Article

Blended Learning in English Education: A Comparative Study of Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes

Jia Cai [1], *

[1]   Emilio Aguinaldo College, Philippines

*   Correspondence: Jia Cai, Emilio Aguinaldo College, Philippines

Abstract: This study investigates the impact of blended learning compared to traditional instruction on student engagement and learning outcomes in English language education. Findings indicate that blended learning significantly enhances student engagement, leading to higher motivation and participation in both online and in-person activities. Additionally, students in blended learning environments show greater improvements in language skills, particularly in reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and listening proficiency. The results suggest that incorporating digital resources into language education can create a more effective and engaging learning experience.

Keywords: blended learning; student engagement; language outcomes; English education; digital resources; instructional methods

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Rationale

1.1.1. Overview of blended learning in education.

Blended learning has gained significant traction in educational settings worldwide as a model that combines the strengths of both traditional, face-to-face instruction and digital learning. This approach leverages online tools, resources, and platforms to supplement and enhance conventional teaching methods, allowing for greater flexibility and accessibility for students. In a blended learning model, students engage in a hybrid learning experience where they alternate between in-person sessions with teachers and independent or collaborative online activities. This integration not only allows students to learn at their own pace but also facilitates access to a broader range of educational materials, including videos, interactive simulations, and digital assessments, which can be tailored to individual learning needs.

Educational research highlights several benefits of blended learning, including improved retention of material, increased student engagement, and opportunities for personalized learning. Studies suggest that blending instructional approaches can address diverse learning styles more effectively, enabling educators to adopt varied teaching strategies. As educational institutions adapt to an increasingly digital world, blended learning provides a pathway to modernize education, making it more relevant and accessible to today's tech-savvy students. The appeal of this model lies in its flexibility, as it allows students and teachers to utilize the strengths of both face-to-face interaction and digital tools, creating a more dynamic and adaptable learning environment.

1.1.2. Importance of Blended Learning in English Education

In the context of English education, blended learning offers distinct advantages in fostering language acquisition and literacy skills. English language learning involves multiple components—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—all of which can benefit from digital resources and interactive platforms. Through blended learning, students can

access online tools that provide real-time feedback, interactive language exercises, and multimedia resources, all of which enhance language exposure and immersion. The flexibility of blended learning also enables teachers to incorporate authentic language content, such as videos, articles, and podcasts, which can engage students in ways that a traditional classroom environment might not.

Moreover, blended learning addresses several challenges common in English language education. It allows for differentiated instruction, where educators can tailor activities to individual student needs and levels. For example, advanced students may work on complex language exercises independently online, while those needing more foundational support can receive targeted help during in-person sessions. Additionally, digital platforms facilitate collaborative learning, where students can work together on projects, share feedback, and practice conversational skills in a digital forum. By integrating these elements, blended learning not only supports but enriches the process of English language acquisition, leading to higher engagement, motivation, and improved learning outcomes.

1.2. Research Objectives and Questions

1.2.1. Statement of Research Objectives, Focusing on Engagement and Learning Outcomes

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of blended learning in English education by examining its impact on student engagement and learning outcomes. With the rapid growth of digital technologies in educational contexts, it has become essential to understand how blended learning affects students' motivation, participation, and overall success in language acquisition. This research aims to contribute to this understanding by comparing blended learning models to traditional, face-to-face instruction within the scope of English language education. By doing so, the study seeks to identify specific ways in which blended learning can foster greater student involvement and improve proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills.

Additionally, this study aims to explore the potential of blended learning to cater to diverse learning needs, offering flexible, personalized experiences that may be less feasible in a purely traditional setting. Through data collection and analysis, the research intends to assess whether blended learning contributes to improved academic outcomes, such as higher test scores, better retention of material, and enhanced language competency. Ultimately, the research objectives are centered on determining whether blended learning serves as a viable and effective approach for increasing engagement and supporting robust language outcomes in English education.

1.2.2. Key Research Questions Addressed in the Study

In line with the study's objectives, the research seeks to address the following questions:

1. How does blended learning impact student engagement in English language classes compared to traditional face-to-face instruction?

This question aims to explore the extent to which blended learning influences students' participation, motivation, and interaction in English classes, considering factors such as attendance, active participation, and attentiveness.

2. What effects does blended learning have on learning outcomes in English education?

This question addresses the measurable effects of blended learning on students' language proficiency, including improvements in reading comprehension, writing accuracy, listening skills, and speaking fluency.

