

## INTEGRATING BLOG AND FACE-TO-FACE INSTRUCTION INTO AN ESP COURSE: ENGLISH FOR HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM

Ru-Chu Shih

National Pingtung University of Science and Technology, Taiwan  
vincent@npust.edu.tw

### ABSTRACT

With the rapid growth of international trade and globalization, English language has been emphasized in Asia countries, thus professionals with a good command of English has become essential and important. This study aimed to establish a blended model combining face-to-face (F2F) instruction for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course: English for Hospitality and Tourism. The research method was a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, including peer and instructor feedback, interviews, and the learning satisfaction survey. A total of 44 English- majored sophomore students participated in the study. The results of the study reveal that this model could contribute to learning effectiveness and satisfaction of an ESP course when the course is well planned, the equipment is sufficient and supportive as well as students are familiar with related applications. Most importantly, peer and the instructor's feedback and the characteristics of the blog, including free access, ease of revision, and interesting material, were major factors that motivated students to learn effectively and enhanced their satisfaction with the course.

**Keywords:** blended learning, blog, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Hospitality and Tourism

### INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, the Taiwan government has realized the current and future importance of “e-learning” and introduced a number of initiatives for promoting the development and uptake of this important approach to learning (Tsai, Chen, and Chen, 2010). Meanwhile, second language (L2) education has been shifted from solely traditional instruction approach into more computer-assisted instruction and e-learning. The Internet allows lower-cost language instruction, providing more opportunities for educational institutions to offer courses online (Godwin-Jones, 2003). Web 2.0 technology can be a potential tool for collaborative learning for enhancing learner's learning performance, such as personal knowledge construction or group knowledge sharing (Chiang et al, 2011; Liaw, Chen, & Huang, 2008).

E-learning may increase flexibility of access, eliminate geographical barriers, and improve convenience of use and effectiveness of collaborative learning. Tam, Kan, and Ng (2010) also concluded that language teachers can promote the use of technology; particularly the online chats could be an option for L2 learners and between learners and the teacher. E-learning has been regarded as a teaching assisted tool for instructors, and learners' intention to use e-learning is influenced by perceived usefulness and self-efficacy (Liaw, 2008; Liaw, Huang, & Chen, 2007). Furthermore, some studies also indicated that students tend to perform better in an online learning environment than in a conventional classroom instruction (Liu, Ho, & Song, 2011; Yusuf & Afolabi, 2010). Online teaching and learning activities have continued to expand as an alternative to traditional face-to-face teaching and learning. In addition, computer-assisted language learning can promote collaborative, learner-centered knowledge construction and offer a more comfortable and less face-threatening environment for interaction than do instruction and discussion in a traditional classroom setting (Dickson, et al., 2008).

Blogs can be used as a collaborative tool for student groups, while instructors can use them as a medium for such tasks as delivering news, messages, and resources, encouraging discussion, and giving feedback and comments (Well, Pegler, & Mason, 2005). Many studies also pointed out some advantages of using blogs in education and its positive effects on improving students' performance. Many studies suggested integrating blogging with instruction may erase the limitation of classroom walls and provide students with more possibilities to connect with others outside of the classroom as well as to enhance the effect of teaching and learning (Chen et al, 2011; Liu & Chang, 2010; 2011; Liu and Lin, 2007; Liu, Shih, & Tsai, 2011; Lou, Wu, & Shih, 2010; Richardson, 2006; Shih, 2010;).

Blended learning (BL) is effective in facilitating online collaborative learning. Cooperative learning allows students to reflect and evaluate their work in the group, as well as to provide suggestions for improvement (Shih, 2010). In addition, blended learning combines several delivery methods to provide the most efficient and effective teaching and learning experiences (Cortizo, et al., 2009; Harriman, 2004; Lou et al, 20). Both face-to-face instruction and electronic feedback, including asynchronous feedback and discussion, can facilitate the productive overall use of feedback (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). As a result, the form of blogs can be used in an ESP/EOP/EAP course for L2 learners at the college level to enhance student learning motivation, satisfaction, and performance as well as to improve the instructor's teaching effectiveness.

