

# Using Technology in Blended Instruction for Language Teaching: Some Pedagogical Thoughts<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

In education, the proper use of technology offers opportunities for learning enhancement across individual differences, and time and space. In the field of foreign/second language education, policy makers, curriculum planners, teachers, and researchers have explored technology integration into classroom-based, blended, and distance programs. In this paper, we discuss the use of technology in blended education as a valuable pedagogical alternative to create learning opportunities in the foreign/second language class. To this end, we revisit the concept of blended education within the field of language learning. Then, we discuss some pedagogical benefits of the integration of technology in this modality. Afterwards, we acknowledge educational conditions which are required for teachers and students to achieve their language learning goals through the integration of technology in blended instruction. Finally, we reflect upon the use of technology during blended instruction as a valuable choice to enhance language education in a post-pandemic era.

## Resumen

El uso adecuado de la tecnología en entornos educativos ofrece oportunidades para mejorar el aprendizaje en diversos momentos y espacios. Diversos actores educativos e investigadores de la enseñanza de segundas lenguas/lenguas extranjeras han explorado la integración de tecnologías en programas presenciales, mixtos y a distancia. Por lo tanto, el presente artículo tiene como objetivo revisar el uso de la tecnología en la educación semipresencial, combinada o mixta y a su vez, destacar esta modalidad como una alternativa pedagógica valiosa para crear de oportunidades de aprendizaje de lenguas. Para tal efecto, se abordan el concepto de educación semipresencial, así como sus beneficios pedagógicos. Posteriormente, se señalan consideraciones prácticas para que la incorporación pedagógica de la tecnología a través de esta modalidad favorezca la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de una segunda lengua/lengua extranjera. Finalmente, se presentan algunas reflexiones sobre el empleo de la tecnología en la educación semipresencial para la enseñanza de segundas lenguas en tiempos de post-pandemia.

## Introduction

The pandemic made teachers, learners, and policy makers realize the importance of integrating technology into daily pedagogical practices to scaffold the learning of foreign/second languages (L2). To this end, Carhill-Poza and Cheng (2020) explain that technology itself does not ensure success in language learning; instead, it is how teachers use technology that determines if learning occurs. Regarding this, Izquierdo et al. (2021) found that second language (L2) teachers from a public university in Mexico were insufficiently prepared to identify appropriate materials, as well as to adequately incorporate information and communications technologies (ICT) during the shift to remote teaching caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The teachers spent extraordinary amounts of time and work in lesson planning and development due to their infrequent experience with ICT, their inadequate technological competence, and the limited institutional support they received. This shows that most L2 teachers still need institutional support on how to adequately manage their course planning, especially when the blended modality is taken into account to create significant opportunities for learners to develop the target language.

In response to the necessity of exploring the use of technology in the language class, this paper delves into the incorporation of blended instruction for L2 language learning and offers some pedagogical suggestions on how to integrate technology in blended instruction for language teaching purposes.

## Defining Blended Instruction

The rapid development of ICT has influenced the way teachers and students utilize digital technologies for language learning. Language classes, in particular, are expected to integrate diverse and new technologies to provide students with rich exposure to the target language, to promote opportunities for peer interaction, to produce the language for meaning-oriented purposes, and to obtain effective feedback and assessment, among other purposes (Chapelle, 2001). According to Wang et al. (2021), a trend that has recently seen renewed interest and application in L2 education is blended instruction. Different from other technology-

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<sup>1</sup> This is a refereed article. Received: 25 November, 2022. Accepted: 20 July, 2023. Published: May, 2025.

