

Advantages and Disadvantages of Blended Learning Approach in Elt Course

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Annotation: This article is devoted to the advantages and disadvantages of blended learning in ELT course. In addition, the implementation of this method in the development of teaching system.

Key words: online, offline, access, experience, technique, method, approach, program, teaching loads, educational system.

Blended learning integrates online and offline learning activities and resources to reduce in-class seat time for students in a face-to-face environment which make it a tremendous advantage for a university. It can help the university management to enhance under-enrolled programs, complete faculty teaching loads, and improve cost effectiveness. Blended learning facilitates students with a unique flexible learning experience, because they can access and engage with their educational program from anywhere and at any time. The participants did not need to be on the campus to actively engage in their studies. Following is the list of advantages of using blended learning technique in an education system.

- Blended learning environment provides many resources of learning to learner which enhanced learner's confidence and competency.
- Quick feedback to learner which will help them in their learning process.
- Remove the constraints of traditional training and learners decide where and when they do their training
- Learners more responsible for their training and help them be self-motivated.
- Blended learning provide Collaborative activities among teacher and students through interactive session.
- Provide access to everyone who needs training by providing it in different ways³.

The blended learning style course based on our proposed model has the following four characteristics:

1. Students can study basic course in Face-to-Face (F2F) lecture at university.
2. Students can implement the practical part of lecture in the lab.
3. Instructor can give lecture and additional learning contents via e-Learning environment.
4. The practical part of the lecture can be simulated and available via e-Learning environment.

In this blended based course, the instructor can also check whether students prepare and review by e-Learning, self-tests, simulators and the result of self-tests⁴. Blended instruction is *more effective* than purely face-to-face or purely online classes. BL methods can also *result in high levels of student*

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⁴ Ally, M.. *Foundations of educational theory for online learning*. In T. Anderson & F. Elloumi (Eds.), *Theory and practice of online learning*. Athabasca, Canada: Creative Commons: Athabasca University, 2004



achievement more effective than face-to-face learning. By using a combination of digital instruction and one-on-one face time, *students can work on their own with new concepts* which frees teachers up to circulate and support individual students who may need individualized attention. Rather than playing to the lowest common denominator – as they would in a traditional classroom – *teachers can now streamline their instruction to help all students reach their full potential*. BL *facilitates a simultaneous independent and collaborative learning experience* for university students. The use of information and communication technologies has been found to *improve student attitudes towards learning*. By incorporating IT into class projects, *communication between lecturers and part-time students has improved*, and students were able to better evaluate their understanding of course material via the use of computer-based qualitative and quantitative assessment modules. Blended Learning also has the potential to *reduce educational expenses, and lower costs* by putting classrooms in the online space and it essentially replaces pricey textbooks with electronic devices. BL *gives the opportunity for data collection and customization of instruction and assessment* as two major benefits of this approach. It includes software that automatically collects student data and measures academic progress, providing teachers, students and parents detailed students' data (e.g. Stadium in Estonia). Often, tests are automatically scored, providing instantaneous feedback. Student logins and work times are also measured to ensure accountability. Schools with BL programs may also choose to *reallocate resources to boost student achievement outcomes*. Students with special talents or interests outside of the available curricula use educational technology to *advance their skills or exceed grade restrictions*. BL allows for *personalized education*, replacing the model where a teacher stands in front of the classroom and everyone is expected to stay at the same pace. It allows students to work at their own pace, making sure they fully understand new concepts before moving on. A classroom environment that incorporates BL naturally requires learners to *demonstrate more autonomy, self-regulation, and independence* in order to succeed. This virtual learning environment *helps connect professors with students* without physically being present, thus making this a 'virtual café'. The advantages of BL are dependent on the quality of the programs being implemented. Some indicators of excellent dependent programs are:

- ✓ facilitating student learning,
- ✓ communicating ideas effectively
- ✓ demonstrating an interest in learning,
- ✓ organizing effectively,
- ✓ showing respect for students,
- ✓ and assessing progress fairly⁵.

From a pedagogical perspective, blended learning aims to incorporate the best aspects of face-to-face classroom learning experiences with the best of mobile and online learning experiences. This allows:

- an increase in learning outcome measures and lowering of attrition rates compared to fully online courses
- an opportunity for students to practice technology skills in navigating online course materials and creating their own digital content for assessment
- an increase in student-teacher and student-student interaction through the use of communication tools like discussion forums, blogs and shared web content on the electronic whiteboard
- the ability to reserve face-to-face time for interactive activities, such as higher-level discussions, small group work, debates, demonstrations, or lab activities⁶

For students, the appeal of blended learning includes:

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⁶ Blended learning: A synthesis of research findings in Victorian education 2006-2011.



