THE INTEGRATION OF CO-TEACHING AND BLENDED LEARNING
TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' ENGLISH SKILL IN THAILAND

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Abstract

This article was written based on two major aims. One aim was to review the texts on English-related policies and problems in Thailand; co-teaching; and blended learning. Another aim was to propose a concept integrating co-teaching and blended learning into new teaching models to improve students' English skills. This article utilized the construct of a literature study. The data were derived from existing documents including relevant books, researches, and articles. After being collected, the gathered texts were analyzed and reviewed. From the reviews were acquired novel possible models.

This literature study found that both co-teaching and blended learning have been deployed to facilitate English language learning. Eliciting from the two concepts, three possible models were introduced, namely the co-station rotation model, the co-lab rotation model, and the co-flipped classroom model.

Keywords: English skills, Co-teaching, Blended Learning

Introduction

In the 21st century, English mastery is highly demanded as English is spoken widely by a lot of people in every part of the world. Kitao (as cited in Riemer, 2007) stated that English is the most widespread and spoken language. In fact, English has become a tool for international communication in several fields such as education, commerce, tourism, entertainment, scientific research, technology, and transportation. Therefore, it is inevitably exigent for those whose native language is not English to master this language so that they are able to participate in global communications.

In Thailand, English is a compulsory subject from primary school to university level. Also, there are schools which administer English programs and international programs. Moreover, an innovation named English Integrated Studies (EIS) has been developed and implemented to

afford further application of English for instructional processes in particular subjects (Thongampai & Yamkasikorn, 2017). These conditions highlight the significance of English in Thai education system. According to Thai Basic Education Curriculum issued by Thai Ministry of Education in 2008, "the foreign language constituting basic learning content that is prescribed for the entire basic education core curriculum is English" (p.252). This statement strengthens the construct that English holds a special position in Thai education system. Nonetheless, as a matter of fact, Thai students have problems in mastering English.

Noom-ura (2013) reported that Thai students have difficulties in learning English. A more recent study by Mala and Fredickson in Bangkok Post (2016) showed that Thais' English ability is considered "not good enough". Education First (EF) also conveyed the same idea as they pointed out that Thailand has very low English proficiency (http://www.ef.co.th/, accessed on 31 October 2016). Consequently, there have been doubts on whether or not Thailand can effectively deploy ASEAN Community as English is crucially demanded for international communications. Hence, this problem is paramount to be solved immediately.

There have been a number of innovations developed to improve both teachers' and students' English skill. Nonetheless, more innovations need to be created to support and fasten the improvement. Therefore, this literature study on new possible ways to deal with this issue needed to be conducted.

Objectives

There are two objectives of this study, as follows.

1. To review the texts on English-related policies and problems in Thailand; co-teaching; and blended learning.

2. To integrate the concept of co-teaching and blended learning into new teaching models to improve students' English skills.

English-related Policies and Problems in Thailand

Based on the records, Thai Government and Ministry of Education (MOE) have recognized the significance of mastering English language for quite some time. Therefore, they have developed a number of strategies to improve students' English proficiency. Punthumasen (2006) summarized the strategies, as follows.

- 1957 - International schools. Thai government has allowed International schools to be opened.

- 1995 - English Curriculum. MOE announced that English is the first foreign language for the Thai school system, and in 1996 the English Curriculum was implemented.

- 1995 - E.P. schools. The Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) began to launch English Program in schools which were ready to provide this program throughout the country.
- Past two decades - International Study Programs.
- From 2007 to 2010 - Strategic Plan for Reforming the English Learning Process to Accelerate National Competitive Ability.

In accordance with the strategies above, Thai government have put considerable attention on English language learning in Thailand. Nonetheless, problems still come up. Noom-ura (2013) stated that Thai students experience difficulties in mastering English. Noom-ura further stated that "Thai students spend twelve years studying English in primary and secondary schools, but the results are questionable" (2013, p.129). Noom-ura (2013, p.143) also mentioned seven English learning problems that Thai students including not having enough practice in English on their own, lacking opportunities for English exposure outside class, having insufficient knowledge and skills of English, thinking in Thai before translating to English, having problems with writing, lacking patience in practicing English, having problems with listening and pronunciation, and lacking confidence in speaking English.

