

# Basic Education ESL Classrooms: To blend or Not to blend?

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**Abstract:** This paper reveals the common technology-based instructional materials utilized by government ESL elementary and high school teachers, their employment of blended teaching, and their attitudes towards blended learning in terms of internationalizing ESL instruction. Literature confirms that technology-supported language learning is effective; nonetheless, no studies on Filipino ESL teachers' familiarity with blended instruction is found; thus, this study is conducted to fill the gap and recommend integration of blended instruction. Data are gathered through crowdsourcing, casual interviews and focus group discussions and interpreted using Spiro's (2018) and Maxwell's (2016) frameworks of blended learning. It involves fifty 21 to 60-year-old ESL teachers from Department of Education schools in a region of the Philippines who are found equating blended ESL classroom with technology rich one only, however confirm openness to blended education. It recommends the global approach to the teaching of English in this diverse and fast-changing globalized Philippine classrooms through digital education.

**Keywords:** Blended Learning, Internationalization, ESL instruction, Technology, Crowdsourcing.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The teaching of English in the Philippines started in 1898 with American soldiers, the Thomasites as the first teachers through the public school system established by the Americans in 1901 (Bautista in Dimaculangan & Gustilo, 2017). Relatively, Bautista and Bolton (2008) suggest that by 1921, native born Filipino teachers of English continued teaching English; hence, the pendulum of English Language Teaching (ELT) in the Philippines continued swinging. Apart from Filipino ESL learners, migrants and EFL learners from neighboring countries as well study English in the Philippines. Indeed, the country can pride about state and private universities with state-of-the-art facilities for English Language teaching and learning. Nonetheless, Cabigon (n.d.) relates that in a roundtable discussion organized by the British Council, key stakeholders from the government, academe, private, and non-government sectors acknowledged that although the Filipino learners demonstrate English competency, concerns on competitive advantage for the country were tackled.

According to him, the stakeholders agreed that the country needs look into improving the teaching and learning of English, developing it as a vital skill of the workforce. Nicholas as cited by Cabigon (n.d.) states that part of the government and academes' work is to share best practices in the teaching and learning of English with partner countries all over the world, inasmuch as English has a distinctive place in the Philippine education system, and retaining high standards of English is critically important for the country's economy and future development.

In addition, the country's educational system revamp brought by the United Nation's call for Education for All (EFA) and the integration of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 calls for effective and innovative ESL teaching in the country; hence, the 21<sup>st</sup> century Philippine ESL instruction must be internationalized. In consonance with the idea of internationalizing English instruction is the teaching of English language through technological advancements that define and stimulate 21<sup>st</sup> century Filipino learners' interest and processing.

The tradition of teaching language skills swings with the remarkable boom of technology. Shyamlee and Phil's (2013) analