

The Use of Blended Learning in Intensive English Class State Islamic University of Sunan Ampel Surabaya: Students' Challenge and Response

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Abstract—Implementing cutting-edge approach blended learning in ELT which combines offline and online meeting is not necessarily with no problem. The present study evaluates students in intensive English class at UINSA regarding the challenges and responses that might appear during implementing ED. Twenty five students through faculties were involved in individual in-dept interviews to gain representative views. The result indicated that most of the students had positive responses towards the use of ED. However, applying ED also obtains some hindrance: those constraints are grouped into several categories such as technology, content, and psychological. The present study evaluates students' challenges and how they cope with the problems during employing English Discovery in intensive English program at UINSA. The finding indicated that the challenges faced by students consist of technical problems, content, psychological constraints. Things that could minimize those encountered challenges are searching strong connection, time management, teacher's guidance, self-awareness. The findings are hoped to give evaluation towards the stakeholders.

Keywords: *technology in education, blended learning, students challenge and response*

I. INTRODUCTION

Digital learning has been taking its place in education since it is accessible and easy to reach. Nowadays, it is ubiquitous to encounter both students and teachers that use the internet to apply it in the teaching-learning process. One that becomes popular online learning which is implemented in the teaching-learning process is called blended learning. Poon (2014) defined Blended learning as a combination of classroom activities and online learning experiences outside the class. He also believed that 'blended learning is a fundamental redesign of the instructional model with a shift from lecture-centered to student-centered instruction where students become active and interactive learners' (p. 158). Also, So and Bonk (2010), points that 'at the activity and course levels, blended learning can be used to design learning activities, interactions among students, and interactions between or with instructors' (p. 190).

Blended learning offers institutions the opportunity to embrace technology, encourage a community of inquiry, and support active and meaningful learning. State Islamic University of Sunan Ampel Surabaya is one of the universities that applied blended learning. Regarding UINSA's vision that is purposed to be an international Islamic University. This University equips students' needs toward the use of English for communication. Through blended learning, students are expected to involve English for their needs, such as creating an International journal, students exchange, proposing a job, etc. The application used by UINSA is English Discovery

(ED). This platform helps learners to optimize skill in English, experience students in interactive learning, and give the chance for students to share their knowledge with all people around the world. English Discovery provides four skills in learning English, those are speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Each skill has 3 levels such as beginner, intermediate, and advance.

This application provides automated writing evaluation that gives students feedback, advanced speech recognition that will support students to be more confident when speaking, a teacher authoring tool that guides them in structured materials, and teachers are also able to manage students' progress. This platform equips the test for each material and final test. ED also helps students to face their TOEIC at the end of their class.

This upswing is expected to represent a new learning method in an enchanted way because it is effective and flexible. Yet, the movement toward online learning is not grounded in compelling empirical evidence that it is effective or beneficial for learning (Hannafin, Hill, Oliver, Glazer, & Sharma, 2003). The rapid growth of the internet used influences the design of an online course. It may also change students' perception of experiencing digital learning. This paper is aimed to describe a study that is exploring the learner's perceptions of blended learning that will include the challenging component regarding the accessibility of online learning, the difficulties in usage, and some other obstacles in applying digital learning and its responses. The purpose of this study was to better understand students challenge in applying blended learning and how they cope with the challenge. To address this purpose, answers were sought to the following three research questions:

1. What challenges that students may find regarding the application of blended learning using ED in UINSA ?
2. How students find the solution to cope with some challenges they found?
3. What elements that may help them to solve the problem in the use of ED?

1. Blended Learning

Williams, Bland, and Christie (2008) define blended learning as a combination of traditional face-to-face learning and distributed learning, the latter of which "is an instructional model that allows lecturers, students, and content to be in different locations" (p. 43). The main feature of distributive learning is that the learning environment is designed to accommodate the fact that students have different learning needs and preferences. This pedagogical model encourages students to learn in an interactive and collaborative environment, and at their own pace and in their own time (Graham, 2006; Saltzberg&Polyson, 1995). That definition brings a clear explanation that blended learning is very useful

for students self-learning since it enables students to access even though they are not in the classroom or meet their teachers. In some cases, blended learning has more advantages.

