (2016) investigated the effects of the blended learning approach to teaching English vocabulary to ESL learners. The participants underwent a pre-test first and later a post-test after being given adequate training in a blended format. The results showed that pupils' have a higher achievement from learning through blended learning compared to face-to-face instruction.

Besides, Krishnan and Yunus (2019) studied the extent to which low-proficient learners acquire vocabulary based on the global CEFR scales. The focus of their research is to

enhance vocabulary development among low-level learners through blended learning. The results showed an increase in EFL students' vocabulary knowledge hence suggesting that this method can help in improving students' vocabulary knowledge. Likewise, Ebadi and Ghuchi (2018) investigated the effects of a blended learning strategy in enhancing vocabulary on 40 Iranian students picked through random sampling. The samples were divided into the control group, which learned through the face-to-face traditional method, and the experiment group, which learned through the combination of the traditional and asynchronous methods using Memrise Application. The data have shown that there was a significant difference in standard deviation between the pre-test and post-test. This indicated that the experimental group who underwent blended learning had significantly higher scores in terms of vocabulary and showed a positive learning attitude towards the blended learning approach.

In contrast, there were some researchers who yield opposite and insignificant results through the blended learning approach. Alshwiah (2010) investigated the effects of a blended learning strategy in teaching vocabulary on premedical students' achievement, satisfaction, and attitude toward the English language. He employed the experimental method with a sample of 50 students. The result has shown that the blended learning approach did not have any significant difference in students' vocabulary achievement and attitude although the students who underwent blended learning had high satisfaction with the approach. Similarly, a study conducted by Tosun (2015) on the effects of blended learning on EFL students' vocabulary enhancement also received inconsistent results with most of the previous related literature. In her study, blended learning is shown to have no significant difference in developing vocabulary knowledge although students have high satisfaction as the respondents in her study still prefer face-to-face learning. As such, previous studies have revealed different findings related to blended learning on vocabulary enhancement. Thus, there is a need to find out how blended learning can affect vocabulary knowledge in the selected population, which are ESL primary school learners in the Malaysian context.

2.3 Effect of Blended Learning towards Motivation

Motivation certainly plays an important factor in successful ESL learning. Most of the researchers (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Dörnyei, 2020; Meşe & Sevilen, 2021) agreed that motivation is crucial in the process of language acquisition. They asserted that motivation is one of the key elements in the process of second language learning as it brings an enormous effect on the learners' learning outcomes. Motivation in this research is based on Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory. They categorized motivation into two sub-theories which are the

Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) which explains intrinsic motivation and Organismic Integration Theory (OIT) which explains extrinsic motivation. As such, this research mainly looked at CET for the motivation aspect. Based on the CET, there are three key aspects that allow optimal function and growth which are autonomy, competence, and relatedness which consequently will augment the feeling of intrinsic motivation.

Dörnyei (2020) mentioned that ESL learners' motivation plays a significant role in successful language learning. Teachers need to have the knowledge to recognize learners' motivation, thus creating a conducive learning environment to suit their needs. Thus, in the language teaching context, ESL learners who enjoy engaging in the activities are thought to be intrinsically motivated. Through fun and interactive learning using Google Classroom, teachers can create a conducive learning environment that will motivate pupils to participate in the activities.

In this research context, blended learning can promote motivation in pupils by fulfilling the three aspects of CET. First, this theory stated that rewards, feedback, and communication towards feelings of competence can promote motivation. Thus, motivation can be promoted through Google Classroom when teachers give positive feedback towards pupils' tasks in the form of marks and positive comments. The CET also theorizes that the need for autonomy must accompany competence to be self-determined. Autonomy includes choice, acknowledgment of feeling, and opportunity for self-direction. Thus, it is important that the teacher formulate activities that are autonomy supportive. For example, activities given through Google Classroom must be fun and suitable for all levels, as well as promote the desire for a challenge in pupils. In this way, pupils can take charge of their learning and learn at their own pace, therefore promoting their intrinsic motivation.

