

# THE USE OF BLENDED LEARNING METHOD IN ENHACING STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILL

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**ABSTRACT** - This research aims at finding out whether Blended Learning method was able to improve the students' achievement and motivation in learning Listening. This research used Action Research design. The subjects of the research were the third semester students of English Department, Faculty of Letters, University of Sawerigading Makassar. This research applied Classroom Action research which consisted of two cycles, each cycle comprised of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The data-collecting methods were observation and test. The data were analyzed using descriptive comparative manner. The result of the research revealed that learning listening through blended learning method could improve the students' achievement. The average score of the initial achievement was 42.07, while at the first cycle was 61.59, and finally, at the second cycle was 68.11. In addition, learning listening through Blended Learning method also increased the students' learning motivation.

**Keywords:** Achievement, Blended learning, Listening, Motivation

## A. INTRODUCTION

**A**mong the four skills in learning English (Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking) which have to be mastered by students, listening skill is the most difficult one for the English department students of Sawerigading University Makassar. This is due to several reasons: Their main reason is that understanding listening material is very challenging due to the differences in pronunciation and the writing of words so that they often find it difficult to understand the expression of native speakers when speaking. Another reason is that listening courses using face-to-face learning methods in the classroom are very monotonous and there is no variation, therefore the students' motivation is very low in this listening lesson with an indicator that when the listening lesson, they seem to be apathetic. And the third reason is that the intensity of their listening practice is not maximal so the result is not so significant. Therefore, the quality of teachers should be improved, not only the

knowledge and skills but also the creativity. This means that teachers should improve the quality of the learning process.

Blended Learning is a learning approach that combines between the advantages of face-to-face learning and e-learning which might be able to answer the student's challenges. In face-to-face learning, learners meet directly with educators. Therefore, social interaction remains in tclassroom where learners still need guidance in learning (Akkoyunlu and Soylu, 2006, p. 45). Learners can interact with educators and their friends so that learners will directly gain feedback from learning outcomes. Meanwhile, online learning offers learning over time where learning can be accessed anytime and anywhere (Akkoyunlu and Soylu, 2008, p. 183). Hameed et al (2008, p. 3) also added that the material in online learning can be accessed as often as possible when something is forgotten.

Based on the background of the problem, the researcher is encouraged to conduct a research on "The Use of Blended Learning Method in Enhancing Students' Listening Skill".

## **B. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### ***Blended Learning***

As language educators, we must always use variations in teaching to enrich the learning process for learners. Blended Learning as a learning model that combines between face to face learning and e-learning, is one of the learning models that can facilitate the delivery of learning materials from educators to learners.

According to Brew (2008, p. 98) Blended Learning is a learning approach that integrates between face-to-face and online learning to produce a more effective learning experience. With Blended Learning, teachers can use the learning resources available online and in face-to-face learning to attract students' attention and help them become more active and effective learners. In line with Brew, Badawi (2009, p. 15) defines Blended Learning as a flexible learning approach that combines face-to-face learning activities with online learning that allows students to exchange feedback and response together and individually in four specific areas, that is, learner feedback, learner strategies, alternative assessments either directly or indirectly. In other words, Blended Learning is a learning process that combines online self-learning and face-to-face learning by utilizing media and technology to provide a more enjoyable and effective learning experience to learners.

If Blended Learning is well implemented, this learning model will contribute positively to the learning process. One of them is more time saving. As revealed by McCarthy and Murphy (2010, p. 67) that with the implementation of Blended Learning, students will be able

to complete the learning tasks in a short time. More specifically, Marsh (2012, p. 4) identifies several advantages of Blended Learning: it provides a more individualized learning experience, gives more personalized learning support, supports and encourages independent and collaborative learning, enhances student engagement in learning, accommodates different learning styles, allocates time and place to practice the target language outside the classroom, reduces stress in the practice of the target language, provides flexible learning anytime or anywhere to meet the needs of learners, and helps learners develop skills. Because of the advantages possessed by learning using Blended Learning, educators should use Blended Learning to improve students' listening comprehension abilities.

