



The Implementation of Blended Learning in Teaching Reading at English Postgraduate Program Universitas Negeri Semarang

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Abstract

The advancement of technology, communication, and data, particularly the internet, has attracted the attention of Indonesian educators. Blended learning has become popular across all school levels in this quickly changing manner of teaching. In the context of teaching English as a foreign language, teachers must adapt to the use of technology in their instructional activities to successfully fulfil the learning objectives. This study describes the use of blended learning in an Engagement Reading class at Universitas Negeri Semarang Language Education Department. The researchers collected data through observation, interviews, and documentation. The study's findings indicate that the stages of field knowledge building, text modelling, joint text creation, and autonomous text construction are used in the reading class. Elena, WhatsApp, Zoom, Google, and Chrome are used to help with the teaching and learning process. Blended learning can make students become active learners because the students can get the other additional information from the internet during the online learning it is effective to make the students enjoy the learning process and do not feel bored with the monotonous learning situation. In addition, the virtual class has easy access anywhere and anytime in different places at the same time and makes it easier for teachers to create archives in digital form. Due to the multi-sources in blended learning, it helps the students to develop their daily reading activity. However, they continue to encounter a difficulty that many students in Indonesia face: internet access and credit quota.

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INTRODUCTION

Technology is still transforming today's classrooms and has made a substantial contribution to teaching and learning of foreign languages. Teachers presently employ technology into their teaching and learning methods. This emphasizes that traditional classroom teaching is combined with online learning. This combination improves learning objectives by utilizing suitable learning technology that is matched to the individual's learning style. This is known as the blended learning.

The definition blended learning is a method of learning that smoothly combines face-to-face and online instruction. Experts offer their perspectives on blended learning, arguing that it is the only effective teaching method that incorporates technology. (Dziuban et al., 2018; Galvis, 2018; Kumar et al., 2021; Menon, 2019) Blended learning integrates two fields of study: education and the use of educational technology. Furthermore, Ma'rifatulloh (2020) stated that Blended learning is characterized as a combination of face-to-face learning (either offline in class or synchronously via video conferencing) with online learning via technology such as Google Classroom, Moodle, or Spada.

Both teachers and students are likely to gain more from this combination than from using only one element. Teachers can provide their pupils with multimedia material that includes text, graphics, audio, and video in addition to classroom learning material. This can increase kids' interest in studying and make the lesson more easily accepted by students.

Blended learning is frequently used in EFL teaching and learning, including reading instruction. Reading should be taught to university students as an essential skill to learn, and teaching and learning activities should be carefully designed to keep up with the times. Thus, the concept of blended learning was applied to English Language Education in Engagement Reading Class. The lecturer used this concept to balance pedagogical instruction

and technology to promote students' learning by combining face-to-face interaction and digital media.

The current technological revolution has encouraged teachers to incorporate technology into their classroom instruction to help students learn more effectively. E-learning or online learning is the use of technology in the classroom. Online learning has provided us with a more natural method of learning. In order to we have an internet connection, we can do it anywhere and at any time. As a result, there is now a teaching strategy known as blended learning. One of the teaching strategies is blended learning, which combines a traditional method of instruction with an online course to achieve specific learning objectives.

Moreover, Tandoh at al. (2013) stated that the advancement of technology has had an impact on all aspects of life, including education. The use of technology in education has changed the way students are taught. The focus of innovation in the teaching and learning process is increasingly on how teachers communicate material and how students acquire knowledge in school. The innovation involves the integration of face-to-face learning with web-based learning, which is related to the use of technology in education.

Students in blended learning can use their gadgets to access internet materials even during face-to-face classes. Blended learning emerges as result of the increasing availability of online information, as well as the requirement for a human component in the learning process. This strategy assures student engagement and puts the learner in charge of his or her own learning experience. It also helps in responding to the learner's individual needs, as most students have different learning styles, and this notion is more likely to suit their needs than traditional classroom teaching methods.

According to Osguthorpe and Graham (2003), blended learning is rich in pedagogy, allows for easy social engagement online, provides easy access to knowledge, has

personal agency, is cost-effective, and allows for easy revision. Furthermore, blended learning has numerous advantages. The advantages are (1) improved learning efficacy, (2) easy access to education, and (3) reaching a big audience in a short period of time while remaining cost-effective.

