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Impact of blended learning (OMO) on Japanese language students at Hong Bang International University

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ABSTRACT

This study explores learners' opinions and their experiences on Online Merging Offline (OMO) blended learning model on the quality of student learning in the Japanese Language Department at Hong Bang International University. Implemented with a 70% offline and 30% online blended learning model during the first semester of the 2023-2024 academic year, the study evaluates student perceptions and identifies areas for improvement. Data were collected through surveys, in-depth interviews, and observations involving second to fourth-year students. The findings reveal a generally positive reception towards the OMO model, with students appreciating the flexibility, convenience, and enhanced interaction provided by the blended format. Access to diverse learning resources and support from instructors and institutional facilities improved learning experiences. However, challenges such as group dynamics, self-discipline, and effective utilization of AI tools were noted. About 30% of students reported no significant improvement in self-directed learning, and some felt overwhelmed by the abundance of resources. Recommendations include ongoing implementation with improvements based on feedback, additional training for instructors, and ensuring robust technological support. Addressing scheduling issues and establishing a continuous feedback mechanism are also crucial. Encouraging extracurricular activities and promoting creativity among both instructors and students can further enrich the learning environment. By adopting these recommendations, Hong Bang International University can refine its blended learning approach, ensuring it meets educational goals and enhances the overall learning experience. This study underscores the importance of adapting to technological advancements and leveraging them to optimize higher education in the 4.0 era.

Keywords: *blended learning, student perceptions, technological support*

1. INTRODUCTION

The 4.0 era, marked by advancements like 5G internet, AI such as ChatGPT, and widespread social networking, alongside effective Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Moodle, Canvas, and Blackboard Learn, is transforming higher education. Traditional face-to-face instruction is being challenged by blended learning, which integrates online and offline components.

Blended learning combines the strengths of traditional classroom interaction with the advantages of internet technologies. While traditional face-to-face learning fosters high levels of interaction through activities like discussions, group projects, and presentations, it is limited by resource and time constraints, large class sizes, and physical space issues.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of blended learning to maintain academic continuity while ensuring student safety. This shift revealed the strengths of online education in overcoming space and time constraints, maintaining instructor-student connections, and delivering high-quality content.

With the return to normalcy, universities like Hong Bang International University are cautiously implementing blended learning, typically with a

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30% online and 70% offline ratio. This research investigates the learning experiences of students at the Department of Japanese Language and Culture at Hong Bang International University within this blended model. The study aims to explore student perceptions and identify necessary improvements for making blended learning more engaging and effective.

Research objectives

This study aims to investigate students' opinions about the impact of both online and offline learning models on the quality of education for students and faculty at Hong Bang International University. It seeks to assess the advantages and disadvantages of blended learning approaches that combine these two methods. The research will develop solutions to address the short-comings and enhance the strengths of blended learning, optimizing the model implemented at the university to achieve the most effective outcomes for both instructors and students. Additionally, the study will establish a theoretical framework to evaluate blended learning models as implemented globally and in Vietnam, both during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the present day. This framework will help identify factors that create challenges and obstacles, as well as key elements that contribute to effective learning outcomes. Finally, the research will analyze the experiences of successful blended learning models in educational institutions worldwide to identify best practices that can be adapted and implemented at Hong Bang International University.

The research focuses on three key questions:

1. What are students' opinions on the positive and negative impacts of blended learning on student outcomes and their practices with the learning model?

2. What challenges do students face in the blended learning environment?

3. How can blended learning be improved to optimize the student learning experience?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Successful implementation of blended learning models

Studies on blended learning across Vietnam and Asia reveal varied approaches and their impacts on student engagement and performance. For instance, FPT University emphasized self-study and autonomy, while Tsinghua University integrated MOOCs and intelligent teaching tools to address online interaction challenges. Ton Duc Thang University focused on improving communication skills through blended learning models. These examples provide valuable insights into designing and implementing effective OMO models, which are crucial for understanding learners' perspectives in Japanese language courses at Hong Bang University.

