

## **Investigating the Effects of Blended Learning on EFL Taiwanese College Students**

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### **Abstract**

Along with the technological development and its ubiquitous presence, many people are getting used to utilizing convenient online resources whenever necessary. And, it also affects the ways of EFL pedagogies. In this study, the teacher/researcher attempts to reveal the effects of integrating e-learning into the traditional classroom learning. The research site was in a technological university located in the center of Taiwan. Students who were taking the course, entitled Workplace English, joined in this project. It was conducted for one semester. Different from the traditional classroom that students are required to attend the class weekly, students went to the class every other week and had only one-hour meeting. In addition, they needed to watch the teaching videos via the e-platform set by the university and participate into the online discussion forum. In the findings, it showed that most students were fond of blended learning mode; that is, one hour meeting and one hour video watching. They liked the way of video watching which they could review it repeatedly. However, they also indicated that they could not get immediate answers when they had questions for the videos. And, they felt unfamiliar with the teacher because of the rare contact meeting hours. In addition, there were some difficulties involved, such as silent classroom meeting and unscheduled instructions informing. Although some less ideal situations occurred in the process of conducting the blended learning mode, it was a good way to help students cultivate their autonomous learning attitude.

**Key words:** blended learning, online discussion, video watching, EFL learners

## 1. Introduction

Along with the well electronic development, more and more courses are conducted by web-based learning style. Many studies have explored the effects of e-learning (Gu, 2002; Prapingwong & Puthikanon, 2008; Shen, 2014; Wang, 2014; Chen, 2015; Mudawe, 2016; Akmal, 2017) applied in the English classroom. It seems that a trend of academic disciplines is towards web-based learning. The academic authority encourages instructors to offer online courses to arouse students' motivation on learning. In this, various kinds of subjects from different academic disciplines have offered specific courses at online basis which including general English class as well. Being in the e-generation, current students may have more interest in applying the e-devices to their study. The purpose of this study attempts to examine the effects of distance learning application in the English classroom. According to the term, distance learning, named by the MOE (Ministry of Education) in Taiwan, this class was required the physical presence of both the teacher and students to have one-hour face-to-face classroom practices, autonomous online video watching, and questions discussion via online discussion forum. This mode of distance learning is similar to the term of blended learning. In Sucaromana's (2013) study, it indicated that blended learning consists of lectures mixed with online teaching. Also, Alpala and Flórez (2011) claimed that blended Learning has become one of the most common ways to teach EFL (English as a Foreign Language) due to its double component, which integrates face-to-face classes with virtual learning. Therefore, instead of so-called distance learning, this study is more like blended learning mode, blending traditional classroom lectures with online learning.

The two-credit-hour class, entitled Workplace English, is a required course for sophomore students to take in a technological university located in the center of Taiwan. 100 students who were from different disciplinary programs took this class. Different from the traditional learning mode, it was a student-centered learning way. They had to watch the videos recorded and uploaded to the e-platform by the teacher/researcher in advance at their own convenience. Furthermore, they also had to participate into the classroom and online discussion. With the autonomous self-learning way, hopefully, students were able to cultivate their independent and responsible learning attitudes. Most importantly, they could reinforce their English competency and motivate their sustainable English learning.

## 2. Literature Review

As technology has been developed progressively, it has also influenced the ways of pedagogies and learning modes in academics. In addition to the traditional classroom of lecturing and note-taking, many teachers have integrated e-materials into their EFL coursework. Likewise, many studies have investigated the effects of e-learning conducted in the EFL classroom. For instance, Khan (2016) explored the effectiveness of e-learning on

Saudi EFL preparatory students' performance. In the study, it showed that most of the students felt that e-learning helped them improve their English. Moreover, the teachers who utilized the e-resources found e-learning quite beneficial and online resources could catch the attention of even a passive learner. Employing online resources, Liu (2014) examined the differences in the perceptions of acquiring listening skills between elementary and intermediate level students. It pointed out that learner variables played a vital role in facilitating the progress of students at different levels. Using Twitter, Taskiran, Gumusoglu, and Aydin (2018) indicated that Turkish learners had positive opinions on it and stated that twitting messages facilitated their language learning experience. They stated that incorporating Twitter activities into EFL teaching and learning context had countless benefits for students. In their study, Gyamfi & Sukseemuang (2018) investigated EFL learners' satisfaction with the asynchronous online learning program Tell Me More (TMM). In the findings, it showed that the learners' were highly satisfied with the vocabulary, reading and listening aspects of the program. However, it also indicated that it could not compensate for human interaction and support which students might need for high satisfaction. As e-learning has become a trend applied in EFL classroom, the teacher, as being a role of facilitator, needs to take the online resources into serious consideration in the teaching context. Instead of focusing on online resources application, more and more teachers have transformed their classroom into a blended learning mode.

