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Research Article

THE EFFECTS OF BLENDED LEARNING ACTIVITIES ON READING COMPREHENSION PERFORMANCE FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

Blended learning has piqued the interest of many scholars in the field of language teaching and learning. The purpose of this study is to see how blended learning activities on Moodle LMS affect the reading comprehension of 12th graders at Tan Chau High School. It also seeks to investigate these students' attitudes on the use of mobile learning activities on Moodle LMS using a quasi-experimental approach with 84 twelfth-grade students. Three instruments were used to collect data: pre and post reading proficiency tests, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. The study's findings revealed that after treatment, there was a significant difference in reading comprehension between the control and experimental groups. Participants in the experimental group were much better at reading comprehension than those in the control group after being educated with blended learning activities on Moodle LMS. Furthermore, many participants had favorable impressions of Moodle's blended learning activities. The study's findings revealed that using blended learning activities on Moodle LMS can help students enhance their reading comprehension.

Keywords: Blended learning; EFL teaching; mobile learning; Moodle; reading comprehension

1. Introduction

Technology is now an integral part of the classroom in the twenty-first century. It is impossible for students to rely solely on print textbooks and brick-and-mortar classes in an age when information and communications technology (ICT) skills are important, with a lot of collaboration, resource sharing, content development, and learning done digitally, asynchronously, and remotely, according to Beetham et al. (2007). Reading comprehension

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with technology support is viewed as a vital aspect of language teaching in a similar fast-changing setting, as it improves the language learning process and helps students read a variety of sources for a variety of purposes (Kumar et al., 2018). Reading can assist pupils in gaining knowledge to suit their educational, research, and entertainment demands. Reading comprehension is an important skill that students must acquire in high school since it plays a vital role in each unit and on the exam. Teachers must offer something fresh to their teaching style in order to attain this goal. ICT skills have become mandatory for most language teachers, according to Viktoria et al. (2018). This study intends to address the following two research questions to investigate the effects of blended learning activities on Moodle on 12th graders' reading comprehension performance:

- To what extent do blended learning activities on Moodle enhance 12th graders' reading comprehension performance at Tan Chau high school?
- What are these students' perceptions of the application of blended learning activities on Moodle in learning reading comprehension at Tan Chau high school?

1.1. Reading comprehension with blended learning support

In language education, learning, and evaluation, reading comprehension is seen as a necessary skill. Reading comprehension, according to Joh and Plakans (2017), is the ability to understand what we read, which is the ultimate purpose of all reading. Reading comprehension, as stated by Ghosh (2015), is "the level of understanding of a text message" (p.424). This comprehension is dependent on a person's cognitive growth. Literal, reorganization, inference, prediction, assessment, and personal response are the six degrees of comprehension in reading comprehension (Day & Park, 2005). Multiple-choice questions, true or false questions, matching, gapped texts, and proofreading are some of the ways and types of reading comprehension activities that can be used to assess students' comprehension (Liu et al., 2020; Miller & Pennycuff, 2008).

Blended learning activities refer to the supplemental learning activities that the teacher creates for students to practice online using tools like quizzes, assignments, chats, and forums. The contents of these activities are aligned with what students have learnt and meet the course requirements. Numerous studies have been undertaken on the association between blended learning activities and reading comprehension skills. At a private institution in Colombia, Castro (2017) evaluated the impact of Moodle-based worksheets on reading comprehension. He came to the conclusion that creating and implementing contextualized virtual reading worksheets increased pupils' reading comprehension significantly. Moodle can be a valuable tool for teachers to augment their daily classroom work. Raharjo et al. (2020) conducted a study with 48 students at the Secretarial Academy of Budi Luhur in Indonesia. They used quizzes, assignments, forums, chats, and other learning activities to help students with the four abilities of reading, listening, speaking, and

writing in their study. The findings of the t-test revealed that teaching material delivered via Moodle improved the four language abilities. Macaruso et al. (2020) looked into using blended learning to supplement reading instruction in elementary schools. There are 2,217 students in the treatment schools. The control schools had 1,504 kids who were taught in a traditional manner. Students in the experimental group performed much worse than those in the control group prior to treatment. The treatment kids outscored the control students on reading comprehension tests after the intervention, and group differences vanished. According to these authors' research, blended learning can help pupils enhance their reading comprehension.

