

# Innovative Teaching and Learning Perspective Lying on a Blended Learning Intensive English Program Writing Course

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**Abstract—** An intensive English program which includes BL (Blended Learning) with English as Second Language (ESL) writing students is investigated through this study. The purpose is to investigate how do teachers prepare to create a productive Blended Learning environment for the ESL (English as Second Language) writing Students, it also includes how the teachers will be trained in Online Teaching and also the assessment of the student's perceptions in BL environment. The study aims to discover how the students will experience the teachers practice and performance within the student's assessment and perception. The teachers were trained in BL teaching and given instructive and technical support, after which both teachers and students were given questionnaires and interviewed in order to determine their experiences in BL Environment. This will be applied through the use of mixed-methods approach which involves the quantitative and qualitative data collection.

**Keywords-** *esl (English as second language) writing; bl (blended learning); online teaching; quantitative; qualitative*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Today, an advanced cell phone almost has the computing power and features of desktop computer from a decade ago, Because of the ever-increasing possibilities enabled by faster computers and internet connections it is difficult to imagine a university or college that does not maintain several large and small computer labs for instruction and provides their faculty with one or more learning management systems such as Blackboard or Moodle. Moodle is a free and open-source education software helping teachers and trainers create and deliver effective online learning environments.

The growing body of literature on blended learning (BL) is documenting the fact that its use is clearly on the rise in higher education. In fact not only is BL an acceptable pedagogical approach, it also has the potential to transform higher education [6].

Blended Learning provides the learning method wherein people can provide the lack of knowledge that they do not have, base from their past learning method. A dynamic blended learning (BL) nurture is, for the purposes of this study is for students can gain knowledge of and which provides

them with a positive learning experience which defined as one that meets their priorities, needs and especially values [7].

Stating that BL is only good for saving money would be a gross simplification. As the above paragraphs allude to, there are several other reasons why the use of BL is a positive development. For example, there are many reasons why an instructor might choose to introduce BL in a course.

Graham and Osguthorpe identified the following six reasons for using BL:

- Pedagogical richness
- Access to knowledge
- Social interaction
- Personal agency
- Cost-effectiveness
- Ease of revision

These reasons are not listed in order of importance and, as one might imagine some are more frequently invoked than others. In separate studies found that, by a great majority, BL was implemented for the reasons of (1) improve pedagogy, (2) increased access and flexibility, and (3) increased cost-effectiveness [7].

Looking at these reasons for using BL it is obvious that both instructions and administrators have several good reasons for wanting to use it. Institutional motivations for promoting BL may focus on the potential savings that can be realized by moving some contact hours online, which reduces the need for physical meeting space and classrooms with their associated costs.

The purpose of this research study is to investigate how to prepare ESL (English as Second Language) teachers to create a blended learning environment that addresses the values, priorities and needs of students in an intensive English program writing course. A review of previous research and theories relevant to this study can provide a foundation for understanding how teacher training and support may affect the

pedagogical qualities and learner outcomes of a blended language learning environment.

#### *A. Goals and Objectives*

Specifically, this study seeks to accomplish three important goals. The first goal is to discover whether a teacher training- and support program can meet the needs of teachers as they intended to create a blended learning environment for their students. The second goal is to measure the student's perceptions environment with respect to its productiveness, and the third goal is to find out how students understanding the teacher's behavior and practice with extent to the factors affecting student perceptions in the course blending Learning.

#### *B. Research Questions*

The study aims at answering the general questions, "How do you prepare teachers to create a productive blended learning environment that provides a positive learning experience for students in an intensive English program writing course?" Specifically, the following research questions will be addressed:

1. What impact does a training and support program have on the teacher's experience of designing and teaching in a BL environment?
2. How do students describe the productiveness of the blended learning environment in an IEP writing course?
3. How do students perceive their teachers practice and behaviour in a BL environment?