Blended learning has been evolved constantly and EFL pedagogies have applied it to empower their professions. For instance, Tananuraksakul (2016) investigated the effect of blended e-learning on learners' extrinsic motivation and attitudes toward learning EFL in a Thai academic context. It resulted in two hypotheses. One was that blended e-learning required by an institute could enhance learners' positive attitudes toward learning EFL. Ting (2014) introduced a blended learning approach for students to practice their language skills and had presented a learners' perspective of podcasting. In their study, Alpala and Flórez (2011) also indicated that students could develop autonomy towards the English learning process. Autonomous learning cultivating is also one important factor which was emphasized in this study. Students can reinforce their learning process through websites related to EFL learning with a wide range of exercises. Alfahadi<sup>1</sup>, Alsalhi<sup>1</sup> & Alshammari (2015) investigated EFL secondary school teachers' views on blended learning content and process, and how blended learning was effective in developing teachers' performance. The results indicated that the teachers' views toward blended learning were positive and promising. They believed that blended learning would make students more interested in learning English and it would help them to improve their language skills. And, teachers were highly optimistic that they would have more time to interact with their students in class through communicative activities. In addition to reflecting teachers' perspectives upon the effects of blended learning, Zumor<sup>1</sup>, Refaai<sup>1</sup>, Eddin<sup>1</sup> & Al-Rahman (2013) explored EFL students' views regarding the advantages and limitations of

merging the features of face-to-face language instruction and online language learning via the Blackboard learning management system. They found that the blended teaching mode broadened students' reading opportunities and enriched their English vocabulary. In their study, Solak and Cakir (2014) aimed to understand the views of vocational higher schools students towards e-learning and face to face learning. The findings proved that learning English via e-learning is as successful as face to face learning. They also suggested that e-learning should be supported with face to face learning. Istifci (2017) examined the perceptions of EFL students on blended language learning and online learning platforms. The students in the study favored face-to-face learning for interaction with their peers and teachers, whereas they favored online learning when they wanted instant feedback and to study at their own pace.

In this study, the teacher/researcher attempts to explore the effects of blended learning mode applied to students who were taking an English subject, entitled Workplace English. Thus, it may help teachers who are interested in the similar way conduct their class more successfully. The research questions are as follows.

### 2.1 Research questions

1. What performance do students demonstrate on taking blended learning mode?
2. What difficulties will happen while conducting the blended learning pedagogy?

## 3. Methodology

For the purpose of examining the effects of applying blended learning mode to the EFL college learners, the data sources include two survey questionnaires, the statistics of video watching quantities, and the statistics of online discussion. The research project was conducted for one semester.

### 3.1 Research site

The research site was in a technological university located in the center of Taiwan. For non-English program students, they were required to take a two-credit-hour English course each semester in their first and second college year. The course titles for the first three semesters were Practical English I, II, and III, and the course for the fourth semester was Workplace English. Different from the first three semesters conducting differentiated instruction, all sophomore students were randomly assigned to classes offered by different English instructors at the beginning of the semester when they were taking the Workplace English. In addition, they were free to drop and add to another class if they were not satisfied with the teacher they worked with or their personal time conflicted with the class schedule at the beginning. Although it was a blended learning mode and students were required to conduct online video watching, they were asked to bring the textbook to the classroom at the

contact meeting hours. In this, students might pay more attention to the lecturing given by the teacher and play less with their smartphone.

### 3.2 Participants

100 sophomore students divided into two classes assigned to the teacher/researcher. They were all from the school of engineering with different programs, containing mechanical, electronical, energy and materials technology, and industrial engineering and management. Some of them had ever taken the distance learning course, Practical English III, in their previous semester. The other did not. Two classes were arranged at the same day. Because it was the distance learning mode, each class had one-hour lecturing meeting. And, the first class started at 9:10 am and the second at 10:10 am. In addition, every other week, all participants had free of class but taking asynchronous online discussion and video watching.