On top of that, Deci and Ryan (1985) also stated that relatedness is the third important factor in promoting intrinsic motivation. They asserted that pupils who work on an interesting task in the presence of a teacher who ignored them tend to result in low intrinsic motivation. Thus, to cater to this aspect by using Google Classroom, teachers should be caring, act as facilitators, and always be ready to give guidance when pupils are working on the task. Consequently, the feeling of a secure relationship will evidently lead to an increase in intrinsic motivation.

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research adopted the quantitative research design. In this study, the quasi-experimental design was utilized. In the first phase, quantitative data in a form of a pretest-posttest design

was implemented. Later, questionnaires were distributed to the research participants to determine the pupils' motivation. The research participants consisted of two classes of Year 4 pupils (10 years old) from a primary school situated in an urban area in the state of Johor. The total number of research participants was 72 pupils. The participants were chosen through purposive sampling. Both classes had an intermediate level of proficiency based on their previous year's final exam average marks. For the pre-test and post-test, pupils were tested based on the vocabulary list in the Year 4 Standard Document and Assessment (DSKP) and based on the themes and topics in their syllabus to ensure pupils' growth is measured correctly. The test consisted of 15 fill-in-the-blank questions and 5 multiple-choice questions. The words chosen consisted of eight A1-level words, nine A2-level words, and three B1-level words. A pre-test was conducted for both the control and experimental group. The control group then underwent traditional learning whereas the experimental group learned through blended learning. After 6 weeks of learning, a post-test was given to both groups. A similar set of questions were given to increase the validity of the test. To overcome the issue of memorization, it should be noted that the answers were not discussed after the pre-test. In addition, the order of questions is also rotated during the post-test. Pupils' performance was measured based on the comparison of test scores from the pre-test and post-test.

Later, questionnaires were distributed to the pupils. The questionnaire contains 11 items to identify pupils' motivation in implementing blended learning activities in the primary ESL classroom. The items were adapted from the seven sub-scales of Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) based on three key aspects in the Theory of Self-Determination which are autonomy, competence, and motivation. A pilot study has been done to test the reliability of the questionnaire and the results have displayed good internal consistency and construct reliability. The Cronbach Alpha value for the questionnaire is 0.816 which ensured the reliability of the questionnaire. The quantitative data gathered were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25.0 to obtain descriptive statistics.

4.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The Effect of Blended Learning towards Pupils' Vocabulary Development

Table 4.1 below outlines the means and standard deviation from the pre-test whereas Table 4.2 presents the t-test results of the pre-test from the experimental group (blended learning) and control group (traditional learning).

Table 4.1: Means and standard deviation of the pre-test

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental - blended learning	36	5.3889	1.85592
Control - traditional learning	36	4.9444	1.39272

Table 4.2: T-test results of the pre-test between the experiment and control groups

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	2.501	.118	1.149	70	.254	.444
Equal variances not assumed			1.149	64.928	.255	.444

Based on Table 4.1, the mean scores of the experimental group (M=5.39, SD=1.86) and the control group (M=4.94, SD=1.39) were nearly the same respectively. As shown in Table 4.2, since the obtain p (.254) is greater than .05, the test is not significant at the .05 level, which indicated that there was no significant difference between the two groups irrespective to their vocabulary ($t=1.149$, $p > .05$). Therefore, it is evident to conclude that the pupils of both groups are of the same vocabulary level before the study was conducted. This is important to ensure that both groups are homogenous in terms of their vocabulary level so as the ensure the reliability and validity of this research.

On the other hand, Table 4.3 below outlines the means and standard deviation from the post-test of the experimental group (blended learning) and control group (traditional learning). Table 4.4, meanwhile, presents the t-test results of the post-test of both groups.