However, with both the advantages of traditional instruction and e-learning as part of blended learning, the researcher (the course instructor) decided to administer a blended approach to the English for Hospitality and Tourism course at a technological university. The major purposes of this study were (1) to establish an effective blog-based blended model for the English for Hospitality and Tourism course, (2) to investigate the effects of using a blended model on the course, and (3) to explore students' learning satisfaction with the blog blended learning.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The research method consisted of a mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches, including comments and feedback from the peer students on the blogs, satisfaction questionnaire survey, and interview. Data collected from panelist reviews were analyzed using quantitative methods. Comments and responses to the learning satisfaction survey questionnaire (LSSQ), and interview were statistically analyzed.

### Research participants

The participants in this study were 44 English-majored sophomore students enrolled in an elective ESP course named "English for Hospitality and Tourism." at a four-year public university in southern Taiwan. In addition, there were seven students, four males and three females, who volunteered to participate in the interview process during the last week of class. The students were coded as S1-M, S2-F, S3-M, S4-M, S5-F, S6-F, and S7-F (M represents male student; F represents female student).

### Research instruments

The research instruments include students' blog short films, the Learning Satisfaction Survey Questionnaire (LSSQ), and the student interview questionnaire. The Learning Satisfaction Survey Questionnaire (LSSQ) contains seven demographic questions, 37 close-ended questions, and one open-ended questionnaire.

### Students' short films and blogs

At the beginning of the class, the 44 students were separated into seven groups. Each one of them was to make a film related to the course subjects and to upload it to his or her blog. The length of the film was limited for less than five minutes. The file size of each film was not to be overly large. Neither the layout nor the pattern of each blog and film was subject to limitations. However, a comment and discussion board was a requirement for each. The blog was to allow upload and download of films, easy access, and easy revision (Figure 1).



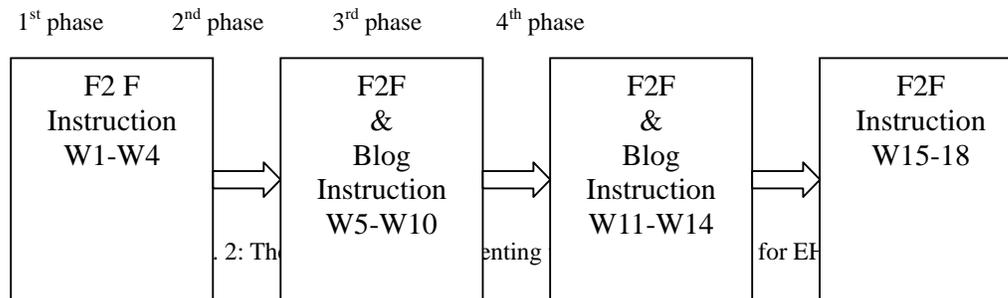
Fig. 1: An example of the students' blog

### The learning satisfaction survey questionnaire (LSSQ)

The LSSQ contains a total of 7 demographic questions, 37 questions, and 1 open-ended question. A 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree=5; agree=4; neutral=3; disagree=2; strongly disagree=1) was employed to obtain students' satisfaction and attitudes toward the statements on the survey questionnaire. Prior to the survey, the content of the questionnaire was validated by two professors of English department and one professor of vocation education. Thus, the construct validity was established. A total of 43 valid responses were collected and analyzed. The questionnaire obtained a .976 of Cronbach alpha value, indicating the reliability of the questionnaire was also established.

### Implementation

The implementation of the English for Hospitality and Tourism (EHT) course was divided into four phases (as shown in Figure 2). This arrangement was intended to facilitate a combination of blended learning and face-to-face (F2F) instruction. Each phase was last about four to six weeks but the instructor adjusted the length and instructional contents based on students' needs and course schedule.



### Student Interview Questions

In order to obtain more in-depth information on students' opinions about this blended learning course, a student interview was conducted and the interview questions are (1) "what do you think of the blended model used in this course that combined blog film with face-to face instruction in class?" (2) "what do you want to suggest that the teacher improve?" and (3) "which part of this course did you like most, and which did you dislike most?"

### RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

The results section contains a qualitative evaluation of the students' progress and of student responses to the interview questionnaires; it also features a statistical analysis of the peer and instructor comments on the films and a statistical analysis of the responses to the survey questionnaire.

#### Results of the students and the instructor's comments on the blog film

The 44 students in the seven groups were required to make comments about their group members' films. After all group members had commented on each other's films, the instructor also reviewed all films and gave comments for students to improve their films and performance. Most of the students' and the instructor's comments on the group members' films were very alike, such as issues of enunciation, posture, gesture, and background noise. In sum, the comments on the blog films show that blog learning can provide opportunities for improvement in terms of not only professional skills but also familiarity with blog applications.