Hande (2014) states that Blended learning has the potential to foster independent, participatory, and meaningful learning; it may also be used as a forum for conversation, asking questions, providing feedback, sharing knowledge, and assessing. As a result, it is possible to conclude that blended learning is beneficial in education. It allows teachers to be creative in how they present the materials. Furthermore, because blended learning integrates different modes of teaching, it generates a successful learning outcome for vast majority of students who participate. Because most students use technology in their daily lives, they can interact with material more easily when it is used in the classroom.

Blended learning is widely employed in English language teaching and learning, especially reading instruction. Teachers should provide curriculum-relevant resources and use suitable tactics in teaching and learning process to know the student skill of reading comprehension. To excite pupils, teachers should be educated and enthusiastic about their reading materials. Aside from the resources, an adequate strategy should be considered. There are three ways for teaching reading: bottom-up, top-down, and interactive.

Bottom-up reading learning is most consistent with current instructional practice and focuses mostly on letter, sound, and word recognition. This method, in particular needs prior understanding of the linguistic system (i.e., phonology, grammar, and vocabulary). According to Nunan (2003) Lower-level reading processes, such as beginning with the fundamental basics of letter and sound recognition, which allows for morpheme recognition, followed by word recognition, and moving to the identification of grammatical structures, and longer text, are indicative of a

bottom-up method. Meanwhile, in the top-down strategy, the reader uses previous information to create predictions, which are then affirmed or rejected by reading the text. Top-down emphasises meaning reconstruction over form decoding. Readers bring to this interaction their knowledge of the subject at hand, knowledge of and expectations about how language works, motivation, interest, and attitudes toward the content of the text, rather than decoding each symbol or even every word; the reader develops hypotheses about text elements and then samples the text to see if the theories are valid.

Understanding in a top-down reading style is influenced by the reader's objective and expectation. Reading passage can thus be understood even if not all the individual words are grasped. In a top-down approach to reading, the teacher focuses on meaning-generating activities rather than mastery of bottom-up abilities such as letter, sound, and word recognition.

In addition to bottom-up and top-down strategies, there is interactive strategy. The reading process that begins with the creation of hypotheses about meaning and the decoding of letters and words is known as interactive strategy. Furthermore, she claims that the process of converting written symbols to meaning involves the use of both prior knowledge and the printed symbols, and that forming predictions about meaning or deciphering graphic signals initiates the process (Vacca et al.1991).

According to Simanjuntak (1988) states that Excellent readers who use an interactive technique will become more interested in identification rather than less concerned with it as their interpretative skills improve. Finally, interactive approach will incorporate elements of both bottom-up and top-down techniques. In addition to the reading strategy, the approach to teaching is critical to the effectiveness of language learning. The Text-Based Approach fits the current trend in language education and learning. This technique is concerned with conveying information about the construction

of effective texts for specific aims in real context and with the use of meaningful language. The

following stages of teaching and learning exemplify the Text-based Approach concept.

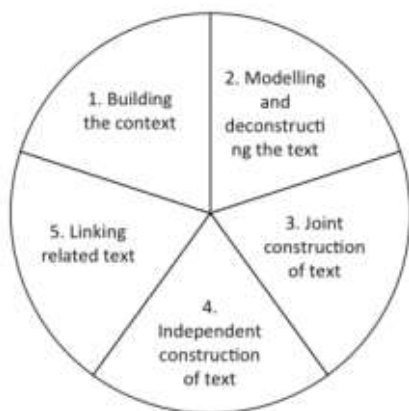


Figure 1. Stages of teaching and learning cycle (adopted from Feez and Joice 2002).

The diagram depicts the stages of teaching and learning activities as creating field knowledge, modeling of the text, cooperative construction of the text, independent construction of the text, and linking related text. The fifth stage, linking similar texts, is optional because it necessitates a capable learner who can connect texts.

Moreover, the finding of this study indicate that the stages of field knowledge building, text modelling, joint text creation, and autonomous text construction are used in the reading class. Elena, WhatsApp, Zoom, Google, and Chrome are used to help with the teaching and learning process. Blended learning can make students become active learners because the students can get the other additional information from the internet during the online learning it is effective to make the students enjoy the learning process and do not feel bored with the monotonous learning situation. In addition, the virtual class has easy access anywhere and anytime in different places at the same time and makes it easier for teachers to create archives in digital form. Due to the multi-sources in blended learning, it helps the students to develop their daily reading activity.

Zahendi (2015) was conducted a study of blended learning in an EFL setting. The

research was conducted at Islamic Azad University. The result of the study proved that blended learning instruction was more effective than face-to-face instruction on the students' reading strategies. It could be seen that the previous studies showed that blended learning is needed to be used in teaching reading. Therefore, considering to the importance of teaching reading and the benefits of using blended learning, this study aimed at investigating how blended learning can be used in teaching and learning process to teach reading skill. Through the results of this study, the teachers are expected to receive information needed about how to implement blended learning in their teaching and learning process.