Table 4.3: Means and standard deviation of the post-test

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental group - blended learning	36	16.222	1.569
Control group - traditional learning	36	11.333	1.589

Table 4.4: T-test results of the pre-test between the experiment and control groups

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	.001	.976	13.148	70	.000	4.889
Equal variances not assumed			13.148	69.993	.000	4.889

The results of the post-test indicated that 36 participants in the experimental group who received blended learning instructions (M = 16.222, SD = 1.569) had a higher mean as compared to the 36 participants in the control group (M = 11.333, SD = 1.589). The t-test results from Table 4.4 also showed that there is significance difference between the two groups ($t=13.148$, $p < .05$) since the obtained p-value (.000) is smaller than the significance level of .05. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it can be inferred that the experimental group who learned through blended learning performed better in terms of vocabulary development compared to the control group who learned through traditional learning.

Based on the test scores obtained from the pre-test and post-test, the data suggested that the proposed blended learning instruction is more effective in developing pupils' vocabulary in comparison to traditional face-to-face learning. According to previous literature, blended learning has been shown to improve pupils' performance in terms of the four main skills which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Ehsanifard, Ghapanchi, & Afsharrad, 2020; AlTameemy, Alrefaee, & Alalwi, 2020). This present study added that blended learning is also able to improve pupils' vocabulary, thus corroborating the statement by previous research (Katasila & Poonpon, 2022; Krishnan & Yunus, 2019; Ebadi & Ghuchi, 2018) who put forward that blended learning poses the advantage of increasing pupils' vocabulary.

According to McHone (2020), pupils learning in a blended learning environment proved to be more successful at transferring their learning in comparison to pupils learning in traditional learning environments. Through blended learning, it allows teachers to integrate various synchronous and asynchronous resources to cater to pupils' levels, knowledge, and interest. Indirectly, it will not only help pupils to memorize but also trigger their interest in learning vocabulary through various interesting and interactive blended learning tasks (Ginaya, Rejeki, & Astuti, 2018). The findings also supported that blended learning instruction is indeed proven to be effective to improve pupils' vocabulary if the activities and tools are chosen in

accordance with their interests and needs. No doubt, pupils are immersed in the usage of technology and consider it part and parcel of their daily lives. Hence, when technology is integrated into their learning process, it provided the opportunity for pupils to learn in a fun and interesting way and indirectly improves their vocabulary learning.

Besides, learners' engagement is an important aspect of blended learning which indirectly help learners to increase their vocabulary knowledge. This is because pupils who enjoy the learning process will put more focus on the learning materials, thus allowing them to retain information. This is consistent with Ehsanifard et al. (2020) who highlighted that pupils' learning will be enhanced when they are given the opportunity to learn digitally which will increase their engagement in blended authentic tasks. Online learning allows for a personalized learning environment without any peer pressure or distractions. Thus, it enabled pupils to learn in their own time and comfort which increased their focus on learning, thus explaining the increase in pupils' vocabulary performance.

Through Google Classroom, the teacher can diversify various web-teaching tools to cover the individual needs of pupils learning at their own comfort, time, and place which will render pupils to pay more attention to the task without any distractions. Besides, the learner-centered activities in Google Classroom offered pupils an individualized learning experience which will promote their learning more effectively. This is supported by various researchers who attributed the flexibility offered by web-learning tools to the increase in learners' performance (Hasan, 2020). Without a doubt, online exercises allow pupils to adjust the pace of their learning and the lesson content to meet their personal learning style (Drysdale et al., 2013). However, it should be pointed out that there are pupils who are not familiar with the usage of technology, thus preferring face-to-face learning in the classroom. In the researcher's class, the pupils are in Year 4 (10 years old) and some of them may not be familiar with the usage of the computer and learning platform. Therefore, before the study is conducted, it is imperative that the teacher give proper guidance on the usage of Google Classroom for pupils to familiarize themselves with the learning platform. Pupils were taught how to open the materials, do the exercises, and view the feedback given.

