

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE FEATURES OF BLENDED LEARNING METHOD IN CRITICAL READING CLASS AT B UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the online aspects of Blended Learning Method implementation and the example implemented in the Critical Reading class in B University. The purposes of the study are to see the implementation of the online aspects of the blended learning criteria in the classroom and the example of its implementation. The theory used is the criteria of blended learning class from Thorne (2003). The finding revealed that most of the criteria are implemented. However, the findings only focused on online features, so there will be some points not implemented in the class, since it could be implemented in offline class. Some examples of the implementation were the usage of Moodle as a help to adapt to blended learning method, usage of wide range of option in giving task and assignments to students, and giving access to contact the most appropriate person in the class.

Keywords: Online learning, blended learning, virtual classroom

INTRODUCTION

Blended learning is a teaching and learning method in Indonesia which mixing courses in offline world (face-to-face) and online world through internet (Madya, 2013). Before, blended learning method is only used in industrial sector of Indonesia (Blended Learning Indonesia, 2014). In education, blended learning was a discourse for Indonesia in 2011 (Blended Learning Indonesia, 2014).

Based on Thorne's studies (2003), there are eight key characteristics that can make blended learning classes successful. They are identifying the core learning needs, establishing the level of demand/ timescale, recognizing different learning styles, looking creatively at the potential of using different form of learning, working with the current providers to identify the learning objectives, undertaking an education process and developing a user-friendly demonstration, offering follow-up coaching support, setting up a monitoring process to evaluate the effectiveness of the delivery.

Blended learning itself has three primary components in it (Ravi, 2016). Those three are trained educator (facilitator) that charged in-class activities, online learning materials, and structured independent study time.

In this study, the writer chose *Critical Reading* class from B University in Bandung which uses blended learning in the classrooms. This university was chosen because of two reasons. First, B University claimed to use blended learning in their teaching and learning process (Institut Teknologi Bandung, 2012). Second, B University is using the Moodle system to support the class through online session and the students have to participate actively through this website for getting score and more knowledge through downloadable materials (Institut Teknologi Bandung, 2015).

The research questions are how the teachers implemented blended learning method online in their virtual classes based on the Thorne's characteristics (2003) and the examples of implementation in the virtual class.

Blended learning method is a combination of e-learning or online learning (Gerbic and Stacey, 2009, p. xvii) with the traditional face-to-face classroom meetings. Blended learning can extend the reach and optimize development cost and time (Singh, 2003). Furthermore, blended learning can personalize learning individually and manage better students' data (Dreambox Learning, 2013)

Thorne (2003a) has done some researches and has characterized blended learning key points in a classroom. First one, blended learning classroom has to identify the core learning need of the learners (Thorne, 2003). This means that a blended learning classroom has to be more focused and specific about the learning need.

Second, blended learning classroom has to establish the level of demand/time scale. It means that “blended learning represents a real opportunity to respond more effectively to individual demand ...” (Thorne, 2003).

Third, Thorne (2003) wrote that blended learning classroom should recognize the different learning style. “The classroom must provide a range of learning solutions and also review and revitalize the full learning and development offered (Thorne, 2003)

“Looking creatively at the potential of using different forms of learning” is the next characteristic Thorne (2003) states. It connects with taking what exists and evolving it into a different dimension using new technologies. Also, the blended learning classroom should be presenting the learning with a wide range of options (Thorne, 2003).

Fifth, Thorne (2003) states that blended learning should be working with the current providers to identify the learning objectives. It means the classrooms should “enable more elegant and bespoke solutions by combining one or more methods and help students adapt to new forms of learning” (Thorne, 2003)

Next, Thorne (2003) states blended learning classroom should undertake an education process and develop a user-friendly demonstration to illustrate the potential of blended learning. Blended learning classroom should “help students to identify the solution that works for them”.

The blended learning classroom also has to be prepared to offer follow-up coaching support. The supports can be an online support coach, peer support teams, or different tutors linked to both online and classroom development (Thorne, 2003). Besides the type of supports, Thorne (2003) states that what important is the availability of level of support and student’s accessibility to the most appropriate person for their need of support.