### 3.3 Measurement instruments

While the semester was in progress, the teacher/researcher constantly reminded participants of conducting their designated assignments. When the semester was approaching to the end, two survey questionnaires were uploaded to the e-platform for participants to complete them. Meanwhile, the teacher/researcher collected and calculated the records of video watching and online discussion quantities conducted by the participants.

- Two survey questionnaires

The first survey questionnaire focused on realizing participants' preference of learning mode, their understanding of the advantages of traditional and distance learning, and video watching achieving. The second survey intended to confirm participants' preference of distance learning, pros and cons of the videos, and the means of video watching. The results of two survey questionnaires will be revealed and discussed in the next section.

- The statistics of video watching quantities

The videos made by the teacher/researcher were uploaded to the e-platform weekly on the schedule. One function served by the e-device is to reserve the records of scanning made by individual students. In this, the teacher/researcher could identify how much progress students had made weekly. Participants were informed that a week before the final exam, the teacher/researcher would collect their overall watching records to evaluate their learning performance. The amount of video watching supposed to be completed was 16 times in total.

- The statistics of asynchronous online discussion quantities

On the online discussion week, the teacher/researcher would give a question relevant to

the topic appeared in the textbook and upload it to the e-platform. Students had three days to compose and upload their answers to the platform as well. All questions and answers were rewritten in English. Students in the same class could read and share their opinions with each other. And, there were 7 online discussions conducted in this project.

### 3.4 Procedures of conducting the blended learning mode

To conduct the distance learning class, the teacher/researcher had to make weekly videos, propose questions for online discussion forum, give feedback to individual students on each discussion, and prepare the lecturing course. There were seven online discussions and nine physical meetings in total. On the week of online discussion, students did not need to go to the class but access to the e-platform set by the university to respond the question given by the teacher. And, on the physical presence week, there was only one contact hour meeting. In addition, participants had to watch videos weekly following the schedule.

The instructor made the teaching videos based on a textbook and uploaded them to the e-platform in advance. In order to make sure that all participants were aware of how to conduct the course appropriately, in the first week of the semester, the teacher/instructor demonstrated students how to access to the e-platform step by step. She also informed the grading criteria which include video watching, online discussion, attendance, quizzes, and mid-term and final exams to the students, so that they would know how to make their efforts effectively. In the one-hour lecturing meeting, the students were asked to bring their textbook and questions found in the videos to the classroom. She would also project the online discussion forum to the class if certain great, problematic, or interesting remarks were found. The teacher/researcher would give feedback to individual students and an overall comment for each online discussion forum.

## 4. Analysis and Discussion of the Findings

In this study, it attempts to find out the effects of blended learning mode applied in the EFL classroom. In the class, the pedagogical approach blended traditional face-to-face lecturing with e-learning which included autonomous video watching and asynchronous online discussion. Based on the data sources of the two survey questionnaires, the video watching quantities, and online discussion records, three parts will be categorized: the preference of learning mode, autonomous video watching, and, online discussion participation, to reveal and discuss the effects of conducting the distance learning mode.

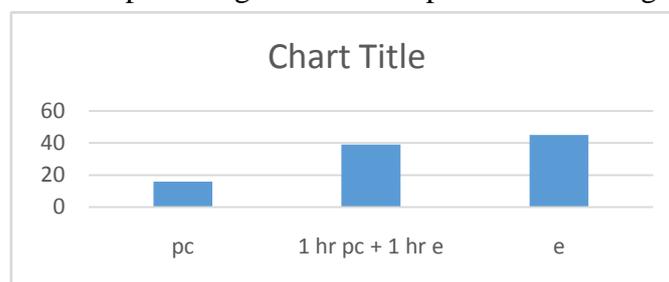
### 4.1 Analysis of the findings

#### 4.1.1 The preference of learning mode

For the question of favorite learning mode illustrated in the table 1, only 16% of participants was fond of traditional physical contact. And, 39% of participants liked blended

learning mode (half physical contact and half e-learning). The e-learning means students had no class but accessing to the Internet to learn autonomously, which including video watching and online discussion. It took 45% and was students' favorite learning mode. It also reflected on the question, "Do you like the distance learning?", and 86% of participants gave positive response. Similar finding also appeared in Akbarov, Gönen, and Aydoğan's (2018) and Sucaromana's (2013) studies that their students preferred blended learning to traditional classroom in EFL context.

