การเรียนรู้แบบผสมผสานในวิชาการเขียนย่อหน้าภาษาอังกฤษของนิสิตไทยระดับปริญญาตรี

Blended Learning in the English Paragraph Writing Class of Thai Undergraduates

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บทคัดย่อ

หลังการแพร่ระบาดของเชื้อไวรัสโควิด-19 นักวิชาการเห็นประโยชน์ของการเรียนออนไลน์ผ่านระบบการจัดการเรียนรู้ การเรียนรู้แบบผสมผสานจึงถูกนำมาใช้ในวิชาการเขียนย่อหน้าภาษาอังกฤษ ภาคการศึกษาที่ 2 ปีการศึกษา 2566 ในบทความนี้ ผู้เขียนทบทวนงานวรรณกรรมที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการเรียนรู้แบบผสมผสานและการพัฒนาทักษะการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษ และอธิบายถึงรูปแบบการเรียนรู้แบบผสมผสานในวิชาการเขียนย่อหน้าภาษาอังกฤษ ซึ่งแบ่งออกเป็นการสอนในห้องเรียนและการเรียนออนไลน์ร้อยละ 46.7 และ 53.3 ตามลำดับ โดยภาพรวมพบว่า การเรียนออนไลน์ผ่านระบบการจัดการเรียนรู้มีประสิทธิภาพสูง นิสิตมีความรู้เกี่ยวกับการเขียนย่อหน้าภาษาอังกฤษมากขึ้นและมีความพึงพอใจต่อระบบการจัดการเรียนรู้อย่างมาก ระบบการจัดการเรียนรู้สามารถเข้าถึงและใช้งานได้ง่ายแม้ว่าบางครั้งจะเกิดปัญหาในการเชื่อมต่อ

คำสำคัญ: การเรียนรู้แบบผสมผสาน การเขียนย่อหน้าภาษาอังกฤษ ระบบการจัดการเรียนรู้

Abstract

After the COVID-19 pandemic, educators found benefits of online learning through a learning management system (LMS). A combined learning was applied in the English paragraph writing class in the second semester of the academic year 2023. In the article, the author reviewed literature related to this type of learning and English writing skill development and explained the eclectic learning system in the English paragraph writing course, which was divided into classroom teaching and online learning at 46.7% and 53.3%, respectively. Overall, the online learning through the LMS was found to be highly effective. The students under study gained more knowledge of English paragraph writing and had a high level of satisfaction with the LMS. The LMS was easy to access and use despite having problems with connection to the system sometimes.

Keywords: Combined learning, English paragraph writing, learning management
system (LMS)

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic situation in 2020 resulted to changes in a conventional teaching method in Thai universities. The spread of the chronic disease obstructed face-to-face learning between teachers and students. For the teaching to proceed, classroom learning was replaced by online learning through a learning management system (LMS).

Although the COVID-19 situation is improving, popularity of online learning is incessant. Besides classroom lectures, many Thai universities have undertaken online courses with and without a degree since learning is not limited only in classrooms nowadays. Online learning can occur at any place and at any time, supported by the internet and technology.

At the university campus in Sri-racha, Chonburi, where the author is working, blended learning was applied in the English paragraph writing course in the second semester of the academic year 2023. In this course, traditional classroom instruction was combined with online learning, in which a learning management system (LMS) was used.

In the article, literature on blended learning and English writing skill development was reviewed. The system of the blended learning in the English paragraph writing class was explained and discussed. This will be a paradigm for lecturers in developing more effective blended writing courses and others. Learners are expected to get the benefits from the blended writing course and realize that self-mastery and determination are the keys to success in the blended learning.

Objectives

1. To review literature on blended learning and related others.

2. To explain and discuss the blended learning in the English paragraph writing class.

1. Review of Literature

1.1. Active Learning

Active learning is when students do tasks or activities and directly learn by constructing their knowledge and understanding of facts, ideas, and skills (Bell & Kahrhof, 2006; Brame, 2019). Metacognition is the main element in the active learning. By linking the activities to the learning, the metacognition allows the students to think about their own learning.

Weinstein (2001) stated that constructivism is the basis of active learning. Learners learn not only from teachers and books but also from the meaning and knowledge they collectively create. When the learners do activities, they will think about their learning and construct their own knowledge and understanding from the activities. This tacitly requires the learners' metacognition which involves higher order thinking.

