Using Blended Learning and Self Managed Learning in an Intensive English Program

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Background

- Taught TOEFL / Michigan Test prep courses in Brazil
- Students had problems attending class
  - Students would get seriously behind or drop out
- Online component might have been helpful
Theory
Blended Learning

Blended learning should be viewed as a pedagogical approach that combines the effectiveness and socialization opportunities of the classroom with the technologically enhanced active learning possibilities of the online environment, rather than a ratio of delivery modalities.

(Dziuban, Hartman & Moskal, 2004, p. 2)
Blended Learning, cont.

Blended Learning should be seen as a fundamental redesign of the instructional model with the following characteristics:

- A shift from lecture- to student-centered instruction in which students become active and interactive learners (this shift should apply to the entire course, including the face-to-face contact session).
- Increases in interaction between student-instructor, student-student, student-content, and student-outside resources; and
- Integrated formative and summative assessment mechanisms for students and instructor.

(Dziuban, Hartman & Moskal, 2004, p. 3)
Self Managed Learning

According to Gilligan (1994, p. 4):

- Concept was developed in the 1970s by Ian Cunningham as
- “a holistic, learner-centred approach to development and learning” and
- “a process in which individuals work at what they want to learn, and how they want to learn, with others, in the context and framework of their situation”

- Generally: Business-oriented definition and application
Self Managed Learning, cont.

Peckham (1995, p. 23):

➤ “Self-managed learning is a developmental process in which adults take on full responsibility for their own learning”

➤ learners rarely want to take on this responsibility so it is therefore the role of the tutor “to enable learners to understand that it *does* matter and that therefore they do need to take on that responsibility”
Self Managed Learning, cont.

- Self Managed Learning and university study
  - An iceberg

- Above the water line: Explicit instruction by instructor.

- “Below the water line learning is that which is essentially self-managed. It differs from related concepts, such as self-directed learning, in that academic staff retain control of the learning outcomes, subject content and means of assessment....However, at the heart of self-managed learning there remains the responsibility that all students must exercise for ensuring that educational obligations are met and learning outcomes realised, and that sufficient time and energy are devoted to these ends. In the main, the ends relate to assessment, preparation and what can be described as immersion.”

Otewill (2002, p. 13)
Primary Research Goals

Investigate the impact of using Blended Learning and Self Managed Learning in an ESL course.

► Can BL and SML add value to a language course?
  ▪ If yes, how?

► Teacher perspective

► Student perspective

Currently in pilot phase

► Investigative approach – more questions to follow...
Primary Research Goals, cont.

Measure -

► Student opinion about:
  - Decreased classroom contact hours
  - Increased online work
  - Need to work more independently
  - Need to assume greater responsibility for own learning
  - Assessment
  - Online materials and delivery
  - Etc.
Primary Research Goals, cont.

- Teacher opinion about:
  - Change in role
  - Demands on technical knowledge
  - Student assessment
  - Online materials and delivery
  - Etc.
Data Collection Procedures
Participants

► Students (10 male, 6 female = 16 total)
  ▪ Average age: 23 years, 4 months (min 18, max 45)
  ▪ Nationalities
    ► 8 Chinese
    ► 3 Korean
    ► 1 Brazilian
    ► 1 Guatemalan
    ► 1 Sudanese
    ► 1 Turkish
    ► 1 Taiwanese
Participants, cont’d

Teacher

- Female
- Early sixties
- M.A. in TESL
- Senior Lecturer
- 15+ years of ESL teaching experience
- “Cool’ rather than ‘warm’ person”
- Usually enjoys cordial relationship with students
Characteristics of BL / SML Special Topics course

- Offered in Midwest university Intensive English Program
- Focus on American history and culture from 1950 – 2008
- Course with 4 contact hours per week divided into:
  - 2 x 1 hour of classroom instruction per week in computer-equipped classroom
  - 2 hours of independent work (homework) expected per week, minimum
- Students primarily work in groups
- All materials are online
  - Four required modules
  - One elective module
Skills focus