Additionally, the increase in vocabulary performance is also attributed to the "different" aspects of blended learning activities as compared to the traditional method of learning, which primarily contributed to the fact that it is a combination of both online and traditional learning. Pupils, being curious about new things are forever eager and motivated to learn something new. Thus, it can be said that this motivation is one significant factor that may increase their interest in vocabulary learning and thus increase their overall performance. This finding is in

accordance with Oweis (2018) who stated that the new, unfamiliar element of learning via technology will undoubtedly enhance pupils' interest, focus, and participation in learning. Pupils are keen on the new method of learning which aroused their interest. Thus, it can be summarized that blended learning allowed pupils to have more satisfaction with the learning process, thus leading to higher performance as retention of information is increased.

Despite the positive findings from this research, it is inconsistent with several studies which yielded opposite results (Alshwiah, 2010; Tosun, 2015). From their results, they claimed that blended learning does not have any significant impact on vocabulary development. The possible explanations for the insignificant results include the short duration of the study, lack of motivation, and unsuitable online learning tools. To relate to the current study, it is important to note pupils' age, level of proficiency, and technological awareness when planning blended learning activities. As such, teachers should make sure that the activities and learning tools should not be too complicated or it will lead to pupils feeling demotivated.

4.2 The Effect of Blended Learning towards Pupils' Motivation

In this section, the researcher presented the mean scores and distribution of motivation items of the study. The mean scores of pupils' motivation towards blended learning in vocabulary development are presented in Table 4.5 below. The mean scores of motivation items ranged from 3.89 to 4.61 with an average mean score of 4.32.

Table 4.5: Means of pupils' motivation

Motivation	Mean	Level
1. I enjoy learning English using Google Classroom.	4.61	High
2. The activities in Google Classroom were quite interesting.	4.11	High
3. I did the activities on Google Classroom because I wanted to.	4.28	High
4. I tried very hard to do all the activities in Google Classroom.	3.89	High
5. I believed that the activities can help me to improve my vocabulary.	4.50	High
6. I would be willing to do the activities in Google Classroom again.	4.42	High
7. I am satisfied with my performance at the tasks I am given.	4.33	High
8. I think I did pretty well at the activities compared to my friends.	4.42	High
9. I felt relaxed while doing the activities on Google Classroom.	4.31	High
10. I hope I can interact with my friends more often during the task.	4.14	High
11. I hoped I can interact with my teacher more during the task.	4.47	High
Average	**4.32**	**High**

Table 4.5 above shows the mean scores of 11 motivation items based on the three variables of the CET which are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Thus, it is evident that all 11 motivation items were at a high level, indicating that the research participants have a high level of motivation towards blended learning instruction. Motivation is also closely linked to pupils' academic performance (Dörnyei, 2020). Hence, the findings supported that blended learning instruction can motivate pupils to be actively involved in the learning process. Hence, the result of the study is in line with many motivational studies (Wang, Chung, & Hattingh, 2014; Oweis, 2018) which linked blended learning with highly motivated pupils. Moreover, Sung et al. (2017) also reported that the integration of technology in learning has been associated with an increase in motivation across various subjects. As such, it is apparent from the data that internal motivation will flourish when the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled in accordance with the Cognitive Evaluation Theory. The variables were discussed thoroughly in the following subsections below.

4.2.1 Autonomy

Autonomy level is a pivotal aspect that determines the level of motivation among learners. Based on Table 4.5, Item 1 to Item 4 reflected on pupils' autonomy. From the results, pupils have shown to have high autonomy in their learning which led to a high level of intrinsic motivation. For example, Item 1 which is "*I enjoy learning English using Google Classroom*" have the highest mean score of 4.61. Thus, it showed that pupils have high interest and enjoyment during the blended learning task. This is supported by item 2 which is "*the activities in Google Classroom were quite interesting*" which yielded a high mean score of 4.11. Hence, it implied that pupils would feel motivated when the activities are fun and enjoyable.

Indeed, through the combination of technology and face-to-face learning, pupils experienced a different method of learning compared to the previous traditional face-to-face learning. Evidently, a high autonomy in learning will directly affect pupils' interest as they can learn using the interface at their own pace and level, thus feeling more comfortable and having a sense of enjoyment in learning. Hence, pupils were shown to participate actively as they were thrilled to be exposed to something "new" to them. Moreover, when pupils were given a choice in learning, it will trigger their interest and curiosity, thus promoting their participation and engagement in the tasks. This is consistent with Manwaring et al. (2017) who supported that pupils' engagement and intrinsic motivation will increase when they become the decision-makers in a blended learning environment.