Active learning can be explained by the theories of objectivism and constructivism The objectivism perceives learning as a teacher-centered instruction in which a learner's cognitive structure is developed. The constructivism focuses on a student-centered instruction in which learners engage in skills or activities that they are learning. They will quickly absorb any information that is consistent with their present knowledge. Meanwhile, they will construct the inconsistent one as new knowledge by combining it with their present knowledge. The constructivism is a basis of blended learning

1.2. Blended Learning

Blended learning is combined of both conventional learning and distance learning mediated by new technologies such as computers for communication and interaction. In the conventional learning, learners and an instructor meet at the same place and time for the learning to occur. In the distance learning, the learners learn at their own schedule with no immediate communication with the instructor (Graham, 2006).

As cited in the Sloan Consortium (Sloan-C), a blended course is a mix between face-to-face learning and online learning. About 30%-79% of the contents are sent online with discussions through technology

In Zhang (2021), blended learning is combined of traditional learning and online learning. The online section complements classroom learning Blended learning collects good points of both traditional learning and e-learning Blended learning is a mix of classroom and computer-mediated instructions Blended learning involves learning approaches such as online classroom, self-learning, and classroom learning

Gil and Garcia (2011) and Carman (2022) denoted advantages of blended learning. First, learners experience new learning environments which can occur at any place such as home, library, etc. Second, the leaners can always access the learning with no time limits. Third, the learners become less dependent on teachers. With answer buttons, hint buttons, and functions in an LMS, they can learn and do activities on their own. Fourth, more communication and cooperation occur between the learners and the teachers who are facilitators. Fifth, the learners are responsible for their self- and co-assessments through workshops and self-checked activities in an LMS. Last, the learners realize that their effort and teachers' feedback are important. The more they keep on doing activities, the better grades they get. They will make less mistakes and can improve their works with the teachers' feedback.

Thorne (2003) stated that blended learning is designed depending on conditions of organizational learning and development that it is fitted in. To create a blended learning

classroom, traditional learning is mixed with online learning which involves technologies. Graham (2006) denoted three forms of the blended learning. The enabling blends involve access and convenience in learning using various modes. The enhancing blends enhance the teaching with learning resources and extra materials given online. The transforming blends reinforce the teaching with technologies used for learners to actively construct knowledge through interactions.

With the pros and cons of classroom and online environments, instructors must choose to use either or both to achieve instructional goals. The strengths of the classroom environment are spontaneity and human connection while participation and flexibility are its weaknesses. The advantages of the online environment are flexibility, participation, and depth of reflection whereas its disadvantages are spontaneity, delay, and human connection (Graham, 2006). In designing a blended learning system, a lecturer must find out the best way to incorporate teaching strategies both in the classroom and online environments

Dennis et al. (2006) asserted that to develop a blended learning class, teachers must know differences between traditional learning and online learning. In the traditional learning, direct interactions between the teachers and students promote high motivation and involvement. Course content presentations are never the same each time. Course activities are for all the students. In the online learning, there is always availability of materials and messages between the teachers and students. The course contents are presented the same. The course activities are individualized due to learners' different competencies and preferred learning strategies.

1.3. Past Research

Geta and Olango (2016) studied writing achievement of students in two classes of blended learning and traditional learning; and examined perception of teachers toward usage of the blended learning in teaching writing. Research participants were 80 first-year students and 50 English instructors. Data of the study included the students' pretest and posttest writing scores and the teachers' attitude test scores. The findings showed that the students in the blended learning group got higher scores in the posttest than those in the traditional learning group. The blended learning enhanced the instructors' attitudes toward English teaching.

Abbas (2018) explored students' satisfaction toward the blended EAP writing course using a questionnaire. In each week of the course, an instructor would meet the students in a classroom to discuss writing objectives, distribute class materials, and give assignments. The Moodle course was also used to give the students additional materials, quizzes, and weekly assignments. Before the students met the teacher in the next class, they had to do and send in the assignments. The results indicated that the students could improve their writing skills. The course materials, assignments, and instructor's feedback

helped promote the students' learning. The Moodle course also encouraged the students to discuss and share ideas with others.

Ataizi and Aksak Komür (2021) studied effects of blended learning on EFL learners' writing skills and their perception toward the blended learning. Research data were writing test scores, an online questionnaire, and an interview. Participants were 92 high school students. Interviews were conducted with 8 students. The results revealed that the students had highly positive perception toward the blended learning which improved their writing skills. They could decide their own time and place of study. Their digital literacy, listening, reading, grammar and vocabulary skills were improved. They reported technical problems, especially with the internet and overload of online activities. They agreed to use the blended learning in EFL classes and others. Their writing exams were notably outperformed. They are more motivated and satisfied with the environment outside a classroom of the blended learning.