### **C. METHOD**

The design of this study was a classroom action research, using a model developed by Kurt (Class Action Research Coach, 2000, p. 11). According to the model, the implementation of action research includes four stages: (1) planning, (2) implementation, (3) observation, and (4) reflection. These four stages form a cycle. The subject of this research is the third semester student of English Department, Faculty of Letters, Sawerigading University Makassar Academic Year 2017-2018, consisting of 23 students. Researchers took the samples of the research in the third semester students because the average result of English final test in listening subject is the lowest among the other skills.

In data collection, the researcher used observation and test techniques (Arikunto, 1996). Observation was done to all student activities in the third semester during listening teaching and learning process. The tool used for observation was an observation sheet that served to record all activities, including attitude, behaviour, attention, and motivation of students in following the learning process. The test was done to find out the learning outcomes. The form of the test was in the form of multiple choices consisting of 40 numbers of listening questions. Each item was provided with four options to choose one correct answer.

The data analysis in this study used comparative descriptive analysis. The researcher compared learning outcomes achieved by learners on initial conditions with learning outcomes after receiving treatment or at the final conditions. If the improvement of learning outcomes in the final conditions of students' listening comprehension had not reached more than 65%, a follow-up action was carried out in cycle II. The purpose of this follow-up was to improve the learning system and overcome all the obstacles and weaknesses found in the previous cycle so that student motivation and interest could increase significantly. In the data analysis, the following procedures were used: (1) analysing the data by determining whether

the student's answer was correct or not, and (2) from the correct student answer, it was given a score. The score was used to measure the results of learning listening through face-to-face in the classroom and online with the help of Facebook group media (blended learning).

#### **D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This study was conducted in two cycles. The first cycle consisted of four stages and the second one comprised of four steps. Both cycle I and cycle II took 5 hours (5 x 45 minutes) for face-to-face in class and in online, lecturer only uploaded the material twice in each cycle, but the material could be learned and practiced anytime, anywhere and many times. Each cycle is described as follows.

##### ***1. Cycle I***

###### ***a. Planning***

In this stage, the researcher made observations to determine the response, attitude, and motivation of students. The researcher prepared a listening topic with Short Conversation material taken from the Listening TOEFL part 1. The researcher devised the lesson plan then prepared the internet media (Facebook group) and references related to the material and finally compiled the test format.

Cycle I took 4 x 45 minutes to deliver face-to-face material in the classroom and 1 x 45 minutes for classroom evaluation. While the material online only given 2 times before the evaluation in class. The researchers compared the results obtained by the students from the test results in the initial conditions with cycle I.

###### ***b. Implementation***

This classroom action research was carried out in the Listening lesson in the third semester students of English Department, Faculty of Letters with the main subject "How to Understand Short Conversations". The purpose of the activity was to provide solutions to students who had difficulties in understanding the conversations in the form of Listening and improve their learning outcomes and motivation.

###### ***1) The First Meeting***

###### ***a) Face-to-face learning.***

Firstly, the researchers introduced how to understand Listening material in the form of Short Conversation in English to the students. Researchers carried out learning activities using the slides and examples of the exercises. The researcher gave some vocabularies related to the listening material. At the end of the class, the researchers asked the students to join the

Facebook group that had been created by the researcher to use it as a medium of practice outside the classroom that can be accessed anytime and anywhere.

*b) Online learning*

To train the material described in the classroom, students were asked to deepen their understanding by exercising their listening by listening to short conversations through the Facebook group which had been created, then they were required to answer the questions to know their ability in understanding the conversation.

*2) The second meeting*

*a) Face-to-face learning*

Based on the experience at the first meeting, the researcher gave the students opportunity to ask if they still found difficulties to understand a short conversation in the form of listening material. This opportunity was given to the students after the lecturer re-explained the strategy or tips to understand and answer the questions of the listening practice. Furthermore, the researcher explained the next material about other forms of short conversations and examples of exercises.

*b) Online learning*

The researcher gave the next short conversation materials to be listened to, and then the students answered the questions to find out how far they understood the material that had been described and mentioned the correct number of the questions in the comment column.

*3) The third meeting*

A face-to-face progress test was administered to figure out the result of cycle I.

