

Hybrid Learning: Upgrading English Classrooms with Technology Integration

Nantina Nilayon

Faculty of Education,

Srinakharinwirot University

E-mail: nantina@g.swu.ac.th

Received: March 27, 2019; Revised: October 11, 2019; Accepted: October 15, 2019

ABSTRACT

This article presents the theory of hybrid learning and views some research studies showing both positive and negative results of hybrid learning in English classrooms in Thai universities in general. It also presents other benefits of hybrid learning from other subjects and other countries. Basic guidelines and examples for educators who wish to implement hybrid learning in their language classrooms are shown.

KEYWORDS: Hybrid Learning, Educational Technology, English Language Classroom, Thai University

Introduction

Technology has become part of our daily lives. Technology is aimed to create a higher quality of living. The uses of echnology are integrated into every aspect of our lives to accommodate our lifestyles, reduce cost and time as well as increase productivity, efficiency, and satisfaction. In education, it has become common to use technology to facilitate learning opportunities and enhance learning outcomes.

In the late 20th century, when computers and the Internet became affordable to general users, the term “e-learning” or “online learning” was originated. Gaur (2015) stated that e-learning is a broad term that covers many different types of teaching and learning based on information and communication technology to allow education to be more interesting, flexible and accessible. While advantages of e-learning were reported in many studies

(Otsetova & Kurtev, 2010; Chatelier & Voicu, 2018), lack of face-to-face interaction has been pointed out as a major flaw of e-learning along with other shortcomings such as lack of self-discipline and skill practice.

Blended learning or hybrid learning was created and gradually brought into play to compromise those pitfalls of e-learning. According to Stracke (2007), hybrid learning was started due to the failure of pure e-learning programs. Walker and Vaughan stated that the rationale behind hybrid learning was the attempt to find a standpoint between e-learning and face-to-face learning environments (2008, cited in Gruba & Hinkelman, 2012). Although hybrid or blended learning was started in business world to meet the needs of working people who hope to further their study without having to leave their full-time job (Sharma & Barrett, 2007), today, this method of learning is widely used in mainstream higher education mainly to create cost-effectiveness, in other words, to maximize the learning outcome within limited cost and time (Singh & Reed, 2001). In the Thai EFL classroom context, hybrid English programs have been implemented in many universities. Research studies were conducted to see the effectiveness of this alternative learning method taking into account the satisfaction of instructors and learners (Tananuraksakul, 2016). This article will explore

the general definitions and advantages of hybrid learning specifically in the English language learning context. The article will investigate the uses of hybrid learning in English as a foreign language classroom in Thai universities and discuss some suggestions many scholars have made for implementing hybrid learning in English language classrooms.

Definition of Hybrid, Blended, Web-enhanced, and Fully Online Learning

According to Klimova and Kacetl (2015), the term “hybrid learning or blended learning” is not easy to define since many people use it in various ways. Nonetheless, there are three meanings of hybrid learning that are commonly recognized: 1) when the web-based and online learning are combined 2) when many media and tools are used in e-learning settings and 3) when several teaching and learning approaches are integrated irrespective of the technology used. In short, the authors suggested Littlejohn and Pegler’s (2007) definition of the term “hybrid learning” as “an integration of face-to-face teaching and learning methods with online approaches”.

The term “hybrid” in the context of education can be used in three different situations. Bonk and Graham (2012) mentioned in their book that the three

situations include (1) hybrid learning environment or situations where all students learn in both face-to-face and online environments; (2) hybrid learning students or situation where some students are in pure face-to-face environment and the rest of them are in pure online environment; and (3) hybrid learning teachers or situation in which one or more teachers teach in a face-to-face environment, while one or more other teachers teach in an online environment. This article will particularly focus on the first situation, a hybrid learning environment.

