

Effects of Blended Learning on Motivating Secondary Students to Learn English Language: A Pilot Study

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ABSTRACT

Blended learning is a combination of traditional teaching method and the use of technology to provide a more organized learning approach in which it gives students extra control over the time, situation and ways of learning. This study investigates the effects of blended learning on motivating secondary level of students to learn English language. A pilot study was conducted. The sample consists of sixty secondary levels of students in a particular school in Shah Alam district, Selangor, Malaysia. The pre and posttest were used to test students' achievement and the survey adapted from Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery was implied to determine students' motivation level before and after the use of blended learning. The analysis through paired-sample t-test revealed that, there was improvement on the level of motivation of the students and there were significant differences on student's achievement whereas they performed better after the use of blended learning. The use of blended learning has a positive impact in individual professional development and instead of measuring the effect of blended learning towards student's achievement; attitude or motivation to learn a language, further studies should also measure the other impact of blended learning itself especially in education.

1. Introduction

Enhancing student learning experiences and motivations through blended learning have a great impact in improving student's motivation and achievement to learn. According to Adam & Nel (2009); development of technology has transformed the style of teaching-learning activities from passive learning to active learning and from traditional classroom to modern classroom. Learning a language is quite a challenging process especially English language. Students need to understand and acquire the four main skills in learning a language; listening, speaking, reading and writing and the use of blended learning can be useful to motivate students to learn English effectively (Frafika et al, 2018). Numerous studies found in the country regarding the effectiveness of blended learning in motivating students to learn English language, but it there were lack of studies focused on applying blended learning towards demotivated secondary level of students to learn a language because the language only taught efficiently during the secondary, not at the primary and due to that, many students especially the school-leavers had a low motivational level to use English language effectively (Ganapathy & Ying, 2016). However, there are many innovative learning management systems provided and invented to create successful and motivated students to learn a language such as virtual-conferencing software like Google Meet and Zoom, online classroom platform like Google Classroom and many more that can benefit the organization and the students. Therefore, this study is needed in order to fill the gap and to find out the effects of blended learning in motivating secondary level of students to learn English language.

To get the answer, this study objectively focused on two research objectives (RO):

RO1) student's motivation level before and after the use of blended learning

RO2) effect of blended learning on motivating secondary students to learn English language

Thus, in order to answer the objectives, the research questions (RQ) were constructed:

RQ1) what are the students' motivation levels before and after the use of blended learning?

RQ2) Are students motivated to learn English language after the use of blended learning?

The rest of the article is formatted as follows: First, a brief explanation regarding the topic of the study is presented in introduction and literature review as the backup in explaining related past studies. Next, the methodology part; where the design and procedures all were precisely-described. The findings of the study were then presented and a summary of the study on study's limitations, implications and recommendation for future research will conclude the whole article.

2. Literature Review

Every learning process requires a manner or a strategy to be adapted in order to achieve the main purpose of learning. Among the important things in the process of learning are "what" to use for learning and "how" to use it (Hardan, A.A., 2013). Keeping up with the issue, it is a necessary to cope up with the increasing changes and improvement in science and technology fields. These changes ushered in many new methods for teaching and learning, such as blended learning. According to Oweis T.I. (2018), blended learning combines forms of direct and indirect online learning and usually involves the internet and intranet, while indirect learning occurs simultaneously within traditional classes.

