Designing Initiation Materials for Promoting Autonomous Learning in Blended Learning EFL Classroom

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Abstract. One of the components of Blended Learning in English Language teaching model is the development and selection of instructional materials for supporting blended learning process. Blended learning which combines the face-to-face and technology-based learning mode has potential to create learning process for autonomous language learning promotion. To build autonomous learning needs learning materials to initiate learning process called initiation material for promoting autonomous learning (IMPAL). The development of IMPAL refers to all the ways in which the learning materials are designed, selected, and implemented in scenario of blended learning model. The learning materials include the delivery methods, instructional strategies and instruction media. This paper explores some of the IMPAL development related to the enhancement of the autonomous learning in learning English to propose framework of materials for learning innitiation that can be used by any teachers for developing the learning initiation in blended learning model.

1. Introduction

The use of technology tools in English language classroom have been attempted by teachers [2]. They can combine or sometimes use them as a compliment in teaching. The combination of a face-to-face and an e-learning mode result in a new teaching mode called it as blended learning which was first emerged during the beginning of 2000 [10], [14]. It is a teaching and learning mode which blends the elements of traditional classroom teaching (the face-to-face mode) with those of the online teaching system [9] or with computers assisted learning [15]. It is also called web-assisted learning [1] or a hybrid model of e-learning [13] which comprises a number of teachings and learning modes. The face-to-face mode is mixed with one of the technological-based learning modes such as individualized, self-paced, asynchronous, synchronous [1] and resources in a single course [13]. These activities and learning resources are parts of the features for encouraging students to be autonomous learners. Since technology-based activities can contribute teaching and learning process to lead accomplishment and learning motivation [2].

One of the important aspects of blended learning English is the existence of learning materials from the teachers and any online resources available on the internet. All of the learning materials are designed and linked to initiating learning. There is a need to find out what makes learning materials encourage students to learn autonomously. To meet the need for developing learning initiation, this paper has been subdivided into three parts. Part one will introduce the theory and concept of blended learning. Part two will analyze the autonomous learning benefits for language learners that technology can give in today's learning environment. The third section of this paper will be based on blended learning and how learning materials are developed and used to enhance and develop autonomous learning. These three divisions will make up the theoretical framework of the intended learning initiation in a blended learning model to enhance autonomous learning. Specific questions are addressed in the field of learner autonomy, how technology tools in blended learning support autonomous language learning.

2. Defining Blended Learning

Blended learning is the integration of a face-to-face teaching mode with an online teaching mode [16] using a variety of teaching methods and different tools of technologies [6] to meet the effective, efficient, and the flexible learning [19] to reach learning objectives. It is the blend of physical and virtual learning spaces that integrate and accommodate technology but focus on student learning [13]. Blended learning is also defined as the combination of face to face mode and computer-assisted learning (CAL) in a single teaching and learning environment [15].

The benefit of blended learning has been widely declared useful for learning. Teaching using blended learning creates a convenience learning environment, efficiency, flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and instructional effectiveness [9]. In the case of instructional effectiveness, Blended learning makes teaching more effective indicated by the effectiveness of using e-resources to make learners enjoy learning [11]. Another benefit of blended learning was declared by [17] in his study which indicated that it was positively accepted by the experiment group. This is indicated by better performance and a higher score than those treated with a face-to-face mode. The positive effect of blended learning was also found by [12] who showed students' positive response in taking part of online speaking practices through a blended learning platform which made them able to communicate confidently using English.

The presence of technology is used to create an online learning application in blended learning which becomes another mode of learning instead of face-to-face mode. Technology integration in teaching and learning in a single teaching environment characterized the blended learning system. The course that is integrated with technology is categorized into a blended/hybrid course when it blends online and face-to-face delivery [3]. A substantial proportion of the content is delivered online, typically uses online discussions, and typically has some face-to-face meetings. The percentage of content delivered online is between 30 to 79 %. According to [4] that the proportion to utilize online activities less than 45 %.

