

## Scope of Blended Learning Approach in English Language Teaching for Secondary level students

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**Abstract:** Blended learning approach is an innovative strategy where technology aids classroom instruction. The effects of blended learning environment in English language teaching classrooms can be analyzed through this study. This paper aims at exploring the rigor of blended learning compared to traditional classroom approach in English language teaching. According to the global scenario, it's necessary for the English language Teachers to adapt and implement technology based teaching methods in order to facilitate the Secondary level students with effective oral and written communication skills. Technology equipped language learning is possible by introducing blended learning in traditional classroom teaching. The aim of this paper is to analyze the scope of English language Teachers to introduce technology in secondary level classrooms and establish language laboratories to improve the students' language efficiencies. This literature gives an overview of understanding and implementing Blended Learning Approach to develop English language skills and even discuss the overall perspective of English language teachers in blending technology with the traditional teaching methods to develop Secondary level students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

**Keywords:** Blended learning, English Language Teaching (ELT), LSRW skills, Critical Thinking, Self-paced learning, Collaborative learning, e-learning, flipped classrooms, online platforms and ICT Models.

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Date of Submission: 15-07-2019

Date of acceptance: 30-07-2019

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### I. AN INTRODUCTION TO BLENDED LEARNING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Blended learning approach is a training approach that combines different learning techniques, often refers to the use of laboratory equipment or computers to complement the classroom sessions and strengthen the teaching process through practice, application of theories learnt in the regular classrooms. To meet the global and industrial needs, it is important for English teachers to move with technology and its advancements. However, English plays a dominant role in the streams of education and employment .

*Mark Belles (2014) defines that blended learning combines face-to-face interaction with a teacher in a brick-and-mortar school location, with additional instruction-whether live and or recorded-conducted in an online learning environment that allows for digital content, personalized learning, and collaboration with fellow students.*

Technology has changed our lives. It's veracious but it becomes ultimate when it best supports the process of education and aids teachers in helping students master the skills. The word blended learning introduces technology in the classroom. It refers to the use of e-learning and Information communication technology models in the traditional classrooms. In the standard educational model, blended learning often refers to the use of laboratory equipment or computers to complement the class sessions and strengthen the teaching process through practice and the application of theories learned in class.

*Garrison and Kanuka (2004) defined blended learning as more than just adding-in technology but providing a "thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences."*

*To Milheim (2006), Blended Learning combines traditional learning with e-learning, while Poon (2013) opines that Blended Learning comingles teachers with students, and audio visual illustration or internet to improve the educational process.*

In the global scenario English language acquired a lot of prominence and it is must for complementing employability skills. To enhance the abilities of the learners the English language teachers should instill their teaching process with innovative strategies, one such can be blended learning. As English is the language of the world, communication skills play a dominant role in student's professional survival and existence. A blend of

technology in English language teaching can up bring realistic approach and enables the students to acquire the skills of English language.

## **II. ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND BLENDED LEARNING APPROACH**

In 1965, Chomsky distinguished between 'competence and performance' in language learning. For him, competence is the linguistic system of a language whereas performance is its use. Applied linguists started to see that learning a second language means primarily learning to comprehend it and to speak it. It became clearer that teaching must involve both comprehension and production. In 1972, Hymes' 'communicative competence' took this distinction one step further by expanding the notion of competence to embrace what a speaker needs to know about how a language is used in particular situations for effective and appropriate communication (McCarthy & Carter, 1994). In 1976, the notion of discourse competence put forward by Halliday and Hasan encompassed the interrelationship of Chomsky's grammar system with Hymes' language systems in use. This inter-relationship enables language users to be discourse-competent (in either spoken or written texts) through the choices they make (as speaker/writer) at all stages of production. During this period of fertile methodological development, the Council of Europe made the case for a communicative approach to language teaching through Van Ek's The Threshold Level (1976).

English language teaching in the global arena has become tough. It's impossible for an English language teacher to depend on old methods such as Direct and bilingual methods. One of the major reasons the standard of students in learning English language is going downhill, is because of the poor teaching methodology. While teaching English, the teacher has to help the students in many aspects, and not just textual matter. To overcome the poor teaching methodology teachers must bring innovation and variation in their teaching. Teaching community should explore the new ways and methods to strengthen the student's English language skills and critical thinking. The four basic skills of English language acquisition Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing should be portrayed and developed in the simplest ways.

Blended learning includes teacher, student, traditional classroom and e-learning platforms. This approach breaks down the regular teaching strategies of English language teaching which did not yield good results in the earlier days. Implementing blended learning in ELT gives an access to current technologies and resources available to develop English language efficiencies by tailoring the needs of various student communities. Blended learning focuses on giving personalized experiences to the learners exposing them to web sources, e-learning, online platforms, games and ICT models. These encourage the students to retain their interest and inculcate self-learning procedures, the best ways in excelling a language.

