Chapter 1
Learning Outcomes and Affective Factors of Blended Learning of English for Library Science

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ABSTRACT

English for Library Science is an essential course for students to command comprehensive scope of library knowledge. This chapter aims to compare the learning outcomes, gender differences, and affective factors in the environments of blended and traditional learning. Around 1000 participants from one university were randomly selected to answer questions in questionnaires. It was found that (1) the pass rates under blended learning increased compared with traditional multimedia learning and the dropout rates under blended learning decreased compared with multimedia learning; (2) males and females did not show any significant differences in learning outcomes; (3) affective factors under blended learning were significantly more favorable than those under multimedia learning; and (4) under the blended learning model, male motivation was significantly higher than female; male attitude was significantly more favorable than female; males held higher self-esteem than females. However, male anxiety was significantly less than female. Reasons for the findings, as well as future research directions, were also explored.

INTRODUCTION

With swift development of science and technology, international communications are growingly important, which cannot move on without prosperity of Library Science. Library science provides intellectual support for technologies. The majority of technologies are recorded in English (Jin et al., 2015). Thus, English is acting like a bridge to pave a way for interaction between technologies, learners and researchers (Zhu, 2015). In order to understand new technologies, learners have to frequent the library to read those written in technical English after retrieving the desired data from a library, where they tend to be exposed to a sea of English for Library Science (ELS).

ELS was an elective course for Library Science majors in the University (located in Jiangsu Province of China). Undergraduate students majoring in Library Science were required to command English knowledge for Library Science in terms of real and digital libraries, dissertation abstracts, citation research, Library Science education and the Internet. Undergraduates were also required to extensively read journal articles on Library Science and education. The term paper, which should be written in English, was a must for them to complete as an evaluation, coupled with a final examination.

The academic year 2010-2011 witnessed a significant change in teaching model of ELS in the University since the management was aware that undergraduates were a "third generation" (Phipps & Merisotis, 1999: 26) immerged in not only classrooms but also online environments. The management noticed that only classroom learning would not meet students' requirements and affective factors exerted some influence on Library Science majors. Students used to feel anxious and less motivated when learning via traditional multimedia and were subject to a negative attitude towards the course ELS. Even, they found that Library Science majors had lower self-esteem compared with engineering and science majors when they were learning ELS. They, therefore, financially supported a teaching innovation project where a blended learning model was designed, catering for students' needs. And lecturers were required to integrate face-to- face classroom instruction with online teaching.

Blended learning meant combination of delivery methods, including most frequent face-to-face instruction with asynchronous and/or synchronous computer technologies. Combination between face-to-face learning and various computer technologies is beneficial for higher education. This model has been used in the University for the course ELS since the blended idea struck the management in the academic year 2010- 2011. The learning outcomes, gender differences and affective factors in blended contexts have, however, never been studied to determine whether the blended learning model has been advantageous over the traditional one. This study aims to compare the learning outcomes, gender differences and affective factors in the environments of blended learning and traditional learning. According to some studies, a high rate of dropouts exerted a negative effect on learning outcomes (Paisey & Paisey, 2004; Sugahara & Boland, 2006). The learning outcomes of ELS, in this study, were identified via the rates of dropout and pass. Affective factors considered in this study included motivation, anxiety, attitude and self-esteem. Questions were thus raised to address the issues, i.e. (1) can blended learning produce better learning outcomes than traditional multimedia learning in terms of dropout and pass rates? (2) are there significant gender differences in learning outcomes under blended and multimedia learning in terms of dropout and pass rates? (3) can blended learning produce significantly more favorable motivation, attitude and self-esteem and less anxiety than multimedia? (4) are there significant gender differences in affective factors in either blended or multimedia learning? Four hypotheses were tentatively established as follows:

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