

The Application of Blended Learning Approach in TEFL: A Case Study of Nakhon Sri Thammarat Primary Educational Service Area Office 3

Rattanyu Srichai

M.A. TEFL Candidate, School of Liberal Arts

Walailak University, Thailand

E-Mail: msrichai18@gmail.com

Abstract - This paper aims to investigate the relationship between blended learning approach and learners' academic achievement in English subject with primary learners in level 6 and further study of learners and teachers' satisfaction of this approach: the case study of Nakhon Sri Thammarat Primary Educational Service Area Office 3 (NST3). The research participants consisted of 65 learners in six small size primary schools and six non English teachers in the schools under school network area 6, Parkpanang District, Nakhon Sri Thammarat Province. These research participants were selected of all the learners who have learnt English subject with the blended learning approach (traditional learning plus distance learning). The study was conducted within four months in the first semester of academic year 2013 with three research instruments, named as survey forms, classroom observation, pre and posttest. The statistic calculation that was employed to analyze the data was average, standard deviation and percentage. This study also utilized a mix-method approach combining with both quantitative and qualitative data description in the research analysis and findings. The research findings showed that the application of blended learning approach is affective for teaching and learning process in English subject at small size primary schools and it can reduce the educational problems and increase the learners' academic achievement and support the teachers' opportunities of teaching and learning English. Moreover, the learners and teachers were satisfied with this approach.

Keywords – blended learning approach; traditional learning; distance learning case study; small size primary school; Nakhon Sri Thammarat Primary Educational Service Area Office 3; TEFL

I. Introduction

The process of learning is important to us and for all people, learners and educators. Fortunately, today we have many options to choose for obtaining additional education. Distance and traditional learning setting approaches are currently providing normally among other approaches of learning like online learning and others. Neither one is the best for everyone; they differ in how information is delivered and how learners' learning is accessed. However, there are many researchers are also advocating the new concepts of learning and teaching such as active learning, student-centered learning, effective use of technology, and collaborative learning (American Psychological Association, 1997; Bonk & Kim, 1998). These new concepts are presented in any approaches of both learning and teaching must be integrated with the content, context and technology. The demand to increase the quality of learning, the blended learning is considered. Many researchers believed that blended learning is an essential learning process to enhance the efficiency and quality of learning because the blended learning supports all the benefits of pedagogical approaches that combine effectiveness and socialization opportunities of the classroom with the technological enhance active learning possibilities of the online environment (Dzuiban, Hartman, & Moskal, 2004, p.2). The objectives of this study endeavors to answer the research questions as;

1. Can blended learning approach enhance the learners' academic achievement in English subject?
2. To what extent do the learners and teachers' satisfy with blended learning approach in English class?

II. Literature Review

This chapter provided a description of blended learning approach in the factors of definition, important and value of blended learning approach. Subsequently the previous studies concerning on blended learning approach were presented.

Blended Learning and Definitions

The thought of new methodology and approach of teaching and learning that open the opportunities to integrate learning in and outside the classroom becomes true in nowadays. The various education transformations or paradigm shift have emerged to create new approaches of teaching and learning, one such approach is “blended learning”. The definitions of blended learning have been offered. It has been described as the combination of instructional modalities, instructional methods, or online and face-to-face instruction (Graham et al., 2003) or as a combination of traditional learning with web-based online approaches (Whitelock & Jefts, 2003). In brief, blended learning is a type of education which combines various models of traditional and distance education and makes use of all type of technology. However the definitions vary from one institution to another, blended learning is defined in this research study are thus articulated by combining of teaching tools or medium, teaching methodologies and integration of online learning as distance learning and traditional approaches in various degrees in order to enhance the effectiveness of learning.

The Importance and Values of Blended Learning Approach

There are many options in learning modes for teachers, learners, trainers or educators to select. Each mode has its own advantages and disadvantages to conduct to teach the learners in the classroom. Some educators might pick blended learning as the learning option. Osguthorpe & Graham (2003) identified six reasons why some of them choose the blended learning system; (1) pedagogical richness, (2) access to knowledge, (3) social interaction, (4) personal agency, (5) cost-effectiveness and (6) ease of revision. From

the overwhelm reasons that the people choose blended learning were based on three factors as (1) improved pedagogy, (2) increased access and flexibility and (3) increased cost-effectiveness (Graham, Allen & Ure, 2003, 2005).