2.1 Blended Learning

The aim of blended learning is to provide interactive learning which results a good combination of teacher's role in a traditional classroom with the high-tech one. Blended learning is a combination of traditional face-to-face classroom and paperless (digital) classroom. Blended learning combines forms of direct and indirect online learning and usually involves the internet and intranet, while indirect learning occurs simultaneously within traditional classes (Oweis T.I., 2018). In this study, teacher is the moderator and guidance to the formal classroom but at the same time the teacher conducts her class in digital way too. There are many benefits of blended learning especially in secondary schools; as established in the article by Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia (2015) entitled *Blended Learning dalam Pembelajaran*:

- a. It enhances understanding and mastery of the students towards the lesson.
- b. It provides similar learning opportunities to all students from different backgrounds and ability.
- c. It increases students' motivation.
- d. It enables independent learning (individualize learning).
- e. It allows students to access the information that is hard to get.
- f. It allows students to collect the information that is taking a long time.
- g. It creates a challenging and interactive learning environment.
- h. It allows students to try or to obtain difficult experiments.
- i. It enhances students' creativity and imagination.
- j. It provides opportunity so students can improve their self-potential effectively with a minimum guidance.
- k. It improves ICT skills continuously.

2.2 Student's Motivation to Learn a Language

Motivation to learn refers to a competence acquired through general experience that is predominantly stimulated through modeling, communication of expectations, and direct instruction or socialization by significant others (Brophy, 1987) yet, when learning a language, it represents desires, willingness and needs to an individual (Ganapathy & Ying, 2016). Although students may be equally motivated to perform a task, the sources of their motivation may differ. A student who is intrinsically motivated undertakes an activity "for its own sake, for the enjoyment it provides, the learning it permits, or the feelings of accomplishment it evokes" (Mark Lepper 1988) because motivation is viewed as one of powerful tool that seem effective in affecting students' learning and behavior (Teppo et al, 2020). Meanwhile, in language acquisition, being motivated on self-determination to learn is the main factor for successfully learning a language because once a person is motivated; there is no need for any external stimulation or reinforcement to learn. Motivation to learn a language, however depends – the higher the aims in learning a language, the higher the obstacles and reasons to not easily quit (Alotebi, H., 2016).

2.3 Blended Learning and Motivation to Learn a Language

The successful of blended learning depends on both teaching approaches effectively and that would motivate students to get engaged in the language learning process interactively. Language learners usually showed their satisfaction when both approaches (traditional face-to-face and online) were combined (Albiladi et al, 2019). Motivation is not only related with confidence, it also an indicator that leads to a happy and peaceful life or in the other terms; motivation is a life skill. Blended learning helps students to increase their motivation to learn a language by practicing empathy, self-decision making, be patient when taking part in conversation, thinking critically and communicate based on experiences (Dangwal K.L. & Lata K., 2017).

Additionally, learning a language with a device as a teaching approach can reflect positively because the good attitudes towards an approach in teaching would reflect a high level of motivation in students (Akbarov et al, 2018).

2.4 Related Past Studies

Different studies about the effects of blended learning on motivating students to learn English have directly or indirectly related to the study and the following study represent a good conclusion for the issue, whereas; to illustrate, in Oweis (2016) pilot study on investigating the effect of blended learning on the achievement and motivation to learn English of German -Jordanian University towards 34 students has revealed statistically significant differences in achievement between the two groups, indicating that the experimental group performed better than the control group. The process of language education consists of two-way communication process, same goes to language skills which consist of four basic skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing. All language skills must be developed equally, as they are related to each other by oral or written (Checova & Rees, 2013).

Another study by Codone in 2001 revealed that blended learning advantaged in motivating students as it improves collaboration and interactivity between students and reduces their feelings of embarrassment in front of colleagues when making errors and findings in the study by Banditvillai in 2016 demonstrated an increment on students' motivation and the development of more to be an autonomous learner.

The use of blended learning not only focuses on improving students' motivation towards a language but towards other subjects to. A study done by Almaseid (2014) to identify the development of achievement among 45 selected intermediate secondary students from Omar Bin Ak-Khattab School, Dubai and after the use of blended learning in teaching Science, the study showed high level of performance on student's achievement test after applying blended learning. However, the further recommendations were provided in order to clarify the issues occurred, as the researcher mentioned in his study.