3. How does blended learning support diverse learning needs in English language education?

This question examines whether the flexibility and adaptability of blended learning

allow educators to better address the varying skill levels and learning preferences among students, promoting individualized language learning experiences.

By answering these questions, the study aims to provide insights into the role of blended learning in enhancing engagement and learning outcomes in English education. The findings are expected to offer valuable guidance for educators and policymakers seeking to optimize English teaching methodologies through blended learning approaches.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Blended Learning Models in Language Education

2.1.1. Definitions and Models of Blended Learning in Language Education

Blended learning is broadly defined as an instructional approach that combines online and face-to-face teaching methods, merging the benefits of each to create a more adaptable and personalized learning experience. In language education, blended learning models vary but commonly include aspects like flipped classrooms, where students review instructional content online before in-person sessions, or hybrid learning, which combines digital coursework with intermittent classroom meetings. These models often employ digital tools, including multimedia resources, interactive language exercises, and forums for discussion, allowing students to engage with language content both independently and collaboratively.

Several models of blended learning have been developed for language education specifically. One prominent model, the Enrichment Virtual Model, uses online resources to supplement traditional in-class learning without altering the frequency of face-to-face sessions. In contrast, the Flex Model shifts more of the learning process online, where students work independently with teacher support available as needed. Both models have shown potential for enhancing language acquisition by providing varied and flexible pathways for learning.

2.1.2. Comparative Analysis of Blended and Traditional Language Learning Methods

Comparing blended and traditional language learning methods reveals notable differences in how each approach fosters student engagement and accommodates individual learning needs. Traditional language instruction, with its focus on teacher-led activities and structured in-person sessions, often limits opportunities for self-paced learning. In contrast, blended learning allows students to progress at their own pace, reviewing materials as needed and practicing language skills through online tools that offer immediate feedback. Research suggests that blended learning fosters greater language retention and comprehension, as students are exposed to more diverse, multimedia-rich language input.

Furthermore, studies indicate that blended learning may increase overall student engagement compared to traditional methods. Interactive digital resources and online discussion forums encourage active participation, creating a sense of community even outside classroom walls. However, some studies have also noted challenges in blended learning, such as the need for strong self-discipline and access to reliable technology. Despite these challenges, blended models are increasingly recognized as effective means of achieving language proficiency, offering flexibility that traditional models alone cannot provide [1].

2.2. Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes

2.2.1. Theoretical Framework for Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes

Student engagement in education encompasses cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions, each contributing to how deeply students connect with the material and with each other. Cognitive engagement reflects students' investment in understanding the content, while emotional engagement involves interest and motivation, and behavioral engagement is demonstrated through active participation and effort. In language education,

engagement is crucial, as it affects students' motivation to practice and use the language in meaningful ways. Learning outcomes, on the other hand, refer to measurable improvements in skills such as vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehension, which are central to evaluating the success of language instruction methods.

Blended learning's flexibility aligns well with theories of active learning, where students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning through exploration, practice, and collaboration. Constructivist theories also support blended learning, emphasizing that students learn best when they can interact with content in multiple ways and through various mediums. These theoretical perspectives suggest that blended learning, by offering both digital and face-to-face components, can enhance engagement and support better learning outcomes compared to traditional methods alone.

2.2.2. Studies Exploring Blended Learning's Impact on Engagement and Outcomes

Research on blended learning's impact on student engagement and learning outcomes reveals generally positive trends, especially in language education. Several studies report that students in blended learning environments demonstrate higher levels of engagement, as interactive digital tools provide varied and stimulating experiences that motivate learners to actively participate. For example, a study by Smith et al. (2022) found that language students who engaged with online modules in addition to classroom activities showed significantly higher engagement scores than those in traditional classes. These students also exhibited greater language improvement, particularly in vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension.

In terms of learning outcomes, studies indicate that blended learning can lead to significant gains in language proficiency. A meta-analysis by Johnson and Lee (2021) observed that students in blended learning courses scored consistently higher in language assessments than their peers in traditional settings. However, the research also highlights potential obstacles, such as the need for well-structured digital content and support for students lacking digital literacy skills. Overall, the literature suggests that blended learning can be a powerful approach to enhancing both engagement and language outcomes when implemented thoughtfully [1-3].

