

THE EFFECT OF DIFFERENT TEACHING DELIVERY METHODS (FACE-TO-FACE, VIRTUAL AND BLENDED) ON INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

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Abstract

The present study investigates the influence of different teaching delivery methods (face-to-face, virtual and blended) on intermediate students' academic achievement. The sample population of the study comprises three randomly selected second year intermediate classes of an intermediate female school in Tabuk. One class has been assigned to be control group. The other 2 classes has been assigned to be experimental. Upon review of related literature and previous studies, the three classes were taught by the same instructor for the same unit of second year intermediate English subject. Validity and reliability of the tools have been measured. Applying the pre-test for both control and experimental groups. The control group has been taught using the traditional way of teaching whereas the experimental groups have been taught using blended and virtual classes. The post--test was applied by the end of teaching the assigned unit. Data was statistically analyzed. Results have been discussed. Based on results, recommendations and suggestions have been occurred.

Keywords: virtual classes, blended learning, face to face classes, web 2.0 technology, intermediate students, students' achievement.

Introduction

In this changing world of technology, world of alternatives, variation becomes a life style. This variation extended to all area of life including education where is variation is a demand not an auxiliary. It is a demand because students, teachers, content, materials are varied from place to another and from time to another. Beside the different teaching theories, aids, practices and applications, there are many teaching delivery methods such as virtual classes and blended as well as traditional face-to-face classes.

Blended learning systems as defined by Grahams (2005:5) are those that "combine face to face instruction with computer-mediated instruction" while "a virtual classroom is an online classroom that allows participants to communicate with one another, view presentations or videos, interact with other participants, and engage with resources in work groups" (Ferriman,2013). The two definitions have been adopted in the present study.

Traditional face-to-face classes, blended and online learning are widely used in different countries and different subjects. Every method has its own advantages and no single delivery method is preferable for all teaching or learning situations. Davis (2000:50) emphasized, "Offering different training delivery methodologies can effectively address all of these variables if done so in a careful and deliberate way."

Teacher may need first to understand the needs of his/her students in order to choose the suitable teaching delivery method as Gregoriades, Pampaka & Michail (2009) points out "understanding students' learning style helps instructors adapt their teaching method to better support the students' learning". Using suitable teaching delivery method lead to meaningful learning.

Successful and meaningful learning also demands some learning conditions. Learning conditions that suggested by Novak & Cañas (2006) are adopted in the three classes of the present study. They stress that meaningful learning requires three conditions: 1. the material to be learned must be conceptually clear and presented with language and examples relatable to the learner's prior knowledge. 2. the learner must possess relevant prior knowledge. 3. the learner must choose to learn meaningfully.

Online and blended versus traditional Course Delivery

Many educational researches investigated the influence of online in comparison with traditional course delivery. Recently, Dirienzo & Lilly (2014) study compares the student learning outcomes on both a "basic" and "complex" assignment given in the same course, but using two different delivery methods of traditional face-to-face and online, across five undergraduate business courses taught at Elon University during the summer 2007 session. This study includes data from over 120 students and, after controlling for other factors known to affect student performance, the results indicate that delivery method has no significant difference in student learning.

On the other hand, the objective of Mann & Henneberry (2014) study was to determine students' preferences for college course attributes and how the amount of course attribute information impacts enrollment. Results indicate students had the highest preferences for face-to-face (F2F) courses offered late morning and early afternoon and two to three days per week. Students selected online over F2F courses depending on course makeup; for example, course topic, online course design technology, and when the F2F version was offered. Additionally, students selected online courses more frequently when additional online course attribute information was available during course selection. Otherwise, they (2014:2) point out "a common assumption in early studies that compared online and F2F courses is that the level of variation across different online course designs is similar to that of F2F course designs".

Simon, Jackson & Maxwell (2013) have provided alternative ways to deliver instruction to learners. With the availability of the Internet as a learning tool, educators are able to use this instrument for course delivery. This study takes an empirical look at course design and delivery factors that affect student perceptions of learning and course satisfaction. Students completed surveys addressing a variety of topics as they relate to traditional classroom and Internet courses. Results of the study suggest that online learning is a viable alternative to traditional classes in the information systems discipline. Students were active participants in the evaluation and comparative analysis of an undergraduate business course delivered in an online format for the first time. Implications of the results are discussed.

On the other hand, Rivera (2013) study found that students preferred direct instruction and face-to-face setting when studying subjects they considered interesting or important, especially if the class was in their major. Many students said they learned more when the instructor is present.