Blended learning models at universities showcase varied approaches and outcomes. At the University of Da Nang, 118 students from diverse disciplines benefited from free resources that improved skills and self-motivation, though challenges included basic IT skills and technology adaptation. The study at FPT University, involving 139 first-year IT students, stated that the model enhanced students' self-study, autonomy, and language skills, with technical issues remaining a concern. At Ton Duc Thang University, learning with a blended model helped improve speaking skills for average and weak students, but higher performers felt limited, highlighting the need for better scheduling and instructor training. Tsinghua University exemplifies leadership in blended learning, utilizing its XueTangX MOOC platform to integrate pre-class videos, in-class teaching, and post-class reviews across 51 universities. These examples underscore the im-portance of robust LMS platforms, IT infra-structure, and adaptive strategies for successful blended learning, providing valuable lessons for Vietnamese institutions like Hong Bang University.

2.1.1. Definition of blended learning

Blended Learning, combining traditional and online teaching methods, has been explored since the 1960s but gained traction in the 1990s. Bon and Graham (2006) compiled three common definitions:

1. A combination of teaching methods (Bersin & Associates, 2003; Orey, 2002; Singh & Reed, 2001).

2. A mix of teaching methods (Driscoll, 2002; House, 2002).

3. A blend of online and face-to-face instruction (Reay, 2001; Rooney, 2003; Sands, 2002) [1].

In Vietnam, Nguyen Van Hien (2008) described blended learning as combining classroom and online teaching. Nguyen Danh Nam (2007) noted that integrating e-learning with traditional methods is effective. At Hong Bang International University, students have adopted a 70% face-to-face and 30% online instruction format since the 2023-2024 academic year, with potential adjustments based on effectiveness.

2.1.2. The definition of blended learning in higher education

Wong et al. (2014) suggest that blended learning in universities can reduce students' anxiety and errors, enhancing engagement and potentially lowering classroom-related anxieties[2]. However, it's unrealistic to expect all anxieties to disappear, as factors like workload, grades, and time management also contribute to student stress.

Pham Viet Vuong (2013) emphasizes that university teaching involves interactive activities between lecturers and students, within a specific program and content, utilizing various teaching methods. If the online component of blended learning limits these interactions, adjustments are needed to enhance interaction in learning activities.

2.1.3. The Significance of blended learning in higher education

2.1.3.1. For Educational Institutions and Society

Bonk and Graham (2012) provide four reasons to support blended learning: pedagogical richness, accessibility, cost-effectiveness, and innovative thinking [3]. Blended learning integrates diverse activities, enhancing learning effectiveness. More learning spaces allow for more activities, combining offline group work with online tools like LMS for discussions, assignments, and feedback. Flexibility in time and space accommodates students' extracurricular activities and part-time jobs. This method is cost-effective, reducing the need for extensive facilities and lowering travel and material costs for students (Graham et al., 2013) [4]. It also fosters innovative teaching methods, encouraging educators to adopt new approaches that meet contemporary needs (Bokolo Jr et al., 2020) [5].

2.1.3.2. For students

Research by Kerres and deWitt (2003) and Pratt (2002) shows that blended learning effectively combines traditional education's inspiration with digital benefits [6]. Traditional classes inspire through direct interaction, while online learning promotes responsibility and active participation. Using various media to explain concepts enhances understanding (Daft and Lengel, 1986). Blended learning supports both collaborative and independent study, enriching the learning experience (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004) [7]. It improves academic performance and reduces dropout rates (Twigg, 2003), offering flexible learning regardless of time and space constraints (Tam, 2000).

2.2. Theory of blended learning: Offline merging online (OMO)

The OMO model offers both offline and online learning environments, providing flexibility for learners to arrange their spaces and schedules (Huang et al., 2021) [8]. It leverages Internet technology and interactive platforms to promote active learning (Han and Ellis, 2019)[9]. This model shifts educators and learners from passive roles to active participants, with teachers as facilitators and learners using digital resources (Ashraf et al., 2021) [10].

2.2.1. OMO learning satisfaction

Evaluating student satisfaction with OMO learning involves assessing the gap between learner achievements and expectations (Wu et al., 2010) [11]. This satisfaction influences learner behavior, success, and overall experience (Kim and Kim, 2016; Osama et al., 2019) [12]. Key factors include instructional guidance, course content, technology, facilities, and interaction among learners and instructors (Sun et al., 2008) [13]. Higher satisfaction leads to better academic results (Caskurlu et al., 2020) [14].

