



ASEAN Journal of Education

Journal homepage: <http://aje.research.dusit.ac.th/>



A Review of Blended Learning Implementation in the English Language Classroom

Navarat Techachokwiwat*, Nutthaporn Owatnupat, Chayapon Chomchaiya & Chatkaew Jai-ngam,

Suan Dusit University, Bangkok, 10300 Thailand.

Article info

Article history:

Received: 5 October 2020

Revised: 11 December 2020

Accepted: 30 December 2020

Keywords:

Blended learning, Online learning,
English language teaching

Abstract

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, technology has played a vital role in instruction at most educational institutions. With the help of technology, the instruction can be considered as being implemented with the Blended Learning (BL) approach, as widely done during school closures due to the pandemic spread, as mandated by the government. This article presents various definitions of blended learning (BL) and different BL models implemented in three different contexts, to provide some 'valuable and unique insight' into BL with 'wider implications', through the review of both theoretical and practical implementation of blended learning. According to the reviews of relevant studies and three particular BL context, BL instruction has many advantages, including increasing learning flexibility, learning motivation and developing four language skills, enabling teachers to offer immediate feedback in assessment and the ability to manipulate content, as well as ensuring all-time availability of lesson content and larger amounts of content for learners' self-study. In addition, BL is also found to be beneficial for enhancing higher learning outcomes, promoting communication between teachers and learners and constructing knowledge and skills among teachers and learners. In other words, it is possible to implement BL approach in various instructional contexts and content areas, particularly in English language courses with both general and specific content and language skills, as in the classes of reading skill, translation and literature mentioned in this article. Besides, BL instruction also highlights unexpected situations such as a paradox of the flexibility of content and its manipulation by teachers, learners' less enthusiasm in communication due to their learning autonomy, impeded online communication due to complication of online tools, platforms and systems and lack of IT literacy and also reverse results of seem-to-be problems among teachers and learners. In conclusion, no technological tools or instruction can claim to be the most effective for blended learning instruction, as discussed in this article. However, the primary key to enhance learning is, in fact, the appropriate blend on both technology and instruction that mostly suits each learning context and students' needs.

* Corresponding Author
e-mail: c.chomchaiya@gmail.com

Introduction

Over the past three decades, digital technology and media have proliferated our society and have significantly altered our ways of life. Digital technology has also played a prominent role in Thai educational policy. Since 2001, the Ministry of Education has emphasized the integration of technology management as a strategy to develop learners' thinking ability and ability to do work and adjust themselves to changes in the society.

Hence, in this digital age, face-to-face instruction solely is no longer sufficient to help students excel in their learning. At present, blended learning, or BL, which combines the elements of face-to-face teaching with technology, is one of the promising approaches for classroom learning. It has been predicted that "...in the future blended learning takes a leading place among traditional modes of education and becomes one of the main competitive advantages of higher education institutions providing educational services based on the Internet resources and face-to-face communication" (Matukhin & Zhitkova, 2015).

In fact, BL is critically important now more than ever, due to the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic. In an attempt to control the spread of this new virus, educational institutions were closed while digital technology and online learning resources were utilized instead of face-to-face instruction to ensure the continuity of learning for students during school closures. BL approach is particularly advantageous during this time with social distancing as an important measure for preventing the spread of the virus since students can sometimes attend virtual or online classes instead of face to face encounters.

This article presents a comprehensive summary of blending learning approach with insightful understanding of its definitions and implementation while demonstrating the different attempts to implement the BL approach, to cope with this particular educational disruption caused by the unexpected school closures due to the pandemic. The three BL models implemented in three English classrooms are presented with uniqueness in nature, in their own particular context, content areas and learning objectives, though similarly situated in English language classroom settings.

Since this article is an academic article, the authors start their discussion with a critical and constructive analysis of published literature on blended learning with particular attention given to the studies implementing

BL instruction in English language courses. Thus, the discussion centers around the literature review to offer the working definitions, the different modes and the advantages and disadvantages of BL implementation in English language classes, as well as some guidelines on how to implement this approach through summary, analysis and comparison of intervention outcomes. Followed by the discussion, implications and suggestions and the conclusion. Then, the authors propose three BL modes conducted separately, with the identification of specific gaps or problems and recommendations for future research.

Definitions of blended learning

Blended learning (BL), which is also known as hybrid learning¹ or mixed mode learning, has become one of the main interests in many fields of education including teaching methodology, educational technology and English language teaching (Picciano, Dziuban, & Graham, 2013). It has been maintained that BL is beneficial for language learners to have more opportunities to acquire knowledge and practice the target language on their own paces (Bonk & Graham, 2006; Klimová & Pikhart, 2015). The term "blended learning" has been defined in various aspects by research scholars. Graham, Allen, & Ure (2003) maintained that the mostly used terms for BL are categorized into three terms, namely a combination of delivery media in learning, of methods of instruction and of online and face-to-face instruction. In relation to this, Driscoll (2003) has classified BL into five broader categories including a combination of different types of online technology in the instruction, a combination of pedagogical approaches with/without the enhancement of technology, a combination of learning technology with face-to-face instruction, and a combination of technology with work tasks to promote both learning and working.

Most of the studies in Thailand defined blended learning as a combination of online and face-to-face instructions, as found in the studies by Nilsook & Wannapirun (2012), Simasathiansophon (2014), Chomchaiya (2014). The Face-to-Face Driver model has been mostly applied to Thai schools and universities, as addressed in the curriculum that the instruction should

¹ Hybrid learning seems to be similar to blended learning, however, with some subtle differences. Blended learning seems to emphasise 'the combination of offline and online instruction' while hybrid learning seems to focus on 'a balance that promotes the best experience for individual students' (The Pennsylvania State University, 2020; Cloudshare Inc., 2020).

be done in the classroom. However, during the Covid-19 Pandemic, schools and universities were closed, which resulted in some changes of instructional models and allowed blended learning to be embedded in classroom instruction. In this article, the term, ‘blended learning’ is defined as “the combination of previous instruction and online instruction in different models” (Horn & Staker, 2011). This definition encompasses the idea that BL is not merely limited to a combination between face-to-face instruction and online learning. In contrast, BL models can also be delivered only online without face-to-face instruction. Hence, the phrase, “previous instruction” is used to avoid such limitation to face-to-face instruction. In addition, it should be noted that the combination between two modes of learning can be varied, depending on individual learning subjects, contexts, objectives, as well as needs and readiness of a particular educational institution.

