Blended Learning in language teaching: making it work

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To critically analyse the concept of Blended Learning in English language teaching
To provide practical ideas for blending

Overview
What?
Why?
How?
Practical ideas
The future
Open forum
Definition one - classic

f2f + distance learning (DL) Frendo 2005
f2f + e-learning Smith & Baber 2005

Definition two
Combination of methodologies

Definition three – combination of technologies

Other definitions
Real world + in world

Other definitions: State of flux
Blended Learning refers to a language course which combines a F2F (face-to-face) classroom component with an appropriate use of technology

(Sharma / Barrett)
Definitions

• Blended Learning means different things to different people

• Classical definition

Key concepts in ELT - ELTJ

Blended learning

Roots
Margaret Driscoll (2002)

“To mix or combine instructional technology with actual job tasks in order to create a harmonious effect of learning and working.”

Higher Education

“the term has been in use for more than 15 years (2006) but (...) its meaning has been constantly changing during this period” (Sharpe, Benfield, Roberts and Francis)

Research and practice – separate worlds?

**Research**

**Five key terms**
- Data
- Empirical
- Qualitative
- Quantitative
- Control group

**Blended and online learning**

**What the research says**

“A note of caution
Qualitative vs quantitative

“Qualitative inquiry is advocated ... classrooms are far too complex to control all the variables required in experimental types of research”
Allright and Bailey (1991)

**Research**

“the observed advantage for blended learning conditions is not necessarily rooted in the media per se and may reflect differences in content, pedagogy and learning time”

**What does the research say?**

…. do digital technologies support language learning? Hockly concludes ‘the jury is still out’, as the effectiveness (or lack of effectiveness) of a particular technology depends on a wide range of factors, such as how it used

Sharma P.
Review in EL Gazette 2017

**Research on Blended Learning**

“There is of course no single perfect blend – the concept is grounded on the notion of flexibility”
(Lamping)

**Handout - References**
Dimensions

**Broad** – “nothing new”

Nearly all teaching is blended with technologies in some way (Masie: 2006)

*vs*

**Narrow** – restrictive?

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Dimensions

**Connotation** + / -

**Positive**

Blended Learning can be viewed as the 'best of the classroom' combined with the best of 'distance learning'

**Negative**

Oliver and Trigwell critique (2005) ‘Can BL be redeemed?’ ill-defined / ‘a compromise position that avoids the excess of either purely online or a purely face-to-face model of training’

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Dimensions

- Cultural differences

- **Country**
  - print + digital + teacher (German)
  - 15h + 15h = 30h (France)
  - coexistencia (Spain)

  - Corporate

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Dimensions

**Subverted**

NEW Blended learning!

**Diluted**

“the large number of definitions it has attracted means that almost any approach can be defined as BL. The term may therefore become redundant” (Westbrook)

**Disruptive**

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BL is a transitory phenomenon that may (...) disappear soon, simply to be replaced by ‘learning’

(Gruba and Hinkelman)

2012

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Model one - %
Model two - Dual track

The two tracks may be well-integrated... or there may be little or no integration between each track.

Model three - integrated

The flipped classroom

‘Flipping’ involves moving the ‘input’, usually given in class, outside the classroom.

Why?

Cost

- Yes - cost savings possible
- No - cost savings highly unlikely
- Not sure

We hope blending leads to ‘better learning outcomes’.
## Why?

Encourage learner autonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Regions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Egypt / Israel / Indonesia / Morocco / Greece</td>
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<tr>
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<td>USA / Mexico / Venezuela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex</td>
<td>Japan (potential)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Challenges

“Why?
Encourage learner autonomy

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## Challenges

- The BL course failed to satisfy anyone’s learning style.
- The course was a mish-mash of different components, but with no underlying unifying philosophy.
- The explanation on my disc was different from what the teacher said.

## Blended Learning success factors

### Appropriacy

Teachers and learners should be trained in the principles of BL, teaching and learning techniques, and in the use of the technology. This is also known as integration. There should be a clear, two-way link between classwork and online, structured self-study.

### Complementarity

Teachers should hold positive beliefs about the efficacy of Blended Learning which they transmit to their learners. BL involves the blending of the two modes of F2F teaching and learning online. Any activities selected should be appropriate for each mode.

### Attitude

Teachers should hold positive beliefs about the efficacy of Blended Learning which they transmit to their learners.

### Training

Teachers should hold positive beliefs about the efficacy of Blended Learning which they transmit to their learners.

## Discussion

**Appropriacy**

- **Synchronous**
  - Same time same place
  - Same time different place
- **Asynchronous**
  - Different time different place
  - Same place different time

**Critical thinking**
Step one: context

- Decide: what are the reasons for blending?
- List: what are the limiting factors?

Step two: Course design

- How will the modes (F2F – online) be arranged in the timetable?
- What is the optimal length of time for each session?
- How many sessions will the timetable include?
- How much choice will the learners be given in the blend?
Step three: Learners and teachers / tutors

• What level of autonomy will be expected from learners?

• How will learners be supported in the transition to a blended approach?

• How will the teachers be supported in the transition to a blended approach?

Step 4: Evaluating and developing the blend

• How will the blend be evaluated?

• How will the blend evolve?

• Sustainability

The course book conundrum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My students receive a course book</th>
<th>My students don't receive a course book</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Needs analysis</td>
<td>Authentic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESP mats</td>
<td>Frameworks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podcasts</td>
<td>No materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-produced</td>
<td>Student docs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Digital Materials: CD-ROM

eWorkbook

e-Book
Courses supported by VLE

Pre

• Shy learners access topic

While

• Washback – learner training

Post

• Handouts posted to the server

Repository – quiz – timed access – communication tools – wiki – assignments etc.

A VLE typically consists of a CMS (Content Management System) and an LMS (Learning Management System). The CMS is the bank of learning materials on the VLE, from individual questions through to complete courses for learners. The LMS keeps a record of the learners who are enrolled on courses, their scores and their progress.

1989

Sir Tim Berners Lee

VLE (Virtual Learning Environment)

LMS (Learning Management system)

CMS (Content Management)

Publisher LMS

BurlingtonEnglish offers a unique program for English language acquisition. It combines face-to-face classroom activities with any time-anywhere access to state-of-the-art online interactive courses. With the BurlingtonEnglish SpeechTrainer®, students effectively improve their pronunciation and comprehensibility, giving them the confidence to communicate successfully in any situation.

There are three modes of study with Touchstone:

- Touchstone Print + Student Book + Workbook
- Touchstone Blended + Student Book + Online Workbook
- Touchstone Premium Blended + Online Course + Student Book + Online Workbook

Other products.......
“The platform is free to download. It’s ‘open source’, which means the code is freely available to developers. Like other platforms, I can upload text, audio, images and video, even the interactive exercises.”

“Mobile LMS

“The interface is similar to Facebook; the students like that. We prefer this educational platform as it is safe. We wanted a platform which includes communication and collaboration tools. These allow teachers and students to message one another, set up discussions and chat.”
Other platforms - Blog

Post feedback from discussion classes

Wiki

Collaborative writing

Dropbox

Storage tool

Creating your own digital materials

[1] Categorise
[4] Multiple choice
[5] Re-ordering
[6] Labelling