Last one, Thorne’s characteristic is setting up a monitoring process to evaluate the effectiveness of the delivery. This characteristic includes “tracking the students’ development in learnt lessons and what improvement can be made; and having an internal learning management system” (Thorne, 2003).

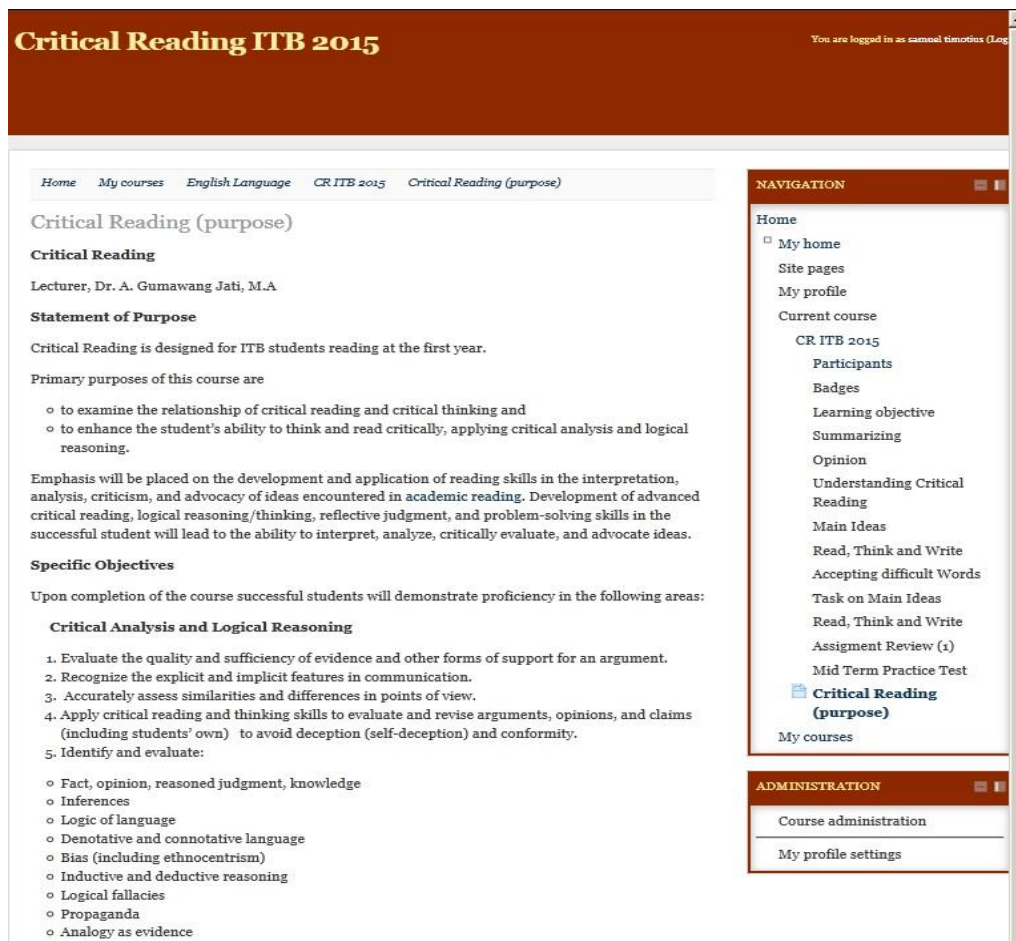
METHODS

In this research, the writer used qualitative approach. The participants of this research were two teachers and the writer, as an online student. As an online student, the writer could only access the class’ website through internet. The source of the data for this research was the website’s screenshot and materials. The data of this research was the online class observation.

The data of this study was the result of online classroom observations. The observations were done online through joining class activity in the website. In online session, students were required to do some exercises and submit assignments. The students were the active students of B University first semester students. The materials for the tests, midterm, and final exam could be accessed same time as the website availability. The total number of class participants was 278 students, taught by two experienced teachers.

