

THE EFFECTIVENES OF BLENDED-LEARNING IN LISTENING SUBJECTS AT THE 2nd SEMESTER STUDENTS OF ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM AT UNIVERSITAS NIAS

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Article history: received 09 May 2023; revised 18 June 2023; accepted 08 July 2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33751/jhss.v7i2.8650>

Abstract. Blended Learning might be one of many choices that educators and students apply in listening class. Post pandemic time, numbers of synchronous and asynchronous learning are arranged to cope with better learning. This research was conducted to see the effectiveness of Blended Learning when applied in Listening skill subjects. The subject of the research was 64 students of the 2nd semester of English Education Study Program at Universitas Nias in 2022/2023 who took Intermediate Listening class. The data gained from the observation and semi-structured interviews to both lecturer and students to gain clear data, and were analyzed through descriptive qualitative analysis. The result of the research revealed that the Blended Learning in Intermediate Listening class was considerably effective but considered as a new style of learning, need more improvement on competence, digital literacy and dedication.

Keywords: blended learning; intermediate listening; effectiveness

I. INTRODUCTION

Post pandemic time makes the gate of new style and type of learning appeared. The synchronous and asynchronous learning take place and change the learning field in global education. New Normal life has internalized the education system. In English Education Program of Universitas Nias, the way of teaching and learning has also adapted the changes. The traditional way of teaching (face-to-face) has altered into more various ways of teaching that adapts the digital literacy, the use of numerous online platforms to support teaching and learning process, and combination of face-to-face teaching learning with digital learning. Particularly in Intermediate Listening subjects, students often face difficulties in distinguishing the accents of native speakers and generally feel bored when they only listen the material in a short time. Additionally, the students even got less motivated when the material is too difficult and used monotonous method of learning. This situation mostly created lower achievement in listening class. This research was conducted to reveal how effective is Blended Learning in enabling the students' ability in Intermediate Listening subject. Since listening is an essential skill in mastering good English (Zebua [1]), listening however remains one of the least understood processes in language learning" (Kavaliauskiene [2]) which need enhanced way to be mastered not only through hearing, but also need more intensive and various way to be mastered.

Blended Learning is simply a combination of face-to-face learning with e-learning, internet-based virtual or online learning (Harb [3]; Putra et al. [4]). The investigation on the effectiveness of using Blended Learning in

Intermediate Listening is worth trying to get better listening skill mastery.

Lindsay and Knight [5] state that in all listening level, the students need to listen in various ways, adapt the way they listen according to the text and the reason for listening and recognize the features of spoken English. Furthermore using visual and textual clues is also essential to create better understanding of listening. Reacted to this, Blended learning is one of the best ways to enhance listening skill through the combination of face-to-face interaction with the internet/online learning. This way is completed with steps of instruction for using both "usual" way of learning with digital content and application. In the Intermediate Listening, wider material range is the real challenge for the students. Different speakers will create different perceptions and understanding on each syllable pronounced. Listening in all traditional method is considerably weak and uncertain for many EFL/ESL students, particularly those who do not use English in daily conversation. Answering this challenge, Blended Learning offers upgraded facilities to make intermediate listening gets well: multiple approaches, simulations, methods, various virtual resources and tools such as online learning materials, chat, message boards, net meetings (Hadisaputra [6]). Blended Learning is also maintaining the interaction between lecturers/teachers with the students (Akkoyunlu and Soylu [7]). Simply [8]–[10], Blended Learning is a learning approach that offers easier and attractive atmosphere of teaching and learning through the balanced combination of traditional approach of learning with modern way or technological/online/internet based approach of learning that shift teacher-centered or student-centered into

a “multi-combined” approach/method of teaching and learning (Harb & Keshta [3]; Vaughan [11])

Blended Learning provides numerous advantages toward both teachers and students. It offers more individualized support in critical thinking, independent encouragement of personal learning, accommodates various learning styles, allocates time and place to practice the target language outside the classroom, and reduces stress in the practice, flexible learning time and place. (Zaka [12]; Ahn [13]; Ramdani, et al, [6]). These advantages finally assures that Blended Learning is might be appropriate to enhance students’ ability in Intermediate Listening class.

Generally, the students are trained to gain better listening through conventional class or through a strict-ruled language laboratory. However, these ways are proven to be less effective because of time limitation, process that is not touching the core of listening weaknesses faced by the students, strict rule and narrow opportunity to get wider understanding. Concerning with this field facts, Blended Learning is possibly one of the best way to deal with insufficient way of teaching Listening in the classroom. Surely, Blended Learning leads teachers and learners to have a “guided independent” learning; free learning time in “free” places but with considerably supervision as well at the same time. This enable the learning participants to have simple benefits: easier and faster access to references, avoidable boring atmospheres of learning location and lighter budget of hardcopy printing (Dewi [14]). Blended Learning will give clear advantages if conducted in clear steps. The steps of Blended Learning are: a) Plan the Integrated Blended Learning; b) Design and Develop the Blended Learning elements; c) Implementing the Blended Learning design; and d) Review (evaluate) the Effectiveness of Blended Learning design (Bath and Bourke [15]).

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study used the descriptive analysis to reveal the effectiveness of Blended Learning in the Intermediate Listening class. The subjects of the research were 64 students of 2nd semester of English Education Study Program at Universitas Nias in 2022/2023. The data was collected through observation sheets and semistructured interviews to the lecturers and students since March– May 2023. By observing the steps of Blended Learning and supported by the interviews, the result would bring this study to reveal the effectiveness of the Blended Learning when applied in the Intermediate Listening class.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Actualizing the Steps of Blended Learning

1) Planning the Integrated Blended Learning of Listening subject.

Based on the observation and interviews, the lecturers of Intermediate Listening subject generally organized the teaching and learning planning on RPS (course

design) of the subject. This planning follows the CPL of the subject which aligned with the curriculum used in the study program. Additionally, the lecturers also prepared the non-traditional “concept” of teaching listening, which was arranging the schedule of listening practices in language laboratory, listening material (voice recording), loudspeakers (in case the language laboratory get system failures / errors or electricity malfunction), computers and LCD projector (multimedia), listening tutorial (Pdfs), listening worksheets (Pdfs/online), online links of listening practice, WhatsApp group to easier the online/offline process of learning, Zoom/Google Meeting facility and schedule, E-Learning facility, and live-feed native speakers conversation (news, interactive talks, etc). These planning were basically produced after the lecturers of listening, students, study program, multimedia department at university and fellow other lecturers had made specific agreement and similar concept on how it would be conducted. Completing this step, the lecturers prepared the checklist form to ensure each items were available and functional.

2) Design and Develop the Blended Learning elements.

Entering step 2, the lecturers designed and develop the listening class accordingly to the RPS (course design) that was prepared earlier. In this step, the listening classes were arranged based on standard/general activities in teaching and learning, namely pre-teaching, whilst-teaching and post-teaching. The differences were each activity’s step was completed with several developments. The classes were scheduled into synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning. In synchronous part, the classes were enrolled into face-to-face approach combined with multimedia/language lab deployments. Meanwhile in asynchronous part, the classes were enrolled with online/technology based learning and conducted individually / group. However, all these parts were controlled by the lecturers through constant monitoring via SIMAT (*Sistem Informasi Akademik Terintegrasi*) Universitas Nias, WhatsApp group, E-Learning facility, Zoom/Google Meeting. Furthermore, the lecturers also maintain the listening progress of the students through weekly journal report, which was controlled via E-Learning Assignment folders, individually and also group. Further development in this part was that each student was enrolled in circular group, attended the online / interactive conversations with native / non-native English speakers equipped with assignments set to be completed, and trained to do TOEFL test, particularly for Listening part. The lecturers also arranged progress system of target achievement, in which each student had to fulfill standard scores for each assignments or attendance for every online / interactive talks with native speakers. Simply, reflection process also took part to ensure the students were able to achieve the target of process and goals of the listening class.

3) Implementing the Blended Learning design.

In implementing the design of Blended Learning, lecturers were maintaining the assurance that each step was conducted according to the organized system. As the starting

point, every students' contract on Listening subject was confirmed via SIMAT (*Sistem Informasi Akademik Terintegrasi*) of Universitas Nias, handled by the PJTI (*Pusat Jaringan dan Teknologi Informasi*) department of Universitas Nias. This system was compact, which enable easier monitoring on schedules, attendances, lecturers, students, tasks/assignments (E-Learning), final study and so on. Fortunately, every Listening lecturers were also integrating this system in Blended Learning and it gave plausible insurances that the students' progress in listening class was monitored and evaluated. Furthermore, the lecturers applied the design and development from the previous step in the enrollment of Listening subjects. Synchronous and asynchronous process were packed with general essential points, namely: a) Students' affirmation to join the class; b) Lecturing contract; c) Course design explanation and process of conducting; d) Learning tutorials / modules / assignments / weekly report / facilities; e) Language Laboratory schedule; f) Circular group; g) Progress Journal; h) Reflection and Evaluation chat room / Zoom/Google Meeting / WhatsApp Group of Listening. All these important points were arranged in schedule and could be revised regularly in certain situation.

4) Reviewing (evaluating) the Effectiveness of Blended Learning design

Reviewing the Blended Learning steps in Listening class was purely essential. In this step, lecturers of Listening subject were responsible to evaluate the progress. The review was not only focused on the students, but also toward all items, including the complete actualization of the schedule, enrollment process, assignments / tasks, readiness and competence of the lecturers, possibility of risks concerning the website's safety, and also the facilities used by both lecturers and students. Since the Blended Learning was quite "flexible" and "strict" at the same time, the process of Listening learning and teaching was not merely a duty, but it also need pure responsibility to gain more credible competence. The lecturers were not only teaching, guiding or monitoring the students but had to become a consultant and expert when the students faced and experienced unplanned condition, e.g. the malfunction of facility, confusion toward the assignment, enrollment problem, material difficulties, native speaker's unavailability, failed test / assignments and so on. In this part, the lecturers were placed as lecturer and engineer / mechanic who able to give any solution to problems. On the other side, the students were also expected to be more responsible to deal with the Blended Learning itself due to its flexibility and availability. The possibility of not having any computer / laptops, unsupported mobile / smartphones, data support, application support and knowledge to use the facility were risks that needed proper solution. Nevertheless, both lecturers and students were expected to be more up-to-dated to any changes in learning model / approach.

The Effectiveness of Blended Learning in Listening Subjects.

Extracted from the finding through observation and semi-structured interviews of both lecturers and students, there are several points that reveals the purpose of this study.

First, relating with the planning of the Blended Learning in Listening subject. On the lecturers' side, the planning was absolutely aligned with the RPS, CPL and curriculum of the study program and gave certainty of its process. Synchronous and asynchronous method of teaching and learning were undoubtedly as the concept of Blended Learning itself, and it was nicely planned and thought carefully. The integration with both lecturers and students were major movement to gain better Listening class. However, it was found that this act of planning took longer time than usual enrollment of lecturing class, and it impacted the additional time for lecturers and students to reach target of meetings of the schedule. Furthermore, lecturers and students were having similar respond that Blended Learning requires multi-skill and multi-tasking on its preparation, and most of the time relied on the modern capability of digital living. Still, since Blended Learning that was arranged in Listening class was far more flexible with its schedule, both lecturers and students were not lost enjoyment of the Blended Learning in Listening class as well.

Second, the step of designing and developing the elements. It was revealed that the lecturers designed and developed the blending system based on standard procedure, such need analysis, material/course design, methodology, and evaluation / assessment. Additionally, these standard elements were developed accordingly to the CPL from study program with several supplementary from various sources / multimodality. About sixty percent of the students admitted that this new development was good and accepted, while the rest of the students conveyed that the development was too dense and complicated. They found difficulties related with so many tasks and assignments, unavailability of facilities in the asynchronous enrollment and capability to deal with online application. Few students complained about their "no paket data" which need more attention to its fund and the availability of network. This fact was intriguing yet complex when dealing with accessing websites, attending online classes, completing virtual assignments and so on.

Third, the lecturer handled the implementation based on the plan, design and development of element. As observed, since the Blended Learning was organized earlier, the lecturers were able to implement the learning in the Intermediate Listening class almost perfectly, but it was certain that few improvements would be necessary. As applied in Intermediate Listening class, Blended Learning was proven to be more elegant and enjoyable, particularly from the students' side. Difficult materials, tasks or assignments were normally took longer time to be completed, but through Blended Learning the students grow more confidence and self-believing that Listening material was not that hard as far as it could be accessed and done by the assistance of various application. Additionally, constant and recorded control and monitor from the lecturers toward students' progress in identifying various accent, vocabularies and meaning ensured the expected result.

This interpretation was also aligned in the fourth element of argument in this study, Reviewing. In this part, the lecturers were observed directly on how they applied the

Blended Learning in the Intermediate Listening class. Total control from the lecturers was important, but it was seen that the lecturers also gave wider opportunities for the students to learn Listening in more relaxing yet serious way. Since the students were able to access via online learning, the time limitation in classroom was eliminated from the list of “trouble-makers” toward failures in Listening class. Concerning to the respond from the students, all of the students reacted quite positively by focusing on how keen the lecturers were in guiding them to achieve better Listening scores and more importantly, the listening skill itself.

IV. CONCLUSION

The arguments above finally brought this study to important conclusion, as follows: Blended Learning is considerably effective when applied in Intermediate Listening subject. Lecturers and students need more improvement on competence, capability in using technology / application, real implementation of digital literacy and dedication. Blended Learning in Listening subject provides more benefits towards time, flexibility of planning and designing, monitoring and evaluation. Blended Learning in Listening subject can be handled well if university able to provide guidelines and facilities. Finally, the researcher suggests more research on this topic is waited respectfully. Fellow other lecturers also expected to apply Blended Learning in all subjects since the education era has clearly changed a lot and fast.

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