As a matter of fact, pupils are generally more motivated if they can take charge of their learning in a fun and comfortable environment. This is supported by the fact that a relaxed and fun atmosphere offered by blended learning will help learners to be actively involved in the learning procedure in a subconscious manner (Özhan & Kocadere, 2020). Çebi and Güyer (2020) further added that pupils will have higher motivation to meet the learning goals when the technological components are more engaging. Thus, pupils will actively participate in a task if the activities can capture their attention. Therefore, it should be noted that the design of the online unit should be attractive, had clear instructions, and be organized in a way that pupils can understand easily. Indirectly, pupils will be encouraged to learn and involved themselves in the learning content.

In addition, high autonomy level could also be seen in Item 3 with a high mean score of 4.28. It indicated that pupils did the activities not because they were forced to by the teacher. Instead, they showed a high responsibility for their own learning, thus representing a high level of intrinsic motivation. This is in conformation with Vibulphol (2016) who found that pupils have more intrinsic motivation when the teacher gives them more space in contrast to teachers who used more controlling styles of instruction. Tucker, Wycoff, and Green (2017) also added that an individual is acting autonomously when they participate actively in the task solely for pleasure and volition. Furthermore, according to the CET, an individual will be intrinsically motivated in activities that pose intrinsic interest, challenges, and aesthetical value to them. In this case, blended learning which has the appeal of novelty was able to facilitate pupils' satisfaction with the need for autonomy. This is supported by Wichadee (2018) who posited that learning in a blended environment not only helps pupils in terms of their learning capabilities, but it allows them to be more responsible.

Another dominant aspect that differentiates between traditional learning and blended learning is the roles of the teacher and pupils. As seen in Item 4 with a high mean score of 3.89 indicated that pupils try their very best in completing the task on Google Classroom, thus showing the active role that pupils play in learning. In blended learning, the transformation of the role of the teacher from the deliverer of knowledge to a facilitator indirectly allows pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning. This is in line with Tseng and Walsh (2016) who argued that blended learning environments will be most effective when the role of the teacher shifts to a facilitator. This is because online learning through Google Classroom provides pupils with a different learning experience as well as motivates them to take charge of their learning whereas face-to-face learning allows pupils to overcome the problems that they faced during the online learning session.

Likewise, Mofrad (2017) also added that the importance of a 'real' and meaningful blended learning task will motivate pupils to participate actively. Moreover, the integration of an online platform will allow the teacher to create various authentic learning tasks to scaffold the face-to-face session (Tseng & Walsh, 2016). Eventually, it will result in pupils taking more ownership of their learning. The activities in Google Classroom certainly exposed pupils to various authentic materials such as videos, quizzes, articles, and texts which contribute in broadening their vocabulary. Thus, blended learning enables pupils to access more meaningful materials even after school hours. In comparison, face-to-face learning which solely depends on the material given by the teacher may not be sufficient for vocabulary development.

To conclude, a blended learning environment served as a medium for pupils to be more autonomous in their learning which resulted in high intrinsic motivation (Sheninger, 2016). Therefore, in order to produce an autonomous learner, teachers need to make sure that the activities are authentic, interesting, meaningful, and able to provide an environment where pupils feel that they have a choice in learning. On top of that, the role of the teacher as a facilitator should also be emphasized in motivating learners to take to be responsible for their own learning. When all the above aspects were fulfilled, it will certainly lead to an increase in pupils' intrinsic motivation.

4.2.2 Competence

In addition, The CET specifies that an individual must experience their behaviour as self-determined for intrinsic motivation to be evident. Thus, item 5 to item 8 which showed high mean scores indicated that pupils have experienced a sense of self-determination and competence towards blended learning activities. For instance, Item 5 which is *"I believed that the activities could help me to improve my vocabulary"* recorded a high mean score of 4.50 which implied that all the pupils generally agreed that they were able to improve their vocabulary through the blended learning tasks. Therefore, it reflected the value of the blended learning activities, thus indicating a high level of competence.

