

Model of Online Language Learning: Its Effectiveness and Students’ Satisfactory Engagement

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to explore the model of online language learning through its effectiveness and satisfactory engagement of KMITL students who opt in and out for online language learning during the first semester of 2019. A mixed methods research design was designated for data collecting: questionnaire and an in-depth interview. The samples of all KOSEN KMITL students enrolling English I were voluntary undertaken. They were trained on various language skills and online setting methods including how to access the available technology, and how to access to their peers or teachers when learning alone online. Not only how effective the online language learning methods were identified and compared to that of the traditional classroom when students interacted with their peers and teachers, the students’ satisfactory engagement while learning language via the online methods were investigated as well. Surprisingly, the study revealed that most students considered learning via the traditional environment to be greater effective and more engaged and satisfied than learning alone via online environment. However, they argued that having blended classroom environment could facilitate their language learning to be more effective and satisfied in engagement via learning online. Finally, the discussion, suggestion and recommendation for both instructors and developers who design online program for language learning were provided*

Keywords: *online language learning, students’ satisfaction, students’ engagement*

1. Introduction

Globalization has caused the never ending increased usage of information and communication technology (ICT) in every nation and every sector: business, politics, economics, and even education. In Thailand, according to Thai Education Reform Roadmap, and the Second 15-year Long Range Plan on Higher Education (2008-2022), enhancing ICT for language education is vividly indicated in the mid-long-term plan (Thailand Ministry of Education, 2015; 2017). As a consequence, language educators, scholars and practitioners try their best to use the digital on-line learning as a tool to create language learning situations to be more open and interactive, having learner centered, and flexible environment, and as a bridge to facilitate learners to prepare themselves to succeed in their study and their future careers. To gain language learners’ proficiency and competences; and to promote open active collaboration, fluency, and comfort among learners; only the implement of instructional strategies of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) through a diversity of open-ended forms of scenarios, such as role plays, information completions, and simulations are not sufficient (Jabeen, S., 2014). The qualified programs equipped with integrate appropriate technologies together with those instructional strategies that help increased use of ICT in either ESL or EFL language teaching and learning are still needed. (Lee, S., Kim, J., Lee, J. & Liu X., 2005; ECML, 2018). Consequently, Thai tertiary educational institutions have launched various online learning programs, not only to suit the greater demand of feasible learning environment, but also as a tool to deliver knowledge and experience to achieve the upmost learners’ outcome of Thailand 4.0 model which aims

to foster creativity, innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability (Luankaew, K., 2016; Ministry of Industry, 2016; Vimolsiri, P., 2016; The National Reform Council, 2016a; Thailand 4.0 Model, 2018). Furthermore, since online learning education has become significant for Thai higher education level, to achieve the best practice, it is unquestionably essential to conduct a clear understanding of not only how effectively the online language learning education are implemented but also how satisfactory learners engage when accessing to that program. To the researcher knowledge, there is insufficient evidence of empirical study of model of online language learning and its effects on students' satisfactory engagement in tertiary level in Thailand. Therefore, this study aims to explore the model of online language learning, illustrate its effectiveness and satisfactory engagement trends of KOSEN KMITL students who opt in and out for online learning during the first semester of 2019.

2. Literature Review

2.1. What are Online Learning Tools?

Online learning tools can be either a program, an application, or technology that can be accessed via an Internet connection. They enhance both a teacher's ability to present information and a student's ability to access that information (Chun, D. & Plass, J., 2000; Son, J., 2011; Chaiprasurt, C., & Esichaikul, V., 2013). There are a variety of online tools that are currently available and freely accessible on the Internet for learning and teaching in ESL/EFL (Kun, L., 2011). However, according to their main functions and features, online tools have been divided into twelve categories (Son, J., 2011). These are learning/content management systems, communication, live and virtual worlds, social networking and bookmarking, blogs and wikis, presentation, resource sharing, website creation, web exercise creation, web search engines, dictionaries and concordancers, and utilities (Fig.1).