1.2. Advantages and disadvantages of blended learning activities in teaching reading comprehension

Many academics agree that blended learning provides a number of advantages over traditional face-to-face instruction. Blended learning, according to Singh (2003), enhances a learning program's reach. It can also assist in balancing and optimizing the learning program. Nor Ashikin et al. (2012) found that combining traditional face-to-face teaching with online learning activities not only solves the problem of teachers having insufficient in-class time, but also makes learning more interesting to the tech-savvy younger generation of learners. Furthermore, blended learning can aid in the development of the four language acquisition skills, as well as independent learning and learner motivation (Banditvilai, 2016).

Despite its advantages, there are certain disadvantages to blended learning that have been documented in the literature. One of the most significant disadvantages of online learning is the lack of social interaction (Rienties & Toetenel, 2016; Vu, 2016). This indicates that in online learning environments, there is a lack of connection between students and teachers. As a result, teachers must pay attention to this flaw by increasing teacher-student contact through Moodle LMS activities such as chats and forums. According to Tran (2016), the most effective strategy to improve students' attitudes toward blended learning is to increase interactions between teachers and students in a blended learning environment by employing interactive technologies such as forums and live chats. The limitations of self-regulation and technology are two more clear downsides of online asynchronous training (Rasheed et al., 2020). Students are expected to self-regulate their learning activities outside of class in a blended learning environment. Students may have difficulties with self-control. Students, for example, may not devote sufficient time to online learning activities or complete projects on time. Students may face insufficient technological hurdles in terms of technology (Uzir & Ga, 2019; Vu & Thu, 2015; Vymetalkova & Milkova, 2019).

2. Methodology

2.1. Research design

The purpose of this quasi-experimental study is to see how blended learning activities affect the reading comprehension of Tan Chau High School 12th graders. Two groups of students, one experimental and the other control, participated in a sixteen-week study to attain this goal. The experimental group consisted of 42 pupils from class 12A4. The control group consisted of pupils from class 12D4 with the same number of students. The main difference in how the two groups learned reading comprehension was that the control group received paper reading comprehension activities while the other received online reading comprehension tasks via Moodle. Before the experiment, both groups were given a reading comprehension pre-test to ensure that they were homogeneous. Two groups followed the same curriculum, utilized the same textbook, and used the same school facilities. Furthermore, in both classrooms, the students were taught by the same teacher, who used the same teaching approaches. The experimental group was taught reading comprehension lessons from a textbook during the treatment. They were also given eight more reading comprehension activities via Moodle. These exercises were completed by the students using Moodle activities such as quizzes and assignments. They might also communicate with the teacher and their classmates through chat and forums. Through these tasks, the teacher provided feedback. Students in the control group were given the same reading comprehension lessons in the textbook as those in the experimental group. They were also given reading comprehension assignments to complete independently, but these were pen and paper exercises.

2.2. Research site and participants

This study was conducted at Tan Chau High School, which is located in An Giang Province. The course book *Tieng Anh 12*, published by Vietnam Education Publishing House, served as the basis for the course syllabus. This book is considered as a primary source of information. The participants in this study were recruited through convenience sampling. The study includes 84 students from classes 12A4 and 12D4 from the school year 2020-2021. They are in their final year and will be taking the graduation exam, which includes English as a requirement.

2.3. Research instruments

The researcher employed three different tools in this study. Pre- and post-reading comprehension tests, questionnaires, and interviews were among the methods used. Both the pre-test and post-test were based on the reading component of the Preliminary English Test (PET), with slight modifications to match the standards of the Vietnamese 12th grade English national exam. Strongly Agree (5 points), Agree (4 points), Neutral (3 points), Disagree (2 points), and Strongly Disagree (1 point) were used to construct the questionnaire. Students' overall perceptions of blended learning (from item 1 to item 5); students' perceptions of blended learning activities on Moodle (from item 6 to item 10); students' perceptions of blended learning benefits (from item 11 to item 17); and students' perceptions

of blended learning challenges (from item 18 to item 20). The questionnaire was created by adapting questionnaires from Sahin-Kizil (2014), Bidder et al. (2016), and Phuong et al. (2019). Cronbach's statistics were used to test its dependability. The piloted questionnaire's reliability coefficient was strong, with a value of .906 for 22 of the questionnaire's items. A semi-structured interview was the final instrument. The students were asked four questions on their experiences with blended learning activities on Moodle, including the benefits, challenges, and their willingness to acquire reading comprehension with blended learning activities on Moodle in the future.