2.2.2. OMO learning quality

The quality of OMO learning refers to how well the support system, services, and content meet learners' needs (Lin et al., 2020). Key factors include system stability, accessibility, and design (Molla and Licker, 2001). Effective online functions and user experiences foster positive attitudes and engagement (DeLone and McLean, 2004). Indicators of student acceptance include content quality, design, functionality, and personalization

(Almaiah et al., 2016). High-quality learning environments enhance student satisfaction and educational outcomes.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses surveys, interviews, and observations for data collection. Surveys target all Japanese Language Department students from years 1 to 4, assessing satisfaction and learning quality in blended learning, distributed via email and the university's LMS. A total of 100 valid responses were collected. In-depth interviews were conducted with 10 students, purposefully selected to represent various academic years and learning performance levels, aiming to ensure a diverse range of learning experiences and opinions. Semi-structured formats were used to allow for both consistency and flexibility in responses. Three classroom observation sessions were carried out across different course levels, focusing on student engagement, teacher-student interaction, and the integration of online and offline components. Observations used standardized forms to record behaviors during classes.

Participants include all second-year to fourth-year students in the Japanese Language Department who have experienced blended learning. The sample is selected based on participation in at least one blended course in the recent academic year. Independent variables are the quality of blended teaching and interaction levels; de-pendent variables are learning satisfaction and quality. The research process includes preparation (designing tools, planning), data collection (conducting surveys, interviews, observations), analysis (statistical methods, extracting interview data, evaluating trends), and reporting (synthe-sizing results, proposing improvements).

Participation activity: This term will be specified as "student engagement in learning activities within a blended course." This includes any form of active involvement, such as attending online and offline classes, participating in discussions, completing assignments, or using digital resources.

Sample selection: The sample includes second to fourth-year students in the Japanese Language Department who have actively engaged in at least one blended course during the past academic year. This selection ensures that participants have substantial experience with both online and offline learning components, making them suitable for evaluating the OMO model's effectiveness.

Student experiences of learning: Students often provide feedback on their OMO learning experiences through surveys and direct communication, allowing the university to enhance the blended learning model. Specific issues include challenges in adapting to the dual online-offline approach, the usability of digital platforms, and the quality of interaction facilitated by technology. Research indicates that addressing these concerns can improve learner engagement and overall satisfaction, which are critical in the OMO model (Huang et al., 2021). This study examines the nature of student feedback to assess which aspects of OMO require improvement, particularly in balancing face-to-face and digital interactions.

Expectations regarding new learning formats: In the OMO framework, students' expectations of digital and physical learning spaces play a significant role in satisfaction and learning outcomes. As Reeve and Tseng (2021) suggest, clear and realistic expectations about flexibility, access to resources, and interactive opportunities can positively influence satisfaction and performance. This section explores students' expectations regarding the integration of online tools, physical classroom experiences, and how these elements contribute to effective blended learning. Understanding expectations in an OMO setting provides insights into aligning resources and instructional approaches to meet or exceed learner goals.

Perceptions of ease and usefulness in participating in new learning format: Alfadda and Mahdi (2021) highlight that ease of use and usefulness significantly influence learning behaviors. Dai et al. (2017) argue that satisfaction in learning predicts performance and encourages cooperation, improving blended learning effectiveness. Self-assessment includes institutional support, learning satisfaction, perceived ease of use, and perceived usefulness.

Social interaction: Bester and Budhal (2001) indicate that learning attitudes are related to

social interaction [15]. High academic performers are more confident and socially integrated, while poor performers face social isolation, negatively affecting participation in both offline and online environments (Modarresi Yazdi, 2014).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Results

This section presents and analyzes the data collected from 100 student survey responses, 10 in-depth interviews, and 3 classroom observation sessions. The findings are organized based on the three research questions: (1) students' opinions about the positive and negative impacts of blended learning, (2) the challenges students face, and (3) suggestions to improve the blended learning experience. The table below summarizes the results from different data sources.

