Initiating Hybrid e-learning of EFL  
for Pre-Service Teacher Training at Islamic College

Andi Muhammad Yauri1,2* and Dr Abdul Rahim Bin Haji Salam1

1Language Academy, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia  
2Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri Watampone  
*email: andi_yaurie@yahoo.com

The use of hybrid e-learning in English as A Foreign Language courses could perhaps be a promising approach for teaching and learning particularly within Islamic higher education. Hence, this paper attempts to explore the initiative effort of familiarizing hybrid e-learning among Islamic college students in a Speaking 4 course. This study took five months and the distributions of meeting in class were seven times for face-to-face class and five times for online class. The instructions were based on Satuan Acara Perkuliahan (Unit Class Event) of the college and delivered by means of both face-to-face and online learning. Online instructions were created in virtual class of Nicenet. Online rubric was made available for self-assessment both in their mid-term test and final test. 89 participants of students took part in the project. They were then asked to do the online task instructions independently or together with their course mates. (Analysis here). The study indicated that hybrid e-learning is applicable in the college. It promoted motivation and collaborative work for the students. In terms of test results, it did not show any significant differences in hybrid e-learning. The research suggests the instructions and material need to be adjusted in order to meet the learners’ need.

Keyword: hybrid e-learning, online learning, higher education, EFL

INTRODUCTION

The spread of educational technology, more or less, could influence the way to teach and learn English into higher pedagogy. This fact has affected to learning process of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The traditional face-to-face class has begun to elaborate with innovative teaching by integrating internet technology. The web 2.0 platform of the internet was made use to combine with traditional class produces hybrid e-learning (Ahmed, 2010). This hybrid e-learning model has started to gain consideration as part of innovative way and acquainting technology in the context of Islamic college.

The hybrid e-learning does not require high cost for software application (Chandran & Kempegowda, 2010; Huang, 2010; Tsai, 2011). Since web 2.0 tools platform enables instructors design and provide their lesson plan without spending much money or even free of charge. This fact has trigged instructors to upgrade and innovate delivering courses in class. However, as this platform has applied currently, it could arise questions in terms of student familiarization. These are regarding to how adequate skill, attitude, and perception encountering hybrid e-learning. By finding the answer of these problems, it will offer a possible way in tailoring hybrid e-learning. This paper sightsees the practice in delivering English as a foreign language, particularly in Speaking course, which is incorporated with internet technology at Islamic college.
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There have been a number of studies scrutinizing hybrid approaches in teaching and learning process. Hybrid e-learning incorporates online learning and traditional face-to-face learning to enhance the teaching and learning process. The significant impact on teaching and learning proved by Mackenzie, Promnitz-hayashi, Castellano, & Hinkelman (2011). Their study focuses on blended learning spaces for instructor specializing in foreign language learning at a Japanese university. They compared lessons between hybrid or blended and non-hybrid e-learning. The results were different lessons goals, different patterns of interaction, different types of homework, more variety of media, and more variety of input and output. Moreover, their study indicated signs the increase of both learner autonomy and motivation. Tsai (2011) supports the idea of improving teaching and learning process. His study focuses on integrating learning theories into hybrid e-learning model. He proves that there is a great interest of a possibility to combine different learning theories into hybrid e-learning. Ansari, Shabbir, & Kazim (2012) offer the benefit and challenge for implementing hybrid e-learning in educational environment. They make use web 2.0 platform for web-based learning. The result of their investigation proves that by introducing this kind of learning the students are able to improve their learning environment significantly such as evaluation, research capability, and communication skills.

Some models to deliver courses has adapted in order to familiarize hybrid e-learning into the higher education. EL-Deghaidy & Nouby (2008) study the effectiveness of blended e-learning as an approach to course. The model proves significant practical implication for teacher. Ijab, Anwar, & Hamid (2004) mention hybrid e-learning concept in designing and teaching courses. They implement this concept as a model into their institution. The finding indicates that the model provides a convenience to the students. Furthermore, they underline the factors indicate the successfulness implementing hybrid e-learning such as the access and level technology adoption, language proficiency, reliability, scalability, security of Learning Management Systems, and the relevancy of the syllabus and contents. Yuen (2010) claims that the trend of hybrid e-learning has become comfortable. Teaching approaches incorporating hybrid e-learning model become pedagogical practices. Yuen make uses approaches in his study such as online discussion, online resources, course management and delivery, and specific pedagogy support.

In terms of evaluating hybrid e-learning in the higher education, Ahmed (2010) assesses hybrid e-learning to the learners by using three critical factors such as instructor characteristics, information technology infrastructure, and organizational and technical support. These factors significantly and directly impacted the learner’s acceptance of hybrid e-learning courses. Kobayashi & Little (2011) evaluates a blended learning in EFL skill. They sum up that instructors have to consider for many variables to improve EFL skill. Those are the proficiency level of students, the length of time they have used the program, the limitations of the program’s interface, and the learner’s own level of computer literacy.

HYBRID E-LEARNING

THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY
This project was carried out in the Islamic college context in Indonesia with participants from pre-service teacher training program located in a rural area of Bone regency, South Sulawesi. The name of college is The State College for Islamic Studies or STAIN Watampone. It is a state-owned Islamic college managed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The college has two faculties, namely Syariah or Law and Tarbiyah or Education Faculties. The pre-service training program is administered by Education Faculty namely Tadris Bahasa Inggris or English Education Department (EED).

There are 89 students attend this course that further is distributed into four groups. Their age ranges are between 20-22 years old with English language competencies of high beginning to low intermediate took part in this project. The students of EED are to be required to attend English courses. One of the courses which is discussed in this paper is Speaking 4 course. It is preceded by series of Speaking 1, 2, and 3 courses. The Speaking 4 course is delivered within 14 weekly meeting, which consist of 90 minutes for each meeting. The course assessment is based on the criteria for each attendance (25%), assignments (10%), mid-term test (30%), and final examination (35%). This compulsory English skill course is available in the second year of their study. So far, this course goal is to improve students’ one way speaking skills for public speaking in any occasion. The class meeting in this study is combined with seven times face-to-face and five times e-learning. Basically, the prior course is delivered solely traditional face-to-face course.

At present, there are 12 lecturers teaching in EED by 2014. They are given the task of teaching education courses as well as English courses. They have to teach some subjects such as, psychology in education, philosophy, Islamic education knowledge, and sociology in education. Most of them apply face-to-face in delivering their courses. Out of seven lectures to teach English skills and linguistics courses. Furthermore, three of them are trying to combine face-to-face and Information Communication Technology for their classes. However, they still have not a certain model for teaching material of hybrid e-learning. The educational background regarding to teaching English for those seven lecturers are five of them magister in English teaching. The other two are magister in linguistics.

The language interaction in a class is both English and Bahasa Indonesia. English is not solely to be used in all class interactions. It causes as English in Indonesia is used to communicate as a foreign language. The use of those languages depends on the content of the subject study. For example, English skills and English knowledge are mostly in taught in English. Conversely, the courses such as Islamic values and teaching practice and teaching subjects are commonly taught in bahasa Indonesia. The Speaking 4 course is delivered in English both for face-to-face class and on-line class. In terms of accessibility for on-line resources, the college provides wireless fidelity, which enables both lecturers and students to access the internet in the classrooms. This effort has been done since two years ago. Even though, it sometimes could not be used effectively as the bandwidth issue and a service is often interrupted. On the other hand, the EED students have started to have their own personal computer or laptop for fun or social networking as well as a supportive tool of their study. Some other students who do not have a laptop go to internet café searching for supporting resources. This fact actually gives a chance and enables the lecturer and students’ access and makes use web 2.0 tools for the class or of their class assignment.
METHODS

The method of investigation followed in this research was exploratory qualitative research aimed at initiative to improve English speaking skills by introducing hybrid e-learning among pre-service teacher training students of the state College for Islamic Studies (STAIN) Watampone. This five months hybrid e-learning project requires face-to-face class once a week of seven weeks and online learning in virtual class also one time in a week of five weeks. The students were asked to do the midterm projects presentation after face-to-face class and other was final project presentation after online class. Then, the students were given a survey to see their perception after attending hybrid e-learning class project.

Speaking 4 course is a two credits hour course which requires the students to have a class once a week. This course encompasses skill and knowledge for public speaking. Web 2.0 tools such as Nicenet and Rubric incorporate face-to-face Speaking 4 course class to support this hybrid e-learning project. Web 2.0 tools is an available online resource that provides students with many types of learning opportunities beyond simple information access (Smaldino, Lowther, & Russell, 2012). This affordance has made asynchronous communication valuable to EFL teachers and students (Golonka, Bowles, Frank, Richardson, & Freynik, 2012). Furthermore, this tool enable students and educators work collaboratively (Elam & Nesbit, 2012). The class assignments are designed for students in order to be done individually and also together with their friends. It allows creating active learning environment, which focused on students centered. Besides, most of the web 2.0 tools are offered free for public use. This makes it as a powerful tool and a widely used for academic purposes.

Nicenet is an internet classroom assistant that allows virtually any classroom (Nicenet, 2003). It is an online discussion board or discussion group. Nicenet is an electronic forum in which facilitate people or group of students to share their ideas, comments, or questions on specific topics (Bikowski & Kessler, 1999). The asynchronous communication nature of Nicenet is able to facilitate the online class for lecturer and students. The lecturer could make online his class instructions, material, or task to the students. Hence, the students who attend Speaking 4 course project read the online instructions in Nicenet and do the class activity individually or collaboratively whenever and wherever they are. Besides, Nicenet is easy to be accessed. The students have other options to open Nicenet as it is not only through their laptop, but also by using their mobile phone. This kind of learning offers flexibility and different atmosphere for the learner in this college.