As previously mentioned, there are many ways to combine different modes of instructions in blended learning as Horn & Staker (2011) divided BL into six models for instruction as follows:

Model 1: *Face-to-Face Driver*, the instruction is mostly conducted in the face-to-face manner, with the online learning technology used to supplement learning outside the classroom or in a lab, like the instruction at schools and universities on daily basis.

Model 2: *Rotation*, a rotation between online learning and face-to-face instruction done in classroom, for example, in a two-hour classroom, students study theories and concepts online for an hour and then study face-to-face in a latter session for application and reinforcement.

Model 3: *Flex*, the online instruction is mostly throughout the course, while traditional face-to-face is used privately or in small group sessions.

Model 4: *Online Lab*, students study online at schools without face-to-face instruction. It has been claimed that the model suits school facing teaching shortages.

Model 5: *Self Blend*, the online courses in which students study remotely. Students can choose more than one course and self-study at their own convenience.

Model 6: *Enriched virtual model*, the online learning is done with the support of teachers. In this model, students mostly study and work outside the classroom and the traditional face-to-face meeting may be conducted for checking in or organizing extracurricular activities.

These models reflect some flexible characteristics of BL as it can be adjusted to suit different pedagogical (e.g. course objectives, course content, evaluation methods, etc.), institutional (e.g. demands, policies and supports from the universities) and personal (eg. learning and teaching styles and preferences). The fact that BL can be implemented in various ways makes it useful and easy for instruction, particularly in the language contexts.

Applications and benefits of blended learning in English language teaching

To fully understand the actual applications and benefits of BL approach in English language classes, the research studies implemented with BL approach in English language teaching had been revealed. Based on the review of relevant studies, BL can be applied in both general English courses (Buran & Evseeva, 2015) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses (Banditvilai, 2016). For instance, Bataineh & Mayyas (2017) used BL to teach reading comprehension and grammar in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class at the university level while Wansaman (2015) applied BL to the teaching of reading for Higher Certificate (Basic Level of English). In writing, BL was implemented, to help students improve their English composition skills through the use of online platforms such as forums and blogs (Kardkarnklai, 2015) and Facebook (Shih, 2011). In addition, it was employed to teach English Public Speaking for college seniors majoring in English (Shih, 2010).

According to a 3-C model of the blended learning arrangement proposed by Kerres & Witt (2003), the content component is the component that makes the learning materials available to learners. When using BL instruction, the content can be delivered through various channels depending on the medium available in the institutions. Online platforms used in English language courses include e-learning lessons, Moodle, Atutor, Blogging, Facebook, Line Messenger, Twitter, etc. The content transmitted through these medias are arranged in both synchronous and asynchronous settings. In other words, the students are allowed to access the online platforms within a flexible timeframe. The students are provided with different learning materials such as the self-guided online lesson modules, streaming video content, as well as written assignments that are posted across discussion boards or social media platforms.

The online platforms are mostly employed as supplementary to the face-to-face instruction. Thus, the students mainly learn the content through classroom instruction but are also assigned to review their lessons online. For instance, Bataineh & Mayyas (2017) integrated face-to-face instruction with Moodle instructions by using in-class instruction to teach reading comprehension and grammar instruction while providing additional materials posted on Moodle as a supplement focusing on specific grammar points and reading comprehension skills based on the textbook used. Teachers also found using technology to help students practice their language skills as well as self-and peer-assessment skills and acquire feedback from others, as well as from the teachers. Shih (2011), for example, implemented the traditional face-to-face classroom instruction for one-third of a semester and Facebook, peer assessment and classroom instruction for two-thirds of the semester. It should be noted that technology was blended into the teaching of English language before, during or after the students were taught all of the necessary knowledge such as vocabulary and grammatical rules and functions. Then, they should be able to prepare, apply and recall the knowledge via their online learning. This is in accordance with Kerres & Witt (2003) who pointed out that the content component should include the knowledge consisting of facts or rules the learners should recall.

In relation to communication component, BL also offers interpersonal communication between learners or learners and teachers (Kerres & Witt, 2003). It was found that most of the studies offered opportunities for peer-to-peer communication as well as learners and teachers communication. Online platforms when used effectively could provide channels for bidirectional communication since many of these platforms offer functions such as blogs, logs, and forums in which teachers and students can communicate and make comments. For instance, the forum component of Moodle allows students to communicate with the teachers (Bataineh & Mayyas, 2017) while the social media platforms offers the comment feature for each post which is convenient for students to assess and leave comments (Shih, 2011). It was beneficial for students to discuss with their peers as well as viewing the discussion and their peers' replies because it encouraged them to post replies and learn from their peers' errors which were corrected by the teacher (Bataineh & Mayyas, 2017). This is in line with Kerres & Witt (2003) who

suggested that for blended learning to be successful, it is crucial to encourage students to participate in discussions, to formulate and receive feedback in discursive settings. In addition, online applications such as Line Messenger were found to be useful in providing opportunities for interaction between lecturer and learners and learners and learners.

The last component of the 3-C model is the construction component "that facilitates and guides individual as well as cooperative learning activities to actively operate on learning tasks (or assignments) with different degrees of complexity (from multiple-choice to projects or problem based learning)" (Kerres & Witt, 2003). The procedure and application of knowledge acquirement that include both individual and group work varied along the studies being investigated since these studies were different in terms of learning goals and objectives, characteristics of content, target groups and situational / institutional demands. However, the studies employing group assignments mostly received positive feedback from the participants due to the opportunity to work collaboratively with others and learn from others. In his research, Shih (2011) mentioned that his participants found group work beneficial, especially with peer's comments and assessments that constructed and refined their knowledge and skills through social interactions in a virtual environment.