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enhanced language learning modalities (Izquierdo et al., 2021), blended education offers classroom instruction which is supplemented by online synchronous and asynchronous language learning sessions or tasks (Blake et al., 2008). Thus, blended learning environments “integrate a wide range of teaching modes, tools, and resources via ICT” (Wang et al., 2021, p. 3). Nevertheless, blended instruction is not merely a mixing of learning and teaching modalities but an educational option where in-person and virtual components complement each other to provide students with an integrated learning experience. This experience should particularly create a supportive, constructive, and participatory learning environment. Yoon and Lee (2010, as cited in Wang et al., 2021) acknowledge that blended instruction incorporates:

*The positive attributes of online and offline education, including instructional modalities, delivery methods, learning tools, etc., in relation to language teaching and learning approaches and methods in order to reinforce the learning process, to bring about the optimal learner achievement, and to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. (p.3)*

Wang et al. (2021) recognize that, during L2 education, blended instruction can “increase learners’ input and output opportunities and enrich their experiences of using the target language” (p. 4). Blended instruction then entails offering purposeful and varied exposure to the target language, such as introducing learners to multiple language varieties, as well as opening up spaces for them to interact with each other and the teacher. Through the careful integration of in-person and online teaching, the blended model can bring diverse L2 learning benefits.

### **Pedagogical Reasons for the Use of Blended Instruction in the L2 Class**

Educational institutions have been gradually reevaluating how they can address diverse students’ needs to develop lifelong learning skills rather than only learning subject matter (Pratt & Kovatcheva, 2018). To this end, stakeholders advocate a learner-centered approach. Tucker (2012) mentions that the student-centered approach is based on the active participation of students in their own learning, the emphasis on comprehensive learning and in-depth understanding, but mainly on the acknowledgement that a one-size-fits-all method does not meet the needs of all students. In L2 education, there are multiple modes of supporting students’ learning needs, but blended instruction may facilitate the adoption of a teaching and learning approach focused on the learners (Carhill-Poza, 2019; Pratt & Kovatcheva, 2018). This type of technology-enhanced instruction aligns with the principles of the learner-centered approach since it provides students with the opportunity to learn the L2 at their own pace, inside and outside of the classroom through diverse ICT materials and resources.

Within the learner-centered approach, one reason for researchers and teachers to explore blended instruction in the L2 class is that it provides learners with flexibility in terms of time, place, tasks, and technological resources (Harker & Koutsantoni, 2005). In other words, during blended instruction, students have the opportunity to complement their classroom experience with the flexibility of L2 tasks that can be accomplished at varied time frames or schedules where they may feel more focused or prepared (Andujar & Nadif, 2020; Tecedor & Perez, 2019). Moreover, the synchronous and asynchronous online components of the modality allow for some degree of student control (Cobo-Rendón et al., 2022; Ramalingam, 2022). Through the online modules, students can choose when, where, and how they interact with technology. Based on the learners’ choices, the teacher then builds classroom lessons which encourage interaction, collaboration, and critical thinking in the target language. To this end, for instance, L2 teachers can take advantage of available technologies, such as mobile-assisted learning, in which the L2 learning experience can be extrapolated from the usual classroom materials to digital resources. Wu (2021) found that L2 students appreciated this combination as they considered that in-classroom language learning was rather limited when working with traditional paper-based instruction. Instead, learners better valued educational alternatives where they could learn “whenever and wherever they are keen to learn using different available resources in a variety of scenarios and situations” (Shadiev et al., 2020, p. 3).

L2 blended lessons must ensure the connection between the online and offline tasks and activities that learners complete in different learning settings (i.e., inside and outside of the classroom) with the target linguistic features that they are expected to acquire (Pratt & Kovatcheva, 2018; Tucker, 2012; Wilson-Armour, 2020). Different authors have offered some instructional recommendations that can help teachers create a blended learning environment where in-person and virtual components complement each other in order to enhance their students’ learning of an L2. These suggestions can be summarized in three different stages:

1. Independent-preparation stage: The L2 teacher provides students with possibilities to select activities outside of the classroom which should pose lower-level cognitive demands, such as remembering

and understanding information presented through videos or interactive presentations (Tecedor & Perez, 2019; Wang et al., 2021).

2. Follow-up in-classroom stage: The L2 teacher complements the previous activities with classroom work that consists of higher-level cognitive processes, including application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of arguments, problem solving, among others (Cobo-Rendón et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2021).
3. Interactional stage: The L2 teacher offers students the possibility to decide how they interact with the target language beyond the classroom or institutional facilities. Students are also allowed and encouraged to bridge inside and outside-the-classroom resources and materials to attain the aims and objectives of the language class (Sauro & Sandmark, 2019). Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) and fanfiction collaborative writing are examples of this type of learning experience (Challob et al., 2016; Sauro & Sandmark, 2019; Shadiev et al., 2020; Wu, 2021).