2. English Discovery

English discovery enables teachers to apply blended learning in their learning activities. It is kind of a platform that has many features regarding English learning. This application help learners to optimize their self-learning. ED is such an accessible and flexible application, this can be used even though the learner doesn't meet their teacher in the classroom. In other words, students can access this digital platform wherever they are. Using this application promotes some benefits such as optimize students' skills in English, experience students in interactive learning, and give the chance for students to share their knowledge with all people around the world. With some advantages in using this application, teachers and students all over the world are suggested to entangle this platform for easier learning activity. These are some features that are offered by ED :

a. Teacher's management system

It provides some advantages to moreover for teachers. Through this platform, teachers are allowed to know all students' learning progress. They will know some students who have a high level and those who often operate ED for learning.

b. Authoring tool

This platform enables students to choose the topic or the material based on their level, and of course, all stages of learner knowledge are provided.

c. ED advanced speech recognition

This application is also available for those who want to improve their speaking skills. It will let students know their speaking progress by practicing.

d. Automated writing evaluation

Students will directly get feedback when exercise writing. They will automatically know their weakness in their writing, like grammatical errors, etc.

Other things about English discovery is that it is available for those who learn English for specific purposes. This platform allows students who learn about technical English, medical English, English for the hotel industry, and English for work to access its feature. Besides that English Discovery also provides any kind of exercise that can improve students' understanding of English

3. Students Challenge

In applying online learning, it doesn't always bring some advantages. It may also have some weakness or even can bring harm. If online learning is not applied in an appropriate way or out from the standard, the learning purposes cannot be reached.

Online learning may have some advantages such as flexible and accessible in used so it ignores wherever students are taking place to learn as long as they have a gadget, it is also not durable so whenever you want to learn or ask a question you may do that not only in a certain time. It is also suitable for introvert students and there are still a lot of advantages in applying online learning. However, some difficulties and challenges in using online learning are found, such as less social interaction with other people since the learning activity is not held in the classroom. Other challenges in applying English Discovery is that the answer to students questions is not always suitable for students' needs, meanwhile, in the class, they are free to ask their teachers for every question they need to ask. It is also not efficient if the students are not interested in accessing online learning. There are still other challenges in using an online assessment found if the study closely reports students' obstacles in applying English Discovery.

4. Research Gap

Some study has done regarding the use of blended learning. One of the research was done by Emerita Banados (2006) titled "A Blended-learning Pedagogical Model for Teaching and Learning EFL Successfully Through an Online Interactive Multimedia Environment". The study is about exploring the effectiveness of using blended learning in the Universidad de Concepción, Chile. Blended learning applied by this university is purposed to improve students integrated linguistic skills. The pedagogical models that are implemented such as, (a) learners' work with UdeC English Online, software conceived as the backbone of the entire Communicative English Program, (b) online monitoring, (c) face-to-face EFL teacher-led classes, and (d) conversation classes with native speakers of English. The result shows that students give a positive response when the students require to have blended learning. The improvements are in terms of all the skills, especially in listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. However, this research is different from the previous study in which it is aimed to describe the learner's perceptions of blended learning that will include the challenging component regarding the access of an online learning, the difficulties in usage, and some other obstacles in applying blended learning using English Discovery and its responses.

II. METHOD

a) Research Design

The research was conducted to study the case of students perceptions in a blended learning classroom in the UINSA. Therefore, qualitative methods was employed to collect data. It is aimed to explore the challenges that students may face regarding the use of blended learning which uses English Discovery and also how they cope with it.

