PROMOTING BLENDED LEARNING
AS AN ALTERNATIVE WAY TO TEACH ENGLISH:
FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

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Abstract

Recently ICT has important role in learning since modern classroom is changing. It is to ease the learning process for the students studying, in town either in the urban area. One of those learning processes is learning English. The role of ICT is implemented in some innovated learning approaches, and one of those is blended learning. Blended learning is the combination between the traditional teaching approaches by employing face-to-face technique and the online teaching approach by employing some provided online platforms. This study is aimed at promoting the blended learning as one of innovated and recommended teaching ways with the advantages and how to implement this learning model for being used to teach English in some probable areas. This study is theoretical based research. In conclusion, this learning approach, blended learning, can be considered as one of innovated teaching ways to teach English since it offers new experience for the students, improving the students' activeness, improving exam performance, tightening the engagement and interaction, and others.

Keywords: blended learning, promoting, teach English

Introduction

In the era of internalization and globalization, English has become one of universal communication tools in each fields. One of them is in educational field, especially in English learning and teaching process. Methods for promoting and enhancing the effectiveness of English learning and teaching process change time by time. Advances in technology have changed the way that many professional educators regard course delivery. Technology has pervaded the fields of education.

In recent years, the term "e-learning" has been known by the people where it uses technology as one of methods for teaching English. The newer one beside e-learning for succeeding English teaching and learning process is blended learning. Blended learning has become a buzzword in many educational environments in recent years, usually referring to courses that employ a mix of face-to-face and online learning (Bonk & Graham, 2012). Blended learning can be defined as a method, or the environment program created by the school offered for the students. Blended learning contexts that integrate physical and virtual components are seen as critical strategies for higher education institutions (Cobcroft, Towers, Smith & Burns, 2006).

The aim of this paper is to promote blended learning for teaching and learning English by providing the advantages either over face-to-face or the use of ICT and how to implement this methods.

The Case of Blended Learning

The beginning of the existence of blended-learning was prompted by the recognition that: the uptake and effectiveness of current learning delivery systems may be limited by their rigidity, the broad geographic spread and commitments of learners may necessitate greater access and flexibility, and blended learning may offer a more flexible and responsive way to learn and work (Harris *et al*, 2009). Blended learning strategies vary according to the discipline, the year level, student characteristics and learning outcomes, and have a student-

centred apporach to the learning design (Saliba *et al*, 2013).

Blended learning is a practical framework that can be used to encapsulate a range of effective approaches to learning and teaching. It encourages the use of contemporary technologies to enhance learning, and the development of flexible approaches to course design to enhance students engagement (Queensland University of Technology, 2011). The use of two different approaches can ease and support a variety of formal and informal learning processes. It can be as simple as combining two different learning methods (reading a book before going to a classroom) or as complex as obtaining a degree via a longer-term distance education program (Woodall, 2012). The use of technology also can support students' learning autonomy since the students that are in a hard or isolated area. It does not decrease the essence of learning process by giving the learning materials via online tutor offered by the holders. So & Brush (2008) claimed that blended learning is effective in facilitating online collaborative learning.

The Goal of Blended Learning
As the advances of Internet and information, technologies in teaching and learning process. Both online and e-learning activities have continued to expand with alternatives to traditional face-to-face teaching and learning. Computer simulations incorporating synchronous chat functions can also motivate language learners who would otherwise be intimidated by face-to-face interactions to more actively participate (Ranalli, 2008, p. Freiermuth, 2002). Further, blended learning recognizes the benefits of delivering some training and assessment online but also usesother modes to make up a complete training program which can improve learning outcomes and/or save costs (Banados, 2006). Blended learning is also to enhance the teaching and learning experiences for students and teachers by enabling them to engage in ways that would

not normally be available or effective in their usual environment, whether it is primarily face-to-face or distance mode (Griffith University, 2010).

By conducting blended learning, students will choose the preference for learning methods combined with the online one, students also need to communicate effectively in English where they can obtain from the online tutor/platforms provided by the program holder, and students need to reach two goals; learning English and mastering ICT for their future life.

Advantages of Blended Learning
The use of blended learning approach offers some advantages as mentioned by Singh and Reed (2001). They identified four advantages, among others are improved learning effectiveness, extending the reach, optimising the development cost and time, and optimising business results (reduces travel costs and learning objectives are obtained quicker). In addition, Sharma and Barrett (2007) defines cost saving as the emphasis on the 'convenience' of blended learning courses as students can study what they want, at the speed they want.

While, Graham (2004, p. 7) and Graham *et al*, as quoted in Stracke (2007, p. 59), have condensed these lists down to three main reasons in higher education which are: improved pedagogy, increased access/flexibility, and increased cost effectiveness.

Models of Implementation
The majority of blended-learning programs resemble one of five models as stated by Horn and Staker (2014), among others are:
1. Flex: An online platform delivers most curricula. The teacher provides support on an as-needed basis.
2. Station Rotation: A course in which students rotate on a fixed schedule or at the teacher's discretion between learning modalities, at least one of which is online learning. Other modalities might include activities such as small-group or full-class instruction, group projects,

individual tutoring, and pencil-and-paper assignments.