In terms of the benefits of blended learning approach in English language teaching, scholars have provided reasons why the implementation of BL has been proposed in language classrooms with the following advantages:

- BL has changed the role of learners to be more active as they are assigned to do tasks to persuade them to practice reading, writing, speaking, listening and thinking (Hancock & Wong, 2012).
- BL provides learners opportunities to study in the classroom or at their own pace as it combines both online and traditional face-to-face instruction. Besides, it has been proved to increase autonomous learning (Banditvilai, 2016; Bataineh & Mayyas, 2017; Kardkarnklai, 2015; Matukhin & Zhitkova, 2015; Shih, 2010; Wansaman, 2015) since BL provides learners with more flexibility and convenience to work at their own pace and time (Poon, 2013) as well as more time to work by themselves. Furthermore, since BL instruction enables learners to learn from various channels and learning materials accessible in a variety of modes, BL has been claimed to enhance better learning outcomes

compared with solely traditional face-to-face instruction or online instruction (Hancock & Wong, 2012; Shand & Glassett Farrelly, 2017). In fact, the claim that BL instruction helps students to perform better has been confirmed in several studies, particularly when applied in English language courses as the students were found to acquire higher English skills and performance after learning through BL instruction (Banditvilai, 2016; Bataineh & Mayyas, 2017; Buran & Evseeva, 2015; Erben, Ban, & Castañeda, 2008; Kardkarnklai, 2015; Shih, 2010, 2011; Wansaman, 2015).

- The interactive learning content of BL enhances learning motivation (Banditvilai, 2016; Buran & Evseeva, 2015; Kardkarnklai, 2015; Shih, 2010, 2011; Wansaman, 2015) and accountability of instruction through authentic contexts (Blake, 2013) and authentic assessment such as the integration of games, online learning and videos (Graziano & Feher, 2016; Hancock & Wong, 2012). For instance, Buran, & Evseeva (2015) applied BL approach with the teaching of a general English course, in which e-learning of writing essays, making presentations or discussing different problems required in the module were integrated with peer-to-peer assessment using defined criteria or rubrics. The research result indicated that the students' interest and motivation to learn the English language increased because the course was tailored to suit the learners' realistic needs.

- BL suits different learning styles of learners and it helps instructors to organize learning content so well that their instructional management can meet the learners' needs (Chomchaiya 2014; Hancock & Wong, 2012).

- In terms of cost management, another possible benefit of BL is the reduction of educational cost with the higher learning achievement rate.

- BL provides learners and teachers with more flexibility and accessibility without affect to the traditional face-to-face instruction (Hancock & Wong, 2012). Even though BL allows students to learn independently, students were still provided with constant feedback from teachers. As mentioned earlier that various online platforms offered comment accesses through which both teachers and learners were able to give comments and feedback. Therefore, students were able to receive immediate response and feedback that could help them realize their mistakes and improve their language skills.

On the other hand, there are limitations and challenges on the instruction of BL as follows:

- The technical resources used in BL, like technological tools, need to be user-friendly, reliable, and up to date as it has some impacts on learning (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). Shih (2010) also found that technical problems as well as students' insufficient knowledge of computer media applications and lack of appropriate hardware, software and related equipment, might affect students' interest, motivation, and performance. Thus, learners and teachers' limited IT literacy could become the learning barriers for the implementation of BL (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Chomchaiya, 2014). In fact, problems relating to technological resources seem to be the most commonly found among studies implementing BL approach in English language teaching. These problems included the improper conditions of computers or network (Banditvilai, 2016), the lack of adequate technological infrastructure (Bataineh, & Mayyas, 2017) and the low signal of the Internet, which delayed the interaction (Shih, 2010).

- Group work activities are difficult to conduct in online learning environment. Therefore, it has been insisted by most research scholars that BL should be conducted in small groups (Yalavaç & Samur, 2016).

- Although technology enables teachers to videotape the instruction and leave the video clips available on-air for the students' self-study, some learners may fall behind as they do not watch the videos on regular basis.

- Although the Internet has become more accessible, some learners still have limited accesses to the internet for many reasons, namely financial difficulties and the remote area where the Internet signal is low or unavailable (Chomchaiya, 2014). For instance, Shih (2010) implemented blended learning in a Public Speaking course in which he asked students to upload their videos on blogs and found that if the students' internet speed was slow or the size of the video was too large, uploading the videos can be very time-consuming. This problem can demotivate students to learn and participate in the activities.

- Teachers need to spend a lot of time and efforts on the BL instruction including the design of the course, the time to be familiar with technology and the method of BL instruction (Buran & Evseeva, 2015; Chen & Lu, 2013).

- Some learners are not ready for BL instruction and seem to be more familiar with the traditional face-to-face instruction. For example, some prefer to take notes and read the learning content from books rather

than to use online learning contents (Chen & Lu, 2013; Yalavaç & Samur, 2016). Some studies also revealed that their participants were not familiar with and unwilling to online learning because they felt that online courses increase their mental and physical workload (Buran & Evseeva, 2015).

- Some online learning resources may not be interactive enough to motivate learners' learning as the use of e-book (Chen & Lu, 2013).

- Although there are various types of BL assessment such as online discussion, online quizzes, it is still very difficult to avoid plagiarism as it was noted that students copied works of others or available online sources (Chen & Lu, 2013). In addition, online assessment such as making corrections and comments on Facebook can be discouraging and embarrassing for some students as Shih (2011) found that the online correction could negatively affect the students' writing skill. In another study in which Facebook was applied, a negative effect relating to plagiarism was also reported as some students copied answers from others were already shown on Facebook while some students were confused about the content they were learning as the discussion and replies from previous weeks were still shown on the Facebook page whenever someone posted their comments and answers (Wansaman, 2015).

- The access to online instruction can lead to some adverse effects, like students' distraction to the lesson and attention to social media, instead. Shih (2011) mentioned that his students had so much fun using Facebook that they forgot to do their assignments. Apart from that, the overuse of online platforms may cause students to lose their attention to the class interaction and enjoy online socialization rather than attending online classes.