In this research, the researchers will use qualitative descriptive, According to Creswell (2012), the qualitative researchers collect the data by examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing participants. In this case the researchers use interview to collect the data, Therefore the researchers prepare some question that may answer the questions regarding this research.

b) Research Instrument

the instrument of this research is interview. Interview was used in order to collect the information about what are students challenges in applying blended learning exactly using English Discovery and how they cope with some problems that appear. was about challenges and responses in using ED. The interview provides some questions about students' experiences in using English Discovery such as, how often they found difficulty in using English Discovery, what challenges that students face are, and how English Discovery can improve their skill. From those question, researchers can develop their questions based on students' responses.

c) Procedure (Data Collection Technique)

Firstly, analyzing the data is important to collect the information. it was done by transcribing the interviews. Next, the researchers read the data and gave the code based on the answer given by the interview. Coding will make the researchers easier to understand the statement and also to put them in the same category that has a similar meaning, therefore, it will help the researchers to get the result. The researchers have done this process for 25 interviewees.

d) Data Analysis

After the data needed were collected, furthermore, the next step to do is data analysis techniques. Data analysis is needed to emphasize the large amount of information that has been collected to find the result. There are many ways to collect the data in qualitative method such as, interview, document analysis, field notes, observation, and etc. This research involve interview to gather the data. The techniques for analyzing the data will be explained below :

1. Transcribing the Data
Transcribing the audio recording containing the result of interview in form of written in order to make the researchers easier to classify the data.
2. Coding the Data
After copying the data in form of written, researchers need to classify the interview result by coding the data based on the students' responses.
3. Analysing Data

After transcribing and coding the data, the researchers need to make hypothesis to link it into the result. The hypothesis is also used to develop or find new theory based on the research.

e) Participant

Research participants were 25 (13 males and 12 females) students of intensive English classroom State Islamic University of Sunan Ampel Surabaya. With an average of 19 years of students. Some students have different level of English learners based on what class they are placed. They are divided into several main levels of learner such as advance, intermediate, and basic. Those 25 participants are chosen from 9 faculties in UINSA randomly. The consideration was at what level they are and also the different challenges that each student are faced.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Results

English Discovery is a platform that is purposed to enrich students understanding of English language. Since some experts said that blended learning is very useful for learning as stated by Yen and Lee (2011) they said that "blended learning, thoughtfully combining the best elements of online and face-to-face education, is likely to emerge as the predominant teaching model of the future" (p. 138). English Discovery offers a lot of advantages since it can be used outside the classroom. The platform enables students to access some exercises in six skills (reading, listening, speaking, writing, grammar, and vocabulary) through some interesting ways, then it will be continued by the teacher as the explanatory after students do their exercise. However the use of ED may find some difficulties regarding some aspects. This research tries to explore the information as much as possible towards the use of ED.

1. Students' Level

The respondents were 25 students of intensive English class State Islamic University of Sunan Ampel Surabaya. They include 13 males and 12 females with different levels of learners. Students were given a placement test before students are required to join an intensive English class. They are divided into some level, those are basic1, basic2, basic3, intermediate1, intermediate2, and intermediate3. This level is chosen based on the student's prior knowledge in learning English. These levels cannot be a judgment of how students' attitudes toward the use of ED. We can not say that the higher the students level, the less they find the problem regarding the application of English Discovery. This can be proved by the interview's result. One of the interviewees (intermediate level) explains that she doesn't find a big problem and

agree that ED is helpful yet she mentions that ED is difficult to be accessed because of low connection

"I am satisfied enough using ED as it improves my understanding of English and it provides a lot of exercises but I still find the difficulties in accessing it due to the internet connection"

Another interviewee in intermediate level also mention that even though ED is useful it also creates a problem like how to operate the platform

"I am in the intermediate2 level, I like using ED because it has a very complete feature, however, I am still learning how to operate it, of course, it takes a lot of time"

Surprisingly, one of the interviewee in intermediate3 find the difficulty in understanding the material

"I do love learning digitally, I also find ED improves my English but it also makes me confused to understand the feature, vocab and also material"

Based on those results of the interview, it can be concluded that problem may appear with ignoring what level are the interview.