► Reading authentic or semi-authentic texts
► Listening to authentic or semi-authentic materials
► Analyzing and synthesizing information
► Classroom and study skills
► Do limited research (write questionnaires, interview people, find online sources)
► Conduct oral presentations
► Create Power Point presentations
► Create posters for presentations
► Create short advertisement / infomercial videos
Materials

► Questionnaires
  - Background
  - Blended Learning experiences
  - Self Managed Learning experiences
  - Motivation
  - English / Technology skills improvement

► Module evaluations (journal essays)
  1. What is your impression of module 1?
  2. What did you learn?
  3. What was difficult? What was easy?
  4. What would you change in module 1, if you could?

► Final Group Interview
► In-class Observations
► Teacher Reflections
Topics Covered

► Module 1: Intro – We Didn’t Start The Fire (1950s + 60s famous people)
► Module 2: I Have a Dream (racism, civil rights)
► Module 3: Jesus he knows me (televangelism)
► Module 4: The Presidential election (American politics)
► Module 5 (elective): Pleasantville (Nuclear family, gender roles, etc.)
► Module 6 (elective): American Gun Culture (Bowling for Columbine, Second Amendment, etc.)
Content and Design

► Website template found online
► All materials found online and integrated via links, including:
  ▪ Texts and lyrics
  ▪ Images
  ▪ Video clips
  ▪ Tutorials and guides (PPT-, poster creation, video production, etc.)
► Web pages are divided into parts
  - Task
  - Methods
  - Results
  - Time
  - Tips
  - Resources
I Have a Dream

This was the title of the speech given at the Lincoln Memorial by Dr. Martin Luther King on August 28, 1963. In this speech he spoke of his desire for a future where blacks and whites would coexist harmoniously as equals. The speech was a defining moment of the American Civil Rights Movement and was a commentary on the powerful forces of racism and inequality in American society. Racism and equality started to become a major theme in America after the Second World War, and several important events took place in the 1950s. In this module you are going to study some of these events.

Goals

- Learn about important topics, people, and events in the American debate about racism and inequality.
- Understand the historical role of African Americans in the United States.
- Practice reading and skimming skills.
- Practice speaking and presentation skills.
- Learn about conducting surveys.

Materials you will need

- This web page.
- A computer connected to the internet with Flash installed and with working audio.
- A working email account.
- Paper and pencil for note-taking.

Sequence

- This module is the third required part of the course.

Navigation

- Please study the different parts of the project in the right-hand menu. You should go through them in the order they are listed - from Task to Resources.
Learning Methods

1. Identify racial issues and events that occurred in the 1950s in the US. You can use the song we have studied so far to help give you ideas, as well as the internet.

2. Choose five questions from the question bank and put together a survey about your chosen topic. You may add a few more questions on your own, if you want. Consult with your teacher for advice on conducting a survey and contacting Americans via email. You need to survey at least three Americans. Then, email your survey to your respondents and wait for their answers.

3. While you wait for the responses, choose a racial issue or event to research and start collecting information for your presentation.

4. Once you have your survey responses back, analyze them to find out what your respondents think about racism. If your survey does not give you enough data to work with, you may use some of the data from the Presbyterian Church survey.

5. Finish your research and make a 10-slide script for your Power Point presentation. This means you should try to plan what to put in your slides.

6. Put your Power Point presentation together. Use 5 slides to present the racial issue you chose, and 5 slides to explain the data you collected and what it says about your issue.

7. Present your research and Power Point presentation in class and answer questions from your classmates.

8. For homework write a 3-5 paragraph essay in which you explain the effect your topic/event had on American history and how Americans view racism today, according to your research. Remember to write this from your own point of view.
Learning Resources

Surveys
You must choose 5 survey questions from this list of possible questions. If you decide to make any questions of your own, try to make them in the same style as those in the list, and make sure you talk to your teacher for additional tips and a check of your questions before you send out your survey.