Blended learning approach also helps cater to the individual needs of the learner and facilitates unique learning styles. This approach ensures the focus on LSRW skills. Listening and speaking skills are correlated and work at the same time in real life scenario. So, the combination of these two stimulates effective oral communication. This integration will assure real-life and purposeful communication. Reading and writing skills have a strong relationship with each other and are required for achieving effective written communication.

Listening needs lot of attention as it is a receptive skill. Listening skills can be well developed by the teachers providing personalized experiences to the secondary level students as they listen to vocabulary, sentence structures, dialogues, video lectures, seminars, inspirational clippings, news reports and you tube channels through online learning platform or language laboratory. Speaking skills are crucial in communicating with people. The ability to speak in English is an evergreen challenge to the secondary level students. Communicating in English is desired in every profession. English language teachers can allow more affective interactions between the learners with the use of e-learning platforms, motivating the students to participate in discussion boards, chat rooms, online debating sessions, substitution drills, playing games, flash cards, design and delivery of conversations.

Reading skills help in comprehending a language, thus enable the learner to write effectively. Mastery of reading requires developing its highly interrelated major component skills decoding, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Reading skills can be easily acquired by the students if the teacher exposes them to e-learning sources and Pronunciation Software which gives orientation on pronunciation, stress, intonation and modulation. Even there is a large availability of web sources which offer reading comprehension worksheets and exercises with immediate feedback. People write for a variety of purposes including recording, persuading, learning, communicating, entertaining, self-expression, and reflection. Proficiency in writing for one purpose does not necessarily generalize to writing for other purposes. In today's world, proficiency requires developing skills in both traditional forms of writing and newer electronic, digital modes which can be better nurtured by introducing blended learning strategies in teaching-learning process.

Now the new area in ELT is Blended learning pedagogy, a course design which borrows key ideas from teaching pedagogy; engage students with the course materials and to make use of in-class and out-class time. Blended learning strengthens the English language teaching and learning process with the help of Information communication technologies. The concept of blended learning has the potential and the big idea to

take the best of traditional classroom learning and blend it with the transformative power of online learning platforms, so that students get a more personalized education that meet their specific needs and move with self paced learning. Blended learning can refer to any combination of different learning methods, learning environments, and learning styles. In short, the effective implementation of blended learning is essentially all about making the most of the learning opportunities and tools available to achieve the "optimal" learning environment. English language teachers can introduce Blended learning approach to make the students understand better and learn English easily as the students can get wide exposure to Internet resources, online platforms, digital media, gamification, chat rooms, discussion boards, audio-video tapes, podcasts and language building software. This approach encourages the teacher to use plethora of various material types that are not always the case of a traditional classroom teaching.

### III. BLENDED LEARNING MODELS

- **Face-to-face:** Teacher offers primarily face-to-face instruction, supplemented with technology in the classroom.
- **Flipped classroom:** These replace the standard lecture-in-class format with opportunities for students to review, discuss, and investigate course content with the instructor in class.
- **ICT Models:** Information and Communication Technologies ( ICT) refers to technologies that provide access to information through telecommunications. This includes the Internet, wireless networks, cell phones, and other communication mediums.
- **Online plat forms:** Instruction occurs via an online platform, with periodic face-to-face meetings.
- **Podcasts:** These are audio files made available on the Internet for downloading to a computer or mobile device, typically available as a series.
- **Station Rotation:** Student rotates between self-paced online learning stations and face-to-face instruction Schedules.
- **Digital media:** Digitized content such as text, graphics, audio, and video that can be transmitted over internet or computer networks. This is a platform where people can communicate electronically.
- **Flex:** Most instruction is delivered online, with teachers providing as needed support in small-group settings.
- **Personalized blend:** Teacher designs face-to-face and anywhere, anytime learning options that straddle the physical classroom and virtual spaces. Learning is the constant and time is the variable.
- **Virtual lab:** Instructions takes place in a brick and mortar lab. Delivered by an online teacher and supervised onsite by paraprofessionals.
- **Self-blend:** Students take online courses to supplement their tradition schools face to face course catalogue.
- **Gamification:** Fun learning Language games.
- **Project based:** The students use online learning either in the form of courses or self-directed access, face-to-face instruction, collaboration to design, iterate and publish project-based learning assignments, products, and related artifacts.

These models emphasize on collaborative and activity based learning. English language teachers can make the best use of blended learning models to promote effective teaching and to develop language skills in the learners. In fact, the unison of listening and speaking with reading and writing will make learners good listeners, speakers, readers and writers so as to be able to communicate effectively. The mastery of these skills is a gradual process which can be obtained through blended learning models.