#### Results of the Learning Satisfaction Survey Questionnaire (LSSQ)

The statistical results of the responses to the LSSQ are discussed as follows. The mean scores of the 37 questions ranged from 3.07 to 3.574 with acceptable standard deviations; thus, all students displayed moderate to high level of agreement regarding the statements in the survey questionnaire. For the design of the blog platform and film section, Question 4 "Position of the uploaded film may influence my blog learning willingness of English for Hospitality and Tourism course" obtained the lowest mean score of 3.09 among the seven questions, indicating the position of the uploaded film only less influenced students' learning motivation. Q3 "Color and fonts of the blog interface may influence my blog learning willingness" and Q7 "Topic of the film may influence my blog learning willingness" obtained mean scores of 3.51 equally, indicating colors, fonts, and topics may influence students' blog learning motivation.

For "Opinions toward the blog platform," Q18 "Free of charge for using blog to learn the course is a great advantage" obtained the highest mean score of 3.72 among the seven questions, indicating students were more concerned about the charge of using the blog platform. Q13 "System stability of blog can be the advantage for learning the course" obtained the lowest mean score of 3.07, indicating system stability was not a major issue for them.

In Part III "Learning attitude toward blog," all the eight questions obtained means scores ranging from 3.21 to 3.37, indicating students possess moderate learning attitude toward the blog. In Part IV "Learning effectiveness of blog application," the 15 questions obtained mean scores ranging from 3.16 to 3.74. Notably, Q33 "Reviewing my own films can help me understand my own strengths and weaknesses of learning the course" obtained the highest mean score among the 37 questions of the survey questionnaire, indicating students highly agreed with the function and effectiveness of using blog to learn English for Hospitality and Tourism course. Meanwhile, Q37 "Through blog learning English for Hospitality and Tourism course, it can also improve my interpersonal

skills and relationship with classmates” obtained the lowest mean score of 3.16 in this section, indicating learning the course through blog did not affect their interpersonal skills and relationship with their classmates. In sum, students were satisfied with integrating the blog film with the traditional face to face (F2F) instruction based on the statistical results of the survey questionnaires. In addition, students agreed that the blog film was effective in learning the course of English for Hospitality and Tourism.

Regarding the results of the demographical information of the LSSQ, a total of 33 students indicated that they spent more than two hours on the internet every day; and 10 students spent about an hour and a half to two hours on the internet. In another words, the students spend a lot of time on the internet daily. Regarding what type of message they leave on their own blogs, 13 out of 43 students leave messages about their own feelings on the blogs. For browsing other’s blogs, 15 students indicated that they visited others’ blogs at least once per day and 12 students indicated that they visited other’s blogs at least six times per day. Finally, most of the students indicated that they visited others’ blogs were to respond to others’ comments, write down own feelings, and chat with friends on others’ blogs. However, the results of the demographical information on the questionnaire are not surprising. Most of the students use their own blogs as a placer to write down their feelings and chat with friends.

### Results of factor analysis of the LSSQ

The results of KMO & Bartlett test show the  $KMO=.774>.6$  and Bartlett Test of Sphericity=1926.29 with .000 of significance, indicating there are common factors existing in the questionnaire and it is suitable to conduct factor analysis. Thus, the confirmatory factor analysis was performed in order to identify the underlying factors that explain the pattern of correlations within a set of observed variables. According to Table 1, there are four factors were extracted, which explained over 76% of variance.

Table 1 Variance explained in factor analysis

Factor	Initial eigenvalues		
	total	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	28.777	63.100	63.100
2	2.492	5.465	68.565
3	1.810	3.968	72.533
4	1.643	3.603	76.135

For Factor I, there are 15 questions loaded: Q 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, and 37; Factor II contains eight questions: Q15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22; Factor III contains seven questions: Q8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14, and Factor IV contains six questions: Q1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7. Q5 “Size of the film may influence my blog learning willingness of English for Hospitality and Tourism course” was deleted after the factor analysis. After carefully examined the statements of the LSSQ, the four factors are named. They are Factor I: Blended learning effectiveness; Factor II: Learning attitude towards the blog platform; Factor III: Operation of the blog platform; and Factor IV: The Design of the blog platform and the short film.