After getting the permission from the university, the writer followed the class activities. The class activities that the writer followed were interactive tasks about the material presented in the class. The writer also downloaded all online materials, such as presentation files used for material guidance for students, which are provided in the class’ website. All of the activities were conducted through the class website which can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Class website's appearance



The writer used a table with blended learning system's characteristics and its availability during the class or semester and there was a column about availability of each criteria of blended learning in each meeting. This column was mainly checking whether the *Critical Reading* class in B University provides all of the basic criteria from Thorne's theory.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The table of availability of key characteristic of blended learning classroom below showed that each criteria required by the blended learning classroom was mixed between implemented and not. Although some were not implemented in the online classes, those points were probably implemented through the offline classes, in which the writer could not join.

Blended Learning Classroom (Results)

Blended Learning Classroom (Results)		Example
7	✓	- M 3, 4, & 6 -10: Online assignment
8	✓	- M 3, 4, & 6: Reflection (Figure 4.1)
9	✓	- M 1-10: Using blended learning method
10	✓	- M 1 - 9: Authentic Materials
7	✗	- M 4: Multiple choices, Cloze test
8	✗	- M 6: Multiple choice, Cloze test
9	✓	- M 9: Multiple choice, Cloze test, Matching items (Appendix C & E)
10	✓	- M 4, 6, 9, 10: Materials & Online exercises
7	✓	- M 1 - 10: Using Moodle
8	✗	- M 3 & 6: Reflection
9	✗	- M 1 - 4, 6: Examples in material
10	✓	- M 3 - 10: E-mail address
7	✓	- M 1 - 10: Grading & Feedback
8	✓	- M 1 - 10: Using Moodle

The implementation of blended learning class' characteristic was divided into 8 main points which were the characteristics from Thorne (2003). However, in some points, there would be some detailed sub points.

The first criterion talks about how the blended learning class could give in-class learning individually, which will different for each student. The writer found out in the *Critical Reading* class that the teacher had implemented this point in some meetings. For example, teacher gave online assignments and group works. The online assignments were given in the website and it could be accessed anytime in the whole semester.

Then, as for the second criterion, Thorne (2003) stated that a good blended learning class should establish level of demand or timescale. It means like giving students time or chances to either write a reflection to the teacher about students' feeling of the class. However, in the online class, teacher did not provide it in the first, second, fourth, fifth, seventh through tenth meeting. Meanwhile in meeting three and six, teacher provided a chance for expressing demand through a reflection writing. The reflection is done through answering question that was given and sent to teacher's email. Grades could also be used by the teacher as a mean to see how students performed in the class. The grades shown were grades for assignment and task. The variety of tasks and assignments was representing critical reading skills that must be mastered, like summarizing, making opinion, getting the main idea of a writing, and learning difficult words.

Thorne (2003) stated in the third criterion that a class should recognize the different learning styles by providing range of learning solutions. Blended learning is one of the learning solution that covers two elements (offline and online). The teacher tried to implement this criterion in meeting three through ten by giving online exercises in the web directly. Moreover, the class supported two learning styles (visual and auditory) through using authentic video (Figure 2)

Figure 2. Screenshot from Video



The fourth criterion is divided into two points, “taking what exists and evolving it into a different dimension using new technologies” and “presenting the learner with a wide range of options”. In the first point, blended learning class should use what exists in real world and evolves it into new dimension (Thorne, 2003). In the online class, the teacher used the authentic materials (nine out of ten meetings), such as online news, magazine article, and online videos, to support the learning process. With the video shown in Figure 2, the teacher managed to use the video to teach students prediction skills. According to McNamara (2007), this skill encourages students to tie the summaries together in a global level. The second point Thorne (2003) said is blended learning class

should present a wide range of options for the students. This has been implemented by the teacher in meeting three, six, and nine, through giving wide range of task types, such as multiple choice, cloze test, paper writing, making sentences, and matching items.