#### *C. Significance of the Study*

Findings from this study will contribute to the fields of the teacher training, Computer Assisted language Learning (CALL), and the area of blended learning research. First, this study provides a methodologically well-founded approach to preparing ESL teachers for teaching writing in a blended language learning environment, which few, if any, studies have investigated thus far. This, in turn, allows this study to make possible recommendations to administrators and program directors on how to best prepare and support teachers for teaching in a blended language learning environment. This is a valuable contribution because the already ongoing trend of transitioning college courses to a blended learning model is likely to continue and to significantly increase in the coming years. The final potential contribution of this study concerns the investigation of how teachers practice and behavior may influence student perceptions of a blended language learning environment.

## **II. LITERATURE SURVEY**

### *A. Defining Blended Learning*

Blended Learning (BL) which also known as (hybrid) has been defined of many authors in many ways but in almost definition it is a combination of face-to-face teaching and computer-mediated or online education for simplest way. BL is known as an integration of online learning and regular class

learning with self-study e-learning activities. Blended learning is not new, in contrary it has been in use for more than 20 years and it is appeared as a substitute to instructor-led training on mainframes and mini-computers in the 1960s.

BL definition falls for three meanings. The first definition combines face-to-face and online teaching, whereas the second defines as it includes a combination of technologies. The third one as it was a combination of methodologies regardless of the learning technology used [11]. BL as "a type of education which combines various models of traditional and distance education and makes use of all types of technology. In other words, blended learning has come to be understood as a combination of conventional classroom instruction and e-learning activities [1].

### *B. Blended Learning in Language Teaching and Learning*

In the English Language Teaching (ELT), blended learning in ELT and defined it as "bringing together the positive attributes of online and offline education, including instructional modalities, delivery methods, learning tools, etc., in relation to language teaching and learning approaches and methods in order to reinforce learning process, to bring about the optimal learner achievement, and to enhance the quality of teaching and learning (p. 180)." The combination of learning techniques, instructional modalities, some delivery tools, and also the focuses in the necessity with approaches and different methods of language learning and teaching are not only includes the core themes of BL [14].

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL), there are sessions in the formal classroom setting that are limited, provided of input language. Due to the increased time for language input and extended learning setting both in online and offline environments, BL has been recognized as an alternative learning environment [9] [14]. As Learning experiences in BL are to be integrated, not simply mixed together, in language teaching or learning, a variety of activities are to be organized in relation to the materials or tools, modes and available resources considering the language teaching and learning [6].

### *C. Second Language (L2) Writing*

In assistance to effectively write in Second Language (L2), students or learners need to acquire a different kind of skills. Nine features that produce a piece of writing: content, the writer's process, audience, purpose, word choice, organization, mechanics, grammar, and syntax [10]. There are also four types of knowledge that writers need - content knowledge, context knowledge, language system knowledge, and writing process knowledge [12]. For the teaching and learning of L2 writing, various approaches have been suggested such as the controlled-to-free approach, the free-writing approach, the paragraph-pattern approach, the communicative approach, the process approach and the genre approach [8] [10] [12] [14]. Of these, the process approach has been a mainstay of L2 writing. The writing process is recursive. The process of writing has been targeted by researchers. The four stages of the writing process: getting started, creating the first drafts, revising, and editing. It is

asserted that L2 learners have to spend more time on all stages of the writing process and need more discussion and feedback than native speakers (L1 writers) [14].