3. Findings and discussion

3.1. Reading test results

Table 1 displays the results of the independent samples t-test. To begin, Levene's test for variance equality yields a Sig. value of .972 (Sig.>.05). As a result, it's safe to say that the prerequisites for equal variances have been met. The Sig (2-tailed) value is .968 (>.05) as a consequence of the t-test results for equality of Means. The results revealed that the difference in reading comprehension between the two groups was minimal, implying that both groups' reading comprehension prior to the intervention was the same.

Table 1. *Results of Independent Samples t-test and Descriptive Statistics for reading pretest results*

	Group						95% CI for Mean Difference	t	df
	Control			Experimental					
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n			
Pretest	6.23	1.43	42	6.24	1.31	42	0.30, -0.61	-.04*	82

* p = 0.968 > .05

Both groups of students were required to take a post-test after treatment. The post-test findings were analyzed using descriptive statistics, same as the pre-test. The post-test mean score of EG (M=7.65) is significantly higher than that of CG (M=6.75), as shown in Table 2. The difference in means between the two groups before and after treatment can be used to conclude that the experiment was effective. The students' reading comprehension has increased as a result of the treatment. In parallel, the researcher conducted a complete and objective examination using the independent samples t-test. To see if their means were substantially different, an independent samples t-test was used. The results showed that the participants' reading comprehension differed considerably between the two groups (t=-3.18, df =82, p=.002). It means that following the intervention, individuals who worked with Moodle scored higher on the reading comprehension exam than those who did not work with Moodle.

Table 2. *Results of Independent Samples t-test and Descriptive Statistics for reading post-test results*

	Group						95% CI for Mean Difference	t	df
	Control			Experimental					
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n			
Post-test	6.75	1.40	42	7.65	1.20	42	1.47, -0.34	-3.18*	82

* $p = 0.002 < .05$

3.2. Questionnaire results

Table 3 shows that students' general impressions of blended learning are positive (M= 3.862). Students' choices range from D to SA. All of the means were clearly higher than 3.40. The results demonstrated that the students in the experimental group had a good attitude toward blended learning in general. Item one has a mean of 4.02, indicating that almost all students think learning in a blended setting is a good concept. It obtained the highest amount of agreement and strong agreement from students, with 80.95 percent, when compared to other things in the group. Only 4.76 percent of students disagreed with this viewpoint, while 14.29 percent were undecided. The students were then asked how comfortable they feel in a blended learning environment. This item has a significantly high mean score (M= 3.81, above 3.39). Learning in a blended learning environment provides comfort to 71.43 percent of respondents. They stayed neutral in 23.81 percent of cases. Only 4.76 percent of those polled disagreed with this viewpoint. Question 3 asked students whether learning in a blended environment is something they enjoy doing or not. The mean score for this item is 3.66 (M=3.66). Students prefer to study in a blended learning setting, according to the findings. There were 7.14 percent of students who strongly agreed and 52.38 percent who agreed. The neutral scale was chosen by 40.48 percent of those polled. Surprisingly, no student voiced dissatisfaction or significant dissatisfaction with this item. This average is regarded as the lowest in the group. This is sensible, and it means that if teachers want their students to appreciate them more, they should improve the way they support them in a blended learning environment, such as checking for assignment completion, providing more feedback, and aiding them in utilizing Moodle more successfully (Phuong et al., 2019). The fourth question concerns the suitability of a blended learning environment for 21st century students' learning styles. This item has a mean score of 3.81 (M=3.81). Furthermore, 11.9 percent of respondents strongly agreed with this viewpoint, and 66.67 percent expressed agreement with it. It demonstrated that learning in a blended learning environment is compatible with their 21st-century learning style. Students were asked whether they planned to learn in a blended learning setting more frequently in the future in the last question. This item has a very high mean score (M=4.0), which is the second highest in the group. It's possible that kids will wish to learn in a hybrid environment more in the future.

Table 3. *Students' Overall Perceptions of Blended Learning*

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1. Learning in a blended learning environment is a good idea	42	2.0	5.0	4.024	.7805
2. I feel comfortable with learning in a blended learning environment	42	2.0	5.0	3.810	.7404
3. Learning in a blended learning environment is the thing I like very much	42	3.0	5.0	3.667	.6115
4. Learning in a blended learning environment is compatible with my learning style as a student in the 21st century	42	2.0	5.0	3.810	.7726
5. I intend to learn in a blended learning environment more frequently in the future	42	3.0	5.0	4.000	.6247