### Results of student interview

The researcher interviewed seven volunteer students to obtain in-depth information about the blog blended learning class. The interview questions are listed as follows, followed by the students’ responses and discussions.

1. “What do you think of the blended model for this course, being half blog film and half in-class presentations?”

*I think the blended model for the course can improve students’ participation in this course, and give them chances to display real situations. (S1-M)*

*I think that it good for students to learn more. They can have more resource to use. (S3-M)*

*I think I can learn some film making skills and experiences besides practicing my professional English. (S6-F)*

According to the students’ interview responses, the seven students all possessed positive attitudes toward the blog-based blended teaching and learning approach to teaching English for Hospitality and Tourism course. They all strongly agreed about combining the blog applications for teaching Hospitality and Tourism course is helpful for them to learn some technology and useful for the course.

2. “What do you want to suggest that the teacher improve?”

*I think teacher should teach students how to use software related to the film such as transforming the format. (S6-F)*

*I think having blog film is better than in class presentation. ...hope teachers can continue this kind of course. (S4-M)*

*Maybe teacher can give students more chances to visit the hotel if the time is ok. The teacher can. (S5-M)*

Students mentioned that the instructor's comments and suggestions were very useful and beneficial to them, helping to improve their professional English performance. In addition, students suggested that on-site visitation to hotels can be arranged and it will be very beneficial for them.

3. "What parts of this course did you like and dislike most?"

*I like to take the videos, but I also dislike doing it. It takes me so much time, but I can have a chance to practice my English ability about the rules for hotels and restaurants. (S2-M)*

*I think I like most of parts because I can use some useful vocabulary, patterns, and others to deal with some problems in every situation (in the hotel, restaurant, on the road, etc.). I don't have any parts I dislike most. (S7-F)*

*I liked the blog thing because I am too shy to present in front of class, although I know I need to overcome my fear. (S3-M)*

What most of the students liked most in the course was that the blended approach was interesting and fun. On the other hand, the blog-based blended approach may consume a lot of time for students to make the film, which can be a notable issue for instructors when designing a blog-based blended instruction course.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### Conclusions

The results of this study show that such educational goals have been achieved, confirming the effectiveness of the blog-based blended model for the English for Hospitality and Tourism course. The findings of the study are discussed and presented as follows: (1) the blended model combining blog and face-to-face instruction can be an effective teaching and learning approach for L2 learners and instructors of Hospitality and Tourism related courses; (2) students' professional skills were improved through this blended approach, such as enunciation, facial expressions, posture, gestures, multimedia software usage, and filming applications; (3) students could benefit from the processes of self-autonomous, collaborative learning, reviews of their peers' and their own films, and the instructor's feedback through blogging (Chen, et al, 2011; Liu & Chang, 2010; Liu & Lin, 2007; Liu, Shih, & Tsai, 2011; Lou, Wu, & Shih, 2010; Shih, 2010) and (4) students are more willing to share their thoughts, ideas, and comments with peers on the blog for avoiding losing face in front of others and thus to ease their stage fright. Furthermore, the factors of the learning satisfaction survey questionnaire were confirmed, containing Factor I: Blended learning effectiveness; Factor II: Learning attitude towards the blog platform; Factor III: Operation of the blog platform; and Factor IV: The Design of the blog platform and the short film. Finally, using blended teaching approach into an ESP could be very time-consuming and it requires some extra efforts from both the instructor and students but its outcome can be very rewarding.

### Suggestions

In order to implement this type of the blended ESP course successfully, the suggestions are: (1) technological equipment and facility, such as computer equipment and internet speed are extremely important for students when filming and uploading their films; (2) on-site visitations to hotels or travel agencies should be arranged for students in order to make this course more thorough and complete as well as to increase the effectiveness of the English for Hospitality and Tourism course; (3) in class presentations and model practices are as equally important as blog learning for students to learn the course effectively; and (4) further empirical studies on different subject courses or levels of students may be carried out to provide proofs and evidences to enhance teaching and learning effectiveness through this blended learning approach.

The limitations of this study are as follows. First all, the subjects of the study were solely from a university, a larger scale of study can be conducted in the future for increasing the reliability and generalizability of the study. Additionally, a further investigation on the students' performances after the class as well as a in-depth investigation on the students' interactions on the blogs can be conducted in the future.

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