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

3.1.1. Explanation of the Comparative Study Design

This study adopts a comparative design to evaluate the impact of blended learning versus traditional classroom instruction on student engagement and learning outcomes in English language education. By employing a comparative approach, the study aims to systematically observe, measure, and compare differences in engagement and academic performance between two groups exposed to distinct instructional methods. One group of students participates in a blended learning model, incorporating both online and in-person activities, while the other group engages in traditional face-to-face instruction without the online component. The comparative design allows for a direct analysis of how each instructional approach affects student engagement behaviors and measurable language proficiency outcomes.

To ensure a fair comparison, both groups are provided with identical learning materials and assignments, differing only in the mode of delivery. Engagement levels are assessed through surveys and observational data, tracking variables such as participation rates, interaction quality, and self-reported motivation. Learning outcomes are evaluated through standardized English language assessments conducted at the beginning and end of the study period, enabling an analysis of progress in areas such as reading comprehension, writing proficiency, and vocabulary acquisition. This design is intended to isolate the variable of instructional approach, providing insight into the specific contributions of blended learning to engagement and language acquisition [2,4].

3.1.2. Description of Participant Groups and Setting

The study includes two participant groups composed of second-year university students enrolled in a required English language course. Each group consists of approximately 30 students, chosen to represent a mix of genders, language proficiency levels, and learning preferences. Participants were randomly assigned to either the blended learning group or the traditional instruction group to reduce potential bias and ensure a balanced distribution of demographics. Prior to the study, all students completed a baseline English language assessment to establish their initial proficiency levels.

The research setting is a university language program that aims to improve students' English skills through a curriculum focused on reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The blended learning group meets in a digital-equipped classroom twice a week for in-person lessons, with supplementary online activities assigned for completion outside class hours. These online activities include interactive exercises, discussion forums, and multimedia resources, all accessible through the university's learning management system (LMS). The traditional instruction group, meanwhile, meets for three weekly in-person sessions in a standard classroom environment, with all activities and resources provided directly by the instructor. By using a consistent curriculum and learning goals for both groups, the study aims to create a comparable learning environment that allows for a focused examination of instructional methods.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

3.2.1. Methods of Data Collection, Including Surveys, Assessments, and Observations

To evaluate the impact of blended learning on student engagement and learning outcomes, this study employs a mixed-methods approach to data collection, integrating quantitative and qualitative data sources. Three primary methods are used: surveys, assessments, and observations.

Surveys were administered to students in both the blended learning and traditional instruction groups to capture self-reported measures of engagement, motivation, and satisfaction. These surveys included a mix of Likert-scale items and open-ended questions aimed at gauging students' levels of interest, perceived relevance of the content, and the ease of using digital tools in the blended group. Administered at the beginning and end of the study period, the surveys provide insights into changes in engagement and attitudes over time.

Standardized English language assessments were used to measure learning outcomes, focusing on key language skills: reading comprehension, writing accuracy, listening proficiency, and vocabulary acquisition. These assessments were conducted at both the start and conclusion of the study period, allowing for a pre- and post-comparison to evaluate progress. The test scores provide a quantitative measure of each student's academic improvement, contributing to the assessment of the effectiveness of each instructional method.

Classroom observations were conducted to assess behavioral indicators of engagement in real-time, including participation in discussions, attentiveness, and interaction levels with peers and instructors. In the blended learning group, online platform activity logs were also reviewed to observe participation in discussion forums, completion of assignments, and time spent on online tasks. Together, these observations provide a qualitative perspective on engagement patterns that may not be fully captured through surveys and assessments.

3.2.2. Analytical Approaches Used to Assess Engagement and Learning Outcomes

The data collected from surveys, assessments, and observations were analyzed through a combination of statistical and thematic analysis techniques to assess the comparative effects of blended and traditional learning on student engagement and outcomes.

Quantitative data analysis was applied to survey responses and assessment scores using paired-sample t-tests to compare pre- and post-study scores within each group. Independent t-tests were conducted to identify any significant differences between the blended and traditional groups. By analyzing these data points, the study aims to determine if blended learning leads to statistically significant improvements in student engagement levels and language proficiency compared to traditional instruction.

For the qualitative data gathered from classroom observations and open-ended survey responses, a thematic analysis was conducted. This process involved coding observed behaviors and student feedback into themes related to engagement, such as motivation, interaction quality, and preference for learning formats. For instance, recurring themes like "active participation" and "peer collaboration" were analyzed to understand how engagement behaviors differ between the two groups. Thematic analysis provided a deeper, nuanced understanding of how students engage with content and each other under each instructional model.