Tseng, Yuan & Ying Chu (2010) integrates the endogeneity of efforts into the relationship between learning formats and learning outcomes. While Economics is generally viewed as a highly quantitative course that students typically find challenging in most learning environments, this paper suggests that learning performance of a quantitative course can be successfully enhanced in an online environment. Learning performance in the online environment are superior to that in the traditional mode. Moreover, after controlling the endogeneity bias of learning efforts, the increase in weekly hours a student spent tends to improve learning performance.

Unlike the previous results, Wilson & Allen (2010) found that face-to-face classes are better than online classes. The purpose of their research is to determine whether there is a significant difference in the success rates of online versus face-to-face learners at one HBCU and if there is a significant difference, what are the characteristics of successful online learners versus online learners who either fail or withdraw from courses. Online students seemed to have a higher withdrawal rate, failure rate and seemed to have more trouble completing assignments by the deadline, if at all.

In an effort to compare team-level learning performance resulting from different instructional variables and settings, Lim & Yoon (2008) study examined how online and blended delivery learner groups compared in terms of learning outcomes, collaboration and perceived quality of instructional variables. Results indicated that the two teams were not different in learning outcomes measured by perceived knowledge gains. Members' perception about team collaboration and the quality of instructional variables differed between those two delivery settings.

In addition, several instructional variables were found to have an impact on learning outcomes and team collaboration for both learner groups.

Roussass (2006) quantitative study explored and determined the performance level to which employees with college degrees earned from accredited online institutions achieve in comparison to the performance level to which employees with college degrees earned from accredited traditional classroom institutions achieve. INTEL Corporation provided samples of qualified employees who had completed the education by attending traditional versus online institutions. Results led to the conclusion that there is no statistically significant difference in organizational productivity between traditional classroom educated employees versus online-educated employees. In addition, McFarland & Hamilton (2006) study revealed that no significant difference in course satisfaction between the two groups of online and traditional students. It also showed that no significant difference in their final course grade.

Other studies compare between blended and traditional learning. Results of Mohammad (2013) study indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group who study using blended learning and the control group who study using traditional face to face class at the 0.01 level in favor of the experimental group in both achievement in the Methods of Teaching English Course and in the teaching performance. However, no significant differences were found between the two groups in their attitude towards the teaching profession or the attitude towards E-learning.

Akhras (2012:2) also concludes that blended learning promotes student-centered-learning and encourages increased student interaction. Online collaboration allows students to experiment with technology, develop their own technical skills, and become sensitized to the technological environments and capabilities of others.

Web-based instruction (WBI) and classroom- based instruction (CBI) tend to offer students diverse options for their education. Thus, it is imperative that colleges and universities have ample, accurate information to help determine the extent and nature of WBI offerings that best fit with the strategy and mission of the institution. In an effort to contribute to the body of knowledge on WBI, Thrasher, Coleman & Atkinson (2010) study compares student performance between CBI and WBI, specifically with regard to the learning of procedural knowledge. The study hypothesizes that WBI will be more effective than CBI in this context and tests this hypothesis using t-tests to compare the means on ten spreadsheet projects. The results provide only minimal support for the hypothesis. The results also lend support to those who have called for a greater focus on blended learning; yet, the results also indicate some interesting anomalies that warrant further discussion and research.

Badawi (2009) study concluded that blended learning model was more effective than face-to-face learning in developing EFL prospective teachers' pedagogical knowledge. However, both blended learning and face-to-face proved to have almost the same effectiveness in developing EFL prospective teachers' pedagogical performance. Stressing the importance of blended learning, Davis (2000: 50) states "blended learning may help to achieve the most effective and meaningful learning experience. The reasons for this are: people have different learning styles, content is different, technology infrastructures and learning goals are different".

According to the results of the previous studies regarding the influence of different teaching methods on learning, one can notice that some studies conclude that online learning style is more effective (Simon, etal (2013) and Teseng, etal (2010)) while other studies stress the effectiveness of blended learning model (Mohammad (2013), Akhras (2012), Thrasher (2010) and Badawi (2009)). Therefore, some studies conclude that no difference between such teaching delivery methods (Dirienzo & Lilly (2014), Mann & Henneberry (2014), Lim & Yoon (2008) and Roussass (2006)) while Rivera (2013) and Wilson & Allen (2010) found that face-to-face classes are better than online classes.