#### D. Teaching Design of the Blended Learning of ESL Writing Activities

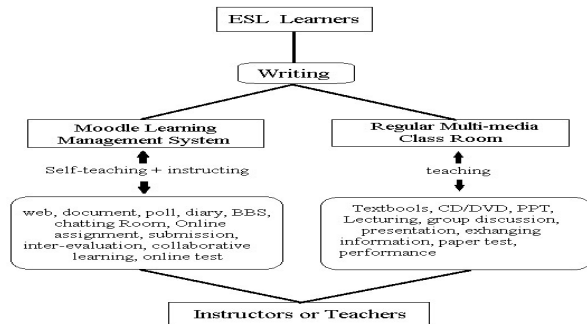


Figure 1.0 Teaching Design of the Blended Learning of ESL Writing Activities

The exercise of writing in class can be conducted in the classroom, Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) or Moodle offers another way to help learning ESL. Moodle or VLE is designed with some functions apt for writing practice. The functions of forum, workshop, and wiki offer enough space for ESL learners to practice writing. Forum is a good space for students to have a brainstorming of topics, contents and structures before starting writing. The function of workshop allows both the instructors and students to read others' writings and evaluate them. This way of evaluation not only allows students to find out the problems in their own writing, but offer them chances to learn from others. The most prominent aspect of the course is to guide ESL learners to focus more on the process of writing rather than the result of writing. Online learning itself requires lots of input when ESL learners answer questions or exchange ideas, which in turn can also attribute to the improvement of their writing competency

### III. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the research design of this study is outlined in detail. The research methodology section describes the pragmatist worldview of the researcher and provides a detailed rationale for the choice of a mixed methods approach to data collection including the individual qualitative and quantitative aspects of the study. Following is a description of the research context, participants, and data collection techniques and materials. Finally, the research and data analysis procedures are described and the chapter concludes with a summary.

#### A. Research Methodology

In this mixed methods study the philosophical worldview is that of simplicity. Base on and other various sources the pragmatist world view "arises out of actions, situations, and consequences rather than antecedent condition. Thus, if fit for a mixed methods approach where "inquiries draw liberally

from both quantitative and qualitative assumptions". [4]. Quantitative and Qualitative data are used "because they work to provide the best understanding of a research problem" an approach to research matches well with the world view of the researcher. I believe a real world problems are best solved by determining the needs and wants of everyone involved and then identifying the best solution based on the knowledge, materials and skills available at the given time. This should be seen in relation to a rigid theoretical or prescriptive approach that frequently needs to conceptualize a problem to make it fit the proposed solution or method of inquiry.

The qualitative data for this study were collected through student and teacher interviews, observations of teacher planning meetings, and classroom observations. The collection of this data complemented the quantitative data very well and provided important additional insight into the students' and teachers' experiences. It also enabled triangulation of the quantitative results.

Quantitative data collection method is the estimated size of a phenomenon of interest that concerned with testing hypotheses derived from theory. In any way, participants may be assigned to different treatments, depending on the research question. If this is not feasible, the researcher may collect data on participant and situational characteristics in order to statistically control for their influence on the dependent, or outcome, variable. If the intent is to generalize from the research participants to a larger population, the researcher will employ probability sampling to select participants. However, as useful as a quantitative approach is, it also has its flaws. In response to this, various aspects of qualitative research methodology were used to collect additional data. These data were collected in the natural setting of the writing classes and observations and interviews were used to provide additional, detailed information in the own words of the participants. This approach is a "concurrent embedded strategy" which is "identified by its use of one data collection phase, during which both quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously" [4].

In summary, the specific research methodology outlined above provides the best way of collecting rich, detailed data on the student participants' opinions about learning within a blended learning environment. It also allows for a comparison of the influence of the individual teachers on their respective classes. Furthermore, the teacher questionnaires, interviews and observations of planning meetings provide quantitative and 58 qualitative data on the teachers' opinions of the transition process to teaching a blended learning course and their experience teaching within the environment.

#### B. The Intensive English program

Data were collected in an (IEP) intensive English program in a large university in the Philippines. In the fall 2010 and Spring 2011 semesters in which data collection took place the program had 200 and 150 students enrolled, respectively. Thirty-two instructors and teaching assistants were employed to teach thesis students during the Fall semester and 31 in the Spring. Students generally enroll in the program to achieve

sufficient English proficiency to pass the English language admission requirements in their desired programs.