- flexibility and the freedom to learn anytime, anywhere
- some level of control over the pacing of their learning. Difficult concepts can be reviewed as often as necessary
- more engaging content that they can create and use their own initiative, and networks to shape
- the opportunity to engage and draw on expertise that would otherwise not be available to them without costly travel, such as virtual conferencing with zoo/museum/gallery staff or virtual excursions to overseas historical or culturally significant landmarks⁷.

Blended learning may appear to be a better chance for education improvement, it may show some significant impediments in terms of application. Learners' individual contrasts, for instance, their learning attributes and learning styles should not be disregarded since individual's characteristics and learning styles in teaching and learning are major factors in effective teaching [Sarasin, 1999]. A study by Felder and Silverman which focused on engineering students found that the failure of knowledge delivery comes from the contradiction between traditional teaching styles versus common learning styles. This gap will create problems such as absenteeism and boredom which causing the students to lose their interest in the subject matter. Blended learning may offer a solution because in this teaching mode, instructors are no more the sole source of knowledge instead they are expected to be facilitators as well as motivators to students. Rovai & Jordan defines blended learning as a new method of learning that offers flexibility and convenience to the educators and learners. Specifically, this new alternative of learning will help and guide workers who want to pursue their study while they are working. Several literatures found in Matheos at all, suggest that this alternative strategy of teaching and learning can intensify better performance in knowledge transfer.

Tayebinik & Puteh investigated the advantages of blended learning over face-to-face teaching and found that blended learning can be viewed as an effective approach in terms of students' learning experience, student-student interaction as well as student instructor interaction, induce students sense of community and enhance collaborative task. Studies using blended learning which involve additional learning time, instructional resources, and course elements that encourage interactions among learners⁸. It represents a switch from passive learning to active learning. The focus of the classroom shifts from a presentational format to one of active learning. This involves putting learners in situations which compel them to read, speak, listen and think. It offers learners the opportunity to be either together or apart. The model of blended learning emphasizes bringing together the online and face-to-face classroom components. In addition, a blended delivery system allows students to learn and access material in a variety of modes—an important feature since students often have very different learning styles. In fact, research indicates that blended learning increases students' chances of meeting course outcomes compared with fully online and even fully face-to-face courses, by decreasing dropout rates, increasing test scores and increasing motivation on the part of students. It adds a human touch to the teaching. The interactive content enables the instructor to create a high level of interest, accountability, and real assessment. It enhances individualization, personalization and relevance. It lets the instructor tailor learning content to the unique needs of different audience segments. The model offers students the best of both worlds because instructors and students have greater flexibility and accessibility without sacrificing face-to-face contact. A blended learning approach is an effective and low-risk strategy aimed at meeting the challenge of the transformational changes that technological developments bring to higher education.

Unless successfully plan and executed, BL could have disadvantages in technical aspects since it has a *strong dependence on the technical resources* or tools with which the BL experience is delivered. These tools need to be reliable, easy to use, and up to date, for them to have a meaningful impact on the learning experience. *IT literacy* can serve as a significant barrier for students attempting to get access to the course materials, making the availability of high-quality technical support paramount.

⁷Dziuban, Hartman & Moskal, 2004.

⁸Means, Toyama, Murphy, & Baki, 2013.



Other aspects of BL that can be challenging is *group work* because of *difficulties with management in an online setting*. The *use of lecture recording technologies* can result in students *falling behind on the materials*. In a study performed across four different universities, it found that only half of the students watched the lecture videos on a regular basis, and nearly 40% of students watched several weeks' worth of videos in one sitting. From an educator's perspective, most recently, noted that *providing effective feedback is more time-consuming* (and therefore more expensive) when electronic media are used, in comparison to traditional (e.g. paper-based) assessments. *Using e-learning platforms* can be *more time consuming* than traditional methods and can come with new *costs* as e-learning platforms. Another critical issue is *access to network infrastructure*. Although the digital divide is narrowing as the Internet becomes more pervasive, many students do not have access to the Internet, even in their classrooms. Any attempt to incorporate BL strategies into an organization's pedagogical strategy needs to account for this. This is why learning centers are built with good Wi-Fi connections to make sure this issue is addressed⁹.

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