2. Students Perception

Based on the data collected from the interview, some students agree that the use of ED sometimes create problems or difficulties since it is recently applied. However, almost all participants also explain that English Discovery helps them to learn English a lot. It is well-mentioned that they are motivated enough to learn English. Through some features, it enables all learners to explore more. Other than that, some also mentioned that English discovery is accessible because it can be used even though the students don't come to the class.

There must be some weaknesses found by ED's users however almost all participants believe that ED is a platform that is useful to enrich students knowledge through the English language.

"Using ED is very effective as we don't have a lot of time to learn some skills in English inside the classroom, it helps us to create an independent study. Even though I often have a problem dealing with my management time, but I do agree that ED has more advantages than weakness"

Finally, it can be concluded that some students may find a lot of problems but the main thing is that ED is more beneficial

3. The Challenges In Using English Discovery

a. Technology

The best of all possible worlds would be for computers and the Internet to become part, and probably only a small part, of a thriving academy of motivated learners whose time in cyberspace is significantly exceeded by time spent reading, visiting interesting places and people, having fascinating conversations, helping their peers, developing their physical and artistic talents, and

enjoying life. (Chapman 2005:342). It is true that technology may help students and teachers in the teaching-learning process. However, learning digitally doesn't always offer a good thing, meanwhile, some weaknesses may appear regarding the involvement of technology in education. Some participants mentioned that the most common raising problem is about the connection. Young (2003) investigated possible effects of the integration of ICT in an ESL class in a vocational senior high school in Taiwan mention one disadvantage of using the internet in education is the lack of Internet access. Other than that, some participants stated that they are confused about operating the system and sometimes some features cannot be accessed on a certain computer. Those problems are still solvable during the time of learning.

b. Content

A study conducted in Taiwan, Ming-Mu Kuo (2008) stated that a few trainee teachers do not think that EFL/ESL web sites are useful in instruction, and a majority of the respondents do not think that these sites can replace course books. Some participants mentioned that they found difficulties in terms of answering the question. These problems are related to the content of learning English. English Discovery provides six skills, those are reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar, and vocabulary.

"I am just regretting why I found the difficulties in learning grammar. I don't like grammar so that even though this platform provides a very good content" (p3, intermediate1)

Based on that statement it can be concluded that the participant does agree if the content of ED has already completed but the problem is coming from themselves. However, some other participants stated that they found the content is lack of explanation. They only get a lot of exercise without being accompanied by a clear explanation

"I like ED a lot but I am often confused in its content because of lack of explanation" (p4)

In this case, the participant also said that it is going to be more beneficial if the teachers are also involved in this blended learning.

c. Psyche

Regarding the physical problem, students are commonly grumbling because of a lot of assignments given by the teachers. Due to the exercises that are provided in English Discovery, some students were complaining about it. Laziness is a common problem and also how they cope with their business.

d. Time Management

Students sometimes need to fight with their schedule. They probably too bored with many assignments and they also difficult to control their time in studying. Since ED provides a lot of

assignments that need to be done, students must spare their time to finish it.

4. Students Responses (Solution)

a) Teacher and Friends

Teachers take an important role in education. In the use of ED, students are required to have individual learning. It means that they need to be independent in learning the material. Some students may accept this learning method meanwhile some others still need a teacher to support their learning. Since blended learning is combining face to face and blended learning, the roles of teachers can support students' independent learning. Another thing is that friends are also the aspect that will help students to engage in self-learning. Some students prefer to ask their friends to favor when they find difficulties.

"When I got the difficulties in understanding the content, I always ask my friend, if we can not solve it then we go to our teacher"

b) Technology

Since the problem in accessing the internet appears, both teachers and students have to consider the solution to cope with it. The problem is about the connection and sometimes about the system that can not be accessed through a certain computer. This problem can be solved by looking for a high-speed connection and change with another computer if their computer cannot be used.

c) Self-Awareness

Students are an important element in education. In the teaching-learning process, students and teachers are required to have an effort to achieve the learning goals. In terms of reaching the purpose, the teacher must have a difficult time to decide an effective way and appropriate method for students. Regarding the effort for achieving the goal. The teacher may find an obstacle, one of them is that students laziness in learning. They are probably too bored with any assignment. In this case, the role of teachers to create a good learning atmosphere is needed. Other than that, students also must have self-awareness in learning. They need to cope with their laziness and bored with positive energy. Time management is also needed. They need to fix themselves in their business

b. Discussion

It is the first year of State Islamic University of Sunan Ampel Surabaya applying ED in an intensive English class because it is recently applied, there may some difficulties, benefit, and probably easiness. This is related to the student's perception of using English Discovery.

At glance, we may conclude that the level of learner will influence the difficulties in accessing the ED. This level is chosen based on the student's prior knowledge in learning English. However, the

interview results show that these levels cannot be a judgment of how students' attitudes toward the use of ED. We can not say that the higher the students level, the less they find the problem regarding the application of English Discovery. Another thing, the students that apply English Discovery will always find some difficulties with ignoring what level are the interviewee. Besides all the problems mentioned by the interviewee, they explain that English Discovery helps them to learn English a lot. It is well-mentioned that they are motivated enough to learn English. Through some features, it enables all learners to explore more. Other than that, some also mentioned that English discovery is accessible because it can be used even though the students don't come to the class.

These are some problems regarding the use of English Discovery. First is technology, Some participants mentioned that the most common raising problem is about the connection. This problem is a kind of individual problem that will not influence much in the use of ED. It is not related to the content or even becomes the weakness of ED, therefore, this problem is actually can be solved in many ways. Second is the content of ED. some other participants stated that they found that the content is lack of explanation. In this problem, students require to be eagerly gathering the information. Also, teachers role is important such as,

a. Teacher As A Learner

Teachers have a very important role to equip the need and learning in the classroom. A Teachers must think from the learners' perspective before she plans to interact with the students.

b. Teacher As A Facilitator

As a facilitator, teachers have to support students in learning for themselves as self-explorer. Teachers should create a good learning atmosphere that reflects the students' life in societal, intellectual and linguistic occurrences.

c. Teacher As An Assessor

As a Teacher, assessing is one of the essential tools for extracting students' knowledge by giving appropriate feedback. An assessment requires the teacher to plan her future teaching techniques and in guiding them to master their language.

d. Teacher As A Manager

Teachers should have good planning related to how to handle the classes within the time management, covering academic skill which is a path to practical approach. An experienced teacher can manage the time based on their own experience. Perfect classroom management created by a teacher using the major mechanisms will lead to the success of teaching-learning methods.

e. Teacher As An Evaluator

Evaluation is a subjective process, which is related to academic fields. The teacher has to be a good evaluator while evaluating the student. True and fair evaluation should be done by a teacher to do justice to a student's career.

Some stated that the content is rich in exercise so that it also influences students willingness.

The last, for all problems faced by ED's user, there will always a solution like a technology problem regarding the connection, This problem can be solved by looking for a high-speed connection and change with another computer if their computer cannot be used. For physical problems, it also can be solved by creating positive energy by having a good atmosphere in learning.

IV. CONCLUSION

Blended learning is a method that provides a lot of benefit such as facilitating students to improve learning outcomes, accessing flexibility, providing a sense of community, and building student satisfaction. Some ED's users do agree if ED is very beneficial. Some students may find a lot of problems but the main thing is that ED is more beneficial. The problem is mostly about technology, Content, Trouble, Psyche, Time management, Independent study. Students are also able to seek their solution dealing with the problem they face. The problem will be emphasized if blended learning is already applied appropriately.

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