Fig. 1 Category of Online Tools for Language Teaching

2.2. Roles of Web Based Instruction (WBI) Program

Web-Based Instruction (WBI) is an innovative approach that uses the Web as its tool for delivering instruction to a remote audience (Grabe, 2009). It is considered as remarkable and efficient in language learning, especially in EFL. It provides learners with essential and meaningful rich and authentic language learning environment, experience of increasing motivation, collaborative learning and social interaction (Kun, L., 2011; Richards, J., Rodgers, & Theodore, 2014). It's also believed that learning via web-based instruction can promote learners to become autonomous learners. By using prior knowledge and experience, learners construct an understanding of a new knowledge by themselves. Online learning environment also encourages learners to have a self-regulation, a mental process that focuses on learners' abilities to plan, monitor, and direct their own creative learning (Chaiprasurt, C., & Esichaikul, V., 2013; Shen, D., Cho, M., Tsai, C., & Marra, R.; 2013). Generally, a language learning program based on WBI provides practices in all four language skills: speaking,

listening, reading, and writing. For example, many studies indicated a greater impact of WBI on student's writing proficiency than a face-to-face communication (Noriah, I., Elias, A., & Muthusamy, P., 2014; Hussin, S, Mohamad Y., Ismail, N. & Yoke, S., 2015). Researchers also claimed that students could developed more in WBI classes than traditional classes (Lee, C. & Pyo, K. 2003; Lee, S., Kim, J., Lee, J. & Liu X., 2005). However, there were some differences in a web-based English reading course which indicated that the actual output-performance level achieved via online interaction was not paralleled to previous expectations in terms of collaborative learning. Similarly, when evaluating the online effects on students' oral proficiency by using a voice-communication via online program among three different instructional contexts, the researcher indicated no significant differences of oral proficiency among those three different instructional contexts (Kun, L. 2011; Kim, S., 2002). As a result, online learning environment didn't suit those students. Besides, some students preferred actual books to gain more concentration while reading. Others thought that it was not feasible enough to read online by themselves.

3. Method and Materials

3.1. Instruments and Methods

Various skills were trained to the students, including how to access to the available technology, and how to access to their peers or instructors when learning alone online. A mixed methods research design was implemented for collecting data. The research tools were a questionnaire distributed through social media websites to the students, and an in-depth interview. Five main features of online tools used for language learning were designated: (1) Texts/References/Materials in digital format, (2) Audio visuals/Videos/Animations/Interactive Web Exercises, (3) E-mails/ Facebook/LINE, (4) Discussion boards, and (5) Video conferencing facilities. Twenty-five questions were provided for students to (1) give reasons for their choice concerning to each feature of online setting, (2) indicate their satisfactory engagement towards each feature of learning languages online, (3) rate the effectiveness of online language education when learning alone, with their friends, or an instructor.

3.2. Participants

The samples were all 24 KOSEN KMITL students enrolling English I during the first semester of 2019 (June-September 2019). All of them were voluntary. Their English achievement was in Lower intermediate level (B2), according to CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference. They belonged to the age group of 14-16 years. All stayed in campus. All had no experience in online English I and had never used online tools for real time contact either with peers or instructors during having difficulties in online learning.

3.3. Procedure

The mean scores, using a scale of 1-7 (1= Very ineffective and 7=Very effective), were derived from students' responses on the effectiveness of language learning online tools in each feature. However, the mean scores accessed from students' satisfactory engagement when they accessed to the Internet for online language learning were indicated on a scale of 1-5 (1= Unsatisfied and 5=The most satisfied). After that the mean scores were interpreted on the range based on Jamieson (Jamieson, S., 2004). Finally, after the in-depth interviewing was completed, transcripts of the interview's data were coded. In order to obtain validity in analyzing data, the data were implicated by two raters. Inter-rater reliability was calculated at 92.5% by using the inter-rater formula of Miles and Huberman (Miles, M. & Huberman, A., 1994).

4. Results

The results of this study were revealed in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table I Effectiveness of Online Tools

Features of online tools	Average
Texts/References/Materials in digital format	5.60
Audio visuals/Videos/Animations/Interactive Web Exercises	5.65
E-mails/ Facebook/LINE	5.90
Discussion boards	5.80

From Table 1, the features of online tools which were indicated at highly positive level were towards the features of Emails/Facebook/Line (M=5.90) and Discussion boards that connected students' peers and instructors when any support was needed (M = 5.80). Interestingly, students considered Texts/References/Materials in digital format and Audio visuals/Videos/Animations/Interactive Web Exercises at highly positive level (M = 5.60, 5.65 respectively); Additionally, they preferred Audio visuals/Videos/Animations/Interactive Web Exercises only to support their study rather than a primary tool. However, no students used video conferencing facilities.