Although “hybrid” and “blended” learning can be used interchangeably nowadays, there were some differences in terms of the proportion of online and traditional class hours of a course according to Gruba and Hinkelman’s (2012) taxonomy of terms. There are also other related terms such as web-enhanced and fully-online. First, a web-enhanced course refers to a course that does not replace in-class time but includes minimal online activities as part of the course; for example, uploading the course syllabus or posting an announcement on the course website. Second, blended course, on the other hand, replaces less than 45% of face-to-face class time with online activities, while hybrid course replaces more than 45% but less than 80% of the face-to-

face class time with online activities. Lastly, a fully online course replaces 80% or more of the face-to-face class time with online activities. This article will discuss the benefits and implementation of hybrid learning using approximately 50% of online class time and review the research studies concerning web-enhanced, blended, hybrid and fully online language courses in Thai universities.

Benefits of Hybrid Learning

The benefits of hybrid learning, in general, have been investigated in many pieces of research; and motivation seems to be the most outstanding one (Berzosa & Rokowski, 2000 as cited in Baturay, Daloglu, & Yildirim, 2010). Other positive characteristics of hybrid learning are 1) allowing flexibility, 2) learning diversity, 3) ability to help enrich pure e-learning class, 4) more chances to get extra practice, 5) more student engagement as materials and teacher can be reached all the time, 6) developing student’s professional skills when less time is spent in class (Huang, Ma, & Zhang, 2008), 7) providing communication channels in a different time and place through the computer, 8) matching with younger learners’ expectations, 9) fostering autonomy when learning is outside the classroom, 10) saving time, 11) offering up-to-date materials (Sharma & Barrett, 2007), 12) giving encouragement

to a more student-centered approach, 13) generating cost effectiveness (Allen & Ure, 2003 as cited in Stracke, 2007), 14) creating more individualised and personalized learning experience and support, 15) promoting collaborative learning, 16) accommodating variety of learning styles that suit every learner, 17) creating less-stressful learning environment, 18) developing twenty-first century learning skills (Pena-Sanchez & Hicks, 2006; Stracke, 2005; and Stracke, 2007 as cited in Marsh, 2012), 19) reducing teacher-student ratio due to more teachers' time (Scida & Saury, 2006), 20) having the "equalizer" aspect as Shantal Woolsey describe the situation where learners who participate less or too shy in class can participate more in online discussion (Dynes & Woolsey, 2013).

In language learning contexts, the benefits of hybrid learning include interactivity of exercises, immediate feedback, which is preferred by language learners (Sharma & Barrett, 2007), continuity of the language exposure as the learning activities can take place anywhere and anytime (Scida & Saury, 2006), ability to read and comment on their classmates work due to web 2.0 technology, which motivates them to read and write more in the target language (Storch, 2001 as cited in Adas & Bakir, 2013). These benefits are generally believed to enhance language acquisition.

In terms of research studies on language learning, the benefits of hybrid learning have been investigated widely. The majority of the studies were conducted to see the improvement of students' performance and attitude. In Jia, Chen, Ding, and Ruan (2012), Miyazoe and Anderson (2010), Šaffková (2011) and Shih's (2010) studies, the researchers did their studies in different English courses and skill focuses, which are critical reading, public speaking, vocabulary and writing respectively. All of these studies show better students' performance and positive attitude towards hybrid English courses. Sucaromana's (2013) studies also showed an increase in attitude towards English language learning and intrinsic motivation respectively. To that end, hybrid learning seems to help promote positive learning outcomes, attitude and increase learners' motivation in language learners.

Hybrid Learning in English Classes in Thailand

ICT, e-learning, and hybrid learning have been studied by many universities in Thailand. At Bangkok University, Wichadee (2018) conducted a research study on a hybrid English course among 149 students enrolling in a fundamental English course. Due to the design that allowed students to interact with the instructors at all times and

the course revision to be more attractive than before, the results indicated a high level of satisfaction among learners on the course design, instructors and interactivity. The study also indicated a positive relationship between learners' academic achievement and their attitude towards hybrid learning, digital literacy and supports provided during the face-to-face sessions.