Tips on how to write good survey questionnaires
http://www.accessable.net/~infopol/tips.htm
http://www.statpac.com/surveys/question-qualities.htm
http://www.keene.edu/crc/forms/designingsurveysatcount.pdf (Note: PDF file - requires Acrobat Reader)

Interesting survey on racism from the Presbyterian Church.
http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Codebooks/PP00RUC_CB.asp

Tips on good email etiquette from the Online Writing Lab at Purdue University.
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/p_emailett.html

Power Point Tutorials and Guides

Short and simple guide to using PowerPoint 2007
http://nipics.net/tutorials/powerpoint2007/create.html

Microsoft PowerPoint Training tutorial with spoken directions (please use headphones if you listen to this in class)
http://office.microsoft.com/training/training.aspx?
AssetID=RC101865831033&CTT=6&Origin=RP10186580103

Short PowerPoint design guide
http://zimmer.csufresno.edu/~johnca/power/sld001.htm
Design: Moodle CMS

**31 August - 6 September**

**7 September - 13 September**

Homework for Monday Sep 9th:
1. Complete your research on your person or topic.
2. Prepare your presentation.
3. Complete your learning contract and hand in.

Homework for Sep 9th:

Write a REFLECTIVE JOURNAL about the first module of the project. Try to address the following questions:
1) What is your impression of module 1?
2) What did you learn?
3) What was difficult? What was easy?
4) What would you change in module 1 if you could?

Please write your journal on a computer and make sure you save a copy where you can find it. Then, print a copy for your teacher and hand in Wednesday.

**14 September - 20 September**

Homework for Sep 17th:
1) Study Resources on writing emails in English
2) Research your topic/issue for your presentation
3) Draft your questionnaire (Think about questions to put in questionnaire – and bring them to class)

On Wednesday Sep 17th you should be prepared to:
1) put together your questionnaire and send it out at the end of class. Your teacher will help you proof-read it.
2) put together information on your topic/issue and work on your Power Point presentation

On Friday Sep 19th, you should be ready to:
1) Analyze the responses to your questionnaire
2) plan how to present the data in your Power point presentation
Analysis

► Data
  ▪ Background questionnaires
    ► Data tabulated
  ▪ Teacher comments
  ▪ Student comments
    ► Transcribed (Transana v. 2.12)
    ► Coded
    ► Analyzed qualitatively
    ► Summarized
Results

Teacher Comments
Learning and Time

► New material
  - Developed by co-instructor (researcher)
  - Unfamiliar content

► New methods: delivery and interaction
  - Online
  - Blended Learning / Self Managed Learning
  - How to be the best “guide on the side”
  - Frustration: Too much “pull and prod” role
  - Reduced contact hours
  - Simulation of university course
    - Limited time to address language issues
    - Realization: Teacher orientation to American academic culture needs more focus
Logistics and Communication

- Team teaching
- Teacher and researcher not in same building
- Essential communication re:
  - Expectations from students
  - Progress of materials – pacing
  - Teaching schedules – coordination between teacher and researcher
- Schedule changes in response to student behavior
- Unusual demands in other quarters
  - Administrative duties
Class Atmosphere

► Change in student / teacher relationship
  ▪ Decrease in interaction
  ▪ Contrary to Dziuban, Hartman & Moskal (2004, p. 3) observations of increased student / instructor interaction

► Increased individual responsibility on the part of the students

► Increase in need for student collaboration

► Increase in need for social bonding
  ▪ Plan and promote group activities and class cohesion to nurture bond throughout semester
Student Behavior

► Attendance and lateness
  ▪ Change of class start time from 1pm to 10am
  ▪ During last two weeks 60% - 70% of students had stopped attending class

► Poor preparation

► Difficult to motivate and involve students
  ▪ “they had an agenda of their own”

