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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF BLENDED LEARNING TO ENHANCE ENGLISH LISTENING COMPREHENSION OF TENTH GRADERS

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Abstract. This study investigates the impact of blended learning on tenth graders' listening comprehension and their attitudes toward its implementation in listening lessons. A one-group pretest-posttest design was employed with 44 tenth-grade students from an upper secondary school in Hanoi who participated in an eight-week blended learning intervention. Quantitative data were collected through listening tests and a questionnaire. Results from a paired samples t-test analysis indicated a statistically significant improvement in students' listening performance after the intervention. Additionally, the questionnaire results indicated that students held positive attitudes toward the integration of blended learning into their listening lessons. These findings highlight the pedagogical potential of blended learning in enhancing listening skills and suggest its broader application in language education.

Keywords: Blended learning, listening comprehension, tenth graders.

1. Introduction

Listening plays a fundamental role in human communication. According to Hedge (2000) [1], individuals allocate approximately 9% of their time to writing, 16% to reading, 30% to speaking, and 45% to listening, highlighting the critical role of listening in the communication process. Given its significance, listening cannot be overlooked. However, research has consistently shown that listening is one of the most challenging skills for second language learners to develop (e.g., Renukadevi, 2014 [2]; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012 [3]).

In Vietnamese public upper secondary schools, many students are proficient in vocabulary and grammar but face challenges with listening comprehension. This issue is partly due to the lack of regular listening practice in lower secondary school, especially since there is no listening test in the tenth-grade entrance examination. Additionally, in Vietnamese upper secondary schools, the limited focus on listening skills, with only one lesson per week dedicated to it out of the three English lessons, makes it difficult for teachers to effectively address this issue.

Amidst this pedagogical context, blended learning has garnered attention as an effective solution to enhance listening skills by integrating face-to-face instruction with online learning resources (Mubarok (2015) [4]), allowing greater flexibility and exposure to authentic listening materials. Both international and Vietnamese research have consistently shown that blended learning is effective in improving students' English listening comprehension. Research by Abdullah (2015) [5] found that blended learning significantly improved pre-intermediate EFL students' listening abilities. Similarly, Banditvilai (2016) [6] emphasized the positive impact of

blended learning on learners' autonomy, motivation, and listening proficiency. Expanding on this perspective, Mubarok (2015) [4] investigated specific blended learning models such as Flip and Lab Rotation, finding that these approaches not only enhanced students' comprehension but were also met with favorable responses. In line with these findings, Syamsuddin and Jimi (2019) [7] further confirmed that the integration of blended learning significantly boosted students' achievement and motivation in listening activities. Ibrahim (2020) [8] found that the blended learning strategy outperformed traditional methods in listening comprehension tests. In addition, studies in Vietnam further support blended learning's effectiveness. Duong, Mai, and Hoang (2019) [9] found positive outcomes from using Google Forms in teaching English to non-major students. Vu and Bui (2021) [10] showed that English major students who used Google Forms for listening assignments had better results and were more motivated. Do and Vo (2021) [11] integrated Moodle-based activities and saw significant improvements in non-English major freshmen's listening skills. These studies confirmed that blended learning promotes student autonomy, offers immediate feedback, and enhances motivation, all contributing to better listening comprehension.

Despite the positive findings, most research focuses on higher education students, with little research on its impact on tenth graders. This gap indicates the need for further studies to explore how blended learning can enhance listening skills in younger learners. Thus, this article aims to bridge this gap by investigating the impact of blended learning on the listening comprehension skills of Vietnamese tenth-grade students, thus providing valuable insights into the potential of blended learning as an approach for fostering listening proficiency in secondary education. To achieve the aim, two research questions were raised:

1. To what extent does blended learning help the tenth graders improve their English listening comprehension?

2. What are the tenth graders' attitudes towards the implementation of blended learning in listening lessons?

2. Content

2.1. Literature review

2.1.1. Definition of blended learning

Blended learning has been defined in various ways by researchers, typically as an educational approach combining online and face-to-face learning experiences over time (Vaughan, Cleveland-Innes, & Garrison, 2013) [12]. Graham, Woodfield, and Harrison (2013) [13] describe it as a method that allows teachers to integrate technology into classroom instruction, maximizing in-person interaction while enabling learning beyond the classroom. Hew and Lo (2018) [14] view blended learning as a pedagogical strategy that blends synchronous and asynchronous online activities with in-person sessions, utilizing digital tools to enhance engagement. Watson (2012) [15] defines blended learning as an innovative approach that uses information and communications technology to merge traditional classroom instruction with online activities, enriching the learning experience and broadening knowledge acquisition. Marsh (2012) [16] notes that blended learning's meaning can vary depending on the learning context but generally encompasses diverse learning environments to enhance educational effectiveness.