At Kasetsart University, Sanprasert (2010) conducted a study on 55 students enrolling in a fifteen-week fundamental English course to see whether this blended course has an impact on students' autonomy. Students were divided into control and experimental groups. Data was collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods: a questionnaire and a study journal. The study showed that using a course management system on the experimental group could create and develop students' autonomous perception, autonomous behavior, autonomous strategy, and interdependence.

Another case study conducted at Kasetsart University on 60 students enrolling in an English for specific purposes course found that although e-learning was perceived positively and negatively by learners, it was found to increase their motivation and develop their autonomous learning. The eLearning materials were also

proven to have a greater ability to develop students' language skills compared to learners in a pure face-to-face class. According to the researcher, it was due to greater opportunity learners in blended learning classrooms had in practicing outside class anytime and anywhere (Banditvilai, 2016).

At Srinakharinwirot University, a study was done on 267 students enrolling in an English course to see how blended learning affects their intrinsic motivation. The result from the control or blended group showed that students in the blended class had significantly higher intrinsic motivation, better attitude towards English learning in general and better satisfaction towards the course (Sucaromana, 2013).

At Huachiew Chalermprakiet University, Tananuraksakul (2016) conducted a small-scale quantitative study on 104 students enrolling in the English Report Writing class to examine the effect of blended e-learning on learners' extrinsic motivation and attitudes toward learning EFL in a Thai academic context. The findings showed positive results in terms of higher motivation and attitudes of the student participants due to its time flexibility.

Moving on to the negative aspect, at Rangsit University, Domalewska's study on the use of weblog as a tool to enhance

interaction among twelve learners of a foundation English course revealed limited success. The participants of this study consist of nine present undergraduate students and three graduated students selected based on their English proficiency. Only pre-intermediate students were selected to participate to ensure the ability to communicate in English. It was found that the participants had very small interactions. Besides, problems on the use of technology were found (Domalewska, 2014). However, this study was conducted on a technology-enhanced course where technology was used in minimal online activity.

Implementation of Hybrid Learning in an English as a Foreign Language Classroom

This part focuses on what should be taken into consideration when implementing hybrid learning into a course: three hybrid models including some steps to follow, three components teachers should include in their hybrid language courses to prevent students from dropping out, a pathway template to use when designing a hybrid course, a hybrid learning parameter for teachers and some other things including learning management system and principles of vocabulary learning using multimedia.

Huang, Ma, and Zhang (2008) designed three models for teachers to develop a

hybrid course. The first model shows three main stages of developing a hybrid. The three stages include 1) pre-analysis, 2) design of activities and resources, and 3) instructional assessment. The second model is called the “process model”. It consists of three modules to follow when reaching the second stage of the first model. The three modules are 1) curriculum lead-in, 2) teaching new knowledge + tasks, and 3) review and assessment. The last model is called “activity model”. This model shows activities learners should do in each unit. They are 1) lead-in, 2) planning, 3) acting, and 4) reviewing.

According to Stracke (2007), the three components teachers are recommended to include in their hybrid course consist of knowledge of technology, printed materials, and the complementarity between the online and face-to-face sessions. Stracke investigated the causes of students’ dropout from hybrid courses by interviewing students and teachers. The four components derived from the study are explained down below.

The information about the students’ digital literacy, first of all, is something that the teacher should find out and give support if lack. The students should be asked about their computer skills as some of them found technology too difficult for them to handle. This is confirmed by a study concerning the correlation between self-regulation learning

and students' demographic information at Chulalongkorn University. The result indicated that students' internet and hybrid course experiences can predict the level of study management, which is a component of self-regulated learning. In other words, the more internet and hybrid learning experience the students have, the more study management they practiced (Samruayruen, Enriquez, Natakatoong, & Samruayruen, 2013). Prior knowledge of technology must, therefore, be taken into consideration when implementing a hybrid course. In the case that students' digital literacy is low, it is suggested that orientation on the use of technology and on learning autonomous is advised to be done in the first week of the course (Hamel & LeCoin, 2012). The second component is the printed materials. Both printed and online materials are suggested to be made available for students in a hybrid course. This is because many students in Stracke's work expressed inconvenience to study without having a textbook in hand to see or take notes. It seems that only online materials are not helpful enough for them as they felt the hardcopy materials made the course tangible. Finally, it was suggested that online and face-to-face sessions should be designed to connect and complement. The new information such as grammar or vocabulary should be presented in the online

sessions while the classroom sessions were recommended for communicative activities that encourage students to use grammar and vocabulary acquired from the online session. Also, this structure of the course must be made clear to the students so they know what exactly they are expected to do (Stracke, 2007).