Implementation of blended learning in English language classrooms

To prevent the COVID-19 pandemic's spread among universities in Thailand, BL instruction was introduced to most courses in universities around Thailand. Courses have been redesigned, using ICT technology in many aspects, including the teachers such as the development through skilling, upskilling and reskilling teachers for effective ICT use, to enhance their learners' learning. Different learning sources and applications online, like Webinar, learning applications and learning management systems have been included in instruction (Office of National Higher Education

Science Research and Innovation Policy Council, 2020). This section reflects the perspectives of the English language lecturers on the implementation of three different modes of BL instruction when the pandemic first hit Thailand in 2019.

1. Online (instruction) and on site (discussion)

In a public university in Bangkok, online instruction was used as the main instruction for the whole semester of an English course, English in Communication, namely for 10 weeks, while the in-class or face-to-face instruction was used as the supplement, with face-to-face discussion, presentations and exams. According to the learning condition limited by COVID 19 pandemic, the Online Driver model, the integration of online learning and face-to-face learning in which computer technology and information technology are vital parts of learning (Horn & Staker, 2011) has been implemented. The course was mainly aimed to develop both English listening and speaking skills of 30 students in the third year of the undergraduate level.

In the designed program, the tutorials were instructed online as the synchronous learning, using a Cisco Webex meeting for each three-hour class per week. During the tutorials, the teacher organized live instruction online, while videos were being recorded for the unattended students to self-study the lessons. If there were any questions raised during the instruction, the learners were able to ask questions by speaking through their microphone and typing the questions on a live chat box. Learning content and related materials were downloadable from the Cloud storage. The online assessment which provided immediate feedback was used for quizzes. The face-to-face meeting enabled the teacher to provide guidance on the assigned projects and to give feedback to the assigned presentations. In order to be social distant, each face-to-face meeting was divided into two sessions with a half of the class attending each session at a time. In fact, the online asynchronous learning was integrated as a part of the program, for example participants could leave questions on the Line application or send emails to the teacher. This kind of learning is currently considered as on-air instruction (Prachachart.net, 2020).

In the personal contention regarding the implementation of a blended learning approach using the Online Driver model in a language classroom, it provided great opportunities for teachers to teach from wherever they are. The type of blended learning

instruction benefits students in remote areas where there are fewer opportunities for teachers to frequently meet students in person. In addition, the use of online meeting programs is no longer the main issue for the financial burden as there are many free programs for teachers and they are compatible with many devices including computers and mobile phones. However, there were some technical problems with the internet signal which collapsed during the instruction and another problem was the familiarity of students to use some programs during the instruction. Therefore, it is suggested that the observation on the learners' experiences on the use of online learning should be assessed, then it enables teachers to select the most appropriate both online synchronous and online asynchronous appropriately.

2. Online (instruction and evaluation and assessment) and on-air (supplementary materials)

In the second context of instruction, a literary course provided for the second-year students in the English major was mainly reformed with the BL approach, in terms of information delivery and teaching methods, with the help of technology, like technological tools and platforms. Prior to the crisis, the course was instructed with the Face-to-Face Driver form, or Model 1 of BL instruction (Horn & Taker, 2011) for the first few weeks out of 15. Later, the instruction was switched to full online instruction, as recommended as Horn and Taker's Model 4, Online Lab (2011), with all the instructions and classroom activities conducted online, but both on and off the university's webpage, WBSC. This BL implementation was conducted with the purpose to deliver all the lesson contents and to build up the students' cognitive skills, like analytical and critical skills required as the basic skills for literary analysis, as follows.

With the help of all applications available both on and off the webpage during this courses, all components of instruction, like course details, lesson content and evaluation and assessment resources, were provided for the students synchronously and asynchronously online. The BL implementation in this context was conducted with three major parts: instruction; self-study; and evaluation. First, the instruction was conducted online (Khan, 1997) every single week, using the online meeting application, Zoom and the chat application, Line, to make the communication effective. This was not much different from the face-to-face mode. During the instruction online, some components were synchronously given to the students. Then, in the second section, the students were assigned to read the novels

and do the relevant tasks assigned by the instructor in the self-study section. To complete this, the students needed to sign in at the WBSC website to find all teaching materials and assignments the instructor had uploaded, anytime beyond the online classroom period. This process was similar to Horn and Taker's Model 4, the Online Lab (2011), in which the students work on all provided assignments anytime on their own, or what is called on-air (Prachachart.net, 2020). Afterwards, in the third section, the students would also need to attend the quizzes, the midterm test and the final exam online. The quizzes, the midterm test and the final exam were scheduled at the same time for the whole class, to prevent cheating. With the help of the online tools, like the ones at the WBSC website, all test items were shuffled with shuffled choices or supplied answers, with reliable and valid test items. With this particular BL model, with both Horn and Taker's Face-to-Face Driver, or Model 1 and Online Lab, or Model 4 (2011), this instruction was implemented with well-combined instructional components, to facilitate the students' learning until the end of the semester.

With such a process of instruction, this course was conducted with the three components as suggested by Kerres & Witt (2003), the content component, the communication component and the construction component, as a kind of blended learning. However, this kind of blended learning is a little different from most kinds of blended learning, namely the instruction mainly focuses on the online platforms, with everything based on the space online, both synchronously and asynchronously.

In the aspect of teaching, this mode of BL instruction facilitated both teachers and learners during the Covid-19 crisis, as follows. First, the content for both instruction and evaluation and assessment were always available on-air (Office of National Higher Education Science Research and Innovation Policy Council, 2020) at the WBSC website. The lesson content and the testing input were uploaded for students at a convenient time. Such availability of content at all time also enabled the students to self-study whenever and wherever they could. This also implies convenience in communication, which will be discussed later. Second, the content, like the lesson content and the contents for evaluation and assessment, could be developed further in the more advanced level, especially through the online platforms, as arranged by the university. Instead of providing the students with just a hard copy of some textbooks, the

content could be rearrange for instruction and evaluation or assessment and create more interactivity with the help of online tools. The contents for evaluation and assessment, like quizzes, tests and exams, could also be arranged with online tools in various versions with shuffled supplied answers, like multiple choices. This could prevent the students from copying the answers from their classmates, especially when they happened to stay together. The quizzes, tests and exams were appropriately organised into categories in different levels in order that all test items and supplied answers or choices were ready to be shuffled for each version of the quiz, test or exam. However, there were also content the instructor provided to learners about online evaluation and assessment which needed to be careful with, such as the same levels of testing content in the different versions of quizzes, tests and exams. Third, while teaching, some online applications, like Zoom, allowed the instructor to manipulate instruction by turning on each learner's camera or microphone to recheck his/her reaction. In this way, most learners could be inspected. This also indirectly forced students to perform well during the online instruction.