**c. Observation**

The lecturer as the researcher observed and recorded all the activities of the students in the process of teaching and learning during the lesson in the form of both face-to-face and on-line. The Lecturer also recorded the situation and condition of the students as they did the test as well as the test results. The results of these observations can be stated as follows.

*1) The first meeting*

In the face-to-face meeting, when the lecturer first began the listening lesson, some students did not pay attention but others kept paying attention on it. When starting the practice, they found it difficult to understand the context of a short conversation. They did not know what the speaker implied in the short conversation. Similarly, in the online learning, they still found some difficulties to understand the speakers and to answer the questions.

*2) The second meeting*

In the face-to-face learning, the researcher figured out that most of the students were very concerned when the lecturer tried to re explain the material in order to deepen their comprehension of how to understand the conversations and how to answer the questions quickly and accurately. They always recorded new things that had not been obtained at the first meeting and responded to what the lecturer explained. Most students had tried to understand what the speaker said in the practice. At the online learning, when the lecturer provided an opportunity to practice their listening comprehension in the form of other conversations, they seemed to be very enthusiastic about their listening exercises and there was a sense of motivation and improvement although not so significant. These were seen from the way they expressed their ideas in the comment column and the answer they uploaded.

*3) The third meeting*

At the third meeting, the lecturer gave a test in the classroom and not through online in order to avoid cheating. The results of the test were analysed to determine whether there was an increase in their listening ability when compared to the results of the test at the initial conditions.

**d. Reflection**

This activity analysed the data obtained, both in the form of quantitative and qualitative data from the observation of the existing instruments. The result of this analysis served as a basis for making better and exciting lesson plans for emerging new motivation and fostering a high level of confidence. The reflection for each meeting can be explained as follows:

*1). The first meeting*

The researcher as the teacher had to give more attention and encouragement to his students so that their motivation, interest and confidence would grow in order that their difficulties in understanding short conversation could be solved. The lecturer also had to continually give encouragement and motivation to ensure that they were able to answer the questions quickly and accurately.

*2). The second meeting*

Based on the results of the test in cycle I, the students began to understand and be able to answer the questions correctly, although the results had not been maximized yet. Dealing with the material, according to the results of the discussion, the researcher had to be careful in choosing the topic of the subject in the exercise so that the students did not feel too difficult and could be more interested and enjoyed the listening lessons. As the purpose of this classroom action research was to improve the students' listening ability and the quality of the

learning process, the researcher had to implement better and more interesting learning in order to reach higher motivation and interest in the cycle II. The researcher still figured out some problems faced by the students. The weaknesses encountered in the cycle I had to be solved in cycle II. Therefore, conducting cycle II was necessary for the improvement of cycle I.

From the reflection of cycle I, it can be stated that learning listening through the Blended Learning method shows a significant change. The change here is related to the discouragement and low motivation initially gained by most of the students, have been transformed into an excitement and encouragement, i.e. there is an increase in the interest and attitude of the students. The changes can be noticed by looking at some of the following indicators: at the time of listening lessons, students were very concerned and competing to answer examples of questions and asked when there was a new word (new vocabulary) that they did not know the meaning. They were very responsive to lecturer's questions, and they started growing their self-confidence, as well as their listening learning outcomes began to increase. The students' learning outcomes reached the average of 61.59 (77.50 was the highest score, while the lowest one was 40). The number of the students who had high listening comprehension was 15 students or 63.82% and low listening comprehension was 8 students or 38.18%. As the maximum comprehension limit set 65% has not been achieved yet, consequently the study was continued to the cycle II.

## **2. Cycle II**

### ***a. Planning***

Based on the result of the test and reflection in cycle I, there were still some students who had not been able to understand the short conversations maximally, therefore the researcher had to be more creative and better in the process of listening learning.

### ***b. Implementation***

At the first meeting in face-to-face learning, the researcher re-explained the tips and tricks to understand short conversations and how to answer the questions quickly and accurately. In the first stage, the researcher mentioned the words and phrases that were often used in the conversation and then explained how to answer the problem quickly and accurately. Next, the researcher explained how to use certain expressions such as idiomatic expressions and focus on the second speaker as well as search the answers by figuring out the synonym or restatement. At the online learning, the researcher gave short conversation exercises and asked them to answer the questions.