When considering implementing a hybrid course, the design of the course is very important. A pathway template suggested by Marsh (2012) includes three parts of a good hybrid course. The first part is in online mode, where students are supposed to prepare themselves by viewing grammar lectures and studying new vocabulary. The second part takes place in class, where students participate in communicative activities using the structure and vocabulary they have learned. The last part should happen online where they "review, extend and consolidate" what they have learned. Teachers can provide some activities that can be done online in this part. A different idea on the portions of face-to-face and online modes is from Rovai and Jordan (2004). They claim that the best hybrid learning pathway should consist of only two face-to-face meetings on the first and the last week of the course. The other weeks in between those two weeks should be dedicated to assignments and asynchronous

discussions. Neumeier (2005) also presents a hybrid learning parameter for teachers and course developers to use as a framework to design a hybrid language course. Her parameter includes guidelines concerning (1) modes (2) model of integration (3) distribution of learning contents and objective and assignment of purpose (4) language teaching methods (5) involvement of learning subjects (6) locations. Students participation and dropout rate highly depend on the course design. The details of each parameter are as follows.

(1) Mode — First, there should be a lead mode where most teaching and learning takes place. Students need to clearly understand the lead mode since important information such as agreements and changes will be informed in this mode. Second, the portion of each mode should be determined by students' and teacher's readiness, technology background, course content and support from the institution. Finally, it is very important to carefully choose the learning modes: face-to-face, online, synchronous, or asynchronous that are suitable for different activities. It is recommended that tutoring and preparation for in-class activities should be done online while speaking and role-play activities should be done in class.

(2) Model of integration — This guideline concerns two issues: sequencing

of the mode and level of integration. Modes of teaching and learning can be arranged in different ways depending on the course content. However, it is advised that each learning object should be presented in more than one mode simultaneously. For example, an online discussion board or a chat room should be run in parallel with other modes so students can keep contact by posting questions or talking to one another. This is important because the success of a hybrid course when students do not see each other every week depends highly on how much “transactional distance” (Moore & Kearsley, 1996 as cited in Neumeier, 2005) or isolation the course can be reduced. The level of integration is another necessary factor when designing a hybrid course. The level of integration means the role of the online mode which was set by the teacher. The teacher can provide the online mode as an optional or a compulsory learning activity depending on the content. For example, online supplementary lectures about basic grammar lessons can be available for students with lower levels of English, the students can study the lectures as an optional learning activity. The lectures are not required for all of the students.

(3) Distribution of learning contents and objectives and assignments of purpose — Distribution of learning contents concerns

deciding whether to use one or two modes in each language function. For example, when teaching present simple tense, the teacher can teach through synchronous video conference only or give a dry video lecture together with face-to-face speaking practice. Another aspect is the assignments of purpose. This means the teacher needs to assign the aim of each activity. For example, online video lectures are to introduce the structure of past simple tense; or online quizzes are to assess students' achievement.

(4) Language teaching methods — Teachers can use different teaching methods, such as communicative approach, task-based approach, problem-based approach, grammar-translation approach in face-to-face mode. Those approaches can also be adjusted in class to suit different students. However, in online mode, the teaching methods and structures are rather fixed depending on the application design. Video conference is suggested as a flexible method used in the online mode.