→ Similar problems detected by Heinze and Procter (2004) with adult students in a BSc IT program - students were not able to handle the increased flexibility and demands on their study discipline
Student Comments
Notable Characteristics

- Average age of students who...
  - Began course: 23 yrs, 4 mos
    - (10 M, 6 F)
  - Participated in final interview: 24 yrs
    - (1 M, 3 F)
    - 1 Chinese, 1 Brazilian, 1 Sudanese, 1 Korean
  - Answered final questionnaires: 32 yrs, 8 mos
    - (1M, 2 F)
    - 1 Chinese, 1 Sudanese, 1 Korean
Language and Content

- Quick language improvement
- Learned about US history, culture, politics, economy
- Gained oral presentation practice and confidence
- Improved ability to do online research
  - Reading
  - Skimming
  - Scanning
  - Selecting
Technology Skills

► Students gained skills and confidence with
  ▪ Power Point Presentations
  ▪ Electronic posters with Power Point
  ▪ Online research

► Improved ability to use computers

► Using technology for university studies
Course Content and Design

- Good, very helpful
- Topics were very helpful
- Content well integrated with skills
- Clear, step-by-step instructions easy to follow
- Website contained all needed info, including entertaining resources (music videos, animated videos)
- “Good to have access to all materials on any computer”
- “I learned a lot about US politics, even though it is not very interesting”
- “Interesting to discuss different political and religious issues”
Course Content and Design cont’d

- First and second modules somewhat similar / repetitive
- Televangelism module should be removed / changed to include other religions
- Website link is hard to remember
Pedagogy

► Time

- Time given is enough, if students do their parts on time
- Enough time for the individual parts

- Need more time for course in general
- Need more time for modules (so those group members, who do most of the work, can finish)
- Too many modules for the time available
Pedagogy, cont’d

Group Work
- Improved ability to work in groups
- Enjoyed working with other students and exchanging ideas
- Initially difficult
- Problematic to divide responsibilities within groups
- Sometimes a few group members ended up doing most of the work
Tentative Results Summary

► Can BL and SML add value to an ESL course?
  ▪ YES

► How?
  ▪ SML
    ► Students gain experience with
      ▪ Group work
      ▪ Finding needed info / doing research on their own
      ▪ Following project time plans
      ▪ Taking responsibility for own learning
      ▪ Managing significant amount of study time
    ▪ Using SML in an IEP ESL course gives learners an authentic college study experience while allowing them to practice a study mode that is foreign to most of them.
Tentative Results Summary

► How? (cont’d)
  ▪ BL
    ► Learners gain experience with
      ▪ Moodle CMS
      ▪ Use of technology for learning / conveying results
      ▪ Online research
      ▪ Student-centered learning
    ► Learners improved and gained confidence in their presentation skills
    ► BL allows instructor to conduct challenging, student-centered course with relevant use of technology that prepares learners for college study in the US.
Tentative Results Summary

► SML / BL
  ▪ Lends itself better to learners who
    ► Are older, more mature
    ► Have college study experience
    ► Are motivated to learn study skills, techniques and technologies
  ▪ An eye-opener for learners who
    ► Have no college study experience
    ► Are not used to student-centered learning where more of the responsibility for learning is put on the student
    ► Are not used to supporting their learning and transmission of knowledge with the use of technology
Limitations

- Limited preparation and directions for teacher
- Participants not entirely representative of target audience
  - Student TOEFL test ‘agenda’
- Limited data collected (esp. final questionnaires)
- Lack of classroom observations from researcher
- Limited assessments:
  - Instructor and peer feedback on presentations
  - Course is pass / fail
  - Most students don’t worry about their grade
Next Steps

- Collect more data in Fall 2009
- Try to offer course on voluntary basis
  - Students may fit desired profile better
- Revise course content, tasks, and instruments
- Revise / increase teacher preparation and directions
- Consider recruiting a different teacher
- Focus on researcher and observer role
Questions?

Comments?

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