In Vietnam's educational context, Circular No. 12/2016/TT-BGDDT by the Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training (2016) [17] defines blended learning as the integration of e-learning and conventional teaching, aiming to improve training efficiency and educational quality through technology.

Based on the above concepts, blended learning in English language teaching combines face-to-face instruction with digital resources, offering a framework for educators to effectively design

activities that leverage both instructional methods and technology to create a rich learning experience.

2.1.2. Models of blended learning

The blended learning model combines traditional and online teaching methods at varying proportions, depending on the level of implementation. Nguyen (2018) [18] identifies three levels for applying the blended learning model (see Table 1).

Table 1. Levels of blended learning

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Face-to-face teaching remains the primary method, supplemented by online learning materials. Students use technology and the internet to search for subject-related resources to complete learning tasks.	Teachers design online lessons to complement face-to-face instruction. Students complete online tasks provided by teachers, with discussions and exchanges occurring via email, forums, or in-class interactions.	Teachers combine online and face-to-face teaching, including planning for testing, evaluation, and managing online classes throughout the course. Students complete learning tasks and participate in online assessments, discussing and exchanging information via email, forums, or directly in the classroom.

Horn and Staker (2011) [19] identified six distinct models of blended learning: 'Face-to-Face Driver', 'Rotation', 'Flex', 'Online Lab', 'Self-Blend' and 'Online Driver' (see Table 2).

Table 2. Models of blended learning

Model	Features	Applicability
Face-to-Face Driver	Traditional face-to-face teaching is the main approach, with technology used for materials and assessments. Learners engage directly in class while accessing documents and exercises online.	Suitable for classes with diverse backgrounds and varying proficiency levels.
Rotation	Learners alternate between face-to-face and online learning according to a set schedule.	Offers flexible support for individual needs; ideal for primary and lower secondary schools.
Flex	Primarily online learning, with the teacher offering guidance, advice, and support during occasional face-to-face meetings.	Fosters self-study skills, enabling learners to organize study time and space independently.
Online Lab	Course is delivered through an online platform, combined with a physical lab setting and supervised by paraprofessionals.	Reduces the need for physical facilities and teaching staff.
Self-Blend	Students attend regular classes but enrol in additional online courses to expand their knowledge.	Best suited for university-level education, meeting varied learning needs.
Online Driver	Learning and teacher interactions occur entirely online via a management platform.	Ideal for students needing flexible schedules, especially in undergraduate and postgraduate education.

In summary, all blended learning models combine online and face-to-face learning to varying extents. The choice of model depends on multiple factors. In this research, with 44 students of varying English proficiency levels and the recent return to full-time in-person classes following

effective COVID-19 management, the Face-to-Face Driver model at Level 2 was deemed most suitable.

2.2. Research methodology

2.2.1. Research design

This study employs a one-group pre-test post-test design to investigate the impact of blended learning on tenth-grade students' listening skills. A quantitative research approach was adopted to test the hypothesis that blended learning enhances students' listening comprehension.

To measure students' progress, pre-tests and post-tests were conducted before and after an eight-week blended learning intervention. The collected data were analysed using a paired samples t-test to determine whether the difference between pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant. This design allows for an assessment of the effectiveness of blended learning in improving listening comprehension.

2.2.2. Research setting

The study was conducted at an upper secondary school in Hanoi, Vietnam. The English curriculum for grade 10 students consists of 105 periods over two semesters, with 3 periods per week, each lasting 45 minutes.

The participants were 44 tenth-grade students aged 14 to 15, most of whom performed well on vocabulary and grammar tests but struggled with listening and speaking skills.

2.2.3. Data collection tools

The study employed two primary tools for data collection: listening tests and a questionnaire. The listening tests were administered at the beginning and end of the study to measure improvements in students' listening comprehension. Each test contained two parts: a gap-fill section and a multiple-choice section. The questionnaire, given at the end of the study, was adapted from Nguyen et al. (2022) [20] and aimed to assess students' attitudes towards the use of blended learning in listening lessons.

2.2.4. Data collection procedure

The study was carried out over an 8-week period. In the first week, students completed a pre-test and an introductory session on blended learning. From weeks 2 to 7, blended learning activities were implemented, combining face-to-face teaching with online listening exercises. The teacher sent these exercises via a Zalo group, and students completed them at home. In-class time was used to review and practice these activities. The final week involved a post-test and questionnaire to assess improvements in listening comprehension and gather student feedback on their experience with blended learning. The data were analysed by using SPSS 26.