The IEP is divided into six proficiency levels (1 through 6), for each of the four language skills (reading, listening, writing, and speaking). Level 1 student, of which there are generally very few are beginners while level 6 students are the most advanced. While it is difficult to generalize, many students enter the program at a level 3 or 4 in reading and writing and typically need one or two semesters of Intensive English study to pass the proficiency test.

The writing level 4 and 5 courses typically focus on academic writing to prepare students for college courses. The course book is determined by the program and two different books are alternated between semesters. This way, students who have to repeat a level do not study the exact same content in both semesters. Each level has a specific set of learning outcomes that teachers must teach and assess.

#### *Participants*

The following section contains descriptions of the teacher and student participants in the experimental and control groups. For information about the blended learning training that student and teacher participants in the experimental group were given at the beginning of the semester.

#### *C. Experimental group students*

The student participants were 41 ESL (English as a Second Language) students whose age span ranged from 18 to 40 years of age ( $M = 21.66$ ,  $SD = 5.05$ ). There were 27 males (65/85%) and 14 females (34.15%) who participated. The participant's different courses included Computer Science (35 participants= 85.37%), Education (3 participants = 7.32%), Civil Engineering (1 participants = 2.44%), Information Technology (1 participant=2.44%), and Business Management (1 participant=2.44%). The participants number of years of English study prior to participating in the study ranged from 1 to 16 years ( $M = 8.43$ ,  $SD = 3.02$ ). All participants were enrolled in intensive English writing courses at either level 4 (26 participants) or level 5 (15 participants). The participants were selected for this study on the basis of their enrolment in these classes and their corresponding proficiency in English.

#### *D. Experimental group teachers*

The teacher participants were 5 ESL teachers (3 females and 2 males) employed in an Intensive English Program (IEP). One teacher taught two of the courses, a level 4 and a level 5 course, while the rest of the teachers each taught one course. Their ages ranged from 25 to 48 years of age (mean age= 33 years, 7 months, std. Dev = 8.82). All teachers were native speakers of American English. Their highest levels of education were MA degrees in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). With one teacher (Ann) having an MA in Applied Linguistics. Their teaching experience ranged from 3 years to 10 years and all teachers had prior experience teaching writing. None of the level 4 teachers had

taught this level before, while the level 5 teachers had taught level 5 writing before.

The teacher participants experiences with using technology for teaching varied somewhat. All of them had experience using computers to teach writing. Typically, teachers in this program have one lab day a week with each of their classes. However, none of the teachers had extensive experience using Moodle for teaching. Two of the female teachers (Ann and Jennifer) seemed a little more comfortable using Moodle than the other three teachers and explored such functions as the grade book and the quiz feature on their own to the point where they could use them in their courses. The other three teachers (Jim, Sandra, and Harry) took a slower approach and had the researcher conduct workshops on these two tools, after which they slowly started using them more. Two of the five teachers had some experience using blended learning prior to participating in this study: Sandra participated in a blended learning study with a focus on listening and speaking conducted by another PhD student one year earlier.

#### *E. Control group students & teachers*

The data from the students in the control were gathered anonymously and consisted of student grade reports. The control group consisted of 21 level 4 writing students and 33 level 5 writing students. As a result of the data collection, very limited demographic information was collected. For the reason, data such as age gender and native language is not available, while No data were collected about the control group teachers. However, the intensive English program requires all instructors to have at least an MA degree in linguistics. Most also have several years of ESL and EFL teaching experience. None of the control group teachers are believed to have any formal training in blended learning pedagogy or technology integration and it is supported by the fact that for the fall 2010 semester only the four teachers involved in the study had received BL addition, while more teachers became interested in BL for spring 2011 semester taught level 4 or 5 writing class.

#### *Data Collection Techniques and Materials*

This section describes the data collection techniques employed in this study and the individual instruments used to gather data. Included are the student pre and post questionnaires and interviews, together with the available data on its validity.

#### *A. Student pre & post-questionnaire*

This questionnaire is a background questionnaire given to the students that is sought to give their information such as age, gender, and nationality together with their English proficiency Skills. The questionnaire was adapted Mackey. The student post-questionnaire is administered using the online Survey Monkey tool. The questionnaire first asked students to enter their name and the name of their teacher. The next 19 questions elicited the student's general experiences in the BL Environment.