Recognizing the significance and exigency of mastering English at present, it is believed that there needs to be more and bigger efforts to solve the problems. Therefore, in this article are discussed and proposed new models to teach English which include co-teaching and blended learning.

Co-teaching

Co-teaching is associated with teacher collaboration, yet both actually contain specific ideas. Honigsfeld and Dove (2010) as cited in Chapman (2016) stated that collaboration means more generally to the sharing of knowledge between teachers while co-teaching refers to the more specific method in which the collaboration occurs in and out of the classroom. Strengthening the idea, Gately and Gately (2001) in Chapman (2016) pointed out that co-teaching is a specific form of collaboration in which educators share the responsibilities toward all students in a particular classroom. Hence, co-teaching is specifically associated with divides of teachers' duties towards pupils in a classroom.

Originally, co-teaching was mainly used to support special students who studied in general schools by asking special education (SPED) teachers to provide assistance for teachers of general education (GE) in classrooms (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2008). However, Honigsfeld and Dove (2008), explained that co-teaching no longer necessarily includes SPED teachers and students; and at present mainstream teachers can be assisted by a reading specialist, a remedial math teacher, and an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher. Hence, it can be inferred that the scope of co-teaching has expanded from its original scale and that it is possible to deploy this concept in

other contexts. For instance, a math and an English teacher can work together to provide Math instruction involving content-based English (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010). In short, general education teachers can be assisted by specific teachers who can enhance the students' particular skill through the same class lesson. The following discussions expose the benefits and models of co-teaching.

Benefits of Co-teaching

Co-teaching has been being implemented and researched in a number of educational settings around the world. The underlying reason is because it brings benefits to education. Reinhardt and Egan (2016)" reported benefits of co-teaching, as follows.

- time for reflection on personal practice,
- exposure to new ideas, strategies, technologies and assessments,
- stronger units with more opportunities for student language production,
- increased opportunities to model live, authentic communication between proficient speakers,
- confirmation of assessment reliability
- additional feedback for students on their work/abilities.

Another research entitled "Benefits of teaching interdisciplinary subjects collaboratively in Jordanian pre-vocational education" Al-Saaideh and Al-Zyoud by (2016) listed benefits of co-teaching to different parties involved, as follows.

- School administrators: finding a new method to deliver PVE
- Teacher of PVE: Changing the status quo of their professional practice in schools by planning, teaching, and evaluating collaboratively.
- Curriculum developers: Developing PVE through rethinking teaching of the subjects collaboratively.
- Students: learning collaboration rather than competition as demonstrated by their collaborative teachers.

The benefits of co-teaching may vary depending on the contexts and the groups involved. Nonetheless, co-teaching can truly provide beneficial improvements to particular educational settings and issues including the English language instructional processes.

Honigsfeld and Dove (2008) concluded that co-teaching can become an effective support for inclusive practices to accommodate the needs of diverse English Language learners; help all students meet national, state, and local standards; establish a vehicle for creative collaboration between English as a Second Language (ESL) and mainstream teachers. In a more elaborated way, Honigsfeld and Dove (2010) summarized the benefits of co-teaching to English language learners (ELLs), as follows.

- more differentiated instruction
- more varied instructional materials
- more authentic assignments adapted to the needs of students at risk
- more instructional adaptations for at risk students
- fewer "pull-outs" so students can remain with their peers
- more individualized instruction
- enhanced social and emotional development due to a more keen awareness of the needs of their peers
- more opportunities to learn about and engage in cooperation
- more opportunities to observe cooperation, interaction and communication by observing their teachers as they collaborate/cooperate
- enhanced social and emotional development due to more interaction with peers
- more experiences with grade-appropriate content
- two teachers trained in different disciplines who have co-planned on their behalf
- alignment of content curriculum and standard with the language/ESL standards
- time for teachers to "bridge the gap" of their academic knowledge
- get their linguistic, cultural and academic needs address
- general education teacher will be exposed to best practices and norms of ESL
- ESL teacher will be exposed to general education norms
- reduce ELLs tendency to become voiceless and invisible

From the above discussion, it can be inferred that co-teaching can greatly benefit English language learners. Also, it can be summarized that the students can learn English in a variety of ways, enhance their English effectively, improve cooperation skill, and become more active and outspoken.

