

The Effect of Blended Learning Using Television Programs on the Improvement of English Listening Competence

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Abstract. Different English levels of incoming students to the university call for the diversity of general English education. The current study draws attention to the students' heavy use of computers and smart phones and utilizes the device for diversifying English learning activities. It also notes students' interest in American television programs since they often watch dramas and movies using smart phones. English television programs and technology is combined to meet the challenges of the general English education in universities. The paper explores the blended learning model using television programs to enhance students' listening comprehension. It takes up an experimental approach using pre and post TOEIC listening comprehension test comparison between experimental and compared groups. The result indicates that both groups show significant growth in listening comprehension in post test compared to the pre test, and there's a significant difference between blended group and traditional off-line only group. This means that using English television programs is effective in the improvement of listening comprehension, and that subsequently blended learning model is more effective than the traditional off-line model.

1 Introduction

With the expansion of universities, the problem general English education is facing is students' indifference to, low preference for, and negative attitude toward general English education courses. To overcome students' negative perception of English, universities especially in small and mid-sized cities have strived to maintain survival by innovating general English education. In these circumstances, American television programs can be utilized as practical and authentic material, an optimal language learning tool through which learners can be immersed in the social and cultural aspects of the target language environment. To make use of this practical language learning tool, it is necessary to consider ways to deploy it into the actual scene of English education. This study attempts to overcome the problems universities are

recently facing by incorporating the blended learning model into general English education, utilizing television programs as learning material, in which students have great interest, and by making the best use of the mobile environment.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Features and the Educational Effect of Blended Learning

Blended learning in general is interpreted as a combination of online and offline education in corporations, but the definition somewhat varies according to different scholars. Considering the features and educational effects, the reason why blended learning has become an issue of great interest lies in the apparent fact that there is no single way to meet the needs of various learners and to achieve an optimal level of learning.

In the learner's perspective, blended learning is effective in meeting the learner's satisfaction in that it enhances the learner's convenience and accessibility (Cottrell & Robinson, 2003), satisfies various needs and learning styles of learners (Dziuban, Hartman & Moskai, 2004), fosters interaction between learners (Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003), and it creates an environment where both real-time and delayed interaction are available. Blended learning also improves the learning achievement by encouraging active interaction between learners, learners and teachers, and learners and lessons.

2.2 English Education Using Television Programs

Farrell (1987) explains the usefulness of incorporating American television programs in listening comprehension with the following four reasons. First, there are multiple options of material according to the learner's competency level since television programs consist of successive episodes constructed on a daily or a weekly basis. Second, they provide language that closely resembles real life communication. Third, they attract viewer's attention and concentration and can continuously offer meaningful language. Fourth, while watching television programs, learners have to understand what the speakers are saying, and why and how they are saying it.

3 Methods of Research

3.1 Subject of Research

This research selected as its subjects two classes of students taking a Practical English course as general education requirements in Y University, a four-year university in Choongbuk region. A pre-test was conducted as a homogeneity check, which consisted of 50 items from the mock TOEIC listening comprehension test. After

comparing the English competency level of the experimental group and the control group, the average score was 63.11 and 63.71 collectively. The result of an independent t-test indicates that the p-value between the experimental and the control group was $p=.838$ and that the statistical reliability was 95%, which is not statistically significant, indicating that the two groups are homogeneous groups.

3.2 Research Design

This study was conducted on two classes of second-year university students taking an English course as a part of their general education requirements. Each class consisted of students in the same major in humanities and social sciences. The experimental group was given blended learning lessons using American television programs while the compared group was also presented with American TV programs but in a face-to-face, traditional class.

1) Selection of Learning Material and Television Programs

This study selected *Friends* and *Monk* as the television programs to be utilized in lessons for the experimental group. Both programs were considered appropriate learning material for English non-majors, since the language structures and expressions used in them are not too difficult. The programs display cultural backgrounds of the target language environment that learners can learn and indirectly experience. Since the genre of the programs chosen is comedy, they can easily arouse learner interest and meet their needs. The episodes selected were the ones containing similar content in the teaching material of the control group and parts of the episodes were utilized in blended learning.

2) Blended Learning Model Applied in the Research

The basic structure of the blended learning model applied in this research is as follows. Pre- and post- learning is proceeded online, where students log on to the researcher's web-site from their homes. In class, both online and offline activities can be applied, depending on the content of the lesson. The researcher's personal web-page offers virtual learning space which provides American television programs related to the lessons, learning material needed in preparing for the next lesson, and learning assignments that allow students to review the previous lesson.

3) Research Implements

This study conducted a pre-listening comprehension test to examine learners' listening competence and to detect the gap between the listening competence of the experimental group and that of the control group, if any. For the pre-test, 50 test items were selected from the mock TOEIC listening comprehension test provided by company P, which specializes in TOEIC tests. 50 test items for the post- listening comprehension test were also chosen from the mock TOEIC test from company P.

4 Results and Argumentation

After giving the corresponding treatments to the experimental and the control group, a paired t-test was conducted on the post-test scores of the experimental and the control group to detect any statistically significant increase in the post-test scores of the

experimental group. After the corresponding treatments on each group, the average listening test score of the experimental group improved by 17.48 points, from 63.11 to 80.59, while that of the control group improved by 11.93 points, from 63.71 to 75.64. The results of the paired t-test on the improvement between the pre- and post-listening comprehension tests indicates the following:

| Group | Test | Number of Treatment | Average Score | Standard Deviation | t | p |
|--------------------|-----------|---------------------|---------------|--------------------|--------|------|
| Experimental Group | Pre-test | 26 | 63.11 | 11.06 | -10.54 | .000 |
| | Post-test | 26 | 80.59 | 6.70 | | |
| Control Group | Pre-test | 27 | 63.71 | 10.77 | -6.27 | .000 |
| | Post-test | 27 | 75.64 | 9.89 | | |

*p<.01

The table above shows there was a statistical significance between the pre- and post-average listening test scores in both the experimental and the compared groups(p=.000). Thus, it can be concluded that the listening competence of both groups improved after the corresponding treatments for each group. To detect any statistically significant increase in the average post-test score of the experimental group compared to the control group, an independent t-test was conducted on the post-test scores of the experimental and the control group, and the test results are as follows:

| Group | Number of Treatment | Average | Standard Deviation | t | p |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------|--------------------|-------|------|
| Experimental Group | 26 | 80.59 | 6.70 | 2.165 | .035 |
| Control Group A | 27 | 75.64 | 9.89 | | |

*p<.05

The table above shows there was a statistical significance between the average post-test scores of the experimental (average test score=80.59) and the control(average test score=75.64) group(p=.035). It can be confirmed that the listening competency level of the experimental group is significant relative to the compared group after the treatment. Therefore, the effectiveness of American television programs applied in blended learning, given to the experimental group, has been verified to outweigh that of the traditional face-to-face learning style administered to the compared group.

4 Conclusion

The results of this study confirms that real, practical learning material such as

American television programs provides more abundant information regarding the language and culture of the target language environment, compared to traditional textbook-based teaching method. This research also verifies the relative effectiveness of blended learning over e-learning and the traditional in-class lessons. Therefore, one can conclude that blended learning is a rather effective teaching and learning method, compared to traditional in-class teaching method. Considering its effectiveness, blended learning can be utilized as an alternative form of English education in universities. Although the long-term effect of blended learning should be examined through further research and experimentation — considering the variety of teaching and learning methodologies — it is certainly an effective teaching and learning method for the improvement of learners' listening competence. Regarding the educational needs and recent changes in universities presented in the beginning of this paper, blended learning is a possible alternative for the current educational trend.

References

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