There are some positive effects when implementing blended learning in teaching English that make the students be able to learn English in their own time and at their place, get more exposures in learning English, work collaboratively with peers, discover about how features of English are used. [17]. All of these positive effects are the implementation of learning independently. Blended learning is modeled to help students learn, explore, and construct language competences through the use of the combination between face-to-face and online modes of instruction. It is a synergy learning structure, dynamically and organically combining a mix of delivery modes, teaching approaches, and learning styles [4].

3. Building Autonomous Learning

Autonomous learning is defined as learning that is conducted through learning activities, learning by doing, interacting with the environment, and having purposes. It must have its way to interact with the environment, learn from its experience (especially from its mistakes), decide what to do by itself, be able to adapt to different environment and tasks and be able to assimilate advice [22]. They have to choose a learning strategy that will help greatly not just in learning, but also on doing other activities. To be a reliable planner and manager for various activities is needed.

The ability to conduct autonomous learning is determined by the students' competence to learn efficiently and effectively. They are required to have self-discipline, initiative, and strong motivation to learn. They must be able to arrange time efficiently, so they can learn regularly based on a self-determined schedule for learning. Learners need to set their learning goals, make their learning plans, choose their learning strategies, monitor their learning processes, evaluate their learning outcomes and suppress interference [8]. Some other supporting autonomous learnings are environment structuring, goal setting, time management, help-seeking, task strategies, and self-evaluation [7]. Blended learning which integrates technology-based learning in the learning process may enable students to enhance autonomous learning ability. The available various learning materials, various digital learning application with many different sources for learning language encourage learning motivation.

4. Designing Blended Learning Materials for Learning Innitiation

Blended learning design is a planning process that considers content, learning process and assessments to gain the learning outcome. The design of blended learning consists of developing learning materials, organizing student learning activities, creating interaction, and deciding assessment procedures [24].

Considering the course design, [23] included that the mode, time, pedagogy purpose, method, and place of instruction were learning aspects that need to consider. The modes in blended learning are face-to-face and CALL/online. A face-to-face mode is mostly chosen as the lead mode, and CALL/ online mode will be the extension activities for the students' own pace in self-study. A face-to-face mode is used to introduce the language and topic, and the online mode is used to extend the students working hours or aid and reinforce classroom instruction. It needs to decide whether the mode is compulsory or optional, it is a course extension, or it is an integral part. The principle blended course design is the links between classroom session and online sessions as seen in Figure 1.

In the case of time, lower level students need more time in class than at a higher level. In blended learning, teachers may divide the length of time for class activities into 61 percent, and 19, 5 percent for online activities. For upper-intermediate levels spend 50 percent and 25 percent online or self-study. For advanced students, the face-to-face class can be as much as the maximum of blended ranges between 1-79% online, and the rest for face-to-face. The face-to-face sessions can be alternated with the online sessions in the timetable [23].
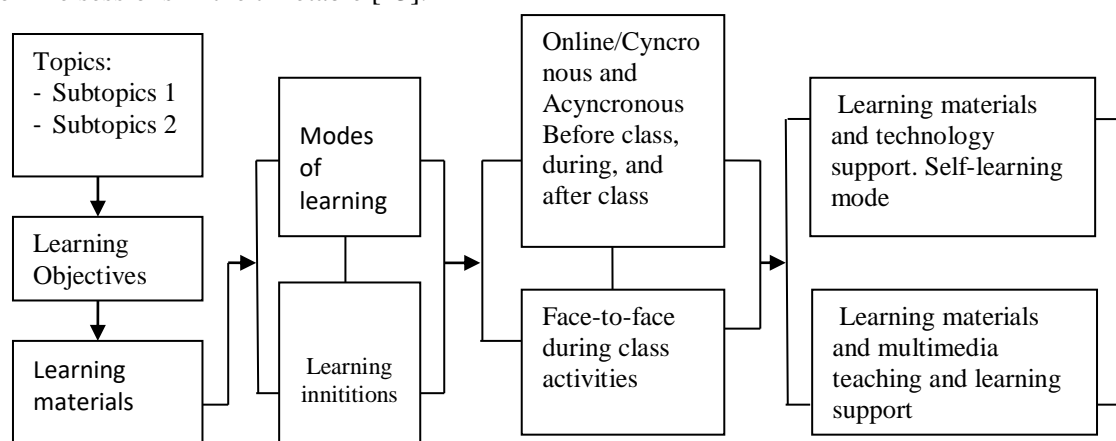