In Malaysian context, a research conducted to determine the effectiveness of blended learning on academic achievements and motivation of 116 upper secondary students in northern Malaysia by Wong et al (2020) revealed that; there was no significant difference in students' academic achievement but there were positive effects of blended learning on students' motivation construct, compared to the traditional learning. Contradict with Syafii (2016) study, whereas it was done to figure out the effectiveness of blended learning for enhancing 26 vocational students' motivation and English achievement, blended learning had a significant difference on students' motivation level before and after the use of blended learning and it provides a lot of opportunities to explore students' needs and potentials, as well as place and time flexibility for learning. Therefore, blended learning seems as one of the essential learning environments that can be applied in motivating students to learn English especially for secondary students when its advantages are considered and as long as there are fully-equipped technical supports, skillful teachers and sufficient-continuous financial support by the country.

3. Methodology

This pilot study was conducted to find the effects of blended learning on motivating secondary level of students to learn English language. The design was experimental design. Therefore, a quantitative method was employed to collect the data from sixty samples.

3.1 Sampling

The study sample comprised 60 secondary students aged 15 years old from a secondary school located in Shah Alam, central Selangor, Malaysia. Convenience sampling was used in order to gather the sample because in this case, the researcher found it is fast, the students were ready to participate and inexpensive rather than focus to the entire population and the reason of choosing only 60 students as the sample for the study were because they were available to the researcher and shared the same characteristics of age and proficiency level. In some educational settings, students were placed into classroom that was not grouped homogeneously, and educators gave group instruction in respect to the specific individual need of students (Johnson, 2016). The proficiency level of all students is average; referred to the school academic achievement system of *Sistem Pengurusan Sekolah*.

3.2 Instruments

Two instruments were implied in this study: pretest and posttest and a survey.

3.2.1 Pretest and Posttest

In choosing the pre and posttests, the researcher studied the most suitable sources mostly taken from the textbook. At the beginning, all samples completed the pretest consists of fifty multiple choice questions (MCQ) consists of 40 questions which divided into 5 parts that consist of Part 1: short texts, Part 2: Error Correction, Part 3: Information Transfer, Part 4: Short Answer Questions and Part 5: Matching gapped text. The selection was considered because it was one of the papers that the students will sit in their national examination for lower secondary, called as *Pentaksiran Tingkatan 3* or PT3. There was no modification or adjustments made upon the questions, since it was published by the Malaysian Examination Syndicate (MES) themselves.

3.2.2 Survey

After exploring the results of the posttest, then the survey consists of 9 questions was prepared and students were required to answer the survey. The survey was adapted from Gardner’s Attitude/Motivation test Battery (2004) that used to determine the feelings about the use of blended learning. The seven-point Likert scales from 1 to 7 were used for the survey which was then analyzed in terms of mean and standard deviation.

3.2.3 Validity and Reliability

As mentioned earlier, to be more validate, the tests were presented to the official state level’s *Jurulatih Utama* (main coach) for the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). There were no modification, alteration including rewording or deletion occurred in the test as the researcher wanted to keep it as original as it can. As for reliability, the pretest and posttest were ensured by administered it to the same group of students from different school but in the same level of proficiency and the same age with the study sample. It took definitely one hour and forty-five minutes to complete the test and after 15 days, the same tests were again administered to the same students. Both pre and posttest were tested reliable with the Pearson correlation scale of reliability and based on the significance value obtained by Sig. (2-tailed) of $0.000 < 0.05$ between for poor and good reliability, it can be concluded that both pre and posttest are acceptable and can be used to be tested to the real sample study. For the survey, the validity of the items in the survey was interpreted. Based on the significance value of Sig. (2-tailed) for survey item 1 to 9, $0.000 < 0.05$, it can be concluded that the items were valid and trusted to be used in the research but the reliability of the survey was also conducted to ensure the instrument is good.