Co-Teaching Models

In co-teaching, there are several models which can be utilized by educational instructors, particularly teachers in classrooms. The models are as follows (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010).

- One student group: One lead teacher and another teacher teaching on purpose.
- In this first model, one of the teachers, either the mainstream or ESL teachers, take turns leading the class. While one leads, the other can give mini lessons to student/s to clarify a concept or skill.
- One student group: Two teachers teach the same content.
- In this second model, both teachers cooperatively direct and lead the class at the same time.
- One student group: One teacher teaches, one assesses

- In this third model, both teachers are engaged in executing the same lesson. However, each has his/her own specific role. While one teacher leads the class, the other goes around the room and assessed the pupils through observations, checklists, and anecdotal records.
- Two student groups: Two teachers teach the same content
- In this fourth model, the students are separated into two groups. Each group is handled by one teacher. The teachers engage in parallel teaching, presenting the same content using differentiated learning strategies.
- Two student groups: One teacher pre-teaches, one teaches alternative information
- In this fifth model, there are two learning groups. The grouping is based on the pupils' readiness levels associated with a given topic or skill. Students who are considered to own limited prior knowledge of the particular content or skill are grouped together and receive instruction to bridge the gap in their background knowledge.
- Two student groups: One teacher reteaches, one teaches alternative information
- In this sixth model, the grouping is flexible. The students can purposively move from one group to another based on their need. Therefore, this model will benefit a class of students with various proficiency levels.
- Multiple student groups: Two teachers monitor and teach
- In this seventh model, the grouping will happen multiple times. This model provides both teachers an opportunity to monitor and facilitate the students. As a result, certain students with specific learning needs who need particular assistance can be supported.

The seven models of co-teaching can be used in different times by collaborative teachers. Each model has its own benefits and drawbacks which are needed to put into account when opting the one to deploy. Hence, the teachers need to determine which model can bring the best in them and their students.

Blended Learning

Blended learning has been a trend in education lately. It has been being integrated in a number of countries around the world. Blended learning has been being implemented in several schools in order to supply better instruction for students. To get to know blended learning better, the followings are definition, models, and benefits of blended learning.

Definition of Blended Learning

Blended learning is defined by North American Council for Online Learning as "the combination of online delivery of content with the best features of classroom interaction and live instruction to personalize learning, allow thoughtful reflection, and differentiate instruction from student to student across a diverse group of learners" (Watson, 2008, p.2). From the definition, blended learning provides personalized learning which affords students to more comfortably study in their own pace. Having a similar idea, Staker and Horn (2012) explained

that blended learning is a formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online learning with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace and at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home. They further pointed out that the modalities along each student's learning path within a course or subject are connected to provide an integrated learning experience (Staker & Horn, 2012). From the explanation, blended learning is emphasized as a part of formal education which means that it is administered by schools. Additionally, it enables learners to integrate learning experiences from two learning environments, online and face to face. Also, students take a considerable part in handling their learning.

Models of Blended Learning

According to Horn and Staker (2014) in INACOL (2015), the majority of blended programs fall into one of four models which are Rotation, Flex, A La Carte, and/or Enriched Virtual. However, the following discussion will focus only on the rotation model.

Rotation Model

Rotation model is "any course or subject in which students rotate—either on a fixed schedule or at the teacher's discretion—among learning modalities, at least one of which is online learning" (Horn & Staker, 2014 in INACOL, 2015, p.6). In this model, teachers hold a significant role in making discretion to rotate learning activities from online learning to class/group discussions or projects. The rotation model is divided into four sub-models, as follows.

Station Rotation

In this model, students experience the rotation Model within a whole classroom or group of classrooms.

Lab Station

In this model, students go to a computer lab for the online learning station.

Flipped Classroom

In this model, in place of traditional homework, online learning is participated by students before attending face-to-face, teacher-guided practice or projects.