As students move through these stages, they use the spaces and resources available online and in the classroom as a means to learn from each other, cooperate, and help each other (Dziuban et al., 2018). Also, during these phases, "students regularly engage with their peers in collaborative inquiry-based activities and assignments" (Tucker, 2012, p. 31). In this regard, Sauro and Sundmark (2019) provide evidence of how L2 Swedish university students engage in-class and out-of-class digital and language practices through the use of fanfiction collaborative writing tasks. By allowing learners to select a writing tool and site to publish their blogs, they were able to maximize the affordances of online platforms, such as embedding multimedia to illustrate parts of the fanfiction. Moreover, students with different proficiency levels and out-of-class experiences with online communities supported each other in the writing of stories. These stories were then shared and discussed online and in the classroom. In this way, language learning opportunities occurred inside and outside the classroom.

There is some evidence that when teachers take into account the aforementioned stages for their classes, they are able to promote student-to-student interactions both in and out of class through a range of technological tools and interactive activities (Pratt & Kovatcheva, 2018). According to Tucker (2012), students in blended courses play an active role during online and in-person learning by solving problems, formulating questions, participating in discussions, explaining arguments, debating ideas, or brainstorming. Regarding these activities, Carhill-Poza (2019) found that teachers from an urban high school in the United States observed that blended instruction allowed English language learners to invest in their own learning, make choices based on their interests, and assess their progress. Additionally, making projects and solving problems allowed students to work at their own pace and encouraged them to have linguistically rich interactions with peers and teachers. These classroom practices led the teachers to notice their significant role in monitoring engagement and understanding during independent and collaborative work.

It should be noted though that learners' acceptance and readiness for online learning play a significant role in designing the stages of blended instruction, the organization of the lessons, and the selection of resources. In a quantitative survey of 181 ELT university students in Iran, Rafiee and Abbasian-Naghneh (2019) found that perceived ease of use, motivation, and self-efficacy have a significant effect on the learners' acceptance and readiness for technology-enhanced L2 learning. Moreover, the students' perceived enjoyment when interacting with digital technologies had no direct influence on their acceptance of online learning. However, designing technology-enhanced lessons for a blended course should go beyond the impression that students would enjoy them; thus, teachers need to ensure that across all the stages through the use of the wide array of materials, the students are exposed to and develop different areas of the L2.

### **Benefits of Blended Instruction for Second Language Acquisition**

From a L2 acquisition perspective, one argument for the integration of technology in language education is that, as learners use technology, they can encounter multiple opportunities for language and cognitive development. In the case of blended instruction, technology-enhanced tasks can provide learners with extensive exposure to varied sources of input (i.e., video, audio, text, and/or images) which scaffold L2 acquisition and complement classroom input (Chappelle, 2001; Ramalingam, 2022). Shadiev et al.'s (2020) study illustrates how an outside-of-the-classroom task prompted vocabulary acquisition among 40 primary level students of English as a foreign language. The students were asked to use an Android-system device to take pictures of objects in the supermarket, while the image-to-text recognition system displayed the objects' written equivalent in English. During this task, the young learners also took digital notes describing their shopping experiences. By analyzing the results of the pre-tests, post-tests, and delayed post-tests,

the researchers found that the learners in the experimental group outperformed their counterparts on these tests since they had expanded their vocabulary and improved spelling.

While these findings point to vocabulary acquisition, blended instruction can also foster students' production of the target language, especially when digital technologies support the speaking objectives of L2 students. Hsu (2016) found that voice blogs facilitated the development of syntactic complexity in L2 speaking since the voice recording platform allowed learners to search for relevant information online, organize their discourse, and rehearse their speech before recording. The students were able to restructure and expand their L2 knowledge as they reviewed and elaborated on their notes. In order to follow up on activities that facilitate language production, teachers should be aware that L2 learners might self-mute during speaking tasks because they are not confident enough when they misunderstand directions or are not familiar with particular software (Wilson-Armour, 2020). Teachers can address this lack of confidence and skills through the blended model by offering their students with opportunities for multi-turn interactions through the L2 between peers and with the teacher and by extending the spaces in which students can speak and negotiate meaning from the classroom to online environments (Carhill-Poza & Chen, 2020).