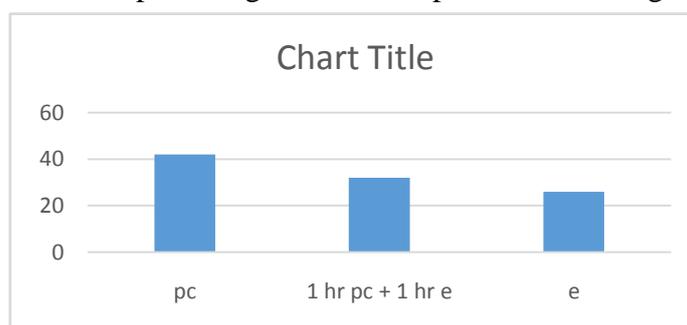
Table 1. The percentage of the most preferred learning mode



Note: pc means physical contact; e means e-learning

Relatively, when students were asked what learning mode they liked the least, 42% of students indicated the physical contact, 32% took the blended learning mode, and 26% took e-learning. Corresponding to the first question, small portion of students (16%) preferred to the traditional learning mode, and larger portion (42%) least liked it. In the table 2, it shows that e-learning mode was accepted by most students.

Table 2. The percentage of the least preferred learning mode



Note: pc means physical contact; e means e-learning

When students were asked which learning mode they liked better, physical contact or e-learning, 24% of students liked physical contact, and 76% of students chose e-learning. The main reasons for the former one were that the teacher and students could have more interaction. Working with the teacher and peers together were full of fun. Most importantly,

the teacher could resolve their questions and problems immediately. However, most students preferred e-learning mode. Most students indicated that they could repeatedly review the videos without temporal and space restrictions. They felt more free and relaxed to work on English learning. Some students indicated that they could sleep more and did not need to worry about the attendance of the class and saved more time on taking the transportation. All participants indicated that the videos made by the teacher were very clear. They could understand them well. However, in the process of watching the videos, they could not gain immediate answers if they had questions. That is also one problem that many students complained. They said they would have forgotten what their questions were when they had a contact meeting offered a week later. Thus, it was one of the reasons that some students preferred physical contact meetings. However, nowadays, it is easy to 'catch' the instructors by means of e-mail or line built in the smartphone if the students are eager for resolving their puzzles.

When students were asked to give honest answers for the two question: "Do you watch the video according to the specified schedule?", and "Do you watch the video from beginning to end?". More than half students (the former one, 55%; the latter one, 63%) replied 'sometimes yes and sometimes no. 32% of students indicated that they did watch the videos from beginning to end.

When students were asked when they usually watched the videos, 61% students replied at night and only 7% of students would do it in the morning. Although almost all students were smartphone users, 64% students would watch the videos with the desktop computer. Only 10% of students would do it with the smartphone. It is very interesting. While most students are addicted to play the smartphone in the classroom, they would like to use the traditional desktop computer for their study. In addition, the e-learning seems correspond to students' learning habit. That is, they preferred night time to day time. Maybe many students had part-time job after school and needed to stay up late and could not get up early in the morning. In this, they liked the e-learning mode and preferred to work on their study at night.

#### 4.1.2 Autonomous video watching

Abiding by the course progress, the teacher/researcher would make and upload the pedagogical videos to the e-platform for students to autonomously watch online. Excluding the weeks of mid-term and final exams, students required to watch 16-week videos. From the statistics of video watching quantities collected at the end of the semester, the watching rate was 61%. It indicates that there were about 40% of students did not conduct the weekly assignment regulated by the teacher/researcher. 27 out of 100 students had perfect watching presence. Surprisingly, 17 out those 27 students also had a perfect online discussion participation. Unexpectedly, 19 students did zero or only one time video watching. For those

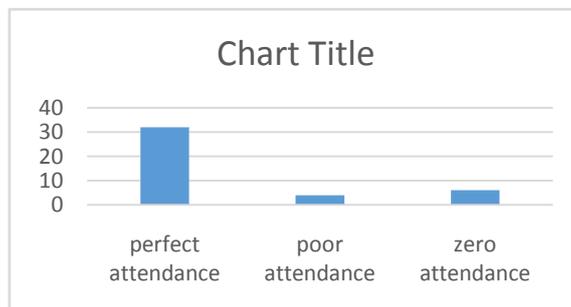
eight students who only conducted one-time video watching, three of them did it on the first week of the semester, another three on the week before the mid-term exam, and the rest two just watched once randomly. When those 19 students were asked why they did not conduct this activity and how they prepared their study without watching the videos, most of them admitted that they were lazy and didn't work seriously for this class. In addition, among those 19 students with zero or only one time video watching record, six of them were not allowed to take the final exam because of violating the attendance rule set by the university. And, seven students were failed for the class. Thus, is the learning mode by means of online video watching appropriate for students to conduct? It will have further discussion in the next section.