3. Enriched Virtual: A course in which students have required face-to-face learning sessions with their teacher of record and then are free to complete their remaining coursework remotely from the face-to-face teacher.

4. Self-Blend: Provides students with opportunities to take online courses that supplement in-person courses. Online learning is remote, and traditional learning is in a brick-and –mortar school.

5. A La Carte: A course that a student takes entirely online to accompany other experiences that the student is having at a brick-and-mortar school or learning center. The teacher of record for the A La Carte course is the online teacher.

Designing Blended Learning

There are four identified principles for designing blended learning in education field as mentioned in *Issues in Digital Technology in Education: Blended Learning* (Wikibooks, 2009), among others are:
- A thoughtful integration to face-to-face and fully online instructional components.
- Innovative use of technology.
- Re-thinking the way we teach.
- Sustained assessment and evaluation of blended learning.

While according to Bonk and Graham (2006), blended learning should be approached as a fundamental redesign of the instructional model with the following characteristics:
- A shift from teacher-centered instruction in which students become active and interactive learners (this shift should apply to the entire course, including face-to-face contact sessions).
- Increases in interaction between student-teacher, student-student, student-content, and student-outside resources.

- Integrated formative and summative assessment mechanisms for students and teachers.

Likewise, Barnum & Paarmann (2002) put forth our strategies to be encompassed in a blended learning model. These strategies are as follows:
- Web-based delivery, which promotes independent and self-reliance in learning;
- Face-to-face processing, in which human interaction is necessary to build a deeper understanding;
- Creation of deliverables, expecting learners to create products, and;
- Collaborative extension of learning – groups meet once a month to share and build upon.

The strategies introduced by Barnum & Paarmann above emphasize on the learners' autonomy, encourage the learners to be productive, stimulate the learners to be collaborative in order to help each other.

Blended Learning Format

Blended learning can be conducted during the semester with weekly lecture, online tutorial times, weekly e-mail reports and weekly assignments for traditional format. Miyazoe and Anderson (2009) conducted this blended learning for 15 meetings where each lasting for 90 minutes. They used forums, blogs and wikis as platforms for implementing blended learning which emphasize on the students' writing skill. While in Banados' research (2006), she made four modules implemented in the *UdeC English Online* web platform where runs over a 15-week term, including 1 week at the beginning of the term for system familiarization sessions and for diagnostic evaluation and 1 week at the end of the term for final assessment. Each module contains about 100 hours of interactive language learning tasks. Some examples of programs/applications for online format are such as *Wordsmith Tools*

(http://www.lexically.net/wordsmith/) (based on Montero's (2007) research), *textalyser* (http://textalyser.net/) (based on Kol and Schcolnik's (2008) research), PBwiki (http://pbworks.com/) (based on Coniam's (2008) research), Tikiwiki (http://info.tikiwiki.org/tiki-index.php) (based on Chen et al's (2005) research), and others. In the online format, the role of teacher/online tutor is to deliver learning material, give feedback and give online assessment. While for offline format/face-to-face, teacher can be a students' consultant for the difficulty they find, give feedback directly, and it is conducted less than the online one. Some usual assignments can be given to the students with employing them to collaborate with the students and help each other to improve their social interaction.

Assessment Consideration

The way in which teachers assess the students is as follows:

- Reflection is needed for both of teachers and students.
- Teachers are able to assess not only the traditional literacy skills (e.g. reading and writing) but also in activities such as story creation or students' groupwork and creativity.
- Monitoring using ICT is often instantaneous and timely, offering immediate opportunities for remedial action.
- Assessment criteria must be transparent to the students where it raises the expectations in performances.
- Self and peer assessment can help to develop a sense of community amongst students, and forge a culture of collaborative learning. Students naturally compare their work eith others; peer assessment processes can build on this to provide a supportive and open environment which is monitored and grounded in established criteria and standards.

- The public nature of students' work and having an authentic audience (through blogging, web pages, online chat, etc.) made students more aware of social etiquette, the need to present better products and encouraged healthy competition between students raising academic achievement.

Implementation

Some of preparations are the necessity to implement blended learning, they are as follows:

1. Planning

The first step to implement blended learning is to consider the situations consisting of curriculum used and how course design guidelines. Next, the aims of conducting the course and learning objective need to be figured out and the last. Further, what must consider are course-level and who our students are, such as year of study (first year students or later year students, class numbers (large or small class), students type (international, low socio-economic background, students with diabilities, mature age students, or students with work/family commitments?

2. Designing and developing

In this step, we must consider course learning objectives, decide the purposeful activities, timing of tutorial and content of course must be connected to the lecture/module/topic progression. Students' resources, assessment and management are also considered in developing this course.

3. Implementing

In implementing this blended learning, we must consider designing formal course including purpose, expectation (by using consistent and trasparent communication to help students understand the blended learning process), guidelines, community (to influence atudents' motivation and engagement), supporting and

sustaining students learning, and evaluation (teacher, self or peer evaluation).

Conclusion

This paper reported the investigation of blended learning theory to be implemented in the concrete one. Blended learning is defined as the combination of learning approach between traditional where employing face-to-face technique and online where employing some platforms provided. The goal of blended learning implementation is to make students engage with the technology while learning English. In designing and implementing this approach, teachers must consider all aspects from the point of view of teacher, students, and other elements.

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