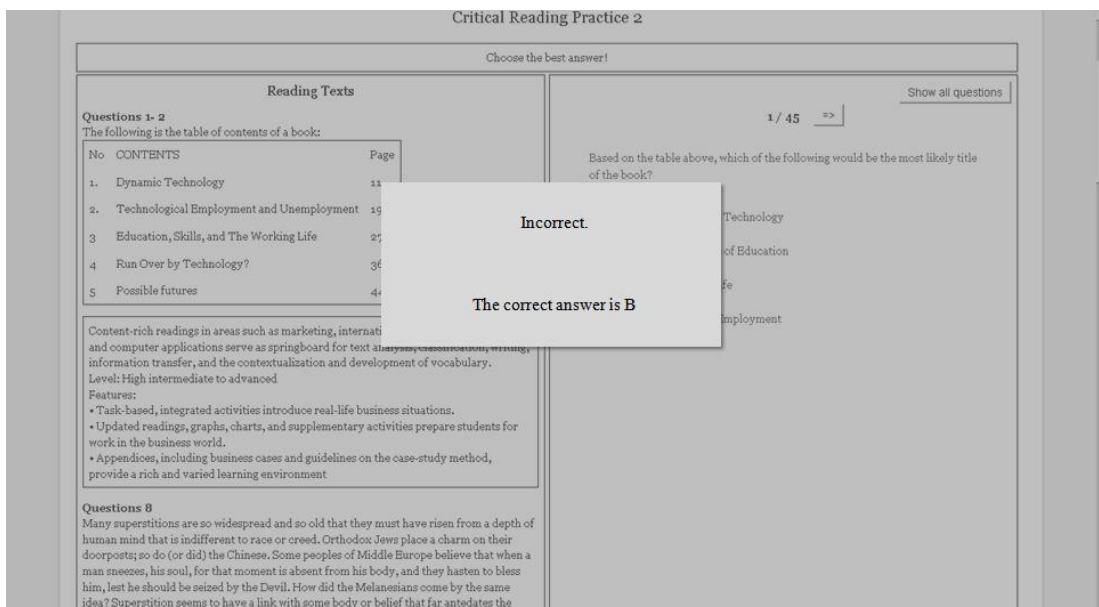
The fifth criterion by Thorne (2003) requires blended learning classroom to do two things which are “enabling more elegant and bespoke solutions by combining one or more methods” and “helping students adapt to the new forms of learning”. He further stated that blended learning class should enable bespoke solutions by combining one or more methods. This point has been implemented, in meeting four, six, nine, and ten, by the teacher through giving reading exercise directly in web that used Moodle system. Second point of fifth criterion, as stated by Thorne (2003), is about how the teacher helps the student adapting blended learning. The online class that the writer joined had implemented it in all meetings (usage of Moodle in all meetings).

Sixth criterion was focused on how blended learning class could help the learner to find solution that would work for them (Thorne, 2003). Teacher tried to implement the characteristic through giving them some reflection sections in some meetings. Through those reflections, the teacher would review them and put some solutions that would work for the students

Next criterion will be divided into two sub points that represent the main criterion. They are “providing level of support” and “having access to the most appropriate person for their need of support for the students”. Thorne (2003) said that a blended learning class should provide a good support for the students, such as an online support coach, tutors, or examples in the materials. In the class, teacher used support through using the example. The second point of the criterion requires teacher to give some access to approach him/her for some support in learning. Since blended learning is probably new for some student, it is required. Teacher applied this criterion by letting the students email him/her with questions referring to the materials or anything that related to the class.

The last criterion is about how the teacher monitor the students’ understanding of the materials that given. This can be done through tracking students’ development and having an internal learning management system. As stated by Thorne (2003), the teacher should track students’ performance through the assignments’ submission and online exercises. In the class, teacher used a grading system that could be seen anytime during the semester in the class website. The teacher had provided the grading system, but the students did not get any feedbacks from the teacher through online classes. The writer got the performance review with grades and percentages whereas the correction provided through online class was the multiple choice’s feedback (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Feedback in Multiple Choice



The second point of the criterion talked about internal Learning Management System (LMS). By using Moodle, the teacher had already implemented this criteria point. In fact, Moodle was used in all meetings to make an effective internal learning management system.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research showed that this class had implemented most of all points in the criteria. However, there were some points that were not implemented in online feature, which were probably implemented in the offline feature. For instance, teacher did not give a lot of opportunities to students to express their demands in the online class, which might probably be done in the offline classes. Grgurovic (2010) stated that although blended learning classroom did not implement all criteria, it was not failed as a blended learning classroom. Since the writer did not attend the offline classes, this study cannot fully depict the whole implementation of blended learning. Further studies in which the researchers can attend both offline and online classes might be conducted to get better pictures of the blended learning.

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