

Embracing Hybrid and Transformational Approach for Teaching and Learning: A Paradigm Shift in English Language Teaching (ELT)

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Abstract

The whole educational system is undergoing rapid changes during the present era. The conversion of the physical classrooms used in traditional education to online classrooms was the original goal of e-learning and web-based learning initiatives. The initial users of e-learning essentially replicated classroom-based courses in online mode. However, numerous technological developments have ushered in innovative changes in the field of English language teaching. The integration of digital tools and platforms has revolutionized traditional teaching methods. Virtual classrooms, video conferencing, and online language learning apps have enabled students to connect with teachers and resources from anywhere in the world. It helped to break down geographical barriers. Additionally, AI-powered language learning applications can provide personalized feedback and adapt to individual learning styles. It is clear from an analysis of the current educational environment that learners are not only dependent on the traditional classroom teaching method. Their approach to learning has drastically changed, and they are now utilizing technology and AI technologies for improved self-directed learning. Their learning process has been greatly facilitated and made easy by technological innovation. The current article demonstrates Blended Learning, one of the most revolutionary aspects of the educational process, in which traditional methods of instruction are further reinforced by online and offline access to digital resources on computers. The research focuses on the use of blended learning in English Language Teaching (ELT), which could be a novel approach to help students learn English more successfully. In a nutshell, the paper brings to light that these technological advancements have made learning English more convenient. It has also opened up new avenues for collaborative and immersive language learning experiences and ultimately helps to shape the future of language education.

Keywords: Blended learning, digital tools, ELT, Artificial Intelligence, Online learning.

Introduction

The future of e-learning is wide open! Learning doesn't just happen during business hours in the office or in the classroom. It happens everywhere through a number of different channels.

Blended learning has emerged as a contemporary and significant trend in education throughout the past few decades. Particularly in the last several decades, there have been significant developments in the teaching of English and other foreign languages in general, leading to the development of a number of novel approaches and techniques. In contrast to other courses, language teaching is a dynamic, continually evolving process where the absence of rigid norms may be seen. Teachers must recognize the extent to which modern information technology has permeated people's lives and use this to their advantage in the classroom. Without a doubt, a teacher's function is evolving, and the boundaries between him/her and the student are becoming more distinct, which encourages cooperation. The role of the student, who takes part in information acquisition as well as its search, growth, and transformation into practical abilities, is growing. The ability to make responsible decisions, use critical thinking, and improve oneself intellectually is also fostered in students. Students' enthusiasm and inventiveness in learning are developed when they are exposed to interactive learning activities. They understand that in the present innovation development, it is essential to be competitive specialists; they actively seek out ways to educate themselves. Only within the traditional full-time educational setting can the new educational environment based on the use of information technology be completely implemented. Consequently, using the method of blended learning is one option to address the current issue.

Understanding the importance of blended learning

In order to improve the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process taking place in schools and colleges, blended learning is a fresh and advanced idea that has gained acceptance. Blended learning is considered a "thoughtful fusion of face-to-face and online learning experiences" (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). ICT, or information and communications technology, has been seen as supporting both online and offline learning. Blended learning is a type of teaching that combines traditional place-based classroom techniques with online educational tools and opportunities for online participation. Both the teacher and the student must be available physically, and the learner may have some degree of influence over the time, place, path, or pace. Professional development and training environments also incorporate blended learning.

Students can learn at their own speed and skill level through blended learning. Learning is not confined to a physical classroom because of the inclusion of a virtual environment. Depending on your schedule, learning can take place over extended periods of time, in little chunks, at home, at a coffee shop, or over a lunch break. Increased flexibility is possible because of blended learning, which permits learning at any time, anywhere. It makes it optional to go to class, allowing a wider geographical reach. Students who can't make it to class at regular times each day or each week can benefit from this. The blended teaching method will be helpful to learners who are new parents, have full-time jobs, have physical limitations, or reside in separate cities.

The benefits of Blended learning over the traditional teaching-learning process

The traditional teaching barriers, which don't work for all learners, are broken down through blended learning, which is crucial. Today, however, we are able to customize the learning process for each student due to access to modern tools and resources. Individuals can learn at their own pace with blended learning, which provides flexible time schedules that can be tailored to each person. With the use of technology, live teacher-student contact is referred to as blended learning. Flexibility is possible for both students and teachers in this form of learning. Using a variety of methods, students can receive well-planned instruction that fits their study schedule. When teachers keep an eye on their students' development and provide timely feedback, they can communicate with them more effectively. By utilizing additional technologies outside of the classroom, blended learning enables students to utilize their educational experiences. In order to accommodate this, learners can customize their learning schedule by identifying areas that require greater attention. Blended learning techniques can also be used by teachers to improve their lessons. This is a more contemporary method of instruction that might enhance a student's training. Some of the major benefits students experience as a result of blended learning are as listed:

- Greater student engagement
- Better information and work-related feedback; team teaching
- Teachers/Instructors can spend additional time with learners
- Added leadership positions
- Prioritize in-depth learning
- There are new ways to teach at home.
- Higher earning capacity
- Plans for individual professional development

Limitations and Disadvantages of the Blended Learning Method

As with anything, there are some perceived drawbacks to employing technology in the classroom, such as overusing internet access for purposes other than academic ones. However, the advantages typically outweigh the disadvantages. Taking steps to ensure teachers and kids are trained on technology integration and execution is the greatest approach to prevent any adverse effects. Teachers should constantly be aware of the purpose behind any technological tool utilized by their students, and they should exercise the utmost care in keeping an eye on what they are doing. Nothing is flawless, and we shouldn't undervalue the importance of traditional teaching methods like handwriting, but with the right application, technology may assist both teachers and students in achieving success.