There are other reasons to support this idea, for example; it is more practical approach to implement in the school when comparing with the single mode of learning whether the traditional, distance or other learning approaches. In blended learning, the students can learn from an online course and at the same time he/she can learn from lectures in class (Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003). In blended learning, the student is actively involved in the learning process and gets higher achievement (Thompson, 2003). Blended learning is also integrated with e-learning method with some advantageous aspects of traditional method, such as face to face interaction and can improve learning and teaching (Thomas, 2010, p.2 & Brown, 2003). Furthermore, the application of blended learning also provides opportunities to accommodate a variety of trends in learning in the information age (Siemens, 2005).

Moreover, Dzakiria, et al., (2012) also added more specifically advantageous of blended learning to the learners, for examples; (1) students felt more sensitive in blended learning class; (2) students were the leading roles in their own learning; (3) blended learning allows instructors to plan and present lower level thinking and critical thinking appropriately with the students' ability; (4) blended learning can enhance the learners' confidence and competency; (5) blended learning can support the quick feedback to learners which will help them in their learning process; (6) learners are more responsible and self-motivated and (7) blended learning provides collaborative learning.

From the various aspects and characteristics of blended learning approach that many theorists mentioned, it is supposed that blended learning is useful and effective for establishing in the schools so as to create the new notion of educational pedagogy.

Related Researches

Blended learning approach is as the outstanding approach to conduct in educational teaching and process. It has a special uniqueness of the combination of traditional and online or distance learning. The result of establishment of blended learning that will specify and ensure of successful blended learning. There are few research studies conducting of blended learning both in Thailand and international researches. The Previous studies on the action research regarding to the blended course conducted from 1999 to 2001 that aimed to investigate students' opinion toward blended and to examine the impact of using different strategies on online communities. Result indicated that students and the instructor were in favor of blended course. Student felt that they learned as much or more than they did in traditional courses, were more motivated, and preferred blended courses over traditional ones (Leh, 2002).

There are some studies focused on the learning outcomes of blended learning. Betul Yilmaz and Feza Orhan (2011) conducted an extensive survey to find student' s academic achievement by introducing blended learning technique in the "Instructional Technologies and Material Development" course. The result showed that; blended learning environment has a positive effect on academic regularly and attendance to learning environments for both deep and surface learners. In addition to Dowling, et al., (2003) investigated the association between the learning outcomes of students and two teaching modules; traditional face to face and hybrid flexible delivery. Result indicated that the hybrid flexible delivery model is more positively associated with students' final marks and improved learning outcomes.

In Thailand, there was a previous study to conduct the blended learning approach as a key interesting in the research, such as Sucaromana (2013) studied the effect of blended learning on the intrinsic motivation of Thai EFL students. The aim of this study is to compare the result of blended learning with face-to-face learning among university students studying English as a foreign language. The result of the research did not differ by gender. The students had

significantly higher levels of intrinsic motivation for learning English, a better attitude toward English as a subject, and better satisfaction with the learning climate after they were taught by blended learning, and the students who were taught using blended learning had significantly higher levels of intrinsic motivation for learning English and had a better attitude towards English as a subject, as well as greater satisfaction with learning climate than the students who were taught using face-to-face learning.

III. Methodology

Research Design

This research study generated a mix-method design, both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative method was brought to evaluate the learners' academic achievement in English learning subject toward the pre-posttest and closed-ended survey forms. In contrast, the qualitative one was produced the data from the open-ended survey forms and classroom observation. The data gathering from the both methods was provided of in-depth understanding of the research findings.

Research Site

Six small size primary schools in the school network area 6 under Nakhon Sri Thammarat Primary Educational Service Area Office 3, all of them were located in Parkpanang district, Nakhon Sri Thammarat province, Thailand.

Participants of the Study

There were two groups of participants taken part in this study: 1) learners and 2) six non English teachers.

a. Students

There were 65 learners, 4 from school A, 6 from school B, 13 from school C, 10 from school D, 22 from school E and 10 from school F. Their ages were around 12 years old. They were all studying in primary level 6, and they have experienced of learning English at least for six years. All of them have experienced of learning with the blended learning approach.

b. Six non English teachers

Six non English teachers were not in the field of teaching English, their graduations were not in English major.

Almost all of them have experienced of teaching or taken part in the seminar of teaching English. They have experienced totally in teaching more than 15 years. They were four females and two males. Their ages were over 50.

