

BLENDDED LEARNING IN THE ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES (ESP) CONTEXT

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Abstract Blended learning has become an increasingly popular approach in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction due to its ability to combine the strengths of face-to-face teaching with the flexibility of online learning. Drawing on the works of Sharma (2010), Tomlinson (2019), and Mulyadi et al. (2020), this paper discusses the key definitions, pedagogical advantages, challenges, and practical applications of blended learning in the ESP context. The findings show that blended learning promotes learner autonomy, flexibility, and engagement while enhancing authentic communication opportunities. However, successful implementation depends on teacher readiness, institutional support, and effective course design. The paper concludes that blended learning is not only a teaching method but also a pedagogical philosophy that can transform ESP classrooms into interactive, learner-centered environments.

Keywords: blended learning, English for Specific Purposes, teacher readiness, technology integration, learner autonomy

Introduction

In recent years, blended learning has become one of the most discussed approaches in English Language Teaching (ELT), especially within English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. As technology becomes a vital part of education, teachers are finding innovative ways to combine traditional classroom lessons with online activities. This combination helps learners enjoy both the human interaction of face-to-face communication and the flexibility of digital learning environments. Researchers such as Sharma (2010), Tomlinson (2019), and Mulyadi et al. (2020) agree that blended learning can make English teaching more effective, engaging, and relevant to learners' needs. This paper explores how blended learning works in

ESP settings by examining its key concepts, pedagogical benefits, challenges, and implications for teaching practice.

What Is Blended Learning

Pete Sharma (2010) explains that the idea of blended learning has evolved over time, but essentially it refers to a purposeful combination of classroom and digital instruction. According to him, there are three main ways to understand blended learning: (1) blending face-to-face and online instruction, which integrates in-class lessons with online tasks and discussions through learning platforms such as Moodle or Google Classroom; (2) blending technologies, which involves using different digital tools such as videos, chats, apps, or social media to enrich learning experiences; and (3) blending teaching methods, which combines traditional, communicative, and task-based approaches to promote language development. Sharma emphasizes that what matters most is balance. In ESP, this might mean using online case studies, podcasts, or videos to complement role plays, simulations, and discussions during class time.

Blended Learning as an Ideal Model

Brian Tomlinson (2019) describes blended learning as a 'principled and coherent combination' of online and face-to-face delivery. He argues that it provides the best of both worlds: the personal connection and feedback offered in the classroom, and the flexibility, autonomy, and exposure to authentic input that digital learning provides. Face-to-face lessons help students build confidence, social bonds, and motivation, while online components allow them to practice skills independently, access extra materials, and learn at their own pace. For example, web quests, online chats, and mobile learning activities allow students to interact with real-world content in their specific field. Tomlinson stresses that each component should serve a clear pedagogical purpose rather than using technology just for novelty.

ESP Teachers' Perspectives

A study by Mulyadi et al. (2020) investigated the perceptions of 70 ESP lecturers in Indonesia and found that blended learning was widely regarded as beneficial but challenging. Most lecturers appreciated how it encouraged flexibility and learner autonomy. Students could access lessons anytime and anywhere, which helped them become more responsible and motivated. Teachers also noticed that integrating digital tools like Kahoot, WhatsApp, or Google Classroom made learning more engaging. However, several obstacles were also mentioned, such as poor internet connectivity, limited institutional support, and teachers' lack of confidence with technology.

Practical Implications for ESP Teaching

Designing a successful blended ESP course requires careful planning. Teachers must ensure that online and classroom activities complement each other and align with students' professional goals. Tomlinson (2019) provides a helpful model for this. For instance, in a business English course, students might begin with a classroom discussion on organizing meetings, then conduct online research, collaborate via chat to plan an agenda, and finally present their project in class. Similarly, in ESP for Nursing, students could listen to authentic medical conversations online, then practice patient communication in face-to-face sessions. This approach helps students apply language in realistic contexts while giving teachers more room to personalize feedback and monitor progress.

Challenges and Future Directions

Despite its many advantages, blended learning still faces practical challenges. Sharma (2010) notes that when the balance between online and offline instruction is poorly managed, courses may lose coherence. Technical issues, unequal access to devices, and inconsistent student motivation can also hinder progress. Mulyadi et al. (2020) found that teacher readiness remains one of the biggest challenges. Institutions should provide continuous professional development and strong technical support. Tomlinson (2019) also suggests involving students in deciding

how much of the course to complete online or in person to boost motivation and learner autonomy.

Conclusion

Blended learning represents a meaningful shift in English for Specific Purposes instruction. By combining the interactivity of classroom teaching with the flexibility of online learning, it creates opportunities for students to practice real communication, access authentic materials, and develop independent learning skills. As highlighted by Sharma (2010), Tomlinson (2019), and Mulyadi et al. (2020), blended learning is not just a trend but a sustainable and powerful approach that helps teachers connect technology and pedagogy in ways that enhance both teaching effectiveness and learner engagement.

References

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