UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF BLENDED LEARNING IN A MALAYSIAN ESL LISTENING CLASSROOM: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Many tertiary institutions have sought to implement blended learning i.e. the combination of face-to-face and Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in enhancing English as a Second Language (ESL). Nonetheless, limited insights into blended instructions that cater to specific skills such as listening have been found. The purpose of this case study is therefore to examine the use of blended approach for the purpose of teaching and learning of ESL listening and how it is viewed by the Malaysian ESL learners. A descriptive case study design was employed involving one intact ESL listening class of 30 students under the Diploma of Computer Science programme. Data for the study were collected using questionnaires, semi structured interviews and pre and post tests. The study employed a blended language learning framework by Neumeier (2005) as well as the Technology Acceptance Model by Davis (1989). The findings obtained from both qualitative and quantitative data, revealed that the students moderately favoured blended learning and were able to practice listening in both in and out of class as supported by various CALL resources. Several aspects of the blended instructions influenced the students' perceived usefulness and enjoyment of learning in the blended class namely the flexibility in learning time, space and individual preferences. The analysis using the Technology Acceptance Model revealed moderate-level of perceptions in terms of the usefulness, ease of use and attitude towards using technology for ESL listening practices. Nonetheless, the significant increase in both the actual listening test results and the students' perceived listening performance suggest the value of a blended instruction for ESL listening. The outcomes of the study provide practical implications for curriculum developers and language practitioners in building and implementing effective blended model for language learning.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

The Malaysian Education Blueprint for Higher Education (2015-2025) or the MEB (HE) reports that despite the significant gains that Malaysia has witnessed in terms of access to higher education, research activities and overall university rankings, employers continue to lament on the graduates' lack of communication skills, especially in the English language which is essential for the 21st century (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). Henceforth, a greater emphasis has been given towards the betterment of the Malaysian undergraduates' English language proficiency by means of innovative efforts to enhance their leaning of this second language (L2, hereafter) (Thirusanku & Yunus, 2014).

One of the initiatives undertaken by the Malaysian institutions of higher learning (IHL, hereafter) is to adopt the blended learning practices (Ma'arop & Embi, 2016) that combines the age-old face-to-face (F2F, hereafter) teaching and learning with information and communication technologies (ICT). This combination creates another learning platform for the current generation of students known as the 'Digital Natives', whose habit of technology usage may influence their way of learning.

Drawing on the rich resources available online, L2 instructions can now be delivered in various methods that are not limited to textbooks and workbooks in class. Long hours of face-to-face lectures are also no longer necessary as the learning process can be carried out in alternative methods. These are enabled by the use of computer-assisted language learning (CALL, hereafter) resources and virtual learning platforms which provide more learning opportunities that are 'optimal' for the students' language learning (Marsh, 2012, p.4).

Looking from this perspective, blended learning seems to create an ideal and flexible L2 learning condition for the students. However, are the Malaysian undergraduates today in favour of using technology for language learning? Would they find the blended approach useful for their language learning needs? These queries come into mind as universities worldwide witness a global shift in its undergraduate courses from the traditional, classroom-based instructions to a blended structure