

Learning English as a Second Language in a Digital Environment: A Study of the Effectiveness of Blended Learning

R.P. Dharmawardene

Department of English Language Teaching, University of Colombo

The present study investigated how effective it would be if blended mode of delivery was incorporated into online mode in teaching English as a Second Language. The study utilized a pre and a post-test to compare students' writing performance after 30-hour teaching session in using correct Tenses and Vocabulary in blended and online modes. Thirty participants belonging to 24 to 40 age group were randomly selected from the 36 students registered for the e-Diploma in Business English course at the Department of English Language Teaching in the University of Colombo in 2018. The experimental group was exposed to blended mode while the control group learned in entirely online mode. Each group had 15 participants. The marks they scored at the pre and post tests were analysed using paired t-tests in SPSS 20.0. The results of the participants in the group of blended mode who learnt English Tenses (Mean = -1.00, SD = 0.53, $t = -7.25$, $p = .000$) comparing with that of the online group (Mean = -0.067, SD = 0.25, $t = -1.00$, $p = 0.334$) showed that the mean score of the former was higher than that of the latter. Similar increase was visible when the learning outcome was compared in relation to learning Vocabulary in the blended group (Mean = -0.80, SD = 0.41, $t = -7.48$, $p = .000$) and the online group (Mean = -0.13, SD = 0.51, $t = -1.00$, $p = 0.334$). The study showed that the knowledge in Tenses and Vocabulary of the participants in the blended group was significantly increased compared to that of the online group. Although the current study is based on a small sample of participants the findings suggest that the blended learning approach can be successfully applied for adult's English learning.

Keywords: Online learning, Blended learning, English, Second language, Adult learners.