

Teaching English as a Whole Language Approach and Blended Learning for Kindergarten at La-orutis Demonstration School in Bangkok

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Abstract

The purposes of this study were: 1) to develop English lesson plans based on the whole language approach combined with blended learning for kindergarten students, 2) to compare students' English language achievement before and after the implementation of the lesson plans, and 3) to examine students' satisfaction with the instructional approach. The sample consisted of 20 kindergarten students (level 2) at La-orutis Demonstration School in Bangkok, selected through cluster random sampling. The research instruments included twelve lesson plans, an English language achievement test, and a satisfaction questionnaire. The data were analyzed the mean, E1/E2 efficiency criteria, and a paired-samples t-test. The results revealed that: 1) the efficiency of the developed lesson plans was 82.68/87.81, which exceeded the established criterion of 80/80; 2) students' English language achievement after the implementation was significantly higher than before at the .001 level; and 3) students' overall satisfaction with the instructional approach was at a high level. These findings suggest that integrating the whole language approach with blended learning effectively enhances English language learning and promotes student engagement in early childhood education.

Keywords: Whole Language Approach, Blended Learning, English Language Achievement

Introduction

English is essential in today's globalized world for both daily life and professional purposes. It is widely used in education, communication, and emergency situations. Although English is not a native, second, or foreign language in some countries, it is considered the most widely used global language; therefore, its importance cannot be overlooked (Ilyosovna, 2020). Teaching English to kindergarten children is equally important. Early exposure to English is a valuable investment in children's future language development and their ability to connect with global society (Elangovan, 2023; Discovery Childcare and Education, 2023). It also supports brain development, enhances social and emotional growth, prepares children for formal



schooling, and fosters a lifelong love of learning. Moreover, early childhood education lays the foundation for academic success and strengthens cognitive abilities (Walden University, 2024).

The management of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in early childhood education is critical, as English instruction is increasingly introduced at the kindergarten level (Kurniawan, 2020). However, Thailand still faces challenges in English language proficiency, with many young learners demonstrating limited communication skills (Manager Online, 2023; Chiropasworrapong, 2019). These issues are largely attributed to traditional teaching methods that emphasize memorization, as well as limited teacher proficiency, inadequate pedagogical skills, lack of engaging materials, and ineffective classroom environments (Songbatumis, 2017; Muar et al., 2024; Hendi & Asmawi, 2018). Additionally, low levels of teacher–student interaction and difficulties in designing engaging activities, such as storytelling, further hinder effective language learning (Chuang, 2001; Tsou et al., 2006).

La-orutis Demonstration School is committed to improving the quality of early childhood education by promoting balanced development in all areas. The school incorporates both Thai and English in daily communication to create a language-rich environment that supports English learning. It also serves as a model institution for early childhood education and a learning resource for other educational organizations (La-orutis Demonstration School, 2024).

In conclusion, teaching English as a foreign language in early childhood is essential for developing a strong foundation in language skills. Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating effective learning through appropriate teaching methods and classroom practices. The integration of the Whole Language Approach and Blended Learning can enhance children’s English proficiency and support sustainable learning. Therefore, this study aims to develop teaching guidelines for “Teaching English as a Whole Language Approach and Blended Learning for Kindergarten at La-orutis Demonstration School in Bangkok.” The findings are expected to contribute to improving early childhood English education and aligning it with modern educational trends and global developments.

Research Objectives

1. To develop lesson plans for teaching English using a whole language approach combined with blended learning.
2. To compare students’ English language achievement before and after the implementation of the lesson plans based on the whole language approach combined with blended learning.
3. To examine kindergarten students’ satisfaction with learning English through a whole language approach combined with blended learning.

Scope of the Research

1. Population scope

The population of this study consisted of 150 kindergarten level 2 students from six classrooms. At La-orutis Demonstration School, Suan Dusit University, Bangkok, in the academic year 2024.

2. Sample scope

The sample consisted of one classroom of 20 kindergarten level 2 students at La-orutis Demonstration School, Suan Dusit University, Bangkok, in the academic year 2024. The sample was selected using cluster random sampling, by randomly selected one classroom from six classrooms.



3. Variable Scope, the variables in this study consisted of: Independent variable 1) Lesson plans based on a whole language approach combined with blended learning. And Dependent variables 1) Students' English language achievement. and 2) Kindergarten students' satisfaction with learning English.

4. Timing Scope

This study will be conducted in the academic year 2024, with lesson plans for teaching English using a whole-language approach and blended learning developed in the first semester.

Literature Review

1. Teaching English for Kindergarten

Teaching English for kindergarten learners involves integrating teaching theories, learning principles, and curriculum design to support young learners whose first language is not English. Effective instruction requires appropriate approaches and meaningful activities that promote active participation. This study focuses on the Whole Language Approach combined with Blended Learning, which emphasizes meaningful, contextualized language use and integrates face-to-face and technology-supported learning. The use of the first language (Thai) is limited to supporting comprehension. The study is based on Krashen's (1983) theories, including the Acquisition–Learning Hypothesis, Input Hypothesis, and Affective Filter Hypothesis, which highlight the importance of natural communication, comprehensible input, and learners' emotional factors. Furthermore, language development is influenced by both innate abilities and environmental factors, with interaction playing a key role. Phonemic awareness and phonics are also essential, as they support reading, pronunciation, and overall language proficiency.

2. Early Childhood Curriculum in Thailand

The Early Childhood Curriculum in Thailand aims to promote holistic child development in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It emphasizes child-centered learning, taking into account individual differences, social context, and Thai culture, while encouraging development through meaningful play and real-life experiences. The curriculum also focuses on developing life skills, morality, and well-being. Experience-based learning is a key approach, particularly for young children, as it supports physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development through integrated, hands-on activities. Key experiences enable children to learn through direct interaction with their environment, forming a foundation for future learning. Additionally, experience plans (lesson plans) are essential tools for organizing learning activities. They help teachers design developmentally appropriate instruction aligned with curriculum standards, including clear objectives, activities, materials, assessment, and reflection.

3. Whole Language Approach

The Whole Language Approach integrates linguistics, psychology, and pedagogy, emphasizing that language is best learned through meaningful and real-life communication. It views language as an interconnected system and focuses on meaning rather than form, encouraging learners to construct knowledge through interaction and experience. The approach promotes learner-centered instruction and prioritizes learning processes over outcomes. Its principles highlight that reading and writing are meaning-making processes in which learners use prior knowledge to understand texts. Learning occurs naturally from whole to part within meaningful contexts. Language learning is most effective when it is relevant, socially interactive, and supports learners' autonomy, integrating cognitive, social, and cultural aspects.



In practice, the approach involves three key components: the teacher, the learner, and the learning environment. Teachers act as facilitators, learners actively engage in communication and collaboration, and classrooms are designed as language-rich environments that support authentic language use. Phonics is integrated within meaningful reading and writing activities rather than taught in isolation. It includes phonemic awareness, word recognition, and cueing systems to support comprehension. Overall, the Whole Language Approach promotes natural, holistic language development through real-life use and interaction.

4. Blended Learning

Blended learning refers to an instructional approach that integrates face-to-face classroom teaching with online learning activities within the same course. It combines traditional and digital methods while maintaining consistent learning content, students, and objectives. This approach allows learners to benefit from both direct interaction with teachers and flexible, technology-supported learning. The theoretical foundation of blended learning is based on the Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System (CABLS), which places the learner at the center of the learning process. The system consists of six interconnected elements: the learner, teacher, technology, content, learning support, and institution. These elements interact dynamically to support effective learning, and they can be adapted to suit different educational contexts and learners' needs. In classroom practice, blended learning can be implemented through several models. First, the blended presentation and interaction model combines in-class instruction with online activities, such as in the flipped classroom, where students study content online before engaging in interactive classroom activities. Second, the blended block model organizes learning into structured phases that alternate between face-to-face and online instruction. Third, fully online models can also be considered blended when they integrate both synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (self-paced) learning activities.

Overall, blended learning enhances flexibility, promotes active learning, and integrates multiple teaching methods to improve learning outcomes.