Additionally, blended instruction allows teachers to engage learners in oral production activities which are designed around the input they receive online and in the classroom. Evidence for this pedagogical idea comes from the work of Wang et al. (2019) who promoted L2 learners' language use in 'real-life' scenarios through project-based tasks that combined online learning and in-class activities. For example, in a *Mock Open Ceremony*, students who were assigned different roles (e.g., president, freshman, parent, alumnus, and senior) collaborated to create a speech based on the online input and presented it in the classroom. Another project required each group of students to design a job vacancy to compete for the *Best Job in the World*. Then, the students performed a role-play in which the winning team acted as employers while the rest of the group applied for the job. The researchers found that this type of oral production task fostered students' critical thinking and integrated communicative skills (e.g., solving problems and completing a project through L2). Based on their research findings, Wang, et al. (2019) advocate for the integration of online and classroom-based teaching and learning modalities since the blended model can enhance students' linguistic and pragmatic knowledge for authentic communicative purposes.

As for writing, Challob et al. (2016) illustrate how teachers can create collaborative writing tasks that bridge outside with inside-of-the-school L2 production in order to provide students with ample opportunities to practice writing and gain valuable knowledge from their peers. In their study at an international school in Malaysia, these authors found that EFL students worked collaboratively to write an essay in the classroom as well as online via the class blog and *Viber* mobile app. The students were able to plan and organize their ideas during the independent preparation stage, and thus, they edited their writing in-class time. This allowed learners to work on writing their essays according to their learning habits and abilities. By writing collaboratively in online and classroom settings, the students experienced a gradual improvement in different aspects of writing, such as grammar, vocabulary acquisition, mechanics of essay writing, as well as the organization of ideas and paragraphs. Overall, blended instruction enabled the students to benefit from their peers' linguistic skills and knowledge and increased the quality of their L2 production (Challob et al., 2016).

There is also evidence that language teachers can use blended instruction in order to help their learners improve their reading ability. For instance, in Hong Kong, Liu et al. (2016) used digital storytelling tasks to scaffold primary school learners' reading development. The tasks were designed for the young learners to work collaboratively in reading, creating, and sharing multimedia stories utilizing an application connected to an online platform. In order for the students to complete the reading task, they worked in pairs and were provided with iPads containing digital stories which included texts and oral narrations. The students then worked collaboratively to re-tell each story they read, add drawings, and record oral narrations. Outside the classroom, the students worked on re-telling their classmates their stories via an online platform. Then, the learners read their peers' stories and wrote comments. Afterwards, inside the classroom, the teacher invited the students to show their work and acknowledged their achievements. Pre- and post-test results revealed an increase in the learners' reading scores and reading fluency (Liu et al., 2016).

In addition to language development itself, teachers can consider blended education to enhance their L2 learners' higher-order thinking skills, such as problem-solving and critical thinking (Carhill-Poza, 2019; Ramalingam, 2022; Tecedor & Perez, 2019; Wang et al., 2019). Research shows that blended education with self-paced preparatory tasks reduces the learners' cognitive load and supports their working memory

capacity (Tecedor & Perez, 2019; Wang et al., 2019). In blended-education tasks, the use of multi-modal materials (i.e., texts, audios, and videos) offers learners opportunities for manageable work, as they can revise the content, correct exercises, and plan activities (Ramalingam, 2022; Tecedor & Perez, 2019). For instance, Roche and Verma's (2013) survey results of a blended course in Legal English at a Mexican university revealed that when students have unlimited attempts to complete online activities, they participate more actively in the classroom because they have sufficient time to draw on their cognitive resources. However, for teachers to benefit from blended education, three issues deserve consideration: access/use of technology, training, and students' individual differences.

