

Blended Learning Method for Teaching Reading: The Benefit Impacts for Non-Regular English Class Program

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***Abstract**---Currently e-learning program has been a warm conversation in the world of education so that it can be meaningful way chosen by individuals who want to study, both in regular class and non-regular class. It turns out to greatly affect the learning method used teachers in presenting the material as increasing sophistication of technology. One of the methods used is a blended learning method. This research aims at investigating the benefits of using blended learning in teaching reading class for non-regular English students of the second semester. The method used in this research is descriptive analysis one. In this research students are facilitated by using blended learning method which is essentially a combination of learning excellence that is done face- to- face and virtually. Students should follow 16-week learning process to study Reading for Basic Strategies subject consisting of some activities as follows (1) downloading material every week, (2) taking part in forum discussion virtually (3) completing quiz and assignment, (4) doing mid test and final test, and (5) joining face to face meeting.*

***Keywords**---Blended learning, E-learning, Virtually, Reading)*

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is very important for every individual because it can create a person who can behave well and know the rules. The definition of education itself is learning the knowledge, skills, and habits of a group of people that are passed down from one generation to another through teaching, training, or research.

A college is a place of education for individuals especially for those who want to get a degree. The university became a young generation container to form more independent character and personality. In addition, colleges help them to think critically and innovatively. However, not everyone is willing to continue study to college. Even most of them were forced to postpone to continue the study due to various factors e.g. a considerable cost factor that should be incurred when wanting to proceed to college. Because of these factors, they consider to work while studying. Although they are working, many employees want to get a higher education degree. This is because with the higher degree of science and title, the employees can improve their better life. Usually by having a higher degree, it will facilitate employees to increase the career path of the company where they work or it can open the opportunity to find a better job. The solution for employees who want to get a better education degree is to attend non-regular class program. Non regular class program is a lecture outside regular class hours. Usually the schedule of non-regular class program is in the afternoon or in the evening and also on weekends. Non-regular class program is designed more flexible in comparison to regular class because it is adjusted to the schedule of employees ' work.

In today's digital era, location is no longer an obstacle to learn in higher education. Through technology, now anyone can go to college anywhere and anytime through online. In fact, not many universities in Indonesia are

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implementing a full online lecture system. However, there is no need to worry, because various teaching methods have been developed. One of them is blended learning method.

To move from a face-to-face learning model or to meet directly, then transforming into online requires an effort and a little bit of cost (Jabarullah and Hussain, 2019). However, this can start with a blended learning model. What is a blended learning? According to Mason and Rennie (2006) *“The term blended learning model was originally used to describe courses which tried to combine the best of face-to-face and online learning.”*

According to Semler (2005) *“Blended learning combines the best aspects of online learning, structured face-to-face activities, and real world practice. Online learning systems, classroom training, and on-the-job experience have major drawbacks by themselves. The blended learning approach uses the strengths of each to counter the others’ weaknesses.”*

Blended Learning is a learning facility that combines various ways of delivering, teaching models and learning styles, introducing a wide selection of dialogue between facilitators and the learners. Blended learning is also a combination of face-to-face teaching and online teaching, but more than that as an element of social interaction such as:

- a. There is an interaction between teacher and students
- b. The teaching can also be online or face-to-face
- c. Blended Learning = combining instructional modalities (or delivery media),
- d. Blended Learning = combining instructional methods

E-Learning provides students an opportunity to independently control the success of learning. The learners freely determine when to start, when to finish, and which part of the module they want to learn first. If, after repeated there is still something they did not understand, learners can contact the instructor by email, chat or follow the interactive dialogue at certain times. Learners can also read the results of discussions in the available message board. It is in line with Mason and Rennie (2006) *“E-Learning is the effective learning process created by combining digitally delivered content with (learning) support and services.”*

II. METHODOLOGY

The method used in this research is descriptive analysis. The data are taken from the English students of non-regular class program studying in the second semester who take Reading for Basic Strategies’ course. English Department of Widyatama University has implemented the method of blended learning in language teaching for more than 5 years, especially for students of non-regular classes. They should attend to the class in the evenings from 6 pm-10.30 pm. Every semester there are some courses that have to implement the blended learning method in its implementation. Of the total courses offered only 30% are implementing the blended learning method. One of the courses implementing the blended learning method is Reading for Basic Strategies course. The objective of this course is that students are able to understand some English reading texts by mastering some reading skill strategies and applying them in understanding various English language texts.

In implementing blended learning method, students are facilitated doing five learning activities in one semester such as (1) downloading material every week, (2) taking part in forum discussion virtually (3) completing quiz and assignment, (4) doing mid test and final test, and (5) joining face to face meeting.

III. DISCUSSION

1. Conducting Blended Learning

Non-regular classes at the University Widyatama implement blended learning method. They are learning with face-to-face meetings as a conventional learning model and online learning system (virtual system). Face-to-face meetings are conducted in the classroom for 3 times in a semester such as at the 1st week, 7th week, and 15th week. While online learning (virtual meetings) are conducted from the 2nd- 6th weeks and 9th -14th weeks. Mid test is conducted on the 8th week and the final test is conducted on the 16th week.

All lecturers and students are conditioned to join e-learning workshop before teaching-learning process started in the beginning of semester. The lecturers are trained how to conduct this blended learning method such as how to register themselves into online system in order to be accessed by students, how to upload teaching materials, how to operate discussion forum, quizzes, assignment and how to grade and give feedback for students’ quizzes and assignments.

Meanwhile, students also are trained how to download teaching material every week, how to register themselves into online system using personal password, and how to actively join discussion forum, send quizzes and assignments.