There were times when the students did not turn on their cameras or microphones and the instructor could not always see their reactions as when in a face-to-face classroom. So, it was not possible for the instructor to follow up their progress during the instruction. In other words, the learners were also autonomous enough to show up or not.

In the aspect of learning, there are many points worth discussing. First, the students could access all the content uploaded on the webpage anywhere and at any time they preferred. On the one hand, this facilitated the students in accessing the contents to some extent. On the other hand, the students would not be controlled by the instructor. Second, as mentioned above, the students' learning seemed to be more active because the instructor could select any student to turn on their video or microphone at any time during the lesson to interact; which forced engagement, to the classroom activities. This helped stimulate their learning well. Third, the students should have felt more secured to be interactive in such a class because they could choose to show or not to show themselves through the camera. This encouraged them to interact with less embarrassment, especially when they would possibly make any mistakes. Fourth, with the same status, all the students were all equal to have the same right to express their ideas. With the same tools,

like microphones and camera, all the students could make their voice known equally and their picture as attractive to the instructor as possible. Besides, most online tools, like Zoom, MS Teams, etc., enabled all participants to actively participate in the classroom meeting, by calling the instructor and their classmates' attention via menus, like the 'raise your hand' menu.

However, there were some problems happening before, during or after the online classroom meetings. Some students with inadequate IT literacy or any technical problems to use online application, could delay the whole classroom lesson (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Chomchaiya, 2014). In this context, the instructor needed to solve spontaneous problems happening to the students when they had problems such as signing in, using the microphone or being automatically disconnected from the online communication. Besides, when some students could not afford the high-speed Internet during the online classrooms, the instruction was also interrupted. Sometimes, students needed to turn off their camera and signed out and the whole class were also possibly forced to make a break before coming back to the meeting again. In addition, when the online communication at the university webpage was very busy, the meetings for evaluation and assessment needed to be cancelled and replaced at a later time; , such as very late in the afternoon or very early in the morning.

The overview of the combination of on-air and online BL instruction with the Face-to-Face Driver form, or Model 1 and Online Lab, Model 4 (Horn & Taker, 2011) in this context, this BL model should be considered as successful. Regarding the information, techniques and methods embedded in this BL context, this literary course was well-conducted with interactions among the instructor and the students, with all-time availability of teaching materials, learner-friendly online classroom platforms and teacher-facilitating methods of evaluation and assessment. The students could acquire knowledge and information by accessing the contents available on-air according to their convenience and autonomy. In this way, the teacher could also train the students to be responsible for their own study and independent. This promoted the students' learning skills, as generally required in literary classes like this one. In addition, other problems, like the ineffective Internet package, the lack of IT literacy among the teacher and the learners or the busy time of online communication, could be solved with cooperation from all relevant people and organizations.

3. On site and online (Instruction) plus On-Air (Supplementary Exercises)

In this mode, Model 1 of BL instruction (Face-to-Face Driver) as suggested by Horn & Taker (2011) was implemented. Unlike the first mode of BL instruction, this English language course did not aim to help students improve their general English communication skills. The objectives of the course were, however, to provide students with specific knowledge regarding the concepts, principles and theories of translation and to have them practice translating at sentence and paragraph levels in this compulsory course entitled “Principles of Translation” designed for second year English major students only.

As stated earlier that BL in this article is defined as a combination of previous instruction and online instruction in different models. This course also features such combination between two modes of instruction namely face-to-face instruction and online teaching with online exercises to supplement learning outside the classroom. As mentioned by, the most important goal of BL design is to find the most effective combination of the two modes of learning for the individual learning subjects, contexts and objectives. Hence, it is worth discussing how the instructors combined the face-to-face instruction and online learning and how it affected students’ learning of specific English language skills.

The course was taught through face-to-face instruction for 10 weeks before switching to online teaching for 5 weeks (3 hours a week). In addition to the online teaching, students were asked to do supplementary translation exercises provided online, so that they could practice translating from Thai into English and English into Thai on their own outside of the classroom. The exercises were divided into 2 sections: English to Thai and Thai to English translations. Each section was divided into topics based on different grammatical structures in Thai and English causing problems for translation such as passive voice, prepositions and conjunctions, modifiers and clauses, order of adjectives and tenses. There were 10 exercises altogether, including 6 topics for the English into Thai translation and 4 topics for the Thai into English translation. Each exercise consisted of 10 sentences with 4 translation choices each from which students had to choose one as the most accurate and appropriate answer. The exercises were assigned via Google Forms in which students were given a link to access each exercise.

Prior to the exercise assignments, the students were taught the theories and principles of translation as well as how to translate these problematic sentences in the classroom before switching to the online instruction using the free online meeting applications such as Zoom and Cisco Webex. In fact, the original plan was to use the online platform as supplementary to the face-to-face instruction. It was after the students had learned the theories and concepts of translation that they were asked to practice translating via Google Forms. This combination is similar to that of Bataineh & Mayyas (2017) in which face-to-face instruction was mainly used while additional materials were posted online as a supplement.

Taking into account, the 3-C model of BL proposed by Kerres & Witt (2003), the content component was made available to learners using the medium available in the institutions including applications like Zoom, Cisco Webex and Google Forms with the application of Line app for making announcements and appointment and e-mail for submitting their assignments.