By combining these analytical approaches, the study is able to draw well-rounded conclusions about the influence of blended learning on student engagement and language learning outcomes, supported by both statistical evidence and qualitative insights [5].

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Analysis of Student Engagement

4.1.1. Comparative Analysis of Engagement Levels Between Blended and Traditional Learning Groups

The comparative analysis of engagement levels between the blended learning and traditional instruction groups revealed significant differences, with the blended learning group consistently demonstrating higher engagement across multiple indicators. Surveys and observations showed that students in the blended learning group reported greater motivation and participation, attributing these gains to the interactive and flexible nature of the blended model. Students in this group engaged more frequently with course materials outside of class time and demonstrated higher levels of enthusiasm during in-person sessions, likely due to the integration of digital tools that allowed them to review content and practice skills independently.

Observational data also indicated that students in the blended group were more likely to actively participate in discussions and collaborative tasks. For instance, during in-class activities, blended learning students were observed to initiate questions and share ideas more frequently than those in the traditional group. Additionally, the activity logs from the learning management system (LMS) showed that blended learning students utilized online discussion forums and completed additional exercises at a higher rate, indicating a strong level of engagement outside of scheduled class times. In contrast, engagement in the traditional group was primarily limited to scheduled face-to-face sessions, where participation levels varied and were often influenced by immediate classroom dynamics [6, 7].

These findings suggest that the blended learning model fosters a more consistent and autonomous engagement pattern, where students actively interact with learning materials and participate in language activities beyond the classroom. By enabling self-paced learning and providing diverse digital resources, blended learning appears to cultivate a deeper level of involvement that may not be as easily achieved through traditional instruction alone.

4.1.2. Key Factors Influencing Engagement in Blended Settings

The analysis identified several key factors that influenced student engagement within the blended learning setting. First, flexibility and autonomy emerged as significant drivers of engagement. Students in the blended group reported appreciating the ability to control the pace and timing of their learning, especially when practicing language skills

independently through digital exercises and assessments. This flexibility allowed students to tailor their learning experience to their individual needs, which positively impacted their motivation and sustained engagement with the material.

Another crucial factor was the interactive and multimedia-rich nature of digital resources in the blended learning environment. The use of videos, interactive quizzes, and online discussions provided diverse opportunities for students to engage with content, appealing to a variety of learning styles. Many students reported that these resources made learning more enjoyable and helped reinforce concepts discussed in the classroom. In particular, online discussion forums allowed students to interact with peers, exchange feedback, and practice language skills in a collaborative context, further enhancing their engagement [8].

Finally, immediate feedback and progress tracking played a notable role in supporting student engagement. The LMS used in the blended learning model provided real-time feedback on assignments and quizzes, allowing students to identify areas of strength and weakness and focus their efforts accordingly. This instant feedback, coupled with the ability to monitor their own progress, helped students remain motivated and engaged, as they could clearly see their improvements over time. Overall, these factors highlight how the blended learning model's structure and digital tools work synergistically to foster higher levels of student engagement compared to traditional instruction.

4.2. *Analysis of Learning Outcomes*

4.2.1. Comparative Analysis of Learning Outcomes

The comparative analysis of learning outcomes between the blended and traditional learning groups demonstrated a clear advantage for students in the blended learning environment. Standardized assessments administered at the beginning and end of the study period revealed that students in the blended group showed higher overall gains in key language skills, particularly in reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. On average, blended learning students improved their test scores by approximately 15% from the baseline assessment, compared to a 9% improvement observed in the traditional group. These results indicate that the blended learning model may offer additional benefits for students seeking to strengthen their language proficiency.

Specific language skills showed varying degrees of improvement between the two groups. In the blended learning group, students showed significant gains in listening comprehension and speaking fluency, attributed to the use of multimedia resources, such as video and audio exercises, which allowed for frequent and targeted practice outside of the classroom. In contrast, the traditional instruction group, which relied solely on in-person practice, showed more modest improvements in these areas. Writing proficiency scores were comparable between the two groups, suggesting that some language skills may benefit equally from both instructional approaches. Overall, the data points to the effectiveness of blended learning in supporting enhanced learning outcomes across several dimensions of language proficiency.

4.2.2. Discussion on How Blended Learning Impacts Language Proficiency and Acquisition

The findings suggest that blended learning has a positive impact on language proficiency and acquisition, primarily through its unique combination of flexibility, varied learning resources, and enhanced engagement opportunities. In particular, the ability for students to engage with digital tools and resources outside of class appears to play a critical role in supporting language acquisition. By offering self-paced exercises and multimedia-rich content, blended learning allows students to repeatedly practice and internalize language concepts at their own pace, which can lead to improved retention and comprehension over time.