Google Forms and Zalo were chosen for this study due to their widespread use, ease of accessibility, and effectiveness in supporting education in Vietnam. Google Forms provides a flexible platform for creating online assignments, collecting responses, and automating grading, making it easier for teachers to manage and evaluate students' performance. Meanwhile, Zalo, a widely used messaging app in Vietnam, facilitates the sharing of assignments, provides instructions, and fosters interaction between teachers and students. The combination of Google Forms and Zalo ensures convenience, accessibility, and effective communication in a blended learning environment, making them a more optimal choice compared to similar tools.

2.3. Findings and discussion

2.3.1. The results of the listening tests

The implementation of blended learning has shown a significant positive impact on students' listening skills, as demonstrated by the comparison between pre-test and post-test results (see Table 3).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics on the results of the listening tests

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Pre-test	44	2	9	5.52	1.96
Post-test	44	4	10	8.02	1.50

The average score of students improved from 5.52 in the pre-test to 8.02 in the post-test, indicating an apparent enhancement in their listening abilities after participating in the blended learning program. Additionally, the reduction in standard deviation from 1.959 to 1.502 suggests that students' performance became more consistent, with fewer students scoring at the lower end. These findings highlight the effectiveness of blended learning in fostering a more uniform improvement in students' listening skills.

To further clarify the difference between the pre-test and post-test results, a paired samples t-test was performed (see Table 4).

Table 4. Paired samples t-test on the results of the listening tests

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	*SD*	*Std. Error Mean*	*95% Confidence Interval of the Difference*				
				Lower	*Upper*			
Pre-test – Post-test	-2.50	1.73	0.26	-3.03	-1.97	-9.57	43	0.00

A paired samples t-test compares the means of two related measurements from the same group of participants. In this study, it was applied to examine the difference between students' listening comprehension scores before and after the pedagogical intervention.

The key indicator for interpreting the results is the p-value. If the p-value is less than the predetermined significance level (0.05), it indicates a statistically significant difference between the two sets of scores, meaning that the observed improvement is unlikely to be due to random chance. Conversely, if the p-value exceeds 0.05, any difference detected may not be statistically meaningful.

As shown in the table, the p-value is 0.00, which is well below the 0.05 threshold. This confirms that the improvement in students' post-test scores is statistically significant, supporting the effectiveness of the blended learning intervention.

2.3.2. Descriptive statistics on the questionnaires

Table 5. Descriptive statistics on students' perceptions of the usefulness of Zalo in learning English listening

Item	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Level of agreement
1. It is easy to access the course materials on Zalo.	44	2.00	5.00	4.30	0.73	Very high
2. Zalo is suitable for learning interaction between teachers and students in English lessons.	44	3.00	5.00	4.18	0.72	High
3. The teacher's feedback through Zalo is beneficial.	44	3.00	5.00	4.25	0.65	Very high

The data shows that students have a positive perception of using Zalo for learning activities (see Table 5). In particular, they report that accessing course materials on Zalo is easy, with a high mean score for Item 1, indicating that the platform provides easy access to course content. Students also consider Zalo suitable for fostering interactive learning between teachers and

students (Item 2), which suggests that they find it a valuable tool for communication and engagement. Furthermore, the teacher's feedback provided through Zalo is viewed as beneficial (Item 3), showing that students appreciate the support they receive. The low standard deviations for each item indicate that the responses were generally consistent across participants, meaning there is a strong consensus among students regarding their positive experience with Zalo. Overall, the data suggests that students find Zalo to be an effective and user-friendly platform for both learning and communication.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics on students' perceptions of the usefulness towards listening activities on Google Forms

Item	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Level of agreement
4. The Google Forms website has a user-friendly interface.	44	2.00	5.00	4.23	0.71	Very high
5. The Google Forms' grading system assists me in keeping track of my progress in improving my English listening skills.	44	3.00	5.00	4.30	0.70	Very high
6. Online Google Forms listening activities helped me practice English listening skills more conveniently.	44	3.00	5.00	4.30	0.67	Very high
7. It is convenient to receive and submit my assignments on Google Forms.	44	1.00	5.00	4.11	0.87	High
8. Online Google Forms listening activities have improved my English listening skills.	44	3.00	5.00	4.18	0.69	High
9. The amount of online listening activities was appropriate.	44	2.00	5.00	4.14	0.80	High