Figure 1: Conceptual framework for developing blended learning materials

4.1. Developing Learning Innitiation

The initiation of learning material in blended learning was developed to initiate students' learning which could be in the form of text, images, audio, and video and supplemented with desired learning activities with learning resources. In tutorial learning resources that function as learning initiations can be packaged in the form of files, folders, ims content pages, labels, pages, and URLs.

In the development of technology, there is no doubt that the internet has an important role in the dissemination of information. The development of rapid development of teleology also makes everything that everyone does become easier and more efficient. The ease of the technology will bring positive benefits and impacts if it is used well and positively of course. The internet itself makes it possible to minimize limitations (distance, space and time) in the delivery of information throughout the world.

The Initiation Material For Promoting Autonomous Learning (IMPAL) program is one of the online-based learning material which was developed in addition to students to increase their knowledge of the material and is expected to help students improve the quality of learning. The contents of the IMPAL program are essentially comprised of two parts, namely the explanation of material and exercises to practice orally and in writing to gain language skill competence. All learning material for ignition learning is presented with additional multimedia (audio, video, and animation) as

supporting media to make it easier to learn. Learning participants collaborate with learning material experts to package the material online.

Encouraging autonomous and collaborative learning Blended learning allows students to decided when and where they want to study. This flexibility can present some difficulties to students who have poor time management skills and who are not used to working autonomously. It is the role of the teacher to help the students develop the skills they require to work independently, particularly if this is the first time they have learned a language in a blended learning environment.

4.2. Designing Activities for Promoting Autonomous Language Learning

The first thing to consider in designing learning activities in blending the BL environment appropriately [14] proposed learning outcomes, timetable, classrooms hours, learning independently, how much time for the teacher to monitor in class and online monitoring. [14] also divided students learning activities for students in BL online and in-class activities.

This advance of ICT encourages teachers to integrate technology in teaching and creates ICT-based instruction activities. Such technology as the computer has been used for supporting English teaching called Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) [5]. Since the use of CALL, there are many attempts to create learning activities such as online learning, learning vocabularies, reading text through a search engine. Online learning or e-learning activity is classified has classified some e-learning platform ranging from simple by using e-mail for uploading learning materials and making communication, having mailing list, using e-learning for combining various learning objects equipped with multimedia facilities, designing interaction through forum discussion, managing the evaluation, and various other online educational activities [18].