Individual Rotation

In this model, students work individually. Each student has an individualized playlist which are set by an algorithm or teacher(s).

Benefits of Blended Learning

Huang, Zhou and Wang (2006) suggested that blended learning own three beneficial characteristics. The first one is flexibility of providing learning resources. More learning resources can be provided and accessed easily online. The second one is support of learning diversity. Since learners are diverse in learning styles, learning proficiency, and learning ability, blended

learning is designed to solve this problem through individualized learning and self-regulated learning. The third one is enrichment of e-learning experience. Blended learning can enable individuals to improve and develop their existing understanding, competence, or skill.

Updating the idea, Al Fiky (2011) stated several benefits of blended learning. The first one is that it moves from lectures to student centered learning. Next, it maximizes teacher-student, student-student, student-content, student-outside resources interaction. Then, it provides integrated evaluation techniques for teachers and students. Also, it broadens the spaces and opportunities available for learning (Bath and Bourke, 2010: 1). Additionally, it supports course management activities such as communication, assessment submission, marking and feedback. Lastly, it supports the provision of information and resources to students.

For all intents and purposes, blended learning has become an answer to a number of educational problems at present. Therefore, this model has been integrated in various educational contexts including English instructional processes. The following are a number of research reports regarding the deployment of blended learning in English language teaching context.

- Sedjiu (2014) reported from his research that students taught using blended learning enjoyed more and achieved higher grades than those taught by using the conventional face-to-face instructional method. In a similar context,

- Larsen (2012) who studied teacher and student perspectives on blended learning intensive English program expressed that blended learning afforded the teachers to better provide personalized assistance, keep better track of student progress, and cover more materials.

- Shaykina (2015) who studied blended learning in English language teaching explained that only a blended learning method that can be very timesaving and provides convenience and flexibility of learning with the complementarity of best innovative approaches and practical resources.

From the above discussion, it can be inferred that blended learning can provide great advantages to English language learners. Hence, it has been a popular tool to implement in numerous schools around the world.

Co-Teaching and Blended Learning (Blended Co-Teaching Model)

As discussed earlier, both co-teaching and blended learning benefit English language learners in certain ways. Moreover, from literature study, it can be seen that both can be combined and integrated in particular ways. Nevertheless, combining both models seems to be a novel action particularly since there has not been the development of a practical model integrating the two concepts which can be deployed yet. Therefore, this article will try to propose new models which are derived from the concepts of both co-teaching and blended learning, particularly rotation model, in English language teaching (ELT) context.

Co-Station Rotation Model

In station rotation model, students experience the rotation Model within a whole classroom or group of classrooms (Horn & Staker, 2014 in INACOL, 2015). According to Horn and Staker (2015), there will be offline and online activities in this model. The students may go around a few stations including small group instruction, independent work/collaborative activities, and online learning (Horn & Staker, 2015).

In short, this model should be applied to a small group of students. Nonetheless, in Thailand, classes are mostly big. There are usually more than 30 or 40 students in a class. If the big class is handled by only one teacher, the station rotation model will not enable the students to study effectively. That is why collaborative teachers are needed. By having more than one teacher, the class can be divided into smaller groups.

In this particular model, there are a number of options which appear. The options are as follows.

1. Option One

One option is that each teacher is in charge of one station. As there are three stations, the teachers can decide who will be in a certain station. One station, namely online learning, may not need any direct assistance from the teacher. As each teacher handles a station, each small group can go around the three prepared stations in a different order. One group may start from online learning and another may start from the instruction.

2. Option Two

The next option would be for the teacher to share the same station at the same time. In this option, each teacher gives instruction to one small group of students before they go to the second and third station. This option is based on Honigsfeld and Dove's two student groups: Two teachers teach the same content model (2010).