The incorporation of Blended learning in English language teaching

Blended learning has been a term used in English language teaching (ELT) for more than ten years. It is an unconventional approach to learning English that effectively combines traditional instruction with free online resources. Many of the available materials are technologically oriented teaching tools. It refers to computer-assisted learning that can raise learners' test scores. The same method is also referred to as Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), and it is used in the field of ELT. The teachers have long used conventional methods of instruction in the classrooms. Sometimes, readily available and

affordable resources like tape recorders and video cassettes were included in their instructional methods. But as technology has developed and improved, a wide range of educational approaches now use learning tools. With such a wide variety of online and offline tools available today, language learning has been made easier. These resources and tools are updated for English language teachers.

An innovative kind of language instruction in English is blended learning, which enables students to combine many beneficial elements for improved language learning. Teachers can find a wide variety of teaching resources and materials on the internet to meet the needs of their learners. The list of these materials includes various kinds of films, workbooks, language learning programs, and exercises for the practical use of the English language. There are several websites that offer language exercises for strengthening LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) skills, vocabulary development, communication improvement in English, pronunciation improvement in English, and functional grammar learning.

The use of blended learning in ELT does not mean that the old methods of instruction need to be disregarded. Instead, it describes the blending of offline materials and online resources. The English instructor uses a variety of printed texts to impart knowledge to his/her students. In addition to this, he /she uses digital resources like films, audio, graphical images, etc., to assist the students in comprehending the teacher better. The students are also instructed to research the subject being covered in class further online. Additionally, it makes learning more interesting and pleasurable for the students. Following the completion of the face-to-face teaching and learning process, the teacher and students will communicate via online platforms. Some blended learning practices which the students can use to improve their language skills are listed below.

Swayam Portal

Swayam is a platform designed to address problems with physically connecting teachers and the educational infrastructure. It is essential to offer students a variety of online study resources without charging a fee. Every course is offered online, and students learn and are taught in a virtual classroom. Students from ELT programs are welcome to enroll in the course and use it for blended learning.

National Digital Library of India

The library is another useful resource for integrated learning. NDLI stands for the National Digital Library of India, a project of the Indian Ministry of Human Resource Development. The goal is to gather metadata from several national and international digital libraries, as well as from other pertinent sources, and to offer a comprehensive text index. For example, the National Digital Library of India (NSDL) offers instructional resources for students in the primary through graduate levels. It was developed with educators, researchers, professionals, and students in mind. For students of any grade level and in any subject, there is also personalized information available. It can be used in blended learning by ELT students.

Coursera

Massive Open Online Courses, or MOOCs, are offered by major universities all over the world through the online education platform Coursera. It currently has partners from more

than 275 different nations. Universities including Stanford, Duke, Penn, Princeton, Michigan, Peking, and HEC Paris are among the partners. Additionally, Coursera collaborates with businesses like IBM, Google, and PwC, all of which have created courses on the platform.

Google Classroom

It is a web-based platform that is frequently used in modern times for evaluating everything in one location, making an announcement, sharing notes, etc. It saves us time and money on administrative procedures. Both the teacher and the students in ELT lessons have the option of combining this web-based platform with traditional teaching-learning methods. Google Classroom is the most significant illustration of this form of communication. Any topic can be taught by the teacher, who can then ask the students to write assignments on it and interact with them through Google Classroom. ELT homework assignments are available for digital submission to the classroom. The teacher can do assessments and present the findings.

#ELT

The hashtag #ELTChat was developed by a group of ELT colleagues. It offers a chance to interact with others and have discussions about a wide range of ELT-related issues. The discussion summaries are provided together with a wealth of suggestions for the finest teaching techniques that many teachers use online. ELT students are welcome to participate in these discussions and engage in language practice for their benefit. This is a fantastic resource that can be included in blended learning.

In a nutshell, Online tools like One Stop English, Wordle, BBC Learning English, British Council of English in India, Cambridge English Online, ISL Collective, and others are available to ELT students as well. YouTube is another effective media that ELT students can incorporate into their blended learning materials to further their understanding through practice.

Conclusion

It is evident that innovative methods for the teaching-learning process are used in blended learning. In this practice, computers and the internet are used for both online learning and classroom instruction. The tools and materials provided by computers reconstruct and reorganize learning. Many students occasionally lament that they don't have enough opportunities to practice the language skills and components in a classroom setting. Their utilization of a range of materials to make their learning more efficient and easily accessible to their needs is made possible by the blended learning approach, which is like a blessing to them. Through a variety of classroom activities, group and pair projects, collaborative and individual learning, online and offline modalities, and other means, blended learning offers the chance to learn English. As a result, it is an inventive method of teaching and learning that makes the best use of technology.

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