Table 1. Summarizes the results from different data sources

Research question	Survey Findings	Interview findings	Observation findings
1. Students' opinions about positive and Negative Impacts of Blended Learning and their practices	72% of students found flexibility in time and learning helpful. 28% noted inconsistency between online and offline content	Students appreciated flexible scheduling. Some expressed reduced motivation when content lacked coherence.	Students were more engaged in face-to-face discussions. Students who completed pre-class online tasks showed better participation
2. Challenges in the Blended Learning Environment	35% faced technological issues (LMS usability, internet problems). 42% had difficulty managing time between modes. Some students reported a lack of real-time interaction.	Students felt isolated in online learning without instructor feedback. Lower-performing students expressed difficulty adapting to online platforms.	Students with low performance were less engaged during online segments. Lack of real-time communication affected participation
3. Suggestions to Improve Blended Learning	68% suggested more frequent teacher feedback. Requested better LMS design and clearer connection between learning modes.	Students suggested more integration between online tools and in-person lessons. Emphasized the need for interactive feedback sessions.	Improved student engagement when online and offline components were well-integrated. Students responded more actively when teachers referred to online tasks in class

4.2. Discussion

The findings reveal that the blended learning model under the OMO framework brings both advantages and drawbacks. On the positive side, students value the flexibility, convenience, and autonomy offered by the model. Survey results showed a strong majority appreciating the ability to review materials at their own pace while still having opportunities for face-to-face interaction. Interview responses echoed this sentiment,

particularly among higher-performing students.

However, a significant proportion of students pointed out limitations in coherence and interaction. Disconnection between online and offline materials, technical issues, and limited instructor interaction during online phases reduced learning satisfaction. Observations confirmed that engagement declined when online preparation did not directly support offline activities.

When considering challenges, time management and lack of social interaction emerged as key concerns. These align with previous studies (Modarresi Yazdi, 2014; Bester & Budhal, 2001), highlighting the importance of social integration and support structures in blended environments.

To optimize blended learning, students proposed solutions such as enhancing the LMS interface, providing regular feedback, and designing courses that balance and interconnect both modes. These suggestions, supported by classroom observation data, indicate that improved instructional design and teacher support can significantly boost learning outcomes.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study investigatedthe effectiveness of the Online Merging Offline (OMO) blended learning model in the Japanese Language Department at Hong Bang International University by addressing three key research questions: (1) students' opinions on the positive and negative impacts of blended learning on student outcomes and their practices with the model, (2) the challenges students face in the blended learning environment, and (3) how blended learning can be improved to optimize the student learning experience.

In response to the first research question, the findings revealed that the OMO model brings several positive impacts, including increased flexibility, improved time management, and enhanced access to learning resources. Students appreciated the opportunity to study at their own pace while still benefiting from face-to-face interaction. However, the study also identified negative impacts such as inconsistency between online and offline materials, reduced motivation when course components were not well integrated, and a lack of real-time interaction in some online settings.

Regarding the second question, the study found that students faced multiple challenges in the blended learning environment. These included technological issues such as unstable internet connections and difficulty using the LMS, problems with time management, and feelings of disconnection during online learning. These challenges were particularly noticeable among lower-performing students, who often struggled with adapting to the digital components of blended courses.

For the third research question, students offered various suggestions to improve the blended learning experience. These included enhancing the design and usability of the LMS, increasing teacher feedback and communication in online sessions, and ensuring better alignment between online and offline learning activities. Students also emphasized the importance of fostering social interaction and collaborative learning opportunities to maintain engagement and motivation.

In summary, while the OMO model has strong potential to improve student learning outcomes, its effectiveness depends on how well the learning components are integrated, how actively instructors engage with students across both formats, and how supportive the technological and instructional infrastructure is. Addressing these factors will contribute to the optimization of the blended learning experience.

Based on the research findings, several recommendations can be made to improve the effectiveness of the Online Merging Offline (OMO) blended learning model at the Japanese Language Department of Hong Bang International University. First and foremost, it is essential to enhance the instructional coherence between online and offline components. Learning materials and activities delivered through different platforms should be clearly connected, forming a seamless learning pathway that avoids fragmentation and supports deeper understanding. This can help students follow the learning process more effectively and maintain motivation.