When pupils have a sense of achievement in their learning, it will motivate them to continue to be engaged in the learning process. The data supported that pupils generally believe that they have to ability to complete the blended learning activities successfully. This is a reassuring phenomenon as pupils' positive attitudes towards the learning outcome may not only help them to develop their vocabulary but at the same time enjoy the language learning process, hence increasing their motivation level. According to Nayir (2017), teachers should identify and develop suitable and meaningful activities which can promote a sense of achievement in

order to boost pupils' intrinsic motivation. Therefore, pupils were keener to continue to take part in the learning process when they were satisfied with their performance and believed that the activities were meaningful towards their vocabulary development. Therefore, it is important that pupils' feeling of competence should be accompanied by feedback in order for learners to continue to take initiative in their work and maintain their effort until the work is completed.

According to Alammary (2019), pupils will have greater enthusiasm in accomplishing their goals when immediate feedback is incorporated. This is because pupils will feel that their work is appreciated when they received comments regarding their work from the teacher. Therefore, the use of online platforms allows students to check the feedback from the teacher upon accessing the platform (Mirriahi, Alonzo, & Fox, 2015). No doubt, pupils can get instructions and feedback too during the face-to-face session, but online feedback can allow the teacher to provide extra materials related to the type of corrections for each pupil. Moreover, another aspect to take note of when giving feedback is that the teacher should make sure that the comments should be encouraging which can be done via online tools in blended mode through online computerized quizzes or online discussion. In this way, it will make pupils feel that they had done well in the task given which will lead to higher motivation and encouragement to be involved in the learning process. Therefore, by recognizing the value of the activity accompanied by positive performance feedback by the teacher, it will lead to an increase in pupils' intrinsic motivation.

4.2.3 Relatedness

Relatedness is another important aspect that relates closely to competence. Item 9 to Item 11 reflected on the relatedness towards blended learning activities. Overall, the high mean scores of Item 9 to Item 11 showed that pupils have a high level of security and relatedness during blended learning activities, which consequently leads to a high level of intrinsic motivation. It is seen in Item 9 which is *"I felt relaxed while doing the activities on Google Classroom*" presented a mean score of 4.31 which indicated that pupils are not pressured when doing the activities. Likewise, Item 10 with a mean score of 4.14 signified that pupils felt a sense of community when they interact with their friends. Similarly, Item 11 with a high mean score of 4.47 indicated that pupils hoped that they can interact more with their teacher during the blended learning tasks. Thus, it signified that pupils felt secure and comfortable when interacting with their friends and teachers. Additionally, with the supportive feedback given by the teacher, it will indirectly contribute to the rise of their motivation level to be engaged in blended learning tasks.

Thus, the findings also supported that the sense of security and relatedness is also an important factor in increasing pupils' motivation. This supported the work of Wang et al. (2019) who argued that relatedness is the strongest contributor to highly motivated learners in comparison to autonomy and competence. They also further added that relatedness is one of the most ignored variables in previous literature applying the SDT. Hence, Sheninger (2016) proposed that the main factor which has the greatest impact on pupils' motivation and achievement is the quality of the teacher to promote a conducive classroom. During both online and face-to-face lessons, teachers that display high enthusiasm in presenting the content and at the same time foster pupils' love of learning will affect pupils' emotional and motivation levels. This is because a classroom climate where pupils can have emotional safety and a sense of happiness when being involved in blended learning tasks thus leading to a higher level of intrinsic motivation.

Without a doubt, pupils will have more desire to learn in a comfortable, caring environment as compared to a tense and unsupportive classroom environment. According to McHone (2020), blended learning experiences developed a stronger sense of community among students compared to only fully online courses or only traditional courses. The collaboration between the teacher and pupils in a learning community meets the social needs of the pupils and in exchange, the feeling of closeness and reverence towards the teacher is increased. Through Google Classroom, pupils can discuss, comment, chat, and interact with their peers and teachers which will make pupils feel closer to one another despite the geographical distance. Thus, it explained the result of Item 9 where pupils felt relaxed when doing the task on Google Classroom.