At the second meeting, the researcher did the same technic as before but with different materials and detail explanation both in the face-to-face meeting and the online one.

At the third meeting in the face-to-face meeting, the researcher repeated briefly about the material already described previously, and then a test was conducted. The test results were analysed and compared with the results of the test in cycle I.

Based on the comparison, the researcher can conclude whether it still needs to be followed up on the next cycle or not. If the comparison results show more than 65% of the number of students with high level of understanding then there is no need to continue on the next cycle.

### ***c. Observation***

An observation was still conducted to obtain data, both from attitudes, interests and motivation as well as the progress of students' skills in listening to short conversations. The results of the observation in cycle II are as follows.

#### *1) The first meeting*

The students began to respond well to the exercises. They seemed very enthusiastic in practicing listening especially through online, they wanted to practice continuously with various topics. The speed of working on the questions and its accuracy had begun to be seen. They were even able to practise some idiomatic expressions obtained from the listening materials into their daily conversation and through the comment column. For instance, they sometimes say “I couldn’t agree with you more” to express their agreement.

#### *2) The second meeting*

The student's response had been very good and confidence had emerged. This is evident that most of the students were not afraid anymore to show the results of their own practice without any command from the lecturer on the comment column at the Facebook Group. They were very active to ask various kinds of procedures for making things and various vocabularies that were often used in the short conversations. The students were practicing listening many times without being asked. They also appeared to have the courage to explain something obtained through the listening practice. In short, the result of the test on the second cycle was better compared to the result of the test in cycle I.

### ***d. Reflection***

Based on the observation and test, the researcher evaluates the students' ability in listening and the framework of the learning process which shows a significant improvement. The results of this stage indicate that the students showed much better progress than that in cycle I.



Most of the students have better conditions when the learning process took place. They seemed very excited and confident. Results achieved in cycle II have shown 82.97% of students achieve a high understanding. Therefore, subsequent follow-up is not necessary anymore because the research indicator has been achieved.

The technique used by the researcher gives enough improvement to the short conversations listening both in the cycle I and cycle II. As evidence, we can see the comparison of the learning outcomes starting from the initial condition, cycle I and cycle II.

Table 1. Learning Outcomes and Listening Comprehension Limits

<i>No</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Score</i>		
		<i>Initial Condition</i>	<i>Cycle I</i>	<i>Cycle II</i>
1	The highest score	60	77.50	85
2	The lowest score	22.50	40	50
3	The average	42.07	61.59	68.11
4	The percentage of high comprehension	12.76 %	63.82%	82.97%

*Note: Maximum score in initial condition, Cycle I and Cycle II is 100 with high Comprehension limit score 65.*

At the initial condition, from the learning result, it is evident that there were only 12.76% of students who reached the limit of high listening comprehension, the highest score was only 60 and the lowest was 22.50.

At the cycle I, the average result obtained by the students was 61.59, the highest score was 77.50 and the lowest was 40, the students with high listening understanding reached 63.82%.

At the cycle II, a very significant progress can be seen with several indicators: the results of high comprehension on the test reached 82.97%. The average of learning outcomes in cycle II was 68.11, with the highest score 85 and the lowest 50, the number of students' high listening comprehension was 19 or (82.97%) and the low one is 4 students or (17.03%).

Based on the above description, it can be stated that learning listening through blended learning method can improve the learning outcomes of the students in the third semester at English Department Faculty of Letters University of Sawerigading Makassar. The most significant influence lies on the development of the students' academic competence particularly in listening skill which reached by 82.29% at the cycle II. Besides, this method also brings another positive impact on the students learning motivation especially in learning Listening 3 subject as seen on their excitement and confidence in participating in the learning process both in the face-to-face meetings and on line ones.

## E. CONCLUSION

Based on the result of this research, it can be concluded as follows: teaching listening by using blended learning method can improve student learning outcomes in listening short conversations. In addition, with blended learning method, students become more enthusiastic, motivated, and active in learning listening.

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