As for the communication component of the 3-model, students were able to communicate in the classroom or during the online instruction via online meeting applications. However, it was more difficult to engage students in answering and giving opinions when teaching online because they had to turn off their cameras to avoid the delayed teaching due to the slow speed of the internet connection. These problems were likely to occur when students turned on their videos at once. As a result, the peer-to-peer communication was also rather limited when employing online instruction. Even though, it was supported by most research scholars that BL should be conducted in small groups to allow for group work activities (Yalavaç & Samur, 2016), it was difficult to work with small groups of students due to the institution policies. In other words, the number of students enrolling in a course was mainly determined by the university administrators. As a result, more than 40 students attended each class, which made it problematic to manage group work activities due to the number of students as well as the lack of adequate online tools and applications at that time. Hence, the communication component was mainly between teacher and students with the focus on giving feedback and corrections on their translations. Despite all these obstacles, however, the researcher put effort into providing the students with as many opportunities as possible to communicate and work collaboratively through discussion and sharing their

ideas in relation to their translation assignments as a whole class. Sometimes, students were asked to work on their translation assignments as a group and submitted them via e-mail. By doing this, students could work collaboratively with others and learn from others.

For this translation course, it was found that after combining online technology, the teacher had more time in the classroom to focus on delivering the content and offering comments on the students' translation at paragraph level instead of sentence level because students could practice translating at the sentence level on their own. Translation at the paragraph level was more difficult since students needed to understand not only the individual sentences, but also the relationship between those sentences. As a result, it is crucial for students to receive direct comments and feedback from teachers regarding their translations at this high level of text structure because it was more complex than sentence-level translation. For this reason, the classroom period was mostly reserved for content delivering and commenting and discussing the students' translation at paragraph level.

From the students' point of view, they also found online translation exercises useful for practicing their translation skill at the sentence level. Based on the students' interview, some students mentioned that the online translation exercises allowed them to translate without time pressure unlike the in-class exercises where there was a time limit for completing each exercise. In addition, they were able to receive immediate feedback including their scores and the translation corrections once they finished each exercise online. The students found it beneficial as it helped them to understand their strengths and weaknesses in translation and learn from their mistakes.

This type of blended learning in which online technology was combined as a complement for face-to-face instruction, however, also had some disadvantages. It was also found that some students did not complete the exercises on their own but copied the answers from others. Besides, some also complained about the heavy workload with a lot of exercises and assignments they needed to complete in and out of the classroom. Technical problems were also found as some students reported having problems accessing Google Forms while some had problems with their Internet connection and the use of inappropriate devices for completing the exercises.

Discussion

This article highlights how BL has been used in English language classrooms and addresses the current needs for BL in language classrooms, the literature reviews of prior studies on BL Approach in language classrooms, the presentations of particular BL implementation in different modes during the Covid-19 pandemic from the authors' perspective and the discussion on theoretical and pedagogical implications and further suggestions.

In terms of formats, this review of three different BL classroom contexts of English-major courses showed different modes of online instruction (Driscoll, 2003). In the first classroom context (4.1), the Online Driver model was used in the course focusing on two English-language skills, the listening and speaking skills, with the combination of synchronous online instruction and traditional face-to-face instruction for discussion. In the second context (4.2), the presentation of on-air instructional materials was integrated into the online instruction for a literary course, which emphasised more on the knowledge the learners would gain than the skills. Meanwhile in the third context (4.3), the instruction embedded the presentation of on-air instructional materials in the onsite instruction, for a translation course, which focused on both knowledge and skills in language learning. These three BL contexts maintained the definitions of blended learning as the mixed mode learning (Picciano, Dziuban, & Graham, 2013) in various aspects (Graham, Allen, & Ure, 2003).

In terms of content, as mentioned in the issue of content component (Kerres & Witt, 2003), the BL classroom context above disclosed some interesting points, as follows. First, the teachers and the learners gained benefits from the content available online, both synchronously and asynchronously. According to the first context, students who did not attend some classes could also learn from the video clips recorded by the teacher on the Cisco Webex. This was very convenient and useful for all students, especially the ones who did not follow the lessons and did not watch the video clips on a regular basis, as suggested. Both the teacher and the learners could make use of the information at their convenience, any time. Second, the amount of lesson content was not limited, as discussed in the third context (4.3). The teacher was satisfied with the increasing amount of lesson content as well as the amount of feedback she could provide for the students, due to the increasing amount of time the students could spend on

the content and the feedback on their own outside of the classroom. The lesson content and the feedback given to the students did not need to be limited in the classroom period. The teacher prepared and created as much information as possible, available for the learners on the webpage. Third, the content, both for instruction and evaluation and assessment, could appear in different forms, especially in a more motivating way to learners, with the help of online tools, like Zoom, Google Forms and etc., as discussed in the second and the third contexts (4.2 & 4.3). Fourth, the availability of content could be manipulated. Sometimes, the teacher could decide to keep some content unavailable, for some specific reasons such as during a quiz or a test, in order to prevent cheating or plagiarism, as mentioned in the second BL context (4.2). The teacher could hide some instructional content from the webpage during a quiz or a test. This is different from the availability of hard copies of instructional materials which cannot be deleted from the students. So, this issue seemed to contradict with Chen and Lu's argument (2013) about the difficulties in avoiding plagiarism. This implies that this well-prepared classroom management is one way to decrease the problem of cheating in the online classroom. In addition, the appropriate use of the technological tools also enhances classroom teaching and learning (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004) and this may also minimize plagiarism.

In terms of communication component, the communication between learners and learners or between learners and teachers can also be considered in two opposite ways. On the one hand, the communication seemed to be well-promoted due to the fact that the teacher and the learners did not need to spend a lot of time and budget on preparing to meet up for their communication in class, as referred to in the first context (4.1). Teachers and students' interpersonal communication could be simply promoted online (Kerres & Witt, 2003), particularly with the advancement of online meeting applications and social media platforms that allowed learners and teachers opportunities to actively communicate via these platforms. However, on the other hand, the communication among teachers and students might not be very well promoted to some extent because, with BL implementation, the teacher and the students might also be spoiled with convenience and autonomy they gained from the nature of blended learning. The students could do anything at any time, unnecessarily synchronously with others, except for their weekly classes, which took place just once a week.

