



## Using Hybrid Learning To Improve the Effectiveness of Teaching Reading Comprehension Skills for English Major Students at a University in Hanoi

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### ABSTRACT

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Hybrid learning, often referred to as technology-mediated instruction, web-enhanced instruction, or mixed-mode instruction, is a teaching methodology that integrates virtual learning resources and online engagement with traditional classroom techniques. The term "blended learning," or "hybrid learning," has gained a lot of traction, particularly in contexts related to tertiary education. An increasing number of educators are employing information technology to deliver instruction or assess students in their courses, thanks to the advancements in computer technology and the ubiquitous use of the internet. This article aims to find out the current situation of teaching reading skill for students of English major at university in Hanoi and estimate the effectiveness of combining face-to-face and online teaching to teach reading comprehension skills for English major students.

### KEYWORDS:

hybrid learning, blended learning, face-to-face and online teaching, reading comprehension skills, English major students

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, there have been numerous notable changes to the education system due to the introduction of various technological applications in information and communication. An increasing number of educators are utilizing technology to assess students' performance in classes or deliver education. In light of the Covid pandemic's effects on people's life in all spheres, including education, face-to-face instruction has gained popularity among educators worldwide in recent years. However, it is undeniable that in-person instruction has some advantages over online learning that cannot be matched, even though online learning also has a lot to offer people living in the digital age. Consequently, hybrid courses—which combine in-person and virtual learning—are becoming increasingly popular as a means of assisting students in staying current with scientific and technological advancements while also gaining the most education possible. The term "hybrid learning," sometimes known as "blended learning," has gained popularity and is particularly relevant in the context of higher education. Actually, not

much study has been done on teaching English as a foreign language using a mixed face-to-face and online teaching approach. Therefore, the main goal of this paper is to discover how well this teaching model works when used to teach English language learners reading comprehension skills.

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. The concept of "hybrid learning"

The term "hybrid learning" is relatively difficult to define because it is used in many different contexts by many different people. In general, there are three most common definitions for this term (Whitelock & Jelfs, 2003):

- i) The combination of traditional learning methods with web-based online learning paths;
- ii) The combination of communication and the application of other tools (eg textbooks) in a digital learning environment;
- iii) The integration of several teaching and learning pathways regardless of the technology used (Driscoll, 2002).

According to Littlejohn & Pegler (2007), "hybrid learning" is the blending of online resources with in-person instruction. Generally speaking, "hybrid learning" refers to a combination of teaching methods (such as in-person or technology-enhanced learning sessions), transmissive media (such as the Internet, classroom sessions, web-based courses, CD-ROMs, videos, books, or Powerpoint slides), and web-based technologies (such as chat rooms, wikis, virtual classrooms, conference tools, blogs, textbooks, and online courses). A variety of factors, including the nature of the course material

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and learning objectives, student characteristics and learning preferences, and teacher experience, influence the decision to use a hybrid face-to-face and online learning approach. Teachers, methods of instruction, and online resources for learning (Dziuban, Hartman, & Moskal, 2005).

### 2.2. "Hybrid learning" learning method and additional values

Based on the theoretical overview in the research (Graham, 2005 or Khan, 2005), we have pointed out four main principles of the "hybrid learning" learning method that combines face-to-face and online:

- The right mix of face-to-face and fully online instructional elements
- Innovative use of technology
- Redefining the learning model;
- Evaluate and benchmark the sustainability of blended learning

1. The first principle aims to diversify the benefits of both environments and successfully meet the diverse needs and interests of learners

2. The second principle means that technologies should be applied pedagogically and used to create and sustain socially situated and interactive learning (Vaughan, 2007).

3. The third principle combines emerging pedagogies and learning theories such as constructivism or activity theory, along with challenging new roles for learners and teachers in the process of learning and understand knowledge.

4. The fourth principle of blended learning should ensure the quality and effectiveness of education.

The main reasons why blended learning should be included in teaching are as follows:

- This method contributes to pedagogy by supporting a variety of interactive learning strategies, not just direct teaching (Graham et al, 2003);
- This method encourages collaborative learning; learners and educators can work together on a number of projects anywhere at any time (Bruffee, 1993);
- This method deepens intercultural awareness by connecting researchers, educators and students from around the world;
- This method helps reduce teaching and learning costs because students do not have to move frequently to complete their studies (Graham et al., 2003); and
- This method is suitable for students' learning styles although there is no clear consensus on this issue (Coffield, 2004; Gregorc, 1979; Hubackova & Semradova, 2013; Poulouva & Simonova, 2012).

The blended learning strategy does have its drawbacks, too. This kind of instruction takes a lot of time and involves a lot of preparation for the materials, evaluation, and other aspects. Furthermore, technological instability can happen at any time, and both teachers and students occasionally have little experience using it. Lastly, a lot of the time, students lack the

study skills necessary to take full use of this blended learning strategy.