In addition to the unsatisfactory watching rate, the number of video watching times for each week is also worth examining. One of the advantages of video watching students liked was that they could access to the Internet anytime they liked without limitation. The most number of watching times for individual week was 7 times. It only occurred once and it appeared in the first week. And, the most frequentative watching was 5 times and it appeared in eight out of sixteen weeks. It means that if students would repeatedly watch specific videos, five times was the average frequency they would do mostly.

#### 4.1.3 Online discussion participation

The activity of online discussion was conducted seven times in a semester, three times before the mid-term exam and four after the mid-term. Each time, the teacher/instructor would upload one question based on the topic scheduled on the syllabus in advance. Students had three days to complete the assignment. Although it was set as online discussion forum, students were not able to answer questions one after the other. It means that they did not take other peers' opinions and gave their own feedback. Therefore, they were asked to give their personal opinions to the questions proposed by the instructor. And, the instructor would give feedback to individual students when the time was due. And, students could read entire discussion forum. Because it was not implemented regularly, many students would forget to complete this task. Therefore, the teacher/researcher had to keep reminding students a week before the activity. In the table 3, it illustrates that 32 out of 100 students had a perfect attendance. It means that they had completed 7 online discussions on time. The entire absence rate was 29%. Among the answers students uploaded, many of them were quite short. It implied that many students had difficulties in putting their thinking into English written words. However, the aim of the forum was to encourage students to express their opinions in written English bravely. Thus, the short answers were also acceptable.

Table 3. The number of attendance for the online discussion



For those poor (means students only participated in the activity once) and zero attendance, it might be because they had difficulties in English, they were lazy, they were busy, or they had no motivation to accomplish the task.

## 4.2 Discussion

### 4.2.1 The preference of learning mode

The results revealed above indicate that the preferred learning mode for students was the e-learning. It means that they preferred video watching and online discussion to one-hour physical contact meeting. The main reason for being fond of e-learning was that they could repeatedly watch the clearly descriptive videos at their own convenience. However, while comparing video watching with online discussion, students seemed to be more serious on the online discussion activity. In contrast to 10% of students did not work hard on online discussion, about 20% students did not work seriously on video watching. It might be because that students needed to spend more time on watching one video at a time. In contrast, they were not requested to compose a certain word count but freely expressed their opinions on the online discussion forum. In this, it seems that the task of online discussion was easier to complete. In addition, they might prefer interacting with the instructor in words to being watching videos alone. With it, their thinking could be exposed to the public and obtain feedback from the instructor. In particular, for those students who were shy and could hardly talk in the classroom, they would be more willing to communicate with people online.

However, because of the shortage of the physical meeting hours, the teacher and students had less opportunities to conduct the class activities and interact with one another. The relationship between the teacher and students became distant, indifferent, and unfamiliar. Many students pointed out this problem in their survey. It might be one reason that many students became quiet when they presented physically in the classroom.

### 4.2.2 The performance of taking the blended learning mode

At the first meeting hour, students were informed the grading criteria so that they would

know how to work on the subject with an ideal performance. The grading items included both mid-term and final exams, video watching, online discussion, assignment, and attendance. In addition, students were encouraged to carry out extra-curriculum activities which were related to English learning, such as taking pictures of English billboards, looking for the errors of misspelling on the boards, participating in English events held on campus, and asking questions in the classroom. In this, they could earn extra points by doing any of them actively. The outcome of students' performance showed that 13 out of 100 students received A+. Conversely, 7 students were not allowed to take the final exams because of exceeding the limit of absence and 8 students were failed for not achieving the requirements of grading criteria. To sum up, 15 out of 100 students could not receive the credits for the class. Theoretically, the blended learning mode provided students more autonomous and comfortable ways of learning. They could have better performance if they were really serious on the subject. However, 15% students were flunked for the course. It implies that the blended learning mode may be appropriately taken by students with autonomous and self-disciplined characteristics.