Consequently, some learners might be less active to communicate with their classmates than the time when they attended the face-to-face classrooms, as suggested by Wansaman (2015). Besides, it was also possible that online communication might not be completely effective when there were some technical problems, like the low Internet speed, the busy period of evaluation season or the lack of IT literacy among teachers and learners. So, this also points to some interesting aspects about how to improve the practice of BL classroom, with the focus on learners' enthusiasm and solutions to IT literacy and technical problems.

In terms of the construction component, which referred to the application of knowledge gained in different situations (Kerres & Witt, 2003), with BL implementation, learners were encouraged to build on their understanding and seek knowledge on the information they obtained from the lesson content. The learners also had opportunities to select what was useful and helpful to their learning. Besides, some learners were able to develop abilities and skills such as cognitive skills when they were interactive with the teachers, their classmates, the lessons and the assignments their teachers provided for them, as mentioned in the second and the third context (4.2. & 4.3, respectively). It is quite important for students to participate in discussion and receive feedback, as in the BL contexts in 4.2 and 4.3. In Acemian's study, the learners could even make sensible decisions on the choices of instructions. This implies that the construction of cognitive skills, like critical skills, was also developed during such BL instruction. Likewise, even when the learners could ask questions during the instruction and were brave enough to respond, both verbally and non-verbally, online, this was already a starting point of their cognitive skill development. When learners could ask a question, this means they started analysing, criticising and managing to deal with information and ideas. So, this is the beginning of constructive learning in discursive setting (Kerres & Witt, 2003).

As previously discussed in the communication area, due to some variables, like the lack of IT literacy, the learning through BL mode might not be achieved up to the degree expected (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Chomchaiya, 2014). Optimistically, such a barrier might also stimulate relevant people, like the teachers and the learners, to overcome the difficulties and develop their IT literacy. So, this might be another kind of constructive learning.

Implications and suggestions

This review of the three different BL contexts in an English classroom practice at the tertiary level, disclosed some interesting implications, both theoretically and practically. In terms of theory, various aspects of how the concepts of blended learning, or hybrid learning, could be useful in classroom practice, through different perspectives of instructors keen in different areas of English-language teaching such as in linguistics, translation and literature. Issues followed what has been mentioned from time to time in most resources about BL, like possibly different formats of blended learning, all-time availability of content for learners, larger amounts of content for learners' self-study, manipulation of content by teachers, promotion of learning outcomes, promoted communication among teachers and learners and construction of knowledge and skill among teachers and learners. These concepts were elaborated in the real classroom context and considered as possibly useful, as previously discussed in this review.

However, in practice, the investigation of BL classroom implementations in the 'natural setting' in everyday situations, as in this review, with in-depth information in these particular context revealed some 'valuable and unique insight' and 'wider implications', with detail, as follows. First, other possible formats of BL classroom contexts are also possible, such as a combination of on-air resource of content and onsite instruction, as in the second context (4.2). Second, the amount of instructional content and assignments could be increased for the learners' sake regarding their autonomy in terms of time and place. Third, there was a paradox of the flexibility of content available during the instruction and the self-study time and its strict manipulation by teachers during the evaluation and assessment. Sometimes, the lesson content were available any time but were also strictly blocked at a particular period of time, to prevent learners' cheating during evaluation and assessment periods. This issue was opposite to what has previously been proposed in the area of online learning, namely cheating could hardly be avoided online (Chen & Lu, 2013) and this a way to fill the gap of how and why the availability of instructional resources is not always useful. Fourth, instead of communication promotion, it was also possible for some learners to be less active in communication, due to their autonomy, which might bring some negative effects to the learners themselves. Fifth, with the complication of online tools, platforms and systems, the online

communication in instruction could also be impeded with the lack of IT literacy among teachers and learners and other technical problems that resulted from teachers and learners' inadequate affordance in life. Sixth, some issues which seemed to be a problem could also turn to be advantageous to BL implementation, like the lack of IT literacy which might turn relevant people, like teachers and learners, to be more active and persevere through their difficulties with finally constructive learning.

With the detailed discussion and the proposed implications above, there are some suggestions the authors of this article would like to propose for possible useful information, as follows. First, for any investigation in BL implementation, especially in the English-language teaching context, there are many interesting areas of research studies, like appropriate technological tools and resources which are worth investigating further, especially in the BL contexts (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). Second, with different areas of ELT, different studies with different characteristics of research methodology applied could be conducted, however, with different focuses on nature of knowledge and skills learners would gain as their learning outcomes, as suggested that in each research context a different finding might reveal something unique. Third, researcher on BL implementation, as well as on other areas of studies, should beware of some trivial data emerging during their studies, especially with possible data by-products. Finally, the perspectives of authors as English language lecturers on the implementation of BL in the classroom were mainly highlighted in the article, which might bring bias information. As a result the further data collection on the language learners' perspectives should also be administered to find the right blend of BL in a particular classroom setting.

Conclusion

With all the detail above, the review of different versions of BL implementation in three classroom contexts revealed interesting information which emerged from the real practice of teaching English as a foreign language, in both general English courses (Buran & Evseeva, 2015) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses (Banditvilai, 2016), in a public university in Thailand. The implementations of BL approach in these English courses offered at tertiary level have presented different modes of learning with online instruction which were differently elaborated in different classroom

contexts, however, with a lot of information worth considering, as discussed above.