The above-discussed blended learning approach also calls for an independent learner and a teacher who can assist and motivate pupils to use it. But the roles that teachers and students play are evolving. As a matter of fact, teaching and learning are seen by contemporary learning models as social processes in which teachers and students collaborate to create knowledge. The instructor takes on the role of coach, facilitator, or both. Wheeler (2009) identified seven competencies that educators utilising blended learning approaches had to possess:

- They can support and encourage learners
- They are not afraid to take risks with new technologies
- They can transfer good teaching skills to an online learning context
- They can communicate well in any method
- They should be people who do not follow the rules and do not obey the rules
- They should thrive in a culture of change
- They should be able to see the big picture

### 2.3. Integrated learning direction in foreign language teaching

One of the most effective methods for learning a foreign language is blended learning. In reality, during the past ten years, English language instruction through blended learning has grown remarkably. The primary emphasis should be on subject areas where students can get the abilities and knowledge required for efficient communication, such as teaching foreign languages and information and communication technologies, as stated by Mothejzikova (2005/2006, p. 131). Thus, the combination of traditional, in-person education and computer-assisted language learning is commonly referred to as blended instruction in the context of teaching foreign languages. Vesela (2012) introduces the idea of "blended CALL" in relation to blended learning, which is defined as language education using a combination of traditional classroom instruction and several technological tools. Study. Within the larger subject of teaching foreign languages, blended learning is defined by Dziuban, Hartman, and Moskal (2005). They define blended learning as an instructional strategy that blends the effectiveness and communication opportunities of the online learning environment with the technologically advanced active learning features of the classroom.

Furthermore, according to Harmer (2012), blended learning is a method of instruction in which students start with input materials like a textbook and work their way up to additional materials and websites. internet. For instance, after reading or listening to a piece on a well-liked subject, students can look up further resources or videos online. Additionally, students can access additional courses, exercises, references, and other activities on the textbook's associated website.

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The additional value of blended learning in the context of teaching English as a foreign language is as follows:

- Online learning environments can allow exposure to the culture of the target language through the use of YouTube videos, meaningful case videos, chat rooms and online seminars; these tools allow learners of English as a foreign language to have greater access to native English speakers, and to interact and collaborate with these foreign peers;
- Language is communication and through the application of the tools mentioned above, students can gain more exposure to the target language than in a traditional language classroom; and if they are properly motivated, they will actively practice the language regularly outside of the traditional classroom setting;
- Using the Internet can help students improve key language skills, specifically listening, reading and writing skills;

- Web-based materials or CD ROMs give students the opportunity to participate in lectures or seminars;
- More frequent teacher feedback will help students practice the language regularly and avoid repeating previous mistakes.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Object and scope of the study

The poll was given to second-year English language majors at a Hanoi university who had just finished their third course, Reading 3. In order to gather information regarding the benefits and drawbacks of the online learning environment as well as how to best integrate online and in-person instruction to maximise efficiency, the author conducted a survey using interviews and observations of online Reading 3 classes.

Interview participants	Age	Level of satisfaction with online learning
Student 1	20	No previous experience with online learning, but open to the experience
Student 2	20	No previous experience with online learning, not very comfortable, don't like technology
Student 3	20	Have no previous experience with online learning, feel comfortable using technology and safe in an online environment

#### 3.2. Research question

- What is the current status of learning reading comprehension skills in the online environment?
- How do students perceive the effectiveness of the blended learning method in reading?

#### 3.3. Current status of teaching reading skills for students majoring in English Language

Some student instruction has been done online even since the Covid-19 epidemic. Reading 3 is a fifteen-week, three-credit course that alternates between theory and discussion classes. These students are well-versed in the benefits and drawbacks of online learning, having participated in numerous online courses over the last two years in all of the modules. Reading is a challenging subject that need for focus, discussion, group problem-solving, high self-awareness, a proactive approach to locate materials online, and frequent practise. On the other hand, because reading is a receptive skill—that is, it requires less interaction with others than speaking abilities—teaching reading skills online is not too challenging.

Teaching reality demonstrates how the advancement of information technology has made it possible for students to collaborate in groups and have productive speaking classes. Teachers can effortlessly assign students to small groups on the online platform, with the opportunity to include additional members for discussion and opinion sharing. More precisely, when learning online, students can quickly make online files that other group members can modify and add thoughts to, or they can simply annotate, underline, and

highlight key passages in the reading. New terms should be commented on, their definitions noted, and shared with other students or members of the class. This is an outstanding feature of online learning compared to face-to-face learning, because in traditional classrooms, students are affected by external factors (classroom arrangement, surrounding noise, distance between students). group members, restrictions on sharing information or contributing opinions...). In addition, teachers can also control students' working attitudes and collaboration during class by participating in discussion rooms, viewing shared files and evaluating student progress through tests and homework, so that teaching methods can be adjusted accordingly. However, the effectiveness of online learning depends greatly on the learners themselves, and for some students who do not have high self-awareness when studying at home, online learning is not highly effective. Others believe that learning motivation comes largely from the opportunity to talk, communicate and interact with teachers in a live classroom - something they don't get when studying online.