### B. Teacher pre & post-questionnaire

In order to get an accurate and detailed picture of the teacher participants a background questionnaire was administered. The teacher's pre-questionnaires were administered to the teacher participants during the first meeting of the group and the researcher. The teachers filled out the questionnaire after signing consent forms. The post-questionnaire for the teachers was created to elicit their experiences with the training they received prior to the course, the support they received during the course, and their course planning during the semester. This sought to capture the perception of the teachers with regards to the different challenges they are likely to have encountered.

#### WEBLEI

The original questionnaire was created by Chang and Fisher based on Tobin's framework for investigating online learning environments in university settings. More specifically, the WEBLEI aims at capturing "student's perceptions of web-based learning environments" [2].

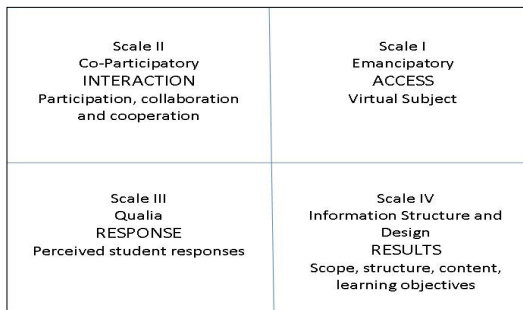


Figure 2.0 WEBLEI Recreated from Chang and Fisher (2003)

Figure.2 Illustrate the four scales of the WEBLEI model. In their rationale for the WEBLEI model, Chang and Fisher (2003) explain that Scale I (Access) is a necessary prerequisite for studying online. Scale II (Interaction) covers learner interaction with one another for the purpose of achieving the stated learning outcomes. In Scale III (Response) students' perception of the learning environment is elicited with a focus on how they feel about using it to accomplish any objectives. These "first three scales of emancipator activities, co-participatory activities, and qualia (were) adapted from Tobin work on Connecting Communities Learning (CCL)" [2].

The fourth Scale (Results) was added by Chang and Fisher (2003) for the purpose of discovering "whether the materials presented follow accepted instructional design standards, such as stating its purpose, describing its scope, incorporating interactivity, and providing a variety of formats to meet different learning styles". Together the four sets of questions provide a comprehensive analysis of the issues that are likely to affect student's perceptions of any given online or blended learning environment. Thus, it is a fitting and appropriate operationalization of Tobin's work on evaluating online learning environments.

### A. WEBLEI validation

The WEBLEI questionnaire has been validated twice for slightly different applications. In Chang and Fisher the questionnaire was administered to 344 Electronic Commerce students at a business school in Australia. They conducted a principal factor analysis to examine the internal structure of the instrument and to extract four factors, followed by the blend of variance and maximum rotation. The results confirmed the existence of four distinct scales. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the four scales in the survey ranged from 0.78 to 0.86 and the discriminant validity, which was defined as described in the study above, ranged from 0.52 to 0.59. The validity is determined by using mean correlation of the individual scales with other scales as an index. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for the modified WEBLEI used for this study was computed [5]. The results are listed in Table I.

TABLE I. CRONBACH ALPHA COEFFICIENTS FOR MODIFIED WEBLEI

Scales	Cronbach's Alpha	N
Access	.768	7
Interaction	.754	8
Response	.748	8
Results	.914	8
Facilitation	.902	7
Total	.940	38

### B. WEBLEI modifications

In order to better be able to use the WEBLEI in this study minor changes were made. Some changes were dictated by the nature of the data collection. For example, question 3 under Scale I was left out because it addressed the time savings students might have experienced by going online from home instead of driving to campus to attend a face-to-face class.