Teachers are encouraged to create learning initiations in the form of language learning materials link to other learning resources for reading, doing language exercises, discussion forum, and writing assignments. [14] proposed some activities to encourage the autonomous learning such as an online forum for discussion, asking questions, create language task for working together, design study plan, integrate the online activities and classroom activities.
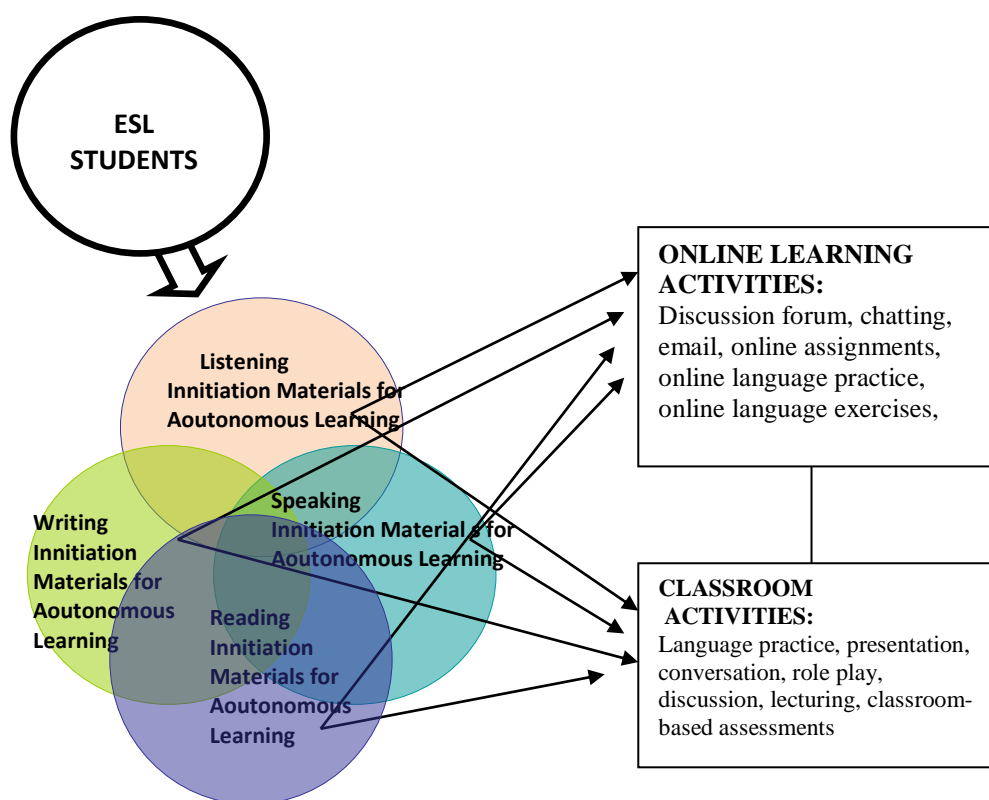

Figure 2. Learning activities

Design of supporting learning activities in Blended Learning modifies from [20].

Listening: In the face-to-face listening material is always very limited [20], Listening skill is supported with a lot of learning materials downloaded Moodle platform [20]. Open sources are available in an audio form and Youtube that can be downloaded or link to moodle platform. Online activity such as doing listening exercises is a good learning environment in Blended learning. Some other activities like chatting, recording, downloading, uploading listening material are also possible in listening activities.

Reading: Learning material for reading in blended learning can be reading documents taken from Oxford and Cambridge [20] or link to some online texts from many different resources. Using Moodle, for example, some activities like chatting, downloading, uploading reading material.

Speaking: The competence of speaking skill in English is mastered through practice. In the face-to-face classroom, practice speaking is needed for building speaking ability, real-time communication in face-to-face communication, [20]. Online chatting may include alternative activities when online mode will be used. The speaking materials for online asynchronous mode can be focused on self-learning material such as video download from youtube or just link to youtube.

Writing: Skill of writing can be developed through class-based writing practice or online platform. Class-based writing practice is monitored by a teacher and directly get some feedback from the teacher. In online practice can be set through a forum discussion to get feedback from peers and the teacher.

5. Conclusion

The advances of technologies make it possible to encourage students autonomous learning, which supported by learning initiation in the form of language learning materials and online learning activities. Online teaching and learning platform are designed to support self-learning materials and self-learning activities. The initiation materials are designed to trigger students in understanding contents language learning and practice language skills both online and face-to-face mode. Blended learning which combines the face-to-face learning activities with online activities such as discussion online/forum, chatting, exchange learning material, have their own pace of learning and encourage self-learning. Discussion forum for language learning is an asynchronous online platform to create online language exercises, an online practice of language skills, and online discussion. The teacher can be a moderator of online discussion to respond to students' responses and questions and gives feedback on student responses. Through online discussion platform students are assigned to discuss and interact with the teacher, pears, technology tools, and resources. Learning initiation for listening and speaking course is the combination of text integrated with audio and video which can be taken from the OER available at the internet. Reading and writing material other courses can be in the digital text, powerpoint with some additional exercises for classroom and online learning.

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