In contrast to 11 students had zero video watching and 6 students had zero online discussion, 27 students had perfect video watching and 32 students had perfect online discussion. It indicates that the blended learning mode may be suitable for students who are more serious and diligent on their study. And, students with less motivation and lower academic achieving may stay with the traditional classroom learning mode.

#### 4.2.3 Advantage takers creating

It mentioned previously that the e-learning may not suitable for all students. Demonstrated in the records of video watching and asynchronous online discussion, it indicated that certain students attempted to take advantages of no physical presence but did not work on e-assignments seriously by themselves. Many students who had ever taken the distance learning before would encourage their classmates to take this class of blending the traditional with online learning. As a matter of fact, although the system could track the records of online video watching and online discussion, it had its weakness. Was it really that the students watched the videos and participated in the discussions in person? And, did they sit in front of the computer all the way till the end of the videos? The system, actually, could not identify it. That is why many students complained to the teacher/researcher that they thought it was not fair for those dishonest students to earn the points. It indicated that they might know who were cheating but they were not willing to testify for the dishonest. Furthermore, it mentioned earlier that, among 16-time video watching, three students only conducted once and they did it on the week before the mid-term exam. The reason was that they learned that the questions for the mid-term exam would be the review section presented

on the video a week prior to the exam. It means that they did not care to learn the texts accumulated in eight weeks, but the best grade they could earn for the exam. Hopefully, the blended learning mode did not create speculators but down-to-earth learners.

#### 4.3 The difficulties in conducting the blended learning mode

##### 4.3.1 Difficulty in transmitting messages

Although there were convenient notification channels, such as the online forum, emailing, and line built-in the smartphone; when leaving away from the classroom, the instructor was hard to transmit text messages to the students effectively because many students would not read them. At the beginning of the class, the instructor would put her phone number and e-mail address on the blackboard and asked students to save them in their smartphone just in case they needed to contact the instructor. However, most of them would not follow the guidance. Thus, when the instructor needed to send urgent messages, she would need to ask the relevant administrative office for help.

##### 4.3.2 Annoyance at keeping reminding

In this project, many students needed to be constantly reminded of conducting the e-learning assignments and the physical attendance dates. Otherwise, they would ignore them. Their learning attitudes illustrated a kind of irresponsible, lazy, and less-motivated. The instructor needed to keep reminding them; or, half of them might have trouble in missing to do the required assignments or less ideal attendance.

##### 4.3.3 Silence in the physical contact hours

Although students were asked to watch the videos and propose some questions before attending the classroom, they were very quiet when the instructor asked questions or encouraged them to ask questions. It seems that most students had no ideas about the topics discussed based on the course progress. It means that they did not watch the videos and prepare the work in advance. In the survey, many students indicated that the weakness of video watching was that their questions could not be resolved at once. It means that they would find out questions, but they did not try to obtain their answers urgently. When attending the class, they might have forgotten what their questions were. In this, the classroom was quiet and their questions were still their questions without resolving.

## 5. Conclusion

Like disciplinary subjects, more and more EFL instructors are encouraged to take the blended learning mode to proceed their classes. Although weaknesses on conducting the blended learning mode are unavoidable, many EFL learners are fond of applying this learning

mode to their work. In this study, it points out that most students liked the e-learning more than the traditional classroom lecturing. The main reasons were that they could repeatedly review the online pedagogical videos without temporal and spatial restrictions. They felt more autonomous and relaxed to learn. And, they were not necessary to attend the class regularly so that they could learn the skills of time management. However, they also indicated that it was lack of interacting with the instructor and peers. In addition, if they had questions, they could not gain the answers right away. Therefore, it may be a good way of taking the blended learning mode with both e-learning and classroom lecturing. However, it also found that for certain students who were low self-control and lower-achieving on academic performance, the traditional classroom might be more suitable for them to take.