Table II Students' Satisfactory Engagement of Online Language Learning

Tools	Average	Levels
Technological supports for interacting with peers online are adequate.	3.80	High
Technological supports for interacting with instructor/facilitator online are adequate.	3.75	High
Audiovisuals/Videos/Animations/Interactive Web Exercises enhances clear understanding.	4.45	Highest
More supplement: quizzes, further exercises, animations, pictures, etc. should be added.	4.30	High
Communicate face to face with peers is important.	3.70	High
Communicate face to face with instructors/facilitator is important.	3.75	High
I feel confident of learning online at my own pace.	3.65	High
I can deal with web technology proficiently.	4.35	High
My instructor/facilitator can deal with web technology proficiently.	4.10	High
Technological supports for assessment/evaluation are sufficient and effective.	3.85	High

Table 2, demonstrated several interesting results that when students accessed to the Internet for online language learning, their satisfactory engagement were differed. They considered the online tool of "Audiovisuals/Videos/Animations/Interactive Web Exercises enhanced their clear understanding" at the highest level while the other tools were indicated only at high level. Surprisingly, in view of the rankings and mean scores derived from the students' satisfactory engagement when they accessed to the Internet for their online language learning, it was obvious to see that (1) Audiovisuals/Videos/Animations/Interactive Web Exercises vividly could enhance clear understanding in learning language online (M=4.45); however, more supplement should be added: quizzes, further exercises, animations, pictures, etc. (M= 4.30). (2) Tools for technological support to increase interaction either between students and peers, or students and instructor were needed (M= 3.80, 3.75 respectively). (3) Interaction with peers and instructor/facilitator could support students more focused as compared to being left to study online alone (M= 3.85, 3.80, and 3.65 respectively). (4) Students found themselves that they could use web technology better than their instructor (M= 4.35, 4.10 respectively). (5) Students still needed face to face communication with either with peers or with instructors/facilitator (M= 3.70, 3.75 respectively). (6) Last but not least, more technical supports for assessment/evaluation, were needed in an online language learning (M =3.85).

Furthermore, an in-depth interview revealed the surprising but interesting results. Students responded positively to the effectiveness and preference of classroom environment blending with an access to online learning (33.21%). Many of them preferred classroom environment and felt that a pure classroom learning scenario is effective and more than enough to learn any language, even without any online support (27.44%). Only 24.35% claimed that learning online with no classroom support was effective and preferable while the

remaining of 15% felt that the online method would be effective and preferable only if they could communicate face to face with instructor. In brief, students' preferences obviously illustrated learners' greater value of classroom environment than that of an online environment.

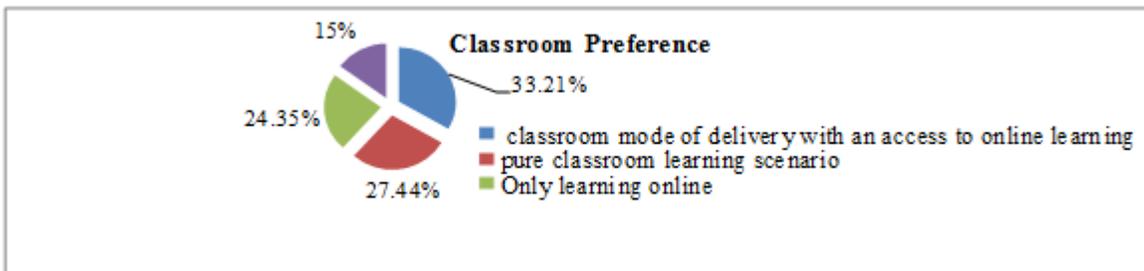


Fig. 2 Classroom preference

However, when asking students who preferred a pure classroom environment about the effectiveness of online tools for language education if they had to interface, 68% felt that online tools for language learning education should be effective, 22% felt that they were not sure, and 10% felt that the tools were not effective enough. Therefore, generally, students did not oppose to the online language learning education. They still agreed that, to a certain extent, online language learning education was effective.