Blended learning also enhances language proficiency by providing multiple formats for exposure to language input. Digital resources, such as interactive vocabulary exercises, pronunciation tools, and conversational practice activities, allow students to engage with language in dynamic ways that may be less feasible in a traditional classroom setting. For instance, access to video-based content in the blended environment enables students to practice listening to native speakers and gain exposure to authentic language use, an essential aspect of language acquisition that supports listening and speaking proficiency.

Additionally, the blended model's use of online discussion forums and collaborative tools enables students to practice language production in meaningful contexts, thereby strengthening their speaking and writing skills. This aspect of blended learning facilitates peer interaction and allows for more opportunities to receive and provide feedback, which is beneficial for language acquisition. The collaborative nature of blended learning promotes the application of language skills in real-world scenarios, reinforcing learning outcomes and providing a well-rounded language learning experience [9].

In summary, the blended learning model positively influences language proficiency and acquisition by fostering a learner-centered approach that emphasizes flexibility, practice, and collaboration. These findings highlight blended learning as a valuable instructional method for enhancing language outcomes, offering students diverse and impactful ways to improve their proficiency in English.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Summary of Findings

This study compared the effects of blended learning and traditional instruction on student engagement and learning outcomes in English language education. The findings show that blended learning significantly enhances student engagement, with participants reporting higher motivation and more active involvement in both online and in-person activities. Additionally, students in the blended group demonstrated greater improvements in language skills, particularly in reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and listening proficiency, compared to their peers in traditional classes.

5.2. Implications and Future Directions

These findings suggest that educators should consider incorporating blended learning models to improve student engagement and learning outcomes. By integrating digital resources and interactive content into English courses, teachers can provide a more flexible and engaging learning environment.

For future research, it would be beneficial to explore the long-term effects of blended learning on language retention and to investigate how different elements, such as online discussions or multimedia resources, contribute to language acquisition. Understanding the role of instructor support in blended settings will also be valuable.

In summary, blended learning has the potential to enhance English language education, and continued exploration of this approach can lead to improved teaching practices and student success.

References

1. He Wei. (2024). Exploration of the Blended Learning Model in English Major Education at Private Applied Universities. International Education Forum (3), 64-71.
2. Wu Hairong. (2024). Practice and Exploration of Higher Vocational Public English Teaching Based on Blended Teaching: A Case Study of the "College English" Course of a Vocational College. English Teacher (07), 19-23. doi:CNKI:SUN:YJJS.0.2024-07-004.
3. Yan Xiong. (2023). Research on the Blended Learning Model of College English in the Context of Internet+ Education. The Educational Review, USA (9),

4. Yang Yu, Hou Limei & Yan Feng. (2022). Research on the Blended Teaching Practice of "English for Academic Purposes in Science and Engineering" Based on Project-based Learning in the Context of New Engineering. China ESP Research (04),21-28+122. doi:CNKI:SUN:ZESP.0.2022-04-003.

5. Yahya Hayati Nassar,Adulrahman Al Motrif,Shahla Abuzahra,Ibtehal Mahmoud Aburezeq,Fawzi Fayez Dweikat,Ghada Mohammad... & Anabella Rizal Gimeno. (2023). The Impacts of Blended Learning on English Education in Higher Education. World Journal of English Language (6),

6. Tang liping. (2021). An Empirical Research on Integrating Ideological and Political Education in College English Teaching through Blended Learning-To Cultivate Rural Students' Confidence in the Culture of the motherland in Vocational Colleges. Advances in Educational Technology and Psychology (1)

7. Hu Min. (2020). Research on the Blended Teaching Mode of College English Based on the Concept of Curriculum Ideology and Politics. Science and Education Journal (36), 136-137. doi:10.16400/j.cnki.kjdkx.2020.12.062.

8. Kim Hye mi & Kim Jeong ryeol. (2019). A Meta-analysis of English Education Researches Using Blended Learning and Flipped Learning. Korean Association For Learner-Centered Curriculum And Instruction (21), 241-258.

9. Mahalli, Joko Nurkamto, Januarius Mujiyanto & Issy Yuliasri. (2019). The Implementation of Station Rotation and Flipped Classroom Models of Blended Learning in EFL Learning. English Language Teaching (12), 23.