

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF RECIPROCAL PEER TUTORING IN SUPPORTING BLENDED LEARNING IN BOTH ONLINE AND OFFLINE MODES

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ABSTRACT

Millennium age education is moving out from traditional education (teacher-centered learning) to contemporary education which is moving towards Students-Centered Learning (SCL). One of the widely being discussed and practiced SCL by educators and students is Blended Learning (BL). This paper will look into the effectiveness of one of the BL approach which is Reciprocal Peer Tutoring (RPT). The study was done to measure the effectiveness of reciprocal peer tutoring in supporting blended learning in both online and offline modes and as well as to get the students' feedback on the usage of blended learning. The research was conducted in various faculties in INTI International University, Nilai Campus for the period of one semester. The students were divided into two major groups; IT group and non-IT group. The study revealed that the majority of the students had a positive view in the usage of RPT in offline mode and in online mode even though the result showed that group without RPT scored slightly higher than with RPT group. The researchers believed that RPT could be a good tool to a better teaching and learning environment especially in today's Malaysian higher educational institution.

KEYWORDS

Student centered learning, Blended learning, Reciprocal peer tutoring, Online mode

INTRODUCTION

According to Kember (1997), there are two broad orientations in teaching which are the teacher centered or content oriented conception and the student centered or learning oriented conception. Kember (1997) further explained, in student-centred learning (SCL), the knowledge is constructed by students and that the lecturer is a facilitator of learning rather than a presenter of information.

In today's teaching and learning environment, one of the fast emerging SCL methods is blended learning (BL). Colis and Moonen (2001) in Rovai and Jordan (2004) said that, blended learning is a hybrid of traditional face-to-face and online learning so that instruction occurs both in the classroom and online, and where the online component becomes a natural extension of traditional classroom learning. Blended learning is thus a flexible approach to course design that supports the blending of different times and places for learning, offering some of the conveniences of fully online courses without the complete loss of face-to-face contact. The result is potentially a more robust educational experience than either traditional or fully online learning can offer.

Reciprocal peer tutoring (RPT) is something new for INTI educators as well as for the students themselves even though the term had been discussed many years back in 1990's. Greenwood (1991) defined RPT as a student mediated instructional procedure in which small learning groups work together on learning tasks. He believed that peer tutoring has been shown to increase significantly students' time spent in academic instruction and engagement and student outcome (1991). To add value to the RPT activities, students will also be engaged in online exercises.

The research was focused on the students' perspective on blended learning through RPT, as well as the significant effect of RPT in supporting blended learning.

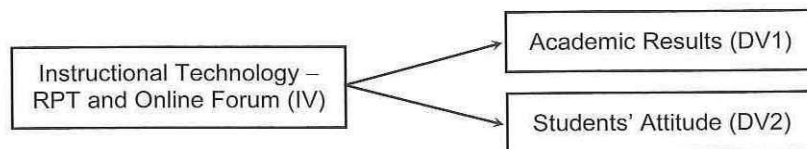
Research Objectives

- i. To measure the effectiveness of reciprocal peer tutoring in supporting blended learning in both online and offline modes.
- ii. To get the students' feedback on the usage of blended learning in teaching the courses for the whole semester.

Research Questions

- i. How effective is reciprocal peer tutoring in support of blended learning in both online and offline modes?
- ii. What is the students' feedback on the usage of blended learning in teaching a course for a semester?

Research Framework



BLENDED LEARNING

One of the fastest emerging SCL methods is blended learning (BL). There are many definitions of blended learning. For example Kovalski (2004) states that blended learning “combines traditional classroom sessions with e-learning and self-study” whilst Bershin (1994) offers “blended learning programs use many different forms of e-learning, perhaps complemented with instructor-led training and other live formats”

Graham, Allen and Ure (2003) in Korkmaz and Karakus (2009) argue that blended learning was developed for its potential advantages in offering a more effective education, convenience, and access to teaching-learning environments. On the other hand, advocators of the blended learning approach define blended learning simply as “maximizing the best of both worlds”, or in other words, the chance to simultaneously benefit from the advantages of online environments and face-to-face learning environments (Morgan, 2002 in Korkmaz & Karakus, 2009).