While conducting this project, the teacher/researcher had to make many videos ahead of time and upload them in time. She also required to make relevant questions for the online discussion forum and give feedback to individual students for each response. In this, the teacher/researcher had to spend a lot of time on accomplishing it. Similar comments also appeared in Archila's (2014) study which indicated that the inclusion of the virtual component was time consuming because it was necessary to give a comment to all the students' responses, so that they could feel that they were not alone in their language learning process. In addition, before entering the classroom, the teacher/researcher had to prepare some discussion topics and questions related to the subjects in order to help students construct clearer insight into their learning. Therefore, it is a heavy workload for the instructor to conduct the blended learning mode. Fortunately, most students would follow the guidelines to implement their required tasks and gave the teacher/researcher positive feedback. Based on the students' performance, the teacher/researcher had gained a precious insight into the blended learning application to EFL learners as well. Followed by Alpala & Flórez's (2011) remarks, it is important that EFL teachers take pedagogical and methodological strategies into consideration to make the blended learning course useful and appealing to students.

## 5.1 Pedagogical implications

### 5.1.1 Appropriate language employed

All participants had taken English classes for three consecutive semesters before joining this blended learning project. Therefore, the teacher/researcher supposed that students might have better English competency and would take English as the medium of instruction during the period of the classroom discussion. Although some students stated in their final feedback that their English listening comprehension and oral skills had made progress, most students felt stressed and nervous to sit in the classroom. It indicates that the dream of English only classroom still needs time to come true. And, teachers who intend to offer this teaching fashion had better take bilingual means to proceed the activity of classroom discussion.

### 5.1.2 Autonomous learning cultivating

Different from the traditional classroom learning, students who took the blended learning mode had to autonomously access to the e-platform to watch the pedagogical videos made by the teacher/researcher weekly. Moreover, on the distance learning week, they were requested to conduct the online discussion forum. The texts posted on the forum were English only. By doing this, students not only could cultivate their autonomous learning and locate the questioning points in the videos, they also had the opportunities to improve their reading and writing skills by means of viewing their peers' opinions presented on the forum and responding their own opinions to the questions proposed by the teacher/researcher. However, three unexpected problems appeared while the project was in progress. It mentioned previously that students were expected to ask questions found in the videos when they had physical contact meeting. However, they were all very quiet and had no interaction with one another. In this, the teacher/researcher would take the floor at all times and it indeed made the teacher/researcher stressed to face to a group of silent and emotionless learners. Furthermore, some students had poor physical attendance and the reason was that it wasted their time to take one-hour only meeting. The third problem was that most students would access to the e-platform to watch the teaching videos regularly; however, 19% of students would do it one or zero time in whole semester. On the 7 online discussion quantities, 10% of students only conducted one or none. Those problematic students would not gain the learning effects by joining the distance learning project. In order to help students improve those disturbing learning problems, the possible ways of solutions will illustrate in the following:

*Required questions proposing.* At the very beginning of the class, the teacher can ask students to propose a certain number of questions related to the teaching videos assigned at the contact meeting. Thus, the teacher and students may have more interaction and the class atmosphere may become more warm and active.

*Setting strict physical attendance rules.* One factor students care much is that they can pass the class they are taking. For those reluctant to attend the class or attempt to make excuses to skip the class, one effective way is to set strict physical attendance policy. With it, it may raise students' attendance rate.

*Giving individual tutoring.* Students who did not complete the assignment of the online discussion forums might suffer from personal problems. After conducting the project for a while, teachers may need to realize the problem and give necessary tutoring for individual students. Under the assistance and encouragement given by the teachers, students may achieve the expected performance.

#### 5.2 Suggestions for future research

Distance learning mode has been taken for decades and has revealed effective learning outcome. In this study, most students were fond of taking the blended learning mode by combining the traditional classroom lecturing with online autonomous learning. However, some unsatisfactory situations, such as missing to watch teaching videos, skipping the meeting hours, and keeping silent in the session of class discussion, occurred during the program in progress. In order to make the blended learning mode more thorough and effective, two suggestions for future research are as follows.

*Building co-learning program.* The teacher can help students involved in the blended learning mode find partners who are taking the same coursework but from another class to form a pair or group. The teacher designates specific contents and expected goals and requests co-partners to achieve them together. It is worth observing how students make accomplishments on the blended learning basis.

*Establishing cross-cultural communication program.* Owing to the new south policy set by the government in Taiwan, more and more international students come to Taiwan for study. Theoretically, their English may be better than Taiwanese students. Thus, in the blended learning program, not only do Taiwanese students conduct the coursework followed by the teacher's request, they also need to interact with international students to gain information requested by the teacher. If Taiwanese students can take the opportunities to establish a good relationship with international students and are serious to work on their designated assignments, their English competency will have satisfactory outcome.

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