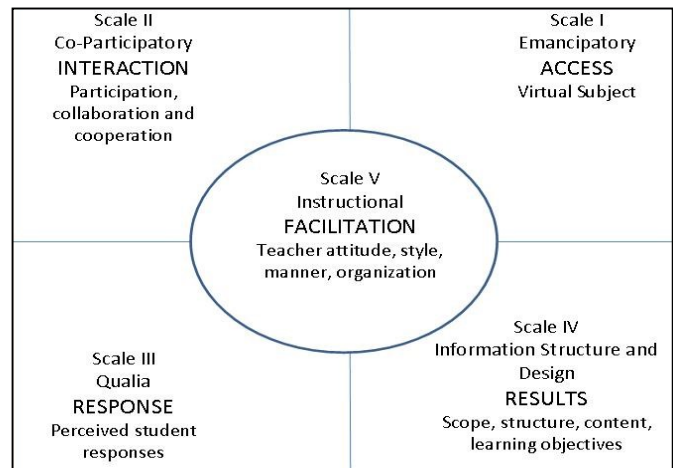


Figure 3.0 Modified WEBLEI Recreated from Chang and Fisher (2003)

#### IV. RESULT

TABLE I. THE IMPACT OF A TRAINING AND SUPPORT PROGRAM ON THE TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE OF DESIGNING AND TEACHING IN A BL ENVIRONMENT

Participants	Level1 Strongly Disagree (SD)	Level2 Somewhat Disagree (SWD)	Level3 Disagree (D)	Level4 Somewhat Agree (SWA)	Level5 Strongly Agree (SA)	Result mean
Teacher 1	—	—	—	—	5	5=Lvl5
Teacher 2	—	—	—	4	1	4.2=Lvl4
Teacher 3	—	—	—	1	4	5=Lvl5
Teacher 4	—	—	—	—	5	5=Lvl5
Teacher 5	—	—	—	1	4	3.8=Lvl4
Over all mean is 4.6 Level 5=Strongly Agree						

*Analysis:* Result is indicated that 5 ESL Teachers are Strongly Agree. This allows the teacher to be more competitive in teaching the students using the BL environment.

TABLE II. STUDENT'S PRODUCTIVENESS OF THE BLENDED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN AN IEP WRITING COURSE

Participants	Level1 Always Never	Level2 Seldom	Level3 Sometimes	Level4 Often	Level5 Almost Always	Result mean
Teacher 1	—	1	3	1	—	3=Lvl3
Teacher 2	—	—	3	2	—	3.4=Lvl3
Teacher 3	—	2	3	—	—	2.6=Lvl3
Teacher 4	—	—	—	4	1	4.2=Lvl4
Teacher 5	—	—	—	3	2	3.8=Lvl4
Over all mean is 3.4 Level 3=Sometimes						

TABLE III. SUMMARY OF STUDENTS ON HOW THEY PERCEIVED THEIR TEACHERS PRACTICE AND BEHAVIOR IN A BL ENVIRONMENT

	Rating for 5 teacher participants from the ESL writing Students using WEBLEI Scale 5 questionnaire (Summary Result)
Five (5) ESL Teachers	Highest ratings (M=4.41, SD= .71) (M=4.27, SD= .84)

*Analysis:* This rate has a purpose of determining how well the teachers did their job in the eyes of the students. Thus, these scores provide a detailed picture of how the students perceived their teacher's practice and behavior and it's demonstrate that the teachers were well prepared and attentive to students needs, focused on their work in the classroom, and challenged the students to perform at their best.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are hereby drawn:

- The teacher respondents show good attitude towards their work.
- The teacher's level of practice has bearing on their teaching performance.

#### VI. RECOMMENDATION

The instructors or the teachers should have the ability to assess and evaluate what students do online. Lack of instructor's direct supervision was one of the major problems faced by the teachers. Hence, a system that allows teacher's full control and supervision on the online component is highly recommended. All the idea behind blending is to improve the learning experience by putting the student first.

For this reason, the blended course design must take into consideration students' preferences as well as their concerns while designing future blended courses.

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