Besides, the discussion in different sections, from Section 1 to Section 6, in this article also reflects ideas which might be valuable to people in the fields of education, ELT, online learning, ICT, etc., as follows. First, with the detailed information obtained from the three different contexts of how BL instructions could be implemented, no matter how, it is quite impossible for instructors, researchers or relevant people to ignore the description with in-depth information gained from any particular context of instructions or research studies.. With no attention to small details discovered in each of the three instructional contexts, some useful but unexpected information would not have been realised and become useful. So, it is quite necessary for any relevant people to pay attention to all or most relevant details which would probably affect anything or anyone in the particular context later, as in classrooms or research settings. Second, with the implemented instances of the tailor-made combination of any components in these three instructional contexts which did not follow any fixed and particular BL models ever proposed before, so as to solve the problems resulting from the pandemic spread, it reflects the idea that any mix-and-match could be possible. This suggests that any investigation, examination or testing of anything useful in instruction, research studies, etc., not be too fixed, but quite flexible. It is challenging to try new ideas as long as it seems to be working in any situation at school, at work or in everyday life. By this way, any intervention figured out should not be constrained, by just following any traditional concepts or ways of action. In contrast, observations, investigations or examinations of instructions and research studies should be able to be conducted with no or rare restrictions. Lastly, as the final remarks, it is hoped that the review in this article should widen the readers' perspectives in instruction and research conduct, especially in the areas of languages, English and English language teaching, so there should be more attempts with achievements in these fields of study.

References

- Banditvilai, C. (2016). Enhancing students' language skills through blended learning. *Electronic Journal of e-Learning*, 14(3), 220-229.
- Bataineh, R. F., & Mayyas, M. B. (2017). The utility of blended learning in EFL reading and grammar: A case for Moodle. *Teaching English with Technology*, 17(3), 35-49.
- Blake, R. (2013). *Brave new digital classroom: Technology and foreign language learning*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Buran, A., & Evseeva, A. (2015). Prospects of blended learning implementation at technical university. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 206, 177-182.
- Chen, S., & Lu, Y. (2013, June). *The negative effects and control of blended learning in university*. In 2013 the International Conference on Education Technology and Information.
- Chomchaiya, C. (2014). *An investigation into the development of English language reading comprehension among Thai undergraduate students using an online blended learning approach*. [Doctoral dissertation, Curtin University]. Curtin University databased.
- Driscoll, M. (2003). *Blended learning: Let's get beyond the hype*. Retrieved 2020, August, 10, from http://www-07.ibm.com/services/pdf/blended_learning.pdf
- Erben, T., Ban, R., & Castañeda, M. (2008). *Teaching English language learners through technology*. New York: Routledge.
- Garrison, D. R., & Kanuka, H. (2004). Blended learning: Uncovering its transformative potential in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 7(2), 95-105.
- Graham, C.R., Allen, S., & Ure, D. (2003) *Blended Learning Environment: A Review of the Research Literature*. Unpublished Manuscript, Provo, UT.
- Graziano, K.J., & Feher, L. (2016). A dual placement approach to online student teaching. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 16(4), 495-513.
- Hancock, S., & Wong, T. (2012). *Blended Learning*. Retrieved 2012, July 31, from http://sites.wiki.ubc.ca/etec510/Blended_Learning#cite_note-3
- Horn, M. B., & Staker, H. (2011). *The rise of K-12 blended learning* (Innosight Institute white paper). Retrieved 2012, October 12, from <http://www.inno-sightinstitute.org/media-room/publications/education-publications/the-rise-of-k-12-blended-learning/>
- Kardkarnklai, U. (2015). Hybrid learning design and effective components of e-learning in English writing course. *Silpakorn University Journal*, 35(1), 1-31.
- Kerres, M., & Witt, C. D. (2003). A didactical framework for the design of blended learning arrangements. *Journal of Educational Media*, 28, 101-114.
- Khan, B. (1997). Web-based instruction: What is it and why is it? In B. H. Khan (Ed.), *Web-based instruction* (pp. 5-18). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.
- Klímová, B., & Píkhart, M. (2019, September). *Blended learning approach in English language teaching—Its benefits, challenges, and perspectives*. In International Symposium on Emerging Technologies for Education (pp. 293-298). Springer, Cham.
- Matukhin, D., & Zhitkova, E. (2015). Implementing blended learning technology in higher professional education. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 206, 183-188.

- Nilsook, P., & Wannapirun, P. (2012). *Blended e-learning activities for the Information and Innovation Management course: Its outcomes of graduate students at Bangkok-Thonburi University*. The Proceedings of International e-Learning Conference 2012 (IEC2012) "Smart Innovations in Education and Lifelong Learning", June 14-15, IMPACT, Muang Thong Thani, Thailand. Retrieved 2016, January 10, from <http://support.thaicyberu.go.th/proceeding/proceedingIEC2012.pdf>
- Office of National Higher Education Science Research and Innovation Policy Council. (2020). *Major changes in Thai education anticipated after the COVID-19 pandemic* (Online). Retrieved 2020, August 10, from <https://www.nxpo.or.th/th/en/4841/>
- Picciano, A. G., Dziuban, C., & Graham, C. R. (2013). *Blended learning: Research perspectives*. New York, NY: Routledge Publication.
- Poon, J. (2013). Blended learning: An institutional approach for enhancing students' learning experiences. *Journal of online learning and teaching*, 9(2), 271-288.
- Prachachart.net. (2020). Regular online learning: OBEC launching 3 forms for schools to choose. Retrieved 2020, August 2, from <https://www.prachachat.net/education/news-466468>.
- Shand, K., & Glassett Farrelly, S. (2017). Using blended teaching to teach blended learning: Lessons learned from preservice teachers in an instructional methods course. *Journal of Online Learning Research*, 3(1), 5–30.
- Shih, R. C. (2010). Blended learning using video-based blogs: Public speaking for English as a second language students. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 26(6), 884-897.
- Shih, R. C. (2011). Can web 2.0 technology assist college students in learning English writing? Integrating Facebook and peer assessment with blended learning. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 27(5), 829-845.
- Simasathiansophon, N. (2014). A perspective on blended-learning approach through Course Management System: Thailand's case study. *International Journal of Information and Education Technology*, 4(2), 172-175.
- Wansaman, W. (2015). *Effects of using facebook as a medium for teaching esp reading for beginners. The degree of Master of Arts in teaching of English as an International language Prince of Songkla University*. Retrieved July 10, 2020, from <https://kb.psu.ac.th/psukb/bitstream/2016/10524/1/400851.pdf>
- Yalavaç G., & Samur Y. (2016). Students' and teachers' perceptions of after school online course. *European Journal of Contemporary Education*, 15(1), 147-162.