Min and Yu (2023) reviewed 3,558 publications and found six critical success factors (CSFs) of blended learning which are learner, instructor, course, technology, design, and environment. Learners have the most impact on the blended learning. The learner's CSFs are demographics, attitude, commitment, motivation, and so forth. The instructor's CSFs are teaching style, attitude, and computer knowledge. The course's CSFs are course design; content quality; assessment and evaluation; and flexibility. The technology's CSFs are quality, software use, ease of use, etc. The design's CSFs are methods of teaching, quality of content, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, etc. The environment's CFSs are accessibility, connectivity, quick navigation, assessments, learning management systems, and others.

2. Blended Learning in the English Paragraph Writing Class

The use of a learning management system (LMS) in teaching and learning was in the second semester of the academic year 2023 at the university campus in Sri-racha, Chonburi. Being offered a free trial on a learning management system (LMS) by a private company, the author decided to apply blended learning in her English paragraph writing class.

To design a blended course, the author was trained to operate the LMS. Meanwhile, objectives and contents of the English paragraph writing subject were reviewed to make a course outline which combined both classroom learning and online learning through the LMS.

As shown in Table 1, the blended course of the English paragraph writing subject was outlined. Of the 15 weeks, classroom learning took 7 weeks, and online learning took 8 weeks as highlighted. The classroom learning involved lecture and discussion. The online learning included self-study, self-assessment, and writing practice with assigned video clips, exercises, quizzes, and writing topics in the LMS. Major learning topics were elements of a paragraph, steps in writing, narrative writing, and descriptive writing. During the course,

students could communicate with their teacher and peers through the LINE Group and emails.

Table 1 Learning outline of the blended English paragraph writing subject

Week	Content	Learning Activities
1 Classroom learning	- Course Introduction What is writing? What is a paragraph? What are elements of a paragraph? What are the steps in writing?	- Lecture and discussion - Do exercises
2 Online learning	Prewriting: What is a topic sentence?	- Self-study by watching a video clip and doing exercises - Self-assessment by doing a quiz
3 Online learning	Prewriting: What are supporting ideas?	- Self-study by watching a video clip and doing exercises - Self-assessment by doing a quiz
4 Online learning	Prewriting: What is a concluding sentence?	- Self-study by watching a video clip and doing exercises - Self-assessment by doing a quiz
5 Classroom learning	- A review on a topic sentence, supporting ideas, and a concluding sentence - Drafting, revising, and editing	- Lecture and discussion - Do exercises
6 Online learning	Telling about someone	- Self-study by watching video clips and doing exercises - Self-assessment by doing a quiz - Writing practice
7 Classroom learning	Telling about someone	- Lecture and discussion on writing mistakes - Do exercises - Revising and editing one's work
8 Online learning	Telling a past story	- Self-study by watching video clips and doing exercises - Self-assessment by doing a quiz - Writing practice
9 Classroom learning	Telling a past story	- Lecture and discussion on writing mistakes - Do exercises - Revising and editing one's work
10 Online learning	Describing someone	- Self-study by watching video clips and doing exercises - Self-assessment by doing a quiz - Writing practice
11 Classroom learning	Describing someone	- Lecture and discussion on writing mistakes - Do exercises - Revising and editing one's work

Week	Content	Learning Activities
12 Online learning	Describing a process	- Self-study by watching video clips and doing exercises - Self-assessment by doing a quiz - Writing practice
13 Classroom learning	Describing a process	- Lecture and discussion on writing mistakes - Do exercises - Revising and editing one's work
14 Online learning	Expressing an opinion	- Self-study by watching video clips and doing exercises - Self-assessment by doing a quiz - Writing practice
15 Classroom learning	Expressing an opinion	- Lecture and discussion on writing mistakes - Do exercises - Revising and editing one's work

In each week of online learning, students were asked to evaluate effectiveness of their learning through the LMS. Based on Table 2, the overall mean score ($\bar{X}$=4.13) showed that the online learning of the students was highly effective. Although lessons were hard ($\bar{X}$=4.10), most of the students could get knowledge ($\bar{X}$=4.62) and apply the knowledge in writings ($\bar{X}$=4.61). The learning timing ($\bar{X}$=4.44) and the online learning were very appropriate ($\bar{X}$=4.52). The students gained more knowledge of paragraph writing (before, $\bar{X}$=3.43; after, $\bar{X}$=4.48). The LMS was highly satisfactory due to its ease of use ($\bar{X}$=3.86) and ease of access ($\bar{X}$=3.58). However, the students reported problems in the online learning regarding the LMS such as unstable connection to the system, breaking up of playing video clips, and delayed transfer of information.