Research Methodology

1. Research Methodology

In this research, three research instruments were employed to collect and analyze data on students' development in four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). These instruments included:

1.1 Lesson plan

The lesson plan was developed based on the Early Childhood Curriculum (2017) and its guidelines for children aged 3–6 years. It was evaluated by three experts using the Index of Item–Objective Congruence (IOC), with values ranging from 0.67 to 1.00. Items with lower IOC values were revised according to expert recommendations, and all items were considered appropriate for data collection. The lesson plan was then piloted with a group of 20 kindergarten level 2 students who were not part of the main sample to identify weaknesses in the learning activities. Based on the pilot results, the lesson plan was revised and refined before implementation in the main study. The efficiency of the lesson plan was assessed using the E1/E2 formula (Chaiyong Brahmawong, 1977).

1.2 Formative Assessment

The pre-test and post-test were designed to assess students' overall English language achievement across four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with 20 items (five per skill). The total scores represented overall achievement. The instruments were evaluated by three experts using the Index of Item–Objective Congruence (IOC), with values



3.1 In the pre-experiment stage, permission was obtained from the school director, and the research procedures were explained to the teacher and students. A pretest was administered to assess students’ overall English language achievement.

3.2 During the experimental stage, lesson plans based on the whole language approach and blended learning were implemented over 12 sessions. Quizzes and an observation checklist were used to monitor students’ learning progress throughout the intervention.

3.3 In the post-experiment stage, a posttest with the same structure as the pretest was administered to measure students’ achievement. In addition, students’ satisfaction with the learning activities was assessed.

All data from the pretest and posttest, quizzes, observation checklist, and students’ satisfaction survey were systematically collected and prepared for statistical analysis. The pretest and posttest scores were used to evaluate students’ English language achievement, while the satisfaction survey was used to examine students’ satisfaction in accordance with the research objectives.

4. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Descriptive statistics, including mean, percentage, and standard deviation, were used to summarize the data. The effectiveness of the lesson plans was determined using the E1/E2 formula based on the 80/80 criterion (Chaiyong Brahmawong et al., 2013).

Inferential statistics were employed to test the research hypothesis. A dependent samples t-test was used to compare students’ English language achievement before and after the implementation of the instructional intervention.

Research Results

1. Results of Lesson Plan Efficiency (E1/E2)

The efficiency of the lesson plans was analyzed using the E1/E2 formula (Chaiyong Brahmawong, 1977). The results showed that the efficiency values were 82.68/87.81, exceeding the 80/80 criterion. This indicates that the lesson plans were effective and appropriate for English instruction.

Table 1: presents the efficiency of the English language lesson plans developed using a whole language approach combined with blended learning.

Details	Full score	Total (48X20)	Total	Average score	Percentage	Standard criteria	E1
Scores obtained during instruction (E1)	48	960	794	39.70	82.68%	80	82.68

Details	Full score	Total (20X20)	Total	Average score	Percentage	Standard criteria	E2
Post-test scores (E2)	20	400	351	17.55	87.81%	80	87.81

From Table 1, the process efficiency (E1) yielded a mean score of 39.70 out of 48 (82.68%), while the outcome efficiency (E2) showed a mean score of 17.55 out of 20 (87.81%).



Therefore, the overall efficiency of the lesson plans ($E1/E2 = 82.68/87.81$) exceeded the 80/80 criterion.

2. Results of the comparison of students' English language achievement before and after the implementation of the lesson plans.

The comparison of students' English language achievement before and after the implementation of the lesson plans revealed a significant improvement. The mean score increased from 13.00 (S.D. = 2.05) in the pre-test to 17.55 (S.D. = 1.75) in the post-test.

Pre-test		Post-test		t
(Total score: 20 points)		(Total score: 20 points)		
($\bar{X}$)	S.D.	($\bar{X}$)	S.D.	6.08
13.00	2.05	17.55	1.75	

The results of the paired-samples t-test showed that the students' achievement after the implementation was significantly higher than before at the .001 level ($t(19) = 6.08, p < .001$). This indicates that the lesson plans based on the Whole Language Approach combined with Blended Learning effectively enhanced students' English language achievement.

3. Results of the analysis of kindergarten students' satisfaction with learning English through a whole language approach combined with blended learning

The analysis of kindergarten students' satisfaction with learning English through the Whole Language Approach combined with Blended Learning showed a high level of satisfaction. The average number of students who expressed satisfaction was 17.75 out of 20, representing 88.75%.