METHOD

The qualitative descriptive method is used in this study. Best defines qualitative descriptive research as a research method that seeks to describe and interpret objects in their natural state. Sukmadinata (2011: 73) defines descriptive qualitative research as "the description of actual phenomena, both natural and human." designed by paying more attention to the features, quality, and interdependence of activities According to this definition, descriptive qualitative research in

this study aims to create a systematic description and relationship between the phenomena being examined. The study was carried out in Engagement Reading Class of English Language Department in Universitas Negeri Semarang in Academic year 2022/2023.

This research was conducted to answer the following questions:

1. How is the implementation of blended learning in teaching reading?
2. How is the students' perception toward the implementation of blended learning in teaching reading?

The researcher employed some approaches to obtain the data needed to answer the questions. Because the data were non-numerical, they were analysed qualitatively. The data were collected by observation, interviews, and documentation. In the field, observation was carried out to collect factual data. The goal was to determine which strategy was adopted during the learning process. In addition, an interview was done to determine students' attitudes toward the deployment of blended learning in the Engagement Reading class. Finally, the researcher reviewed Lesson Plans, which were related to research topics. The researcher analysed the data after obtaining it. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), data analysis entails data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. Data reduction entails summarizing, selecting, and focusing on what is important. Following data collection, the researcher selected, abstracted, and processed data from observation, interviews, and documentation. Following that, the data was displayed. The researcher described all of the data gathered via observations, interviews, and documentation in this step. Finally, the data were analysed to provide answers to the research questions. Researchers' observations and interpretations were used to reach the conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The development of technology has had an impact on how we teach. The use of digital media in teaching and learning, including the teaching and learning process in the Engagement Reading class, has grown in popularity. Engagement Reading, according to the English Language Education Universitas Negeri Semarang curriculum, develops knowledge about concepts and types of texts or genres, including their communicative purposes, text structure, linguistic features, and abstract meanings, as well as short functional texts that are transactional in nature and aim to deal with daily affairs; develop an attitude of reading and responding to texts; and provide responses to recount, narrative, and short functional texts found in the curriculum. The learning objectives are:

1. Explain abstract meanings (metafunctions) in short functional/transactional texts found in everyday life, including their communicative purposes, text structure, and linguistic characteristics;
2. Demonstrate a liking for reading various texts as a form of entertainment; and
3. Respond accurately, fluently, and acceptably to recount, narrative, and short functional/transactional texts found in everyday life, both in guided and personal responses.

Once a week, the Engagement reading class examined brief functional texts such as announcement, notice, caution, warning, greetings, prayer, song lyrics, wise words, recommendations, instruction, meme, parody, advertisement, and label. The professor delivered the materials for the lesson three days before it began. The papers given were examples of brief functional text to be discussed at the upcoming meeting. They were uploaded in pdf format to Google Classroom and distributed to the WhatsApp group, which included the students and the professor as members. The goal of sending the materials

early before the class began was to allow students to learn the materials in a more flexible manner, in terms of time and place, and to be prepared for the class. The lecturer then stated the learning objectives as usual as the class began. To catch the students' attention, the teacher displayed the materials containing the examples of the short functional text discussed in the meeting. The lecturer invited the pupils to read aloud the displayed text to assess their pronunciation. When students struggled to understand the meaning of specific words, the lecturer instructed them to guess the meaning based on the context of the text, then check it up in their online dictionary to validate whether their prediction was correct or not. Students were given examples of one specific short

functional text and asked to locate similarities in the texts' communication aims, generic structure, and linguistic elements, then debate them. To ensure that the students understood the concept of the text, the teacher requested them to identify and analyse another example of a short functional text on the internet. To assess students' comprehension, the teacher asked them to present and explain the text they discovered and the analysis to their peers. Following the students' presentation, the lecturer and friends inquired about the text's abstract meaning (metafunctions). When students can respond to the text accurately, fluently, and acceptably, the subject's learning objectives have been met.