Table 2 Effectiveness of the online learning

Topic	Gain knowledge	Apply knowledge	Hard lessons	Learning time	Online learning	Knowledge before	Knowledge after	Ease of access (LMS)	Ease of use (LMS)	Overall
What is a topic sentence?	4.57	4.85	3.71	4.42	4.57	3.0	4.28	3.71	4.28	**4.57**
What are supporting ideas?	4.66	4.66	4.16	4.33	4.50	3.66	4.83	4.33	4.16	**4.50**

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Topic	Gain knowledge	Apply knowledge	Hard lessons	Learning time	Online learning	Knowledge before	Knowledge after	Ease of access (LMS)	Ease of use (LMS)	Overall
What is a concluding sentence?	4.80	4.40	4.20	3.80	4.20	3.0	4.20	3.20	3.40	**3.40**
Telling about someone	4.70	4.70	4.30	4.50	4.60	3.50	4.80	3.70	4.0	**4.20**
Telling a past story	4.60	4.70	4.50	4.80	4.50	3.90	4.80	3.20	3.40	**4.0**
Describing someone	4.75	4.75	4.25	4.75	4.87	4.0	4.62	4.37	4.50	**4.50**
Describing a process	4.50	4.40	3.80	4.40	4.40	3.20	4.20	2.60	3.30	**3.60**
Expressing an opinion	4.44	4.44	3.89	4.56	4.56	3.22	4.11	3.56	3.89	**4.33**
Total	**4.62**	**4.61**	**4.10**	**4.44**	**4.52**	**3.43**	**4.48**	**3.58**	**3.86**	**4.13**

Meanings: Least (1.0-1.80); Less (1.81-2.61); Fair (2.62-3.42); More (3.43-4.23); Most (4.24-5.0)

Discussion

The blended learning system was implemented in the English paragraph writing course enrolled by Thai undergraduates in the second term of the academic year 2023. The blended writing course combined classroom learning with online learning through the LMS. The online learning allowed students to actively learn by themselves. The classroom learning enabled them to ask questions or discuss problems found in the online learning with their teacher and peers. This blended writing course focused on active learning and student-centered instruction based on the theory of constructivism When learners engage in skills or activities that they are learning, they will quickly absorb information that is compatible with their present knowledge. The learners will also construct the inconsistent one as new knowledge by combining it with their present knowledge.

The blended paragraph writing course was an ideal mix of both classroom learning and online learning. Of the 15 weeks, the classroom learning took 7 weeks (46.7%) while the online learning took 8 weeks (53.3%). The development of the blended paragraph writing course was conforming to the Sloan Consortium (Sloan-C). In a blended learning course, parts of course contents are lectured in classroom whereas 30%-79% of the course contents are delivered online

Students reported that the overall online learning of the blended English paragraph writing course was highly effective. In accordance with Carman (2022); Ataizi and Aksak Komür (2021); Abbas (2018); Geta and Olango (2016); and Gil and Garcia (2011), the students had positive perception toward the online learning of the writing course. With the LMS, they experienced new learning environments. They could learn at their own places such as home and dormitory. With attached worksheets and quizzes, they could do exercises and have their self-assessment in the LMS. The students could get more knowledge in the online learning, and the LMS was easy to access and use. Nevertheless, compared to a classroom, the students had less communication with their teacher and peers in the LMS. This disagreed with the findings of Abbas (2018) in which the students freely discussed and shared their ideas with others.

In the author's view, blended learning could be implemented in the English paragraph writing course for certain reasons. Based on Thorne (2003), students in the blended writing course had learning experiences both in classroom and online with multimedia technologies. According to Graham (2006), classroom learning and computer-mediated learning have both strengths and weaknesses. Instructors must choose to use either or both to achieve teaching goals. The strengths of the classroom learning are spontaneity and human connection whereas its weaknesses are participation and flexibility. The advantages of the computer-mediated learning include flexibility, participation, and depth of reflection while its weaknesses involve spontaneity, delay, and human connection. As cited in Graham (2006) and Martyn (2003) suggested that designers of blended learning systems must find out the best way to combine instructional strategies in classroom and computer-mediated learning environments to exploit the strengths and avoid the weaknesses of each learning environment. Meanwhile, Min and Yu (2023) found six critical success factors (CSFs) of blended learning which are learner, instructor, course, technology, design, and environment. Learners have the most impact on the success of the blended learning.

Conclusion

The blended learning in the English paragraph writing class was successful. Online learning through the learning management system (LMS) enabled students to learn to write paragraphs at their own pace. Classroom learning allowed the students to ask or discuss any learning difficulties with their teacher and peers. However, technical problems of the LMS were obstacles to the online learning such as unstable connection to the system and breaking up of the playing video clips.

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