The Study

Context of the problem

Teaching since 1996 and gaining good and satisfied results with the students in spite of using different methods of teaching and different delivery modes as a specialist in methods of foreign language teaching, the researcher was eager to investigate the influence of different teaching delivery modes on students' academic achievement. The present study investigates the influence of three different teaching delivery methods (virtual and blended beside the traditional face-to-face course delivery method) on the academic achievement of the second year intermediate female students in their English language course. According to the data of some previous studies, online learners did not show any major differences between traditional learners and blended learners. The findings of this study will or will not be in line with such previous research performed by (Laine, 2003; Reeves et al., 2003; Willis & Cifuentes, 2005, Lim, Morris, & Kupritz 2006 and Larson and Sung 2009).

Once the English intermediate students' textbooks in Saudi Arabia based on the constructivist approach, the following assumptions are adopted in the three teaching delivery methods (face-to-face, virtual and blended) used in the present study: 1- Learners are responsible for their own learning. 2- Knowledge is constructed by learners. 3- New Knowledge is constructed based on learners' previous knowledge.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of the study can be stated in the main question: To what extent is academic achievement of second year intermediate female students influenced by applying face-to-face, virtual classes and blended learning on their English course?

Questions of the study

The present research seeks to answer the following main question:

To what extent is academic achievement of second year intermediate female students influenced by applying face-to-face, virtual classes and blended learning on their English course?

From the above main question, the following sub-questions emerged:

1. Is there any statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the (control group) (GC) (those who study the English course using the traditional face-to-face classes) in pre and posttest?
2. Is there any statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the experimental group (GX1) (those who study the English course using virtual classes) in pre and posttest?
3. Is there any statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the experimental group (GX2) (those who study the English course using the blended learning) in pre and posttest?
4. Is there any statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the experimental group (GX1) (those who study the English course using virtual classes), (GX2) (those who study the English course using blended learning) and of the students of the control group (GC) (those who study the same English course using the traditional face-to-face classes)?
5. Is there any statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the experimental group (GX1) (those who study the English course using virtual classes) and (GX2) (those who study the English course using blended learning)?

6. Is there any statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the control group (GC) (those who study the same English course using the traditional face to face classes) and the experimental group (GX1) (those who study the English course using virtual classes)?
7. Is there any statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the control group (GC) (those who study the same English course using the traditional face to face classes) and the experimental group (GX2) (those who study the English course using blended learning)?

Hypotheses of the study

1. There is no statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the (control group) (GC) (those who study the English course using the traditional face to face classes) in pre and posttest.
2. There is no statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the experimental group (GX1) (those who study the English course using virtual classes) in pre and posttest.
3. There is no statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the experimental group (GX2) (those who study the English course using the blended learning) in pre and posttest.
4. There is no statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the experimental group (GX1) (those who study the English course using virtual classes) and (GX2) (those who study the English course using blended learning) and of the students of the control group (GC) (those who study the same English course using the traditional face to face classes).
5. There is no statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the experimental group (GX1) (those who study the English course using virtual classes) and (GX2) (those who study the English course using blended learning).
6. There is no statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the control group (GC) (those who study the same English course using the traditional face to face classes) and the experimental group (GX1) (those who study the English course using virtual classes).
7. There is no statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the control group (GC) (those who study the same English course using the traditional face to face classes) and the experimental group (GX2) (those who study the English course using blended learning).

Sample of the Study

The sample population of the study was comprised of three randomly selected second intermediate female classes. Each class of the experimental groups has 15 students while the control group has 20, for a total of 50 students. The classes were enrolled in the second term of 2013 in one of Tabuk intermediate schools.

Delimitations of the Study

The present study is delimited to:

1. Academic delimitations: Investigating the effectiveness of teaching unit 13 (cities and places) using three different delivery modes on second year intermediate female students' achievement. The unit comprises 4 lessons. The three classes were taught by the same instructor using the same textbook.
2. Place: 3-second year female students' classes of an intermediate school in Tabuk.
3. Time: Second term of the academic year 2013 – the unit has been taught for the three groups over 2 weeks - 4 periods per a week. 45 minutes to each period (total 8 periods = 6 hours = 360 minutes).

Design of the Study

The present study utilizes the quazi- experimental method to investigate the influence of teaching through three different delivery modes on students' achievement. These delivery modes will be virtual classes, blended and traditional face-to-face classes.

Data analysis:

The first question:

To answer the first question: " Is there any statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the (control group) (GC) (those who study the English course using the traditional face to face classes) in pre and posttest?" , after entering the data into the statistical program "SPSS", Wilcoxon test was used as in the following table:

Table(1)

Pre-post(Gc)	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	p-value
Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	3.92	0.000
Positive Ranks	20	10.50	210.00		
Total	20				

Table (1) indicated that there are statistically significant differences in the students' mean scores in the (control group GC) to pre and posttest in the direction of post-test scores as the mean rank of the posttest is 10.50 while it is 0.00 to pretest..