Research instruments

The instruments used for this study were survey forms, pre and posttest and classroom observation. These were all the following details of triangulated instruments;

a. Classroom Observation

It was the participated observation that contained with 4 mains items relating to the physical setting, lesson format, instructional presentation and classroom management. The time length of each observation was an hour, taking twice for each school, totally 12 times. The classroom observation started from May to September circulating within six schools. Classroom observation was used to find out and answer research question 2.

b. Survey form

There were two formats both open and close ended questions, the first was for the learners and the other was for the six non-English teachers. The survey forms were adapted from distance manual. There were 65 copies distributed to learners and all were returned, while other 6 copies for teachers and also were returned. The statements in both forms were described in Thai language. The rating scale was claimed and adapted from Likert's five points scale (Likert, 1932), that was ranged as illustrated; (5) absolutely true, (4) mostly true, (3) neutral, (2) mostly untrue, and (1) absolutely untrue. The survey was used to find out and answer research question 2.

c. Pre-Posttest

Pre and posttest was used to measure the learners' academic achievement in English learning subject. The tests were adapted and validated from distance learning manual and NST3 achievement test. The tests consisted of 4 formats with listening test, writing test, alternative choices test and cloze test. Pre and posttest was used to find out and answer research question 1.

Sources of Data

The main source of the data gathered from the learners and six non English teachers via the research instruments implementation.

Data Analysis

After the end of data collection of all sources with mix-methods, the research data were analyzed and interpreted of the research findings with both quantitative and qualitative description. The statistical requirement uses were average, standard deviation and percentage.

IV. Results

To display the result of research findings, both quantitative and qualitative methods were brought to narrate the data analysis. The results below presented the answers to all the research questions;

Classroom Observation

From participated classroom observation in English classroom with blended learning approach. It was found that all learning activities, the learners learned English with the distance teacher that live broadcast from the distance learning studio at Wangklaikangwon School. While they were learning, there was a traditional teacher helping them simultaneously in the classroom. The researcher found that the relationship between the traditional teacher and the learners were well-interacted in learning. The traditional teacher was an advisor to help the learners while the distance went on teaching English content toward the television screen. At this context of blended learning approach, there were two teachers cooperated in teaching English to the same group of learners. Additionally the researcher also found that all classes that were observed, all the learners were not absent the class, they were attentive to learn.

Additionally, the traditional teachers also tried hard to instruct and search more exercises to develop the learners in order to practice them in English skills. All periods of English, they prepared and reviewed the English vocabularies before the distance broadcast started. When the class was over, they checked the exercises and returned to them immediately. They

told the researcher that they agreed to teach the learners with blended learning approach in English class. They also added that they could know more English from the distance teacher and the learners were so fun to learn in the class.

However, the researcher also observed and took notes of teaching process of distance teacher. The researcher found that she prepared the lessons well, both the contents and teaching tools. She stimulated the class with greeting and followed her instruction by asking questions to all learners. Her contents were presented with power point presentation. Throughout her class, the learners both in the studio and in the destination classroom concentrated to learn. Her method of teaching were also blended, she used variety methods to teach. At this point the researcher observed that though the distance teacher communicated as a one way communication, the learners or the traditional teachers also behaved that the distance teacher was in the real class and teach them directly.

Considering on the physical settings of all targeted schools, they weren't different. All English classes were clean and fulfill with English knowledge around the room. Some were attached on the windows and doors, including the pictures, words and English statements. The English knowledge also included with the Asean detail. The researcher thought that it was so interesting ideas and opened widely for the learners' knowledge. Moreover, some theorists stated that arranging the physical environment of the classroom is one way to improve learning environment and to prevent problem behaviors before they occur and can affect the behavior of both students and teachers. And they also added that well-structured classroom tends to improve student academic and behavioral outcomes.

Survey Form

The result analysis of the survey forms were elicited from both the learners and six non English teachers, these were shown;

Participants' data

As for the personal information of learners and teachers were presented in Table 1 and 2 as the followings;

Table 1: Learners' personal data

Name of the schools	No. of participants	Gender		Experiences of learning English (Average Years)
		Male	Female	
School A	4	2	2	7.00
School B	6	4	2	6.00
School C	13	7	6	6.00
School D	10	5	5	6.00
School E	22	12	10	6.00
School F	10	7	3	6.00
Total	65	37	28	6.16

Table 2: Six non English teachers' personal data

Name of the schools	No. of teachers	Gender		Exp. Of teaching English	Graduation degree
		Male	Female		
School A	1	-	/	2	B.Sc. In Math
School B	1	/	-	4	B.A. In Art
School C	1	-	/	2	B.A. In Soc.
School D	1	/	-	2	B. Sc. In Bio.
School E	1	-	/	1	B.A. In Thai L.
School F	1	-	/	1	B.A. In Thai L
Total	6	2	4	2	-

Learners' Opinions on Blended Learning in English (Close Ended Survey)

This part was divided into four aspects concerning, as English learning content, teaching and learning process, teaching tools and learning assessment. The learners submitted their ideas and analyzed the data, the result shown as in the table 3 below;

Table 3: Displayed the result of learners' opinion on blended learning approach with English subject.