Table 6 shows descriptive statistics regarding students' perceptions of the usefulness of Google Forms for listening activities. From the data, students viewed Google Forms as highly beneficial for conducting listening exercises. They found the website's interface easy to navigate (Item 4) and considered the grading system effective in tracking their progress (Item 5). Online listening activities through Google Forms were seen as convenient for improving English listening skills (Item 6). While slightly lower, the convenience of receiving and submitting assignments via Google Forms was still viewed positively (Item 7). Furthermore, students felt that their English listening skills had improved as a result of these online activities (Item 8), and they considered the number of listening tasks provided to be appropriate (Item 9). The standard deviations indicate that the responses were consistent across participants for each item.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics on students' behavioural intention of the blended course

Item	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Level of agreement
10. This blended course met my English learning needs.	44	3.00	5.00	4.34	0.68	Very high
11. Compared to other messaging applications, Zalo is my first choice to communicate with my teacher and classmates.	44	2.00	5.00	4.25	0.75	Very high
12. I want to learn English listening comprehension with online Google Forms listening activities in the future.	44	3.00	5.00	4.30	0.67	Very high

Based on the data from Table 7, it can be inferred that most students express a very high level of agreement regarding their behavioural intention towards the blended course. They felt that the course effectively met their English learning needs (Item 10), preferred using Zalo over other messaging applications for communication with their teacher and classmates (Item 11), and showed a strong desire to continue practicing English listening comprehension through online Google Forms activities in the future (Item 12). The low standard deviations suggest minimal response variability, indicating a consistent consensus among the participants. This indicates that students have a positive attitude towards continuing with similar blended courses in the future.

In conclusion, the data analysis suggests that implementing blended learning in teaching listening to tenth graders has been successful. The improvement in students' scores from the pre-test to the post-test, combined with their favourable attitude toward the blended course, highlights the effectiveness of the approach.

2.3.3. Discussion

Research question 1: To what extent does blended learning help the tenth graders improve their English listening comprehension?

The analysis of pre-test and post-test scores reveals a significant improvement in students' listening comprehension after the implementation of blended learning. While no student achieved a perfect score in the pre-test, a notable number attained scores between 8 and 10 in the post-test, demonstrating the effectiveness of blended learning over the eight-week period. These results align with prior studies (e.g., Mubarok, 2015 [4]; Abdullah, 2015 [5]; Banditvilai, 2016 [6]; Syamsuddin & Jimi, 2019 [7]; Ibrahim, 2020 [8]; Vu & Bui, 2021 [10]; Do & Vo, 2021 [11]), reinforcing that blended learning benefits not only higher education students but also high school learners.

Several challenges were identified during the intervention. Limited exposure to English listening, unfamiliarity with test formats, and reliance on multiple-choice questions were key obstacles. However, the integration of face-to-face instruction and online practice expanded students' vocabulary and listening skills, leading to improved performance. In summary, the findings confirm that blended learning is an effective approach for developing listening comprehension skills in high school learners.

Research question 2: What are the tenth graders' attitudes towards the implementation of blended learning in listening lessons?

The study highlights students' positive perceptions of blended learning, aligning with previous research (e.g., Mubarok, 2015 [4]; Vu & Bui, 2021 [10]; Do & Vo, 2021 [11]) blended learning was favoured for its interactive nature, self-paced learning opportunities, and access to diverse multimedia materials, which made listening practice more engaging and effective. Additionally, immediate feedback from online tools helped students identify weaknesses and refine their strategies.

Given these findings, educators should consider integrating blended learning strategies into their teaching by utilizing technology to design interactive activities and enhance student engagement.

3. Conclusions

This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of blended learning in improving tenth graders' listening comprehension and to explore their attitudes towards this approach. The results showed significant improvement in students' listening scores after implementing blended learning. Additionally, the majority of students had positive attitudes towards the blended learning approach, finding the Zalo platform and Google Forms activities useful and convenient for enhancing their English listening skills.

The findings support the effectiveness of blended learning in fostering listening comprehension among high school students, offering valuable insights for educators seeking to integrate technology into their teaching practices. However, this study has certain limitations. The research period was relatively short, which may not have been sufficient to capture long-term effects. Future research should consider longitudinal and comparative designs to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of blended learning's impact.

Despite these limitations, the research provides a solid foundation for future studies on blended learning's impact on high school students' listening skills. However, it is important to acknowledge potential technical challenges and infrastructure requirements associated with implementing blended learning. Limited access to digital devices and stable internet connections may hinder students' participation in online activities. Furthermore, both teachers and students need adequate digital literacy skills to navigate learning platforms effectively. The functionality and usability of learning management systems should also be optimised to support interactive and engaging listening exercises. Addressing these challenges will be crucial for maximizing the potential of blended learning in language education.

This study suggests that blended learning has strong potential for enhancing language learning, particularly in listening, and encourages further exploration in this area.

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