(5) Involvement of learning subjects — Learning subjects include student, teacher, and computer. This guideline concerns the pattern of interaction between the subjects, roles of teacher and student, and the level of autonomy in students. When designing a hybrid course, teachers or course developers need to decide the pattern of the interaction

between the learning subjects. Teachers/course developers need to be able to identify whether the activity will be done in groups, pairs, or individual; interact through the computer (synchronous or asynchronous); with the computer, or at the computer (collaboration among students online). Roles of teacher and student must also be determined so it is clear what they are expected to do in each learning environment. Finally, the level of student autonomy must also be specified so students know which part of the activity requires their sole effort to complete the task and which part they can relax and let others be in control.

(6) Locations — Students must be provided with space they can work on their own. Computer facilities must be available for students on campus.

Learning management is suggested to be used in a hybrid course because of its ability to trace students' online activity. This is because by tracking students' online activities, the teacher knows which part of the lessons students are struggling with, and so teachers can provide additional explanations or exercises (Scida & Saury, 2006).

In terms of learning new vocabulary, there are some multimedia principles to follow when designing a hybrid language course according to Clark and Mayor (2003, as cited in Baturay, Daloglu, & Yildirim, 2010).

First, when presenting new words, present them both in text and graphic forms. Second, words that relate to each other should be placed next to each other. Third, when presenting new words, it is better to present them in an audio format than in a text format. Fourth, the unrelated sound should not be included at all. Fifth, new words should neither be presented in a text or an audio format. Sixth, the online teaching style should be relaxed.

Conclusion

Although hybrid learning consists of both pros and cons, it appears that the pros outweigh the cons. The positive results include the increase of learners' satisfaction, learners' autonomous, significantly higher intrinsic motivation, better development of language skills compared to face-to-face classrooms and a better attitude towards English learning towards the course. A negative result, however, concerns technical problems. However, some guidelines and careful plans provided in the last section of this article should help prevent obstacles the teachers may face. The writer believes that when being exploited appropriately and carefully, technology generates significant benefits. Different studies show different results depending on the contexts and the nature of the participants in terms of their

experience and preferred learning styles. To that end, hybrid learning should be provided as an option for any courses that should be designed based on learners' various needs. After all, its success depends on the teacher's design. Deerajviset (2014) suggested that the success of technology integration in language learning relies on the ways technology is used. Both teachers and students need to know how to use technology to benefit their teaching and learning.

Recommendation

Hybrid learning is recommended for teachers and students who are ready to integrate technology into their learning experience. Nevertheless, careful planning and preparation is necessary in order to make the best use of the method. Extra time and effort are required; however, the method could be worth a try when considering many positive outcomes it promises.

References

- Adas, D., & Bakir, A. (2013). Writing difficulties and new solutions: Blended learning as an approach to improve writing abilities. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(9), 254-266.
- Banditvilai, C. (2016). Enhancing students' language skills through blended

- learning. *Electronic Journal of e-Learning*, 14(3), 220-229.
- Baturay, M. H., Daloglu, A., & Yildirim, S. (2010). Language practice with multimedia supported web-based grammar revision material. *ReCALL*, 22(3), 313-331.
- Bonk, C. J., & Graham, C. R. (2012). *The handbook of blended learning: Global perspectives, local designs*. San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer.
- Chatelier, G., & Voicu, I. (2018). E-learning within the framework of UNESCO. In *Proceeding of The Fourteenth International Conference on eLearning for Knowledge-Based Society* (pp. 6.1-6.8). Bangkok, Thailand.
- Deerajiset, P. (2014). Technology in EFL teaching and learning in Thailand: An overview of research and issues. *Journal of Mekong Societies*, 10(1), 71-112.
- Domalewska, D. (2014). Technology-supported classroom for collaborative learning: Blogging in the foreign language classroom. *International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication Technology (IJEDICT)*, 10(4), 21-30.
- Dynes, R., & Woolsey, S. (2013). Implementing blended learning in language studies at Mohawk College. Retrieved April 12, 2019, from <https://teachonline.ca/pockets-innovation/implementing-blended-learning-language-studies-mohawk-college>
- Gaur, P. (2015). Research trends in e-learning. *Media Communique*, 1(1), 29-41.
- Gruba, P., & Hinkelman, D. (2012). *Blending technologies in second language classrooms*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hamel, M. J., & LeCoin, I. (2012). Reflection on the design and delivery of a hybrid grammar course. In *International Conference ICT for Language Learning, 5th Edition*. Florence, Italy: Pixel.
- Huang, R., Ma, D., & Zhang, H. (2008). Towards a design theory of blended learning curriculum. In *International Conference on Hybrid Learning and Education* (pp. 66-78). Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.
- Jia, J., Chen, Y., Ding, Z., & Ruan, M. (2012). Effects of a vocabulary acquisition and assessment system on students' performance in a blended learning class for English subject. *Computers & education*, 58(1), 63-76.
- Klimova, B. F., & Kacetyl, J. (2015). Hybrid learning and its current role in the teaching of foreign languages.

- Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 182, 477-481. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.04.830>
- Littlejohn, A., & Pegler, C. (2007). *Preparing for blended e-learning*. Abindon, UK: Routledge.
- Marsh, D. (2012). Blended learning: Creating learning opportunities for language learners. Retrieved April 20, 2015, from https://www.academia.edu/3331650/Blended_Learning_-_Creating_Learning_Opportunities_for_Language_Learners
- Miyazoe, T., & Anderson, T. (2010). Learning outcomes and students' perceptions of online writing: Simultaneous implementation of a forum, blog, and wiki in an EFL blended learning setting. *System*, 38(2010), 185-199. doi: 10.1016/j.system.2010.03.006
- Neumeier, P. (2005). A closer look at blended learning—parameters for designing a blended learning environment for language teaching and learning. *ReCALL*, 17(2), 163-178.
- Osguthorpe, R. T., & Graham, C. R. (2003). Blended learning environments: Definitions and directions. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, 4(3), 227-233.
- Otsetova, A., & Kurtev, I. (2010). E-learning – advantages, good practice and innovative experience in the college of telecommunications and post - sofia. In *Proceeding of International conference of e-Learning and Knowledge Society* (pp. 185-190). Riga, Latvia.
- Rovai, A. P., & Jordan, H. (2004). Blended learning and sense of community: A comparative analysis with traditional and fully online graduate courses. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 5(2). doi: <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v5i2.192>.
- Šaffková, Z. (2011). Using blended learning to develop critical reading skills. In *Proceedings of 10th European Conference on e-Learning* (pp. 705-715). Brighton, United Kingdom.
- Samruayruen, B., Enriquez, J., Natakatoong, O., & Samruayruen, K. (2013). Self-regulated learning: A key of a successful learner in online learning environments in Thailand. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 48(1), 45-69.
- Sanprasert, N. (2010). The application of a course management system to enhance autonomy in learning English as a foreign language. *System*, 38(1), 109-123.
- Scida, E. E., & Saury, R. E. (2006). Hybrid courses and their impact on student

- and classroom performance: A case study at the University of Virginia. *Calico Journal*, 23(3), 517-531.
- Sharma, P., & Barrett, B. (2007). *Blended learning: Using technology in and beyond the language classroom*. Oxford, UK: Macmillan Education.
- 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), 883-897.
- Singh, H., & Reed, C. (2001). A white paper: Achieving success with blended learning. *Centra Software*, 1, 1-11.
- Stracke, E. (2007). A road to understanding: A qualitative study into why learners drop out of a blended language learning (BLL) environment. *ReCALL*, 19(1), 57-78.
- Sucaromana, U. (2013). *The effects of blended learning on the intrinsic motivation of Thai EFL students* (Doctoral dissertation, Srinakharinwirot University).
- Tananuraksakul, N. (2016). Blended e-learning as a requirement for teaching EFL in a Thai academic context. *Teaching English with Technology*, 16(4), 48-55.
- Wichadee, S. (2018). Significant predictors for effectiveness of blended learning in a language course. *JALT CALL Journal*, 14(1), 25-42.