Item Statements	\bar{X}	S.D	Result Analysis
1. English learning content	4.11	0.81	Mostly true
2. Teaching and learning process	3.97	1.01	Mostly true
3. Teaching tools	4.04	0.92	Mostly true
4. Learning assessment	3.92	0.98	Mostly true
Total Average	4.01	0.93	Mostly true

From table 3: The result showed that all four aspects concerning of learning English with blended learning approach, the learners satisfied with English learning content the highest average score with mostly true at (\bar{X} =4.11). On the contrary, learning assessment became the lowest satisfaction at (\bar{X} =3.92). However, the learners felt mostly true of all item statements with (\bar{X} =4.10), meant that they were satisfied with blended learning approach in English class.

Learners' Comments and Suggestions (Open Ended Survey)

Not all the learners expressed their comments and suggestions on blended learning approach that was taught in English class. These were some conclusions ideas that relating to teaching and learning process with blended learning approach that was shown in table 4.

Table 4: Displayed the learners' comments on blended learning approach

Comments	Categories	Details	No. of Learners
LIKE	Content	- Interesting and be useful in daily life	8
		- Suitable for learners' level and time length	
		- Same in the textbook	
	Learning activities	- Funny	17
		- Felt good with both teachers	
		- Doing many activities or playing games	
		- Getting more knowledge	
		- Practice speaking English	
	Teaching tools	- Clear explanation	
		- Modern teaching tools and interesting	13
- Enhance the learners pay more attention			
- Attract the learners			
Teachers' appearance	- Relating to the content		
	- Good looking	9	
	-Self-confident and hospitality		
DISLIKE	Teaching process	- Very rapidly, cannot follow	7
		- Strictly	
		- Unclear voice	
		- Mistaken of switching /r/ and /l/ sound	
		-	
NO COMMENT	-	-	11
Totally	-	-	65

Additionally the learners have had some comments and suggestions on the blended learning; some were satisfied

with this approach. They liked learning with both distance teacher and the traditional teacher. They felt good while they were learning in the classroom; some learners showed their intention to learn English because they thought that it was important for all nowadays and future.

The Traditional Teachers' Comments and Suggestions (Open Ended Survey)

The research findings showed that all the traditional teachers expressed their thoughts on blended learning as blended learning is another good method of teaching that can help the teacher to design the courses with the distance teacher through the distance learning manual. This approach can encourage and stimulate the learners to be more active in learning activities. Similarly this approach is benefited to urge the traditional teacher to prepare of teaching in advanced.

In addition, the advantages of blended learning approach regarding to teachers' opinion, it is considered a new concept of teaching that brings the good points of each approach integrated, and it is a new approach to construct the teaching methodology integrated with technology. There are varieties of blended learning approach that suited for each educational institutions and contexts. The application of blended learning approach into classroom depends on the readiness of school staff, learners, school environments and budget for establishment.

The Result of Pre and Posttest

This part was shown the result of pre and posttest with 4 test items, named as listening test, cloze test, writing test and multiple 4 choices test, the result was displayed in table 4 below;

Table 5: Displayed of pre and posttest result

No. of Test	No. of Test Takers	Total Score	\bar{X} Pretest	\bar{X} Posttest	\bar{X} Score Increase
Test 1: Listening Test	65	15	10.96	13.64	18.08
Test 2: Cloze Test	65	15	7.13	9.91	18.53
Test 3: Writing Test	65	16	8.95	11.32	15.14
Test 4: Multiple Choice	65	15	6.71	9.98	21.30
Total Average			$(\bar{X} = 8.44)$	$(\bar{X} = 11.22)$	$(\bar{X} = 18.27)$

From table 4: It was shown the test result of pre and posttest of English subject that the learners have learnt with blended learning approach. The result showed that test 2 and test 4, the learners failed in pretest but the others passed. While all posttest result, the learners could pass with all tests. Comparing the score of pre and posttest, the learners got the score in posttest higher than pretest of all tests. The total average score of pretest was at $(\bar{X} = 8.44)$ and posttest was at $(\bar{X} = 11.22)$ and the score increasing was at $(\bar{X} = 18.27)$. It was concluded that when the learners learned English with blended learning approach, they have had competencies in English, they got higher achievement.

V. Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Studies

Blended learning in this context consists of traditional learning combination with distance learning. This method of teaching allows the learners, traditional teachers and distance teacher cooperate in teaching and learning process. The learners can participate in learning activities both in one way and two ways communication in the traditional classroom. This research study wants to find out the relationship between blended learning approach and learners' academic achievement in English subject in primary level learners and further study the learners and teachers' satisfaction to apply of this approach in the English classroom. The results of this research showed that the learners got higher

academic achievement in English when they have learned with blended learning approach. They thought that learning English was fun and they felt satisfied with this approach. Additionally the teachers agreed to apply the blended learning approach into English classroom because it can enhance the qualitative teaching and learning English and open learning opportunities for English language. Finally the application of blended learning approach and other teaching methods would help improve or develop the qualitative teaching and learning process and other researchers should try to apply the blended approach with other subjects besides English.

References

- [1] American Psychological Association (1997). Learner-centered Psychological Principles: A framework for School Redesign and Reform (Retrieved from www.apa.org/ed/lep.html) 2/9/2003.
- [2] Betul, M. Y. & Feza, O. (2011). Evaluation of University Students' Academic Achievements, Web Material Using Behaviors, and Attendances in Respect to Their Learning Approaches in a Blended Learning Environment". Vol. 8, No.2 pp.1027-1048.
- [3] Bonk, C. J., & Kim, K., A. (Ed.) (1998). Extending Socio-Cultural Theory to Adult Learning. New Jersey: Mahway.
- [4] Brown, R. (2003). Blended Learning: Rich Experiences From a Rich Picture. Training and Development in Australia, 30 (3), pp.14-17.
- [5] Dowling, C., Godfrey, J. M., & Gyles, N. (2003, December). Do Hybrid Flexible Delivery Teaching Methods Improve Accounting Students' Learning Outcomes? Accounting Education, 12(4), pp. 373-391.
- [6] Dzakiria, H., Don, M. S., Raman, A. (2012). Blended Learning as Pedagogical Alternative to Teach Business Communication Course: Case Study of UUM Executive Diploma Program. Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education-TOJDE July 2012. Volume 13 Number 3 Article 21.
- [7] Dziuban, C., Hartman, J. & Moskal, P. (2004). Blended Learning. Educause Center for Applied Research, Research Bulletin, 7. Retrieved June 25, 2012 from <http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ERB0407.pdf>
- [8] Graham, C. R., Allen, S. & Ure, E. (2003). Blended Learning Environments: A Review of Research Literature. Unpublished Manuscript, Provo, UT.
- [9] Graham, C. R., Allen, S., & Ure, D. (2005). Benefits and challenges of blended learning environments. In M. Khosrow-Pour (Ed.), Encyclopedia of information science and technology (pp. 253–259). Hershey, PA: Idea Group.
- [10] Leh, S. C. (2002). Action Research on Hybrid Courses and Their Online Communities. Education Media International, 39(1), pp.31-37.
- [11] Likert, R. (1932)."A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes." Archives of Psychology 140 (1932): 1-55.
- [12] Osguthorpe, T. R., & Graham, R. C. (2003). Blended Learning Environments Definitions and Directions. The Quarterly Review of Distance Education. 4(3), pp.227-233.
- [13] Siemens, G. (2005). Connectivism: A learning Theory for Digital Age. International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning. Vol 2 No 1, January 2005.
- [14] Sucaromana, U. (2013). The Effects of Blended Learning on the Intrinsic Motivation of Thai EFL Students. English Language Teaching, Vol.6 No. 5.pp. 141-147. Published by Canadian Center of Science and Education.
- [15] Thomas, M. (2010). Is Online Learning Different from Traditional Learning? Education Centers. Retrieved from <http://www.educationcenters.com/faq/online-education/is-online-learning-different-from-traditional-learning-112.php>
- [16] Whitelock, D. & Jefts, A. (2003). Editorial: Journal of Education Media Special Issue on Blended Learning. Journal of Education Media. 28(2-3), pp.99-100.



Mr. Rattanyu Srichai is a school principal at Ban Kohtang School, Nakhon Sri Thammarat Primary Educational Service Area Office 3, Thailand. He received B.A. in English major in 1996 from Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, Thailand. Now he is a candidate of M.A. TEFL, School of Liberal Arts, Walailak University, Thailand.