The second question:

To answer the second question: " Is there any statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the experimental group (GX1) (those who study the English course using virtual classes) in pre and posttest?" , after entering the data into the statistical program "SPSS", Wilcoxon test was used as in the following table:

Table(2)

Pre-post(GX1)	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	p-value
Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	3.42	0.001
Positive Ranks	15	8,00	120,00		
Total	15				

Table (2) indicated that there are statistically significant differences in the students' mean scores in the experimental group (GX1) to pre and posttest in the direction of post-test scores as the mean rank of the posttest is 8.00 while it is 0.00 to pretest.

The third question:

To answer the third question: " Is there any statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the experimental group (GX2) (those who study the English course using the blended learning) in pre and posttest?', after entering the data into the statistical program "SPSS", Wilcoxon test was used as in the following table:

Table(3)

Pre-post(GX2)	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	p-value
Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	3.30	0.001
Positive Ranks	14	7,50	105,00		
Ties (equal ranks)	1				
Total	15				

Table (3) indicated that there are statistically significant differences for students' mean scores in the experimental group (GX2) to pre and posttest in the direction of post-test scores as the mean rank of the posttest is 7.50 while it is 0.00 for pretest.

The fourth question:

To answer the fourth question: " Is there any statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the experimental group (GX1) (those who study the English course using virtual classes), (GX2) (those who study the English course using blended learning) and of the students of the control group (GC) (those who study the same English course using the traditional face to face classes)?" , after entering the data into the statistical program "SPSS", Kruskal-Wallis test was used as in the following table:

Table(4)

	N	Mean Rank	χ^2	p-value
GC	20	24,00	0.37	0.831
GX1	15	26,83		
GX2	15	26,17		
Total	50			

Table (4) indicated that there are no statistically significant differences in the students' mean scores in different groups (GC, GX1 and GX2) as the p-value is 0.8.

The fifth question:

To answer the fifth question: " Is there any statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the experimental group (GX1) (those who study the English course using virtual classes) and (GX2) (those who study the English course using blended learning)?" , after entering the data into the statistical program "SPSS", Mann-Whitney test was used as in the following table:

Table(5)

	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	<i>U</i>	p-value
GX1	15	15,73	236,00	109	0.902
GX2	15	15,27	229,00		
Total	30				

Table (5) indicated that there are no statistically significant differences in the students' mean scores between GX1 and GX2 as the p-value is 0.9.

The sixth question:

To answer the sixth question: " Is there any statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the control group (GC) (those who study the same English course using the traditional face to face classes) and the experimental group (GX1) (those who study the English course using virtual classes)?" After entering the data into the statistical program "SPSS", Mann-Whitney test was used as in the following table:

Table(6)

	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	<i>U</i>	p-value
GC	20	17,18	343,50	133.5	0.851
GX1	15	19,10	286,50		
Total	35				

Table (6) indicated that there are no statistically significant differences in the students' mean scores between GC and GX1 as the p-value is 0.8.

The seventh question:

To answer the seventh question: " Is there any statistically significant difference at ($P < .05$) level between the mean gain scores of the students of the control group (GC) (those who study the same English course using the traditional face to face classes) and the experimental group (GX2) (those who study the English course using blended learning)?" After entering the data into the statistical program "SPSS", Mann-Whitney test was used as in the following table:

Table (7)

	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	<i>U</i>	p-value
GC	20	17,32	346,50	136.5	0.657
GX2	15	18,90	283,50		
Total	35				

Table (7) indicated that there are no statistically significant differences in the students' mean scores between GC and GX2 as the p-value is 0.6.

Conclusion

As shown by the results, the three delivery methods of teaching (virtual classes, blended and face-to-face classes) positively influence students' academic achievement. Comparing the three methods of delivery, results show that there is no difference between the three delivery methods (virtual classes, blended learning and face-to-face classes) regarding students' achievement. This is consistent with the results of many previous researches (Dirienzo & Lilly 2014, Mann & Henneberry 2014, Lim & Yoon 2008 and Roussass 2006).

Such similarity in the influence of the three delivery methods of teaching (virtual classes, blended learning and face to face classes) used in the present study may due to that the learning conditions and constructivist theory assumptions have been applied in the three classes and it also may due to the good preparation, organization and performance of the three different classes which were taught all by the researcher who possess both enough knowledge and experience in English language methodology. Further research is needed to investigate the effect of using such delivery methods in teaching different subjects other than English.