To determine the reliability of the survey to be used as a research instrument, the test reliability was conducted using Cronbach’s Alpha. The instrument is considered quite high reliable whereas the value of Cronbach’s Alpha > 0.60 and based on the output, the value obtained was $0.677 > 0.600$, which was considered high and the research instrument was reliable.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Result of RQ1

In order to answer the objective of the study, the researcher constructed the question: What is the students’ motivation level before and after the use of blended learning? So, before proceed to the findings on the effect of blended learning itself, the researcher compares the mean and standard deviation of both surveys as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Standard deviation and Mean for the Survey (before and after)

Survey	Mean	Standard Deviation
Before BL	5.89	6.79635
After BL	6.29	5.40703

The above table shows the mean for the survey before blended learning (BL) which is (M = 5.89) with the standard deviation of (SD = 6.80) and the mean for the survey after blended learning is (M = 6.29) with the standard deviation of (SD = 5.41). These differences between the mean for both surveys were tested using paired sample t-test to examine on students’ motivation level before and after the use of blended learning whether is there any improvement or not, as shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Comparison of Two Means Score of the Survey on Before and After

Pair 1 before – after	Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% C.I. of the Difference				
				Lower				Upper
	-.44444	.39922	.13307	-.75131	-.13758	-3.340	8	0.010

From the table, it revealed that, there were significant different between the mean score of survey on students' level of motivation to learn English language, before and after the use of blended learning with $t(8) = -3.340$, $p = 0.010 < 0.05$. The results of the mean were relevant with Albiladi et al (2019) where students were highly motivated and showed their satisfaction to become successful learners when both approaches combined. It was proven that, when the teaching strategy is used intelligently, the results are rarely disappointed and sometimes outstanding. Instead of motivating students to collaborate and interact each other, blended learning also develops student's motivation to be an autonomous learner (Banditvillai, 2016).

4.2 Result of RQ2

In order to find the effect of blended learning on motivating students to learn English language, the researcher run the SPSS paired sample t-test to compare the means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the pre and posttest score. It was chosen by the researcher to reveal that; whether there is an improvement on the students' motivation level; before and after the use of blended learning towards learning English language. The result was presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Results

Pair 1 PRE – POST	Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% C.I of the Difference				
				Lower				Upper
	-13.66667	6.64516	.85789	-15.38329	-11.95004	-15.931	59	.000

From Table 3, it revealed that, the RQ2 got it answer whereas; there were significant different between the mean score of pretest and posttest on students' achievement, before and after the use of blended learning on motivating them to learn English language with $t(59) = -15.931$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ as the better the blended learning being applied in the teaching progress, the higher the levels of performance in the achievement test (Almaseid, 2014).

4.3 Discussion

The findings of the survey assist to identify the students' motivation level to learn English language, before and after the use of blended learning. From the analysis of the survey, blended learning is found to be one of the factors that motivate the students to learn English language. This is because, students tend to be more confidence in communication and tend to response to the teacher more frequent rather than in the traditional face-to face classroom. The positive scales in the survey showed that students were motivated to learn English language as supported by Al-Bataineh et al (2019); students' attitude towards blended learning were strongly satisfied and motivated to learn English. The findings also revealed that blended learning could be an effective teaching method that could help students to get a better understanding while learning other subjects too as supported by Almaseid (2014) summarized the effectiveness of blended learning on students' achievement in Science showed high level of performance on student's achievement test after applying blended learning.

The findings and analysis from the research show a positive result of using blended learning on motivating secondary students to learn English language. Clearly, students performed well in the posttest after the implemented of blended learning, compared to the traditional method. The paired sample t-test revealed that students who were exposed to blended learning during learning language significantly developed in their posttest. Even there were some of the students' marks didn't changed much, it perhaps caused by the way the teacher convey the learning process that become the factor in contributing the success of the research as same with the determination of the effectiveness of blended learning on academic achievements an motivation by Wong et al (2016); there was no significant difference in students' academic achievement but there were positive effects of blended learning on students' motivation construct, compared to the traditional learning. However, through the positive findings, it can be said that, the decision made on applying the one-group pretest-posttest design proposed by the researcher was a success and blended learning is seems as one of the essential learning environment that can be applied in motivating students to learn when its advantages are considered as blended learning had a significant impact in the study and provides a lot of opportunities to explore students' needs and potentials, as well as place and time flexibility for learning (Syafii, 2016).