### **Pedagogical Challenges in Technology Access and Use**

Educational stakeholders, including school leaders, teachers, and students, must be aware that having access to technology does not mean it will be used effectively for educational purposes (Lozano & Izquierdo, 2019). Chapelle (2001) argues that "the question of who computes and how successfully they do so is clearly tied to communicative language ability as it is realized through electronic literacy" (p. 93). This suggests that, even if teachers and learners have access to some types of technologies, they may not actually know how to use them for language education. Along these lines, various authors point out that teachers and students who possess hardware (e.g., computers, tablets, smartphones, projectors, etc.) and software (e.g., learning management systems, massive online open courses, and language learning apps) must develop digital and cognitive abilities to take advantage from them for language learning (Chapelle, 2001; Carhill-Poza & Chen, 2020; Hubbard, 2011). Moreover, as previously explained, blended education brings about the challenge of combining different types of resources through different stages to achieve different aims throughout a lesson.

Thereafter, to implement blended instruction in their educational settings, teachers require training and guidance on how to adequately use their own materials, their classrooms' resources, and school facilities. Izquierdo et al. (2017) indicate that, in Mexican public schools, access to technologies and teacher education are not the only limitations to incorporating ICT into the language class. The authors highlight that public teachers need to deal with overwhelming protocols, insufficient technical support, and fear of using technological resources. Thus, it is important to emphasize that teachers and students should be trained on maximizing the use of the technology available to them and overcoming administrative, infrastructure, and logistic challenges.

### **The Need for Training on Blended Instruction**

The effective implementation of blended instruction for L2 education calls for school leaders to ensure that teachers and learners develop adequate technological, pedagogical, and learning skills that foster L2 acquisition. Thus, it is suitable that, before any instructional adjustment, school leaders consider teachers' pedagogical aptitudes and attitudes towards technology as well as encourage them to adapt the blended modality (Comas-Quinn, 2011). As decision-makers, they are in charge of applying institutional interventions which guide the educational community in constructing an adapted and situated version of the blended model that corresponds to each school's context. For the effective functioning of the blended model, various authors recommend that institutional guidelines ensure that:

1. Teachers are able as well as encouraged to shape materials and learning environments to promote students' L2 learning (Cobo-Rendón et al., 2022; Wilson-Armour, 2020).
2. The teaching staff is offered work-based and continuous specialized training on technology-enhanced instruction (Comas-Quinn, 2011; Izquierdo et al, 2021; Mendieta-Aguilar, 2012).
3. Procedures are established to monitor the impact of the training and support on students' and teachers' performance (Cobo-Rendón et al., 2022; Tecedor and Perez, 2019).

On the teachers' side, the transition from exclusively classroom-based language instruction to a combination of different teaching models with digital technologies requires the development of their pedagogical skills as well as their abilities to use ICT. For this reason, teacher training must adequately support teachers to accept and transition into blended instruction with ICT. The adaptation to roles as facilitators, producers of media resources, or even online tutors compels teachers to acquire suitable ICT skills and expand their pedagogical knowledge (Mendieta-Aguilar, 2012). Regarding this, Cobo-Rendón et al. (2022) suggest three main training modules on blended instruction: (1) effective integration of technology, (2) appropriate use of online materials, and (3) functional approaches to self-directed ICT use. Izquierdo et al. (2021) emphasize that training in digital abilities and pedagogy should enable teachers to make informed decisions on materials

selection and lesson planning. Therefore, school leaders and teachers themselves must acknowledge that training courses could influence their teaching practices which may have an impact on their students' L2 learning.

On the learners' side, students may disapprove of the changes in the structure of a course (i.e., from exclusive classroom-based to blended instruction) due to their expectations and attitudes towards L2 teaching and learning as well as ICT integration into the L2 class (Mendieta-Aguilar, 2012; Rafiee & Abbasian-Naghneh, 2021). Nonetheless, Tecedor and Perez (2019) suggest that providing suitable and continuous training to students can help them come to terms with the blended modality which differs from their most usual experiences in the L2 class. The learners' abilities to work with ICT are perhaps not in question if they are digital natives, but they would still need guidance to connect what they do with different technologies for specific L2 learning objectives (Dauzón & Izquierdo, 2020). Hence, language teachers need to lead learners to understand that:

*The primary purpose of a computer reading or listening lesson is not to answer the comprehension questions correctly but rather to engage with the language and content to improve their reading or listening proficiency – comprehension questions are just the most visible part of that process (Hubbard, 2011, p. 429).*