Table 1. The stage of the teaching-learning process can be seen below:

Stage	Activities	Application
Building knowledge of the field	a. 3 days before the engagement Reading class, the lecturer gives some examples of a short functional text (for example: warning) and provides material about imperative sentence. b. The lecturer asks the students to learn the materials given before the class starts	Elena, WhatssApp
Modelling of the text	The lecturer states the objectives of the learning The lecturer shows the examples of warning The lecturer asks the students to read the text The lecturer and the students discuss the communicative purpose, generic structures, and linguistic features of the text.	Zoom
Joint constructions of the text	The lecturer asks some questions (metafunction) based on the text, then the students the answer of the questions.	Zoom
Independent construction of the text	The lecturer asks the students to find other example of warning, asks the students to analyze the text, and present it.	Elena, Zoom

The students present the text and explain the communicative purpose, generic structures, and linguistic features of the text.

The lecturer ask some questions (metafunctions) based on the text, then the students answers of the questions individually.

The modelling is provided once the context has been built. This stage's activities include addressing the purpose, displaying linguistic aspects, and discussing the text's generic structure. These are the activities proposed by Gibbons. According to Gibbons (2002), during the modeling stage, students become acquainted with the text's goal, structure, and language qualities. In the Joint Construction of the Text, students were asked to answer the text-based questions collectively; in the Independent Construction of the Text, students were asked to explain and answer the questions separately. The stages and activities used in teaching and learning process are also reflected in the lesson plan created by the lecturer. In the teaching and learning process, the lecturer and students used Elena, WhatsApp, Zoom, , as shown in Table 1. The activities and software showed blended learning is being used. The lecturer interviewed the students to learn about their attitudes of the use blended learning. The interviewees were asked about their thoughts on blended learning process in terms of communication, engagement, cooperation, and ease of access.

Table 2. Interview results

Interview Questions	Interview results
Communications Facility	I can communicate easily with lecturer and friends..... the lecturer always gives feedback
Engagement	I am engaged with lecturer.... topic is relevant... I am interested with the class. I like this class.
Collaboration	I can collaborate with friends and discuss the material with my lecturer and friends....
Access	Sometimes I have problem on the internet connection and because of quota.....

Based on the responses, it is possible to conclude that the students have a positive attitude toward the implementation of blended learning in the reading class. The students believe that the use of blended learning allows easier communication with the instructor because the lecturer provides individual feedback to each student. Furthermore, student participation is encouraged. It is evident from the kids' active engagement in class. The contents, according to the pupils, are also relevant to their requirements and daily life. This makes the pupils' learning more meaningful. Alnoori and Obaid, Ghazizadeh and Fatemipour (2017) also discovered that a blended learning approach significantly improved the reading proficiency of EFL learners. In addition, Alnoori and Obaid also mentioned that blended learning can be used in a variety of different locations, not only in classrooms. Consequently, students can develop their reading proficiency and improve their reading skills in a suitable location and at a convenient time, concurring with the present study. In a comparable way, Kim's (2014) study

found that while all participants' reading comprehension skills improved, those exposed to blended learning showed much more development than those using traditional learning methods.

In order to gain a qualitative knowledge of participants and their interactions with a hypermedia reading process, Hamdan et al. (2017) used a case study. The study's conclusions emphasized the usefulness and efficiency of online supplemental resources, including audio, video, and graphics, as well as how employing these tools helped students comprehend hypermedia reading materials better. However, without the addition of an emphasis on reading abilities, vocabulary test results did not significantly increase when a mixed learning strategy was used alone to build vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, the reading process should be considered as a core component for developmental improvements in language, with other skills being additional.

Overall, the implementation of blended learning effected significant improvements in

the English language reading skills and development of EFL undergraduate students. The blended learning program must be appropriately designed for a specific course or specific set of target skills. Learning objectives are a priority, followed by course content, and subsequently, materials, resources and technology selection. Ensuring these key features are undertaken in order, would prevent the use of blended learning from becoming technocentric, which may undermine the helpfulness and effectiveness of blended learning for developing reading skills and other language learning skills

CONCLUSION

Many aspects of life including education that have been influenced by technology. The teaching method has evolved from traditional classroom interaction (face to face) to blended learning, which combines traditional classroom instruction with digital or internet-based media. According to the research, implementing blended learning does not interfere with the learning stages in the classroom. The steps of establishing knowledge of the field, modelling of the text, cooperative construction of the text, and individual construction of the text remain in the teaching and learning process. The usage of technology enhances learning activities. Elena, WhatsApp, Zoom, are the technologies used. Furthermore, students show a favourable attitude regarding the use of blended learning in reading class. This is due to their belief that the implementation continues to enhance communication and interaction, engagement, and collaboration. However, they continue to experience problems typical to Indonesian students, such as internet access and credit quota.

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