Aside from that, although blended learning opened a new way for teachers to widen their scope of teaching, there should not be a lack in terms of interactions between the pupils and the teacher. When the teacher is facilitating pupils in a blended learning environment, it is also crucial to foster social and emotional connections. This can be done through supportive feedback, unbiased comments, and constructive view during the facilitation of the blended learning tasks. Teachers should encourage pupils to ask questions, share their views and opinions, and work together with their friends. In this way, pupils will feel that they are socially connected to one another and eager to work in a team with their peers. At the same time, the teacher can provide necessary guidance towards any groups that required extra help. Consequently, it will promote a healthy learning community in the classroom and also virtually.

Empirical data from this research also support the fact that peer acceptance and positive friendships with peers contributed to students' relatedness. As seen in item 10, pupils hope to

interact more with their friends during the tasks, thus reflecting that pupils appreciate the value of learning in a community. The findings are consistent with the work of Ridwan (2020) who reported that team-building activities and cooperative tasks can promote a positive relationship among peers, thus encouraging pupils to learn from each other. For example, in activities such as peer discussions, group work and collaborative tasks which are done during online or face-to-face sessions, pupils who have a higher level of proficiency can guide their friends who have lower proficiency. In this way, a positive relationship is built among the pupils, which leads to a higher level of intrinsic motivation. Moreover, Banditvilai (2016) further added that human interaction provides a feeling of social connectedness which is not possible in virtual communication. As such, teachers must make sure that the face-to-face session not only serves to present content and materials but also to discuss and promote interaction among pupils so that they can work together to form a learning community.

Therefore, it is pivotal that the teacher should try to strike a balance between achieving learning goals and also social relatedness in a blended learning classroom. This can be done by choosing the right technological tools to support collaboration and facilitate learning (Kumar et al., 2021). Thus, the use of blended learning allows teachers to focus on both aspects as Google Classroom can fulfill both learning goals and pupils' need for supervision and interaction. Additionally, it also should be noted that not all pupils favour face-to-face communication but prefer written text to communicate with their teachers and friends. This is because some of them may feel shy to ask questions or to give opinions which is a quite common phenomenon in the Malaysian classroom context. Thus, teachers will have to adjust their schedules to accommodate more frequent interaction with pupils who generally expect more frequent feedback in online environments than in face-to-face environments.

In conclusion, it is apparent that pupils become motivated learners when their need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled. Therefore, teachers are urged to fulfilled pupils' need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness by formulating suitable blended learning activities for pupils that allow pupils to have choices, have sufficient time to learn, receive a personalized assessment, receive positive feedback, and create the opportunities to build a strong learning community in the classroom. Consequently, it will develop intrinsically motivated learners which are able to build supportive relationships among the teacher and peers in the classroom. Likewise, if the three psychological needs are neglected, pupils' intrinsic motivation will decrease significantly.

5.0 CONCLUSION

To sum it up, this research has provided some input on the effect of blended learning on pupils' vocabulary development and motivation towards blended learning in the CEFR context. The use of blended learning can positively enhance pupils' vocabulary as well as influence pupils to be more motivated and autonomous learners. Thus, it highlights the importance and the advantages of the blended learning approach to cater to the needs of current learners in line with 21st-century learning. Therefore, it is the researcher's intention to encourage teachers to implement blended learning instructions in their schools. In light of the findings, future research can investigate the effects of blended learning on other language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. On the other hand, as most of the previous literature focused on the effect of blended learning in the higher learning and secondary school context, more studies can be conducted in primary schools in different geographical areas, ages, and proficiency levels. With the current rate of technological expansion, primary school pupils are more technology-savvy, thus highlighting the importance of integrating technology tools into their learning process.

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