5. Conclusion

As many researches discussed and presented positive results of blended learning towards students' attitude, academic achievement and motivation, the use of blended learning should always closely follow the modernized development in technology especially in education. Of course, in order to take measure students' performance, the traditional way of meeting face-to-face, sitting for exams or submitting exercises are still relevant. Hopefully this research could have contributed in future

practice and the recommendations for further research is also hoped could be used to improve and filling the gap that the researcher could not get the chance to fill-up.

5.1 Implications

The findings contain both implications on theory and practical in general; mainly focus to a future research in motivation. The data from the findings can be used as a firm base for academician to reinvent the existed theory by inserting observation checklist to study people's reaction or behavior towards learning. The checklist could help academician to comprehend the exact needs for a particular group of students not even by age, but also can be categorized by skills, talents and performances for example: speaking skills. Positive findings in the research where students were motivated to learn a language, after the use of blended learning contribute to an individual professional development by encouraging participation among people to convey their respective opinions and ideas with a limited face-to-face conversation. Despite of conveying ideas, blended learning provides opportunity to develop professionalism especially to the leaders to show a good leadership; by cooperating with his/her colleague's flexible time, without interfering the quality time with family. The other implication is that, this study could give impacts to future practice especially in training the teachers. Through the statistical results, teachers develop their skills in teaching professionally by assigning more interactive assignments through virtual-class presentation; enlighten students' talents in IT-creative skills such as constructing an interesting mind-map, informative power-point presentation or develop peer-to-peer evaluation in order to build self-determination ability among students. In the end, this study will possibly help teachers to be more multi-tasking, flexible and also professional knowledgably in all aspects of teaching style; traditionally or virtually. It will enable the teachers to explore new approaches on how to assist students to achieve in academic. As for students, the importance of blended learning on motivating students to learn is one of the attempts that can be used to develop one's professionalism especially in acquiring a language as Gardner (1985) stated that the combination of attempt and desire to obtain the aim and favorable attitudes is the key factor of motivation among the language learner.

5.2 Limitations

Several limitations to this study need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size was small. The limited number of participants consisting of 60 students makes it difficult to find the significant relationships from the data as statistical tests usually require a large-scale sample size to ensure the firm significant result. Secondly, the instruments used were limited and focus on survey forms and questionnaires only because the study's main focus is to investigate the effect of blended learning on secondary school students' performance in English test so the choose of instruments must be limited according to the scope of analysis. These factors lead to a significant obstacle but the researcher found it as a challenge and an opportunity to describe a need for future research. The last limitation of this study was; lack of prior research studies about blended learning with secondary students. Only a few studies related with the effects of blended learning in Malaysian context and mainly focus to the tertiary level, not towards a secondary level of students.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the limitations and the findings of the research, as for recommendations, instead of measuring the effect of blended learning towards student's achievement, attitude or motivation to learn a language, further studies should also measure the other variables such as: increase sample size and population because the small number of sample and population somehow affected the findings because to obtain a desired level of statistical power, the sample size is necessarily needed (Anderson et al 2017). Using various instruments in testing blended learning for example online quizzes, virtual interview, an accessible resources and applicable design that can be adapted by other users and the most important is the evaluation that should be measured appropriately and valid to the accordance education system because blending learning and learning itself has generally no different impact in term of measurement, except some additional elements in it (Hart, S. 2018) and enhance teachers' fidelity in conducting blended learning such as develop a more possible programs for teachers applied by teachers when handling some kind of IT related classroom.

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