Rubric is a set of assessment criteria for appraising or judging student products or performances (Smaldino et al., 2012). A rubric normally consists of rating scale as a direction to measure achievement of performance criteria. The rubric helps the students to have a clear understanding of what they expect for achieving a score and successful in a course. This project makes use the online rubric Rubistar, which can be accessed in http://rubistar.4teachers.org. This online rubric is expected to give direction to the students for preparing and attending self-assessment after joining hybrid e-learning class. The scoring of this rubric is modified from Rubistar web and intended to be used both for midterm project presentation and final test project, which have same criteria and scale.

Basically, the criteria of performance and rating scale in this rubric project are focused on oral presentation. The criteria are divided into five categories of performance and four rating
The ratings counted as the lowest score is 1 and the highest one is 4. The first category is intonation. All the ratings in this category concentrated on voice volume of the students in presenting oral presentation. It shows the rating 1 for volume often too soft to be heard by all audience members. Rating 2, volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members at least 80% of the time. Rating 3, Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members at least 90% of the time. And, rating 4, Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members throughout the presentation.

The second category is enthusiasm, which focused on facial expression and body language. It appears rating 1 for very little use of facial expressions or body language. In addition, it did not generate much interest in topic being presented. Rating 2, facial expressions and body language are used to try to generate enthusiasm, but seem somewhat faked. Rating 3, Facial expressions and body language sometimes generate a strong interest and enthusiasm about the topic in others. Rating 4, facial expressions and body language generate a strong interest and enthusiasm about the topic in others.

The third category is a time-limit which concentrated on how long the students spend their time for delivering their speech or oral presentation. Rating 1, presentation is less than three minutes or more than six minutes. Rating 2, presentation is three minutes long. Rating 3, presentation is four minutes long. Rating 4, presentation is five minutes long.

The fourth category is posture and eye contact. This category informs the criteria of how the students stand up and perform eye contact to audience. Rating 1, slouches and or does not look at people during the presentation. Rating 2, sometimes stands up straight and establishes eye contact. Rating 3, stands up straight and establishes eye contact with everyone in the room during the presentation. Rating 4, stands up straight, looks relaxed and confident. Also, establishes eye contact with everyone in the room during the presentation.

The fifth category is content, which paying attention on including four items in speech practice. Rating 1, does not seem to understand the topic very well by mentioning the items in header, introduction, body, and conclusion. Rating 2, shows a good understanding of parts of the topic by mentioning the items in header, introduction, body, and conclusion. Rating 3, shows a full understanding of the topic by mentioning the items in header, introduction, body, and conclusion.

**PROCEDURES**

The instructional design and development hybrid e-learning in this project is utilized ADDIE (Analyse, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate) approach proposed by Branch (2009). This design consists of five main steps. The first starting by analyse, in which the researcher identifies the probable causes for a performance gap or the problem that the lecture wishes to solve. The second is design, which describes overall purposes and point of the instructional unit. It could also verify the desired performances and appropriate testing methods. The third is develop, which the researcher creates the actual learning material, generate and validate the learning resources. The fourth is implement, which prepare the learning environment and engage the students. Finally, evaluate, which assess the quality of the instructional product.
Analyze

Some of English lecturers in EED at the college of STAIN Watampone tried to make use of various sources from the internet to support their class material in order to enrich the content of their face-to-face class. However, their efforts were not effective to encourage the learners to be independent learners. Actually, online learning system should promote student-centred learning. Even so, this expectancy is being far from the reality. This might be caused by that they lack of knowledge on how to develop online material, and because they are not familiar with which the best tools for incorporating face-to-face class. So, the problem is that how to develop a hybrid e-learning in the course to support students to be more independent learners. In this case, the researcher tried to initiate hybrid e-learning of EFL, particularly in Speaking 4 course.

Design

The purpose of Speaking 4 course is to improve students’ speaking skills, particularly for public speaking in various kinds of an event. The content of course material in this project is divided into two modules, which include skill and knowledge for delivering a speech. The first module regarding skills of speaking delivers in form of face-to-face class. The students are asked to understand, discuss, and practice the part of the module which consists of an outline of speech, technique to arrange speech, Master of Ceremoney speech, practicing to speech, technique to develop idea in speech, and practicing to develop idea. Whereas, the second module is mostly concerning knowledge of speech, which covers pattern of speech, favourite speech, the strategy of English speech (1), the strategy of English speech (2), and behavioural aspects in the speech. The class instructions within the second module are created on the internet by means of Nicenet. Then, the students are asked to join Nicenet class to read instruction, follow the suggested link for reference, answer the questions, and do collaborative activity by practicing speech with their friends.

Develop

This phase describes learning resources, tools, strategies, instructions, and selected media to facilitate learning process in hybrid e-learning are put into action.

Implement

This phase regarding to prepare the learning environment and engage the students. The implement phase is actual learning environment where the student can begin to construct the new knowledge and skills required to close the performance gap (Branch, 2009). After attending a series of face-to-face class, the researcher introduces and asks the students to log in Nicenet by giving a class key. For the further class, the students attend Nicenet class as a medium of online discussion and to provide them with instructions and learning tasks. This class is fully online before they are giving a final project.

Evaluation

The students are required to attend face-to-face class and do their project to pass first module. The requirement is also the same for Nicenet class. The students have to attend online Nicenet class and undertake the project of the second module.