This result indicates that most students responded positively to the instructional approach, suggesting that the integration of the Whole Language Approach and Blended Learning effectively promoted enjoyable and engaging learning experiences for kindergarten learners.

Discussion

The findings of this study support the effectiveness of using a whole language approach combined with blended learning in early childhood English education.

First, the efficiency results ($E1/E2 = 82.68/87.81$) indicated that the developed lesson plans were effective in both the learning process and learning outcomes. The activities were designed to promote meaningful language use, allowing students to learn English naturally through integrated skills and real-life contexts. This supports the principles of the whole language approach, which emphasizes learning language as a whole rather than in isolated parts. According to Goodman (2014), language learning is most effective when it is meaningful, contextualized, and related to learners' real-life experiences. In addition, whole language theory suggests that children learn language best when they are actively engaged in authentic communication and are exposed to language in natural and meaningful situations. This finding is also consistent with previous studies. For example, Mirhosseini and Sharif (2022) found that the whole language approach provides meaningful learning experiences for young learners by integrating language skills in context. Similarly, Kasten and Clarke (1989) reported that children who learned through a whole language approach demonstrated better literacy development and more positive attitudes toward reading and writing. Furthermore,

Ukrainetz et al. (2000) found that embedding language learning within meaningful literacy activities, such as shared reading and writing, significantly enhances children’s language development. Therefore, the design of the lesson plans in this study aligns with the theoretical foundation of the whole language approach, which promotes holistic language development through real-life use and interaction.

Second, the results of students’ English language achievement showed a significant improvement after the implementation of the lesson plans. This suggests that the integration of blended learning helped enhance students’ learning outcomes by providing additional opportunities for practice through both classroom activities and digital learning environments. The combination of face-to-face instruction and technology-supported learning enabled students to engage more actively in the learning process. This finding is consistent with previous studies on blended learning. For example, Li and Wang (2022) found that blended learning significantly improves students’ academic achievement and engagement by combining traditional instruction with online learning environments. Similarly, Banditvilai (2016) reported that blended learning enhances students’ language skills and promotes learner autonomy, as students can practice and review content at their own pace. In addition, Graham (2006) stated that blended learning integrates the strengths of both face-to-face and online instruction, leading to more effective learning experiences. Therefore, the improvement in students’ English language achievement in this study may be attributed to the integration of blended learning, which provided flexible learning opportunities, increased interaction, and continuous practice for students.

Third, the satisfaction results indicated that students had a high level of satisfaction with the learning activities. This may be due to the use of engaging activities, interactive tasks, and meaningful communication, which are appropriate for young learners. The integration of blended learning also contributed to students’ enjoyment and motivation, as it provided a variety of learning experiences. This finding is consistent with previous studies on blended learning and student engagement. For example, Banditvilai (2016) reported that blended learning environments enhance students’ motivation and positive attitudes toward learning by providing opportunities for interaction and self-paced learning. Similarly, Li and Wang (2022) found that students in blended learning environments demonstrated higher levels of engagement and satisfaction compared to traditional classrooms. In addition, Vygotsky’s social constructivist theory emphasizes the importance of interaction and social engagement in learning, suggesting that students learn more effectively when they participate in meaningful and collaborative activities. Therefore, the high level of students’ satisfaction in this study may be attributed to the integration of interactive learning activities and blended learning environments, which supported both motivation and active participation. Overall, the findings suggest that combining the whole language approach with blended learning provides an effective and engaging way to support English language development in young learners.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Recommendations for Teachers

Teachers should adopt lesson plans integrating the Whole Language Approach with Blended Learning to promote meaningful communication, real-life language use, and student-centered learning. The use of digital tools should also be incorporated to enhance engagement and extend learning beyond the classroom.



2. Recommendations for Schools and Curriculum Developers

Schools and curriculum developers should integrate blended learning into early childhood English programs. Combining technology with appropriate teaching approaches can enhance learning effectiveness. Adequate support and training for teachers should also be provided.

3. Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies should examine the long-term effects of this approach and its application in different contexts or age groups. Further research may also explore the relationships among students’ satisfaction, motivation, and learning achievement.

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