Learner training should then entail more than improving digital abilities; students should invest in developing academic skills that support their own and their institutions' L2 learning objectives. Tecedor and Perez (2019) examined students' attitudes towards blended Spanish courses at three large public universities in the U.S. From this study, the researchers learned that students that experience the blended modality need to develop appropriate abilities for independent study work. They also put forward some recommendations to design learner training initiatives which support students throughout a blended course. These suggestions include the following:

1. Training must provide learners with strategies to improve their studying techniques, such as note-taking and question formation from videos and readings.
2. Learner training should address metalinguistic knowledge, especially for complex grammar structures which may not be easy to understand from video tutorials (Tecedor & Perez, 2019).

During the implementation of blended education, teachers should be aware that L2 students may rapidly find that this modality requires appropriate self-study skills to adequately manage their own learning (Blake et al., 2008). Blended instruction requires L2 learners to learn and/or improve self-regulation skills to work independently, manage their time for online tasks and classroom activities, and properly use platforms and resources (Cobo-Rendón et al., 2022; Comas-Quinn, 2011). According to Huang (2019), students who have self-regulation skills find personal motives and specific abilities to complete, manage, and assess practices which orient them to achieving specific learning goals. During a blended course, L2 learners also need monitoring and guidance from their teachers in setting their goals, keeping themselves motivated, regulating their emotions, and managing their learning and self-evaluation (Mendieta-Aguilar, 2012). Based upon the above recommendations, language teachers should help their students understand how blended instruction can assist them in the development of higher forms of cognitive work during classroom activities. Nonetheless, this requires that teachers take into account the individual differences of their learners.

### **Considering Learner Individual Differences during L2 Blended Education**

Students' personal characteristics and learning abilities are significant variables that should be considered when incorporating diverse teaching modalities with ICT in the language class (Carhill-Poza & Chen, 2020). Learners' success in mastering the target language during a course could be considerably attributed to commitment to their own L2 learning rather than only the technological means of exposure and instruction (Harker & Koutsantoni, 2005). Research suggests that implementing a blended modality for language instruction is optimal for students who are self-motivated since they tend to be more committed and efficient (Blake et al., 2008). When given the option, L2 students may select a blended course relying on false expectations of less class time and duties. Therefore, teachers need to consider the level of cognitive maturity that blended instruction requires, especially for young learners in the public education system. Most of these young learners may not have developed a suitable level of cognitive maturity to tackle all the stages of blended instruction; hence, L2 teachers of initial levels of education should pay attention to their students' individual differences and integral learning abilities (Dauzón & Izquierdo, 2020).

It is also important that teachers consider variability among their learners. Therefore, they should pay attention to their students' skills, capabilities, and personal attributes while organizing their blended lessons.

For instance, Andujar and Nadif's (2020) design of an inclusive blended approach included a series of videos with captions and sign language which students watched via *Edpuzzle* prior to the classroom tasks. During class time, the Silent Way<sup>4</sup> and Task-Based Learning methods served to support the learners with special needs who struggled to understand the content and complete the activities. For students with hearing loss, the Silent Way, together with visual explanations, made input comprehensible. The analysis of in-depth interviews with the students revealed that an inclusive blended model favors the use of digital technologies which can support students with varied abilities (Andujar & Nadif, 2020). Blended education then opens possibilities for tailoring instruction to a wide range of students with differing abilities to achieve their and their institution's academic goals. For instance, diverse computer software and apps, such as *Microsoft Word*, *G Suit for Education*, *Microsoft Teams*, and *Zoom*, have built-in assistance for listening, reading, and writing in which L2 learners can have recourse.

## Conclusion

For the last two decades, studies in the field of foreign/second language education have made systematic efforts to explore the efficacy of technologies compared with non-technological or paper-based teaching methods (Huang, 2019; Mendieta-Aguilar 2012; Rafiee & Abbasian-Naghneh, 2021; Ramalingam, et al., 2022; Zhang & Zhu, 2020). Empirical evidence on the use of ICT, such as computers, mobile devices, applications, and online environments, substantiates their usefulness in L2 education (Zhang & Zhu, 2020). Dziuban et al. (2018) acknowledge that recent overriding interest in different forms of technology-based instruction has paved the way to advancement in this endeavor. This interest in integrating innovative modes of language instruction reveals a growing commitment to providing learners with diverse educational alternatives for L2 learning. Undoubtedly, the shift from in-person classes to remote instruction during the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the integration of ICT inside and outside of the school setting (Izquierdo et al., 2021).