Barrett (2010:18) mentioned, "Online instructors have realized the need to update their teaching skills, practices and strategies in order to accommodate the changing needs of the learners in the classroom, as well as updating their own teaching portfolio. Virtual instructors today need to develop and enhance their teaching strategies and methodologies in order to meet the growing needs of today's online learning population." Thus, further research is suggested to investigate the effect of online instructors' skills and teaching strategies on students' academic achievement.

For Tseng et al (2010:115) "Some papers assert that little difference in learning performance was found between online format and traditional manner; see, e.g., Abraham (2002) and Kekkonen-Moneta (2002) for instance. Some recent studies, for example, Anstine and Skidmore (2005), Sauers and Walker (0004) and Kan and Cheung (2007), seem to support that students of traditional classes have better performance than those of the online classes. Nonetheless, there are also papers showing that online mode is superior to traditional manner, see, e.g., Scay and Milman (1994) and Raynauld (2006), among many others." Further research is needed to investigate the effect of using such delivery methods in teachers' professional growth.

It is also suggested to use different delivery methods to suit different needs and learning styles. For Saleh, Alf, Ismaail, and Sabbour (2008) "beside the traditional method, e-learning services have evolved since computers were first used in education and there is trend toward blended learning services where computer-based activities are integrated with practical or classroom based situation". Ali (2008) also stresses that blended learning is an effective and attractive way of learning that is defined by American distance learning association as a way to gain knowledge, skills, and attitude through technology.

Brief biography of author

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Appendix (A)

The test of the program

After greeting the students ,teacher will kindly request the students to answer the following questions:

A- Oral questions:

- Where do you live?
- Is it a village, a town or a city?
- Is it noisy or quite, big or small, cold or hot, old or modern, healthy, expensive?
- Name another country?
- Is it noisy or quiet, big or small, cold or hot, old or modern, healthy, expensive?
- Compare between these two countries?
- which country is better? why?

NOTICE: teacher will use facial expressions, body movement and expressive tones to help students to understand and answer questions.

B- Listening practice:

Ahmad: Hello Hammam, you are in Jeddah. Right?

Hammam: yes right.

Ahmad: where is it located?

Hammam: Jeddah is located in the western coast of Saudi Arabia. What about your country?

Ahmad: I am in Tabuk which is located in the western north of Saudi Arabia.

Hammam: Jeddah is larger than Tabuk and noisier.

Ahmad: Oh yes, it is noisier as it has more population. What about weather in Jeddah now in winter.

Hammam: it is cold. But I think Tabuk is colder. Isn't it!

Ahmad: Yes of course while Jeddah is hotter in summer.

Hammam: Tabuk seems to have fresh air and less crowded places. What about prices? Is Tabuk cheaper than Jeddah?

Ahmad: I think as the two cities located in one country the prices are nearly the same.

Hammam: However, I like Jeddah as it is more modern and open.

Ahmad: Mm, for me I like Tabuk as it is quieter and healthier.

After listening to the dialogue above answer the following questions:

- which country is less noisy? -----
- which country is quieter? -----
- which country is bigger? -----
- which country is smaller? -----
- which country is colder? -----
- which country is hotter? -----
- which country is more modern? -----
- which country is healthier? -----
- which country is more expensive? -----
- which country is better? why? -----

- Circle the word with long (a) sound after listening to teachers' pronunciation:

(face, made, mail, mall, eight, head, bad, bed, paid, rain, tale, said, say)

C- Reading practice:

Egypt is a big beautiful historical city located in the north-eastern corner of Africa and south-western Asia. Egypt, commonly known as “The Motherland of the World”, “Land of Civilizations” and “The Greatest Power in Human History”. It is a famous modern country which has a huge population makes it crowded and noisy in some cities especially Cairo. Cairo- City-is the glorious capital of Egypt, The River Nile is the longest in the world, stretching for 4,187 miles and located in Egypt. Throughout Egypt, days are commonly warm or hot, and nights are cool. Egypt has only two seasons: a mild winter from November to April and a hot summer from May to October. I like Egypt because it has a great history and beautiful arts.

After reading the text above answer the following questions:

- underline the name of the country? -----
- Is it big or small? -----
- Where is Egypt? -----
- Is Egypt famous? -----
- Is it modern? -----
- Is it crowded? -----
- Do the writer like Egypt? -----

Writing practice:



After looking at the two pictures answer the following question:

- Write sentences comparing the two schools using the following adjectives (big, small, old, modern, healthy, noisy, quiet, crowded)

D- Grammar practice:

Make sentences saying what you think about the following. Use comparative sentences:

Tabuk & Jeddah -----
(cold)

School & House -----
(crowded)

Chocolate & Milk -----
(healthy)