2. Learning Activities

Learning activities consist of uploading and downloading teaching materials conducted by lecturers, taking part actively in the discussion forum, doing exercises or quizzes, completing assignment (tasks), and face-to-face activity

(a) Uploading and downloading learning materials

For teaching Reading for Basic Strategies, the lecturer should prepare teaching materials for 14 meetings in one semester according to syllabus and learning outlines. Syllabus and learning outlines are shared and uploaded in the first meeting of lecturing to the students so that they know what materials they are going to learn for one semester. Meanwhile, the teaching material for each meeting is uploaded every Monday or Tuesday every week.

The students are able to download the material just after they know it is uploaded. They can learn the material by themselves. They can ask questions if they find some difficulties in understanding the teaching material using a discussion forum – a session in online system which facilitates the students to discuss anything related to the topic of material of the week with other students or even the lecturer.

Some topics discussed for this course cover some reading skill strategies such as scanning, previewing, predicting, guessing meaning by context, finding topic sentence and finding main idea.

- Practice in scanning will help students learn to skip over unimportant words so that they can read faster. It is in line with Beale (2013) who quotes “*when scanning, you look only for a specific fact or piece of information without reading everything.*” When we scan, we have a question in mind. We do not read every word, only the words that answer the question.
- Miculecky and Jefrie (1996) explain “*The aim of previewing is to help you predict or make some “educated guesses” about what is in book*”. In this activity, readers can review titles, section headings, and photo captions to get a sense of structure and content of a reading selection.
- In predicting, we use knowledge of the subject matter to make predictions about content and vocabulary and check comprehension.
- Guessing word meaning from context is used when prior knowledge of the subject and the ideas in the text becomes clues to meanings of unknown words, instead of stopping to look them up. It is also claimed by Miculecky and Jefrie (1996) “*When you try to guess the meaning of unknown word, you use the text surrounding the word-the context.*”
- When students read for meaning, they should begin by looking for the topic. This help students connect what they read to what they already know. It is in line with Miculecky and Jefrie (1996) that “*Topic is the overall subject of the paragraph*”. In order to find topic, ask yourself: “*What is this about? What is the general idea?*” They claimed also that “*Main idea is a statement that tells the author’s point about the topic*”. In other words, main idea is a topic plus the author’s point about the topic. When we want to know how to find main idea, we should ask yourself: “*What is the overall message or argument being made by the author about the topic of this paragraph?*”

(b) Discussion Forum

As the author mention above in point (a), a discussion forum is to facilitate not only students but also lecturers to ask questions, discuss the material, share idea or even criticize the topic discussed with other students and lecturers. They can do chatting in discussion forum using English. This activity is notified as their presence in the lecture of the week. Lecturers can consider their students’ activity in discussion forum as one of their assessment points.

(c) Quiz and Assignment

Quiz is given to the students as a kind of test whether they have understood or not to the material given to the students in the week. The quiz material is related to the topic discussed in the week. The quiz is given every week and can be accessed through online by students on Friday or Saturday. The students should turn in the answer of the quiz on time in range of due date time suggested by the teacher. Those who do not send the quiz are not allowed to follow remedial quiz and in consequence do not get a score for it.

Assignment is just like a review exercise. The lecturer gives an assignment to the students through online for about 4 times in one semester, in the 4th, 6th, 12th and 14th weeks. The materials for assignment is given from some previous topics of the previous weeks. Model of quiz and assignment can be closed test or

multiple choice test question. However, assignment test is longer and more complex than quiz test. The rules of doing the assignment are almost the same as those for quiz tests.

(d) Face-to-face activity

Face-to-face activity is needed to discuss more complex materials and clarify only if the materials are still questionable for the students. Face-to-face sometimes is used to find solution for the problems they face in virtual meeting.

(e) Mid Test and Final Test

Mid test is a kind of exam or evaluation which is held on the 8th week of the semester. It is also given through online system. The rules of doing mid test are almost the same as those for quiz and assignment tests. The materials for being tested on the mid test come from the topics discussed in the previous meetings (Chapter 1-7). Final test is the exam which is held on 16th week of the semester. The final test materials are taken from the topic materials from Chapter 9-15. It is conducted in the classroom under the supervising of the course lecturer. Those who do not follow the exams because of certain reasons, should contact the person in charge to process make-up exams.

3. Benefits of Blended Learning for Students

- A blended learning approach provides ultimate flexibility in presenting content. Complex topics can be presented in the classroom, while other subject matter can be available online. With an online component, it will also increase flexibility and convenience over how and when the students participate in the learning process. They can access anything through internet for almost 24 hours via email, or online discussion.
- A blended learning approach provides cost effectiveness. By including online activities, students and lecturers do not need to travel to campus or class. All materials and learning instructions can be easily run at lecturers' own desk. It saves time and also money cost.
- The good news of successful blended learning approach can provide a seamless transition from classroom to computer access. Students and lecturers can design ways of continuing discussion themes and personalizing content to a person's specific job or interests.
- Some online activities such as chatting, giving comment using English and completing quiz and assignment can improve students' competence in English. Especially for the respondents of this research, they are expected to comprehend the importance of some reading strategies so that they succeed to read and comprehend the text fast and get a good grade for this reading course.

IV. CONCLUSION

To summarize, teaching Reading for Basic Strategies using blended learning approach is really useful for non-regular English class students because students can employ active learning strategies through combination activities both face-to-face learning and online system in between the bustle of their work. With this method, students can study the materials provided by lecturers, do quizzes and assignments, interact online through discussion forum that can be accessed anywhere and anytime through computers, tablets or smartphones without losing face-to-face interaction. In addition, this blended learning method becomes very effective because it can eliminate students and lecturers travel costs.

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