Given all this technological development, teachers cannot underestimate or disregard what can be done differently in the classroom. The combination of technology and different teaching modalities constitutes a promising educational approach, which offers varied opportunities for language learning across time and space (Wang et al., 2021). This approach could include different types of technological resources during in-person, online or internet-based (often used synonymously with distance education), and flipped instruction<sup>5</sup>, among others (Harker & Koutsantoni, 2005; Tecedor & Perez, 2019; Wilson-Armour, 2020). Across these instructional modalities, the blended model has emerged as an educational option that deserves teacher attention, as it can provide advantages of both in-person and online teaching and learning (Huang, 2019). Hence, blended education depicts a variety of teaching "where the online component becomes a natural extension of traditional classroom learning" (Zhang & Zhu, 2020, p. 65).

Even though the blended modality comes with various benefits, teachers need to make conscious and critical decisions for its effective implementation. According to Pratt and Kovatcheva (2018), careful consideration should be given to a) the physical and online environments, b) the context for teaching and learning, c) the appropriate pedagogical approach, and d) the technology that is available inside and outside of the schools. Nevertheless, language teachers should keep in mind that using ICT for students to complete multiple-choice quizzes or grammar exercises outside of the classroom, which are then discussed in the classroom, does not adequately represent blended education.

In a post-pandemic era, educational institutions need to consider that blended instruction as well as technology-enhanced lessons will be implemented increasingly as technologies advance, and as they become available to all teachers and students. If teachers are interested in the transition to a blended modality for L2 teaching and learning, they must ensure that learning drives the use of technology. In this transition, teachers need to see themselves as facilitators that guide and help students with their L2 learning

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<sup>4</sup>The Silent Way is a teaching method not restricted to language teaching, developed by Caleb Gattegno. In this method, the teacher utilizes colored wooden or plastic rods and word charts to teach vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and spelling. The instructor provides a single demonstration—repetitive practice is avoided—of a word or structure or points to the chart without speaking, and then, the students are expected to recall—within periods of silence, imitate, and use the information independently (Celce-Murcia, 2013).

<sup>5</sup>In this article, the term flipped instruction refers to a form of student-centered blended instruction in which students are given extending learning opportunities outside the classroom—typically before a lesson—while class time is focused on interaction and production of the target language (Carhill-Poza, 2019).

through carefully planned technology-enhanced L2 lessons which stimulate students' cognitive and linguistic skills in and out of the classroom (Huang, 2019). Teachers should then invest time and draw on specialized techno-pedagogical abilities when they take on roles as producers of media resources, managers of virtual learning systems, or online tutors (Mendieta-Aguilar, 2012). These abilities are key to the appropriate design of instructional tasks, selection of materials, use of learning management systems, and implementation of assessment methods. Consequently, in teacher education programs, teachers need to learn about strategies which merge technological tools and pedagogical principles.

From a language acquisition viewpoint, it is essential that teachers understand that the purpose of the blended modality is not adding ICT to the L2 class, but expanding students' exposure to input and output production and opening spaces for meaningful interaction among students and with the teacher. Language teachers need to be committed to the provision of appropriate options for L2 learning as well as different modes of access to language instruction. To this end, this paper has outlined what researchers have found about how to effectively incorporate technology within the blended modality. We have also provided some recommendations to implement blended instruction to enhance L2 learning efficacy. These suggestions include, for instance, using audio-video materials and mobile applications to improve students' reading and speaking skills, and engaging learners in collaborative tasks via online platforms to foster their writing abilities and critical thinking. Based on our experience as language teachers, we advise those L2 teachers interested in new avenues of instruction to reflect carefully upon the use of the blended modality in their courses since blended instruction cannot be taken as a one-size-fits-all solution to wider educational issues.

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