In addition, the university should consider improving the usability of its Learning Management System (LMS). A more user-friendly interface with organized resources, integrated scheduling tools, and automatic reminders would support students in managing their studies more efficiently. Another critical recommendation is to increase the level of student-teacher interaction. Teachers are encouraged to provide timely and consistent feedback across both online and offline sessions. Strategies such as short live discussions, virtual check-ins, and personalized feedback messages can enhance the sense of connection and clarify academic expectations.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of supporting students in developing time management skills. Orientation sessions or guidance on balancing blended coursework could help students, especially those unfamiliar with self-regulated learning, adapt more successfully to this model. It is also important to address technological barriers, particularly in terms of access and stability. Providing technical support or ensuring reliable infrastructure would reduce disruptions and allow for smoother participation.

Lastly, the study recommends fostering greater social interaction among students. Incorporating more collaborative learning activities and encouraging peer discussion - both online and in person - can create a more inclusive and engaging learning environment. Strengthening these areas will contribute significantly to the overall success of the blended learning model, leading to higher satisfaction, deeper engagement, and better academic outcomes.

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Tác động của việc học tập kết hợp (OMO) đối với sinh viên Bộ môn Ngôn ngữ Nhật tại Trường Đại học Quốc tế Hồng Bàng

Nguyễn Minh Hưng, Hồ Lê Thị Xuân Trinh

TÓM TẮT

Nghiên cứu này khảo sát tác động của mô hình học tập kết hợp Online Merging Offline (OMO) đến chất lượng học tập của sinh viên Bộ môn Ngôn ngữ Nhật Trường Đại học Quốc tế Hồng Bàng. Được triển khai với sự kết hợp 70% thời gia học trực tiếp và 30% trực tuyến trong học kỳ I của năm học 2023 - 2024, nghiên cứu này đánh giá nhận thức của sinh viên và xác định các lĩnh vực cần cải thiện. Dữ liệu được thu thập thông qua khảo sát, phỏng vấn sâu và quan sát đối với sinh viên năm thứ hai đến năm thứ tư. Các phát hiện của nghiên cứu cho thấy sự đón nhận tích cực nói chung đối với mô hình OMO, trong đó sinh viên đánh giá cao tính linh hoạt, tiện lợi và khả năng tương tác nâng cao do định dạng kết hợp mang lại. Khả năng tiếp cận các nguồn tài nguyên học tập đa dạng và sự hỗ trợ từ người hướng dẫn cũng như cơ sở vật chất của Trường Đại học Quốc tế Hồng Bàng đã cải thiện việc học của sinh viên. Tuy nhiên, những thách thức như tính năng động của nhóm, tính tự giác và việc sử dụng hiệu quả các công cụ AI đã được ghi nhận. Khoảng 30% sinh viên cho biết không có sự cải thiện đáng kể nào trong việc tự học và một số cảm thấy choáng ngợp trước nguồn tài nguyên học thuật đa dạng. Các đề xuất bao gồm việc triển khai liên tục với những cải tiến dựa trên phản hồi, đào tạo bổ sung cho giảng viên và đảm bảo việc hỗ trợ công nghệ trong giảng dạy. OMO giúp giải quyết các vấn đề về lịch học và quan trọng hơn là thiết lập được cơ chế phản hồi liên tục từ sinh viên. Ngoài ra, OMO khuyến khích các hoạt động ngoại khóa và phát huy tính sáng tạo của cả người dạy và người học, có thể làm phong phú thêm môi trường học tập. Bằng cách áp dụng những khuyến nghị này, Trường Đại học Quốc tế Hồng Bàng có thể cải tiến phương pháp học tập kết hợp của mình, đảm bảo đáp ứng các mục tiêu giáo dục và nâng cao trải nghiệm học tập tổng thể. Nghiên cứu này nhấn mạnh tầm quan trọng của việc thích ứng với những tiến bộ công nghệ và tận dụng chúng để tối ưu hóa giáo dục đại học trong kỷ nguyên 4.0.

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