3. Option Three

Another option is done by grouping the students based on their readiness level. In this third option, there can be 4 stations prepared namely, pre-teaching instruction/ re-teaching instruction, main instruction, individual work/ collaborative activity, and online learning. In this option, the pre-teaching/ re-teaching instruction can not only be used to bridge the students to the main instruction and re-teaching, but also in non-English language lesson, it can be used to introduce English terms or words which will be used in certain subjects such as Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Computer, and Math. Through this installment, the students can both learn English vocabularies and be more ready for the main lesson. This option is based on Honigsfeld and Dove's two student groups: one teacher pre-teaches, one teaches alternative information model and two student groups: One teacher reteaches, one teaches alternative information model (2010).

Co-Lab Rotation Model

In lab rotation model, students receive instruction in a classroom and then go to a computer lab for the online learning station (NACOL, 2015). There are a few options which can be done with this model, as follows.

1. Option One

The first one is by having one single group of students. This option is based on Honigsfeld and Dove's one student group: One teacher teaches, one assesses model (2010). Hence, while a teacher leads, another observes the class. By doing so, during the first station, the teachers can both deliver information and perform necessary assessment to improve the lesson. During the online station, both teachers can also observe and give directions to the students, if necessary.

2. Option two

The second option is by dividing the class into two smaller groups. Each teacher is responsible for one group during the instruction station and then leads the students to the next station, online learning. This option is based on Honigsfeld and Dove's two student groups: Two teachers teach the same content model (2010).

3. Option Three

The third option is by having three stations. The first two stations will be instructions. They can be pre-teaching and main instruction, to bridge certain students to the next lesson, or re-teaching and main instruction, if there are remedial students. This is based on Honigsfeld and Dove's two student groups: one teacher pre-teaches, one teaches alternative information model; and two student groups: one teacher reteaches, one teaches alternative information model (2010). During the online learning, the teachers need to observe and direct the students, if necessary.

Co-Flipped Classroom Model

In flipped classroom model, in place of traditional homework, online learning is administered by students before attending face-to-face, teacher-guided practice or projects (Horn & Staker, 2014 in INACOL, 2015). Also, content and instruction is primarily delivered online which sets this model apart from only doing homework online at night (Horn & Staker, 2014 in INACOL, 2015). Through flipped classroom, "Time becomes available for students to collaborate with peers on projects, engage more deeply with content, practice skills, and receive feedback on their progress" (Hamdan, et al., 2013, p.3). Therefore, in English language teaching setting, flipped classroom can be utilized.

In co-flipped classroom model, there are a number of tasks which the co-teachers need to perform. One task is to prepare online learning materials which will be studied by the students at home or before coming to classroom. The other task is to design the classroom activities which focuses more on practicing, discussing, and collaborating. By doing so, the students will receive

much language exposure which is truly important for language learners (Stefánsson, 2013). Also, it will provide the students with considerably more time to use the language which is very significant for language learning (DeKeyser, 2007).

In classroom, the co-teachers have several options to do. The options are as follows.

1. Option One

The first one is to have one big group of students and conduct the activities. In this option, a teacher leads, while another monitors the class. This is based on Honigsfeld and Dove's one student group: One teacher teaches, one assesses model (2010). By doing so, the teachers can find existing issues which are needed to address to improve the instruction.

2. Option two

The second option is to have two smaller groups of students. In this option, each teacher needs to facilitate each group. This is based on Honigsfeld and Dove's two student groups: two teachers teach the same content (2010). By doing so, the students will receive bigger attention and have higher chance to practice the language.

Conclusions

In Thailand, Thai students have problems in English learning (Noom-ura, 2013). To help solve the problems, co-teaching can be utilized to effectively enable inclusive practices which accommodate various learners' needs (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010). In addition to co-teaching, blended learning can also be deployed to answer several language learning issues by creating a timesaving, convenient, and flexible learning environment (Shaykina, 2015). Both co-teaching and blended learning are considered successful models to facilitate better English learning experiences. As a result, it is interesting to integrate the two constructs to afford a better learning environment, particularly in English instructional process.

A few possible models integrating co-teaching and blended learning can be administered to better the condition. They include co-station rotation model, co-lab rotation model, and co-flipped classroom model. Though these models have never been implemented before, it is hoped that these models can bring a better English teaching and learning process so that students' English skills can be improved. Also, it is genuinely expected that the integration between co-teaching and blended learning can gain more attention and interest.

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