*Bonk and Graham proposed the following categories of blends that relate to instructor shifts:*

**Enabling blends** - Enabling blends primarily focus on addressing issues of access and convenience. For example, enabling blends are intended to provide additional flexibility to the learners or attempt to provide the same opportunities or learning experience but through a different modality.

**Enhancing blends** - Enhancing blends allow for incremental changes to the pedagogy but do not radically change the way teaching and learning occurs. This can occur at both ends of the spectrum. For example, in a traditional face-to-face learning environment, additional resources and perhaps some supplementary materials may be included online.

**Transforming blends** - Transforming blends are blends that allow for a radical transformation of the pedagogy, a change from a model where learners are just receivers of information to a model where learners actively construct knowledge through dynamic interactions. These types of blends enable intellectual activity that was not practically possible without the technology.

#### **IV. ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS ATTITUDE AND PERCEPTION:**

Blended learning is advantageous to the language learner. Content and language learning activities that provide for ample practice must be introduced into the course. Research has shown the limitations of applying a generalized style of teaching, rather than modifying lesson plans to fit the needs of the student. “Increasingly, organizations are recognizing the importance of tailoring learning to the individual rather than applying a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach.” (Thorne, 2003) Of course, common needs exist, but blended learning allows the teacher to look for creative ways and use a variety of media to address the specific needs of his students. When a teacher designs lesson plan, it is important to note the type of learning activity, e.g. lecture, case study, role play, simulation, game, etc. that best conveys the objectives of the lesson. Blended learning is not simply adding an online component to a face-to-face course. Technology in a course should be used wisely – to facilitate student learning. Excellent opportunities exist for English language teachers to make learning interactive, dynamic and fun.

*Even the English language teachers believe the Characteristic of authentic activity in Blended learning proposed by Herrington, Oliver & Reeves, 2003.*

- *Have real-world relevance.*
- *Require students to define the tasks and sub-tasks needed to complete the activity.*
- *Comprise complex tasks to be investigated by students over a sustained period of time.*
- *Provide the opportunity for students to examine the task from different perspectives, using a variety of resources.*
- *Provide the opportunity to collaborate.*
- *Provide the opportunity to reflect and involve students’ beliefs and values.*
- *Can be integrated and applied across different subject areas and lead beyond domain-specific outcomes.*
- *Are seamlessly integrated with assessment*
- *Create polished products valuable in their own right rather than as preparation for something else.*
- *Allow competing solutions and diversity of outcome.*

The English language teachers have a positive outlook in applying blended approach as it increases student interest, keeps students focused for a longer time, provides student autonomy, instills a deposition of self advocacy, promotes student ownership, allows instant diagnostic information and student feedback, enables students to learn language at their own pace and prepares the students for the future. Like any teaching or learning method, blended learning also has some disadvantages. Ineffective use of learning technology tools may waste resources. Learners must have basic technological knowledge or a willingness to learn, high technology setup and maintenance costs, cases of low motivation and poor inter-personal skills

#### **V. DISCUSSIONS & CONCLUSIONS**

Blended learning supports more flexible, interactive, efficient, accessible, and varied learning experience for both teacher and student. The charisma of blended learning approach lies in the adaptation of technology aided learning methods in addition to the existing traditional based learning. Assessment is a very vital tool for determining the student’s knowledge for the subject they enrolled at any levels of education. Blended learning techniques provide teachers to deliver the lecture as well as assess student learning using creative and innovative methods. It also contributes to a collaborative-constructive teaching learning process. E-learning and online platforms are the latest technological innovations that are increasingly used in education. These provide opportunities for the secondary level students to either revisit skill building activities or increase the skills they have already attained, thus enhancing their language learning. In the process of teaching English language, the teacher should ever think of student centered environment.

Blended learning strategies surely help out the English language teachers to bring in student’s active participation as the models encourage embodied learning, supporting learner’s specific needs. English language teaching and learning system flourish with blended learning process. Implementation of blended learning approach in English language teaching reduces isolation of the secondary level students and encourages activity based learning which is important in upbringing LSRW skills. This approach improves time management skills and team efforts, thus helps in professional growth. The traditional English language learning classrooms should have a blend of technological environment along with teacher’s supervision. Blended learning increases the interest of students towards English language and keeps them focused for longer periods. These models promote self-paced learning as they provide plenty of e-learning materials, ICT models and wider access to internet sources which are crucial in achieving English language Excellency.

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Ch.Alekya. B.V.Ramani. "Scope of Blended Learning Approach in English Language Teaching for Secondary level students." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*. vol. 24 no. 07, 2019, pp. 11-15.