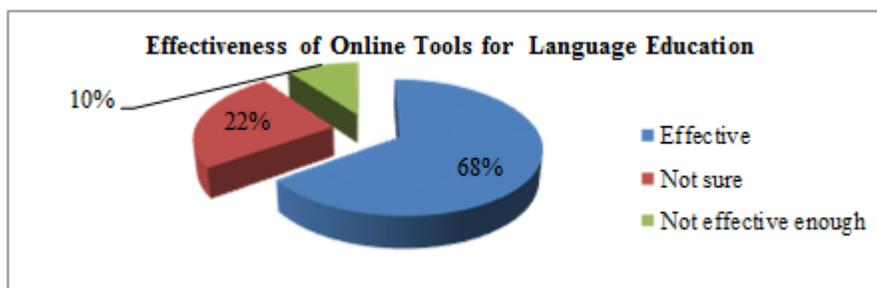


Fig. 3 Effectiveness of Online Tools for Language Learning

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The results of this study revealed that the effectiveness of online language learning was different from that of the learning with the help of an instructor in classroom environment. Satisfactory engagement of online language learning and students' preference for classroom environment were clarified. Limitations of the tools for online language learning method, such as, inadequate interaction, insufficient supplement to gain more opportunities in learning and practicing language skills, and inadequate knowledge in know-how technology of the language education programs still occurred. As a consequence, students considered greater effectiveness when they studied under the supervision of instructors in classroom environment than in online setting. Interestingly, these findings were compatible with those of the previous studies (Hughes, S. 2012; Kim, S., 2002). Hughes also stated that despite all the technological advancements, classroom mode was still popular in acquiring language skills. That is, 63% got satisfactory engagement to classroom environment, 6% preferred Online, 6% thought that both were equally effective, and 25% claimed that it depended on the person. Teaching and learning style can be modified according to the student's issues in classroom environment. Thus, classroom environment can promote collaborative learning, enhance critical thinking skills, improve social skills, build organizational skills, keep students stimulated, and develop important personality and career building skills.

6. Suggestion and Recommendation

In educational settings, there are abundance of language learning online tools. Each equips with various interesting features. It is essential for teachers to make evaluative judgments of the tools: to find, choose, use and

evaluate the right tools to serve certain language learning purposes. Furthermore, online language learning education has become an alternative tool with popularity that more and more institutes in any educational levels are offering language courses online. However, despite the rising popularity of the language online courses, regular attendance in classes seems to help students get real-time two-way communication, especially when students feel uncertain or awkward to their solutions. That is, students can directly and continuously interact with their teachers and other individuals of their own age to share their ideas and identify their demands right away. Accordingly, face-to-face questions together with immediately feasible answers in various patterns, including teachers' real-time suggestions, learners may feel more motivated to learn than using generalized virtual online notes and suggestions when learning online. In contrast, the virtual classes isolated individual from all classmates in classroom environment, so he/she met far fewer peers than he/she would have in a classroom; thus, losing their growth and learning that went on through face-to-face interaction in classroom setting. However, individuals are different, some may think that online language learning education is more appropriate while others prefer more on classroom language learning environment.

Thus, in enhancing online program for language learning, program developers have to consider major components. These components -- instructional design, multimedia component, including internet tools, computer/storage device, service providers, servers, and browsers -- could affect not only the change of language learning online environment itself, but also reflect content development as well (Richards, J., Rodgers, & Theodore, 2014; Chaiprasurt, C., & Esichaikul, V., 2013). Additionally, such components are highly related to learners' learning styles and interests. That is, incorporating various multimedia elements, including texts, graphics, animation, audio, and video can greatly contribute students' motivation to learn language to develop his/her knowledge, skills, and values. As a result, for the best practice, (1) online educational program for language learning should be registered, accessed, and engaged with ease for learners, teachers, and institutions. (2) since insufficient knowledge in managing these tools causes learner's incompetence, to develop various technical supports needed for increasing effectiveness of an online language education program, elements in online evaluation in every aspect: form, e-mail, database should be included and redesigned as real-time tools for checking, evaluating students' assessment, and feedback responding. (3) Online language instruction should be focused more on the components of individual testing, question and answer formats, peer group discussion participation, including portfolio development as well.

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