From the above reality, it can be concluded that if a blended learning model can be applied to teach subjects - especially reading comprehension skills that intertwine face-to-face and online lessons, this kind of learning can be more satisfying and suitable for all types of learners.

#### 3.4. Data collection and analysis

The students who took part in the study's interviews had varying experiences with in-person and virtual instruction. While some people are more at ease with hybrid learning

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models than others, everyone recognises the advantages of having both online and in-person instruction in the classroom. The opinions of a few of the students who took part in the interviews are summarised here, along with some recommendations that can help educators create blended learning programmes in the future:

## *Students 1*

Despite having no prior experience with blended learning, Student 1 is happy with the modifications made. In his opinion, taking a hybrid reading course online helps students get ready for in-person instruction more effectively. Student 1 is an engaged learner who frequently offers to share their thoughts in class and during small group discussions, according to observations made in the classroom. He believes that students need to read online since they may utilise online dictionaries to read and comprehend the ideas of others. Out of the three, he is the one that views blended learning the least. Although he acknowledged that the hybrid course was flexible and productive, he claimed it decreased student-teacher and peer contact.

## *Students 2*

Student 2 appreciates that the combination course offers a flexible schedule. She participates actively in class discussions and small group work with her classmates. Despite her lack of interest in technology during the interview, she received excellent feedback regarding the course's online learning component. She appreciated getting feedback from her classmates, which made the course more enjoyable and gave her lots of opportunity to communicate with the instructor and other students. She also thought that the online activities better prepared her for in-person classes.

## *Students 3*

Observations made in the classroom indicate that student 3 possesses many traits typical of Asian students. He is much more quiet than other students and exhibits greater self-discipline in his meticulous preparation for classes and careful completion of assignments outside of them. Despite not having any prior experience with blended learning, he showed interest in it. He likes online learning because it offers security and lots of time to write answers and comments, even though it involves more work. In addition, he recommends that students reply to every comment made by their peers rather of simply picking a few. For him, online learning activities make him more confident in expressing himself and better prepared for face-to-face learning in class.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

### ***4.1. Students were initially unfamiliar with the blended learning model***

None of the students who were questioned had taken a blended course previously, and most of them had a limited understanding of what one was. Observations made in the classroom reveal that during the first two weeks, students frequently have a lot of questions concerning the

requirements for online activities and the structure of the course.

### ***4.2. Students agree that blended learning has several advantages over the traditional model***

According to several studies (Caulfield, 2011; Hensley, 2005; Yeou, 2016), students prefer the scheduling flexibility that hybrid courses can provide. Students are free to do their homework whenever they like. They also have more time to read a book before they start to generate ideas. Student 1 stated, "We have more time to think about a topic more thoroughly, have enough time, thanks to online activities."

Every student surveyed felt that taking a hybrid online course could help them better prepare for in-person classes. Here are their opinions. "I have to read what my classmates have to say before class so that I can prepare a topic for discussion when I get there. I believe that as a result, I am better prepared than I would be in a typical classroom because in the latter, unforeseen circumstances may happen. (Student 2)

"Traditional classroom discussion seemed like an idea right away." (student 3)

When asked in the interview which format they would choose for a reading course in traditional formats, blended learning, and a completely online course, all 3 students chose the hybrid course. Classroom observations also show that students can actively participate in class discussions without having to spend a lot of time introducing or reading through the topic.

### ***4.3. Technology does not place an additional burden on students***

Students have conflicting opinions about the use of technology in the course. During the interview, I realized that using an online platform was not appealing to them. Student 2 even expressed a lack of interest in technology. However, they all felt comfortable with online platforms if online activities did not require performing additional tasks. They said they all spent the same amount of time doing homework in class, whether studying in person or online. The main obstacles that make it take students longer to complete course assignments come from language and familiarity with the subject matter, which are common obstacles in any advanced reading class. any.

### ***4.4. Communication is an element that students value in the learning model***

Although assignments are submitted online, most students look forward most to reading their classmates' comments in class. Student 2 suggested more immediate communication for further discussion. Student 1 suggested that "written analysis of classroom discussions can make students take this assignment more seriously."

We also found that personality traits can influence how well students benefit from this blended learning model. Student 2, as we observed, is quite approachable and talkative in class, showing a preference for traditional classroom discussion activities over online interactions, while Student 3 is a the



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quieter member, feel more comfortable with online communication. Combining these options provides diverse opportunities for interaction for students in blended classrooms.

### 5. CONCLUSION

From student responses and classroom observations, it can be seen that the integrated reading course is popular and effective for students learning English as a foreign language participating in the interviews. Although students were initially unfamiliar with this form of learning, positive feedback demonstrated that they were able to adjust and benefit from the flexibility and different options for communication that the course offered. learning brings. Online lessons in the course give them more time to think deeply and be more flexible with their schedules. However, because students do not find technology an engaging part of the course, teachers of blended learning classes should prioritize creating communication spaces rather than simply focusing on technology applications. technology to design language courses.

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