Table 4 clearly shows that students' opinions of blended learning benefits average 3.81 (M=3.81, higher than 3.39). The table of the Descriptive Statistics Test results on students' views of blended learning benefits demonstrates that the students agreed that adopting blended learning activities on Moodle provided numerous benefits. The most notable benefits, in their opinion, are that studying in a blended environment is highly valuable (item 11), and that learning in a blended environment helps students improve their in-class learning (item 16). The mean score for these two items is 3.95 (M=3.95). In addition, item 11 and item 16 had a significant proportion of agreement. It was 83.34 percent in one case and 80.96 percent in the other. Only one student (2.38%) did not see the value and benefits of a blended learning environment in increasing in-class learning. When asked whether using Moodle made their learning activities more enjoyable (item 12), 14.29 percent strongly agreed and 66.67 percent agreed. This item has a mean score of 3.90 (M=3.90, above 3.39). This indicates that these pupils were interested in using Moodle. Students were asked if using Moodle allowed them to participate at times that were convenient for them in item 13. 76.19 percent of students agreed that they could participate in Moodle at times that were convenient for them. 7.14 percent of them disagreed with this viewpoint, while 16.67 percent were undecided. Furthermore, this item had a mean score of 3.81 (M=3.81, higher than 3.39), indicating that they agreed with this viewpoint. It can be concluded from the statistics in item 14 that the usage of Moodle aided in increasing the level of engagement in this course. The mean score was 3.78 (M=3.78, above 3.39) and the level of agreement was 78.43%. Only 4.76 percent of those polled disagreed with this viewpoint. Moodle also allowed students to feel more connected to their classmates. This issue has a percentage of agreement of 76.19 percent (item 15 with the mean of 3.69, above 3.39). In addition, 71.43 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that communication with the instructor in a blended learning setting was easy, while 16.67 percent disapproved and the rest remained neutral in response to question 17 (11.90 percent). This item's mean score was 3.61 (M=3.61, above 3.39), making it the lowest mean score in the construct. According to Heinze & Procter (2004), the

main advantage of online learning is the lack of social connection. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to this element in order to promote teacher-student engagement with accessible tools on Moodle. Finally, the majority of students recognized the value of blended learning activities on Moodle.

Table 4. *Students' Perceptions of Blended Learning Benefits*

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
11. In general, I think learning in a blended learning environment is very useful	42	2.0	5.0	3.952	.6228
12. The use of Moodle helped make my learning activities interesting	42	2.0	5.0	3.905	.6917
13. The use of Moodle allowed me to participate at times that were convenient for me	42	2.0	5.0	3.810	.7404
14. The use of Moodle helped me increase the level of participation in this course	42	2.0	5.0	3.786	.6063
15. The use of Moodle helped me feel more connected with classmates	42	2.0	5.0	3.690	.7486
16. Learning in a blended learning environment helped me to enhance my in-class learning	42	2.0	5.0	3.952	.6608
17. I believe I could easily communicate with the instructor in a blended learning environment	42	2.0	5.0	3.619	.8540

3.3. Interview results

When asked about what they thought of blended learning activities on Moodle, most of the students (9 students or 90%) talked about these activities positively. Although their language use was varied, most of them had the same idea about the use of blended learning activities on Moodle. For example, "I find them very helpful and interesting because I can use my computer or smartphone to do the activities. The various activities on Moodle help me to escape from the boring lessons and to increase the amount of time I spend on learning English.", one of the participants who was interviewed (S1).

However, one student (S3) said that he found it a little bit uncomfortable to learn with blended learning activities on Moodle. "I have difficulty reading the passages on my smartphone due to my eyesight. Occasionally, I have trouble with the internet connection. In addition, I am under pressure because the time limit is set on the screen when I do the quizzes", he said. Overall, it is possible to conclude that the experimental group had positive perceptions of the use of blended learning activities on Moodle. They agreed that these activities were interesting, convenient, and useful for developing their reading comprehension.

When asked, "What effects do blended learning activities on Moodle have on reading comprehension?" all of them (S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, and S10) approved that blended learning activities help them improve reading comprehension. One of them said that

"I think one of the effects of blended learning activities on Moodle is that they can help me improve my reading comprehension. I am making progress in reading comprehension" (S4). Another added, "The combination of many activities on Moodle such as quizzes, assignments, chats, and forums are useful for reading comprehension. First, the reading comprehension texts are updated to students quickly by the teacher whenever students log in Moodle. Second, I have many opportunities to practice reading comprehension. I can do the quizzes or assignments again and again. Besides, I can use chat and forum to interact with my friends and teacher." (S5). The rest (S1, S2, S3, S6, S7, S8, S9, and S10) all shared that the blended learning activities on Moodle help them develop reading comprehension skills and have better performance in reading comprehension. To sum up, all of the students (100%) agreed that blended learning activities helped them improve reading comprehension performance and develop reading skills. When mentioning chat and forum activities, S3 said, "I can also have synchronous and asynchronous discussions via chat and forum activities on Moodle about the reading topic with my friends and the teacher." Another student said, "The activities such as chat and forum help me connect with my friends and teacher. If I have difficulty in doing quizzes or assignments, I can use chat or forum to exchange my ideas with my classmates or my teacher" (S8). In addition to improving reading comprehension performance and reading comprehension skills, blended learning activities also helped increase student-student as well as student-teacher communication. Thus, teachers can take advantage of chat and forum activities on Moodle to enhance teacher-student and student-student interaction.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, after the intervention, there was a significant difference in reading comprehension scores between the control group (M= 6.75, SD=1.406) and the experimental group (M= 7.65, SD=1.196) (t= -3.175, df=82, p=0.002). Participants who were taught using Moodle's blended learning activities outperformed those who were taught using traditional activities. To summarize, blended learning activities on Moodle improved the reading comprehension of 12th graders. The findings of this study are consistent with those of many previous studies, such as those conducted by Bidder et al. (2016), Bataineh and Mayyas (2017), and Birgani and Kheirzadeh (2018), which found that blended learning assisted ELF or ESL learners increase reading comprehension.

Moreover, participants had positive feelings about the blended learning activities according to the questionnaire and interview data. The majority of them considered that using blended learning activities is entertaining, beneficial, convenient, and appropriate with the test type in the exam as well as their learning style. Although they encountered some difficulties, they discovered that it had far more benefits than drawbacks. Furthermore, they all expressed a desire to be taught reading comprehension using blended learning activities on Moodle in the future. As a result, we can conclude that the majority of students had

favorable impressions on the use of blended learning activities on Moodle. This finding is consistent with Gyamfi and Gyaase (2015), Phuong et al. (2019), and Tran and Le's earlier research (2021).

To meet the renovation demand in teaching and learning, school administrators should pay greater attention to the integration of ICT in the classroom, particularly the application of blended learning. Vietnam is considering switching to computer-based tests in the future, according to Duong (2019). The school's ICT infrastructure, particularly its internet network and language labs, should be upgraded so that teachers and students may readily access the internet, use computers in the classroom, and maximize the use of blended learning. It is difficult to successfully implement blended learning activities on Moodle in learning reading comprehension because they are different from traditional teaching. Without a strong internet connection in the language labs or around the school campus, it is challenging to implement blended learning activities on Moodle in learning reading comprehension. Gyamfi and Gyaase (2015) also stated that school-wide adoption of blended learning requires an investment in internet infrastructure.

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HIỆU QUẢ CỦA MÔ HÌNH HỌC TẬP KẾT HỢP ĐỐI VỚI HOẠT ĐỘNG ĐỌC HIỂU CỦA HỌC SINH TRUNG HỌC PHỔ THÔNG VIỆT NAM

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TÓM TẮT

Phương pháp học tập kết hợp đã và đang thu hút sự quan tâm của nhiều học giả trong lĩnh vực dạy và học ngôn ngữ. Mục đích của nghiên cứu này là tìm hiểu các hoạt động học tập kết hợp trên hệ thống quản lí học tập Moodle ảnh hưởng như thế nào đến việc đọc hiểu tiếng Anh của học sinh lớp 12 Trường Trung học Phổ thông Tân Châu. Ba công cụ sử dụng để thu thập dữ liệu bao gồm bài kiểm tra trình độ đọc trước và sau, bảng câu hỏi và phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc. Kết quả cho thấy sau quá trình thực nghiệm, có sự khác biệt đáng kể về khả năng đọc hiểu giữa nhóm đối chứng và nhóm thí nghiệm. Những học sinh tham gia nhóm thử nghiệm có khả năng đọc hiểu tốt hơn nhiều so với những học sinh trong nhóm đối chứng. Đồng thời, học sinh cũng có những phản hồi tích cực về các hoạt động học tập kết hợp trên Moodle. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy việc sử dụng các hoạt động học tập kết hợp trên Moodle LMS có thể giúp học sinh nâng cao khả năng đọc hiểu của mình.

Từ khóa: học tập kết hợp; giảng dạy tiếng Anh; học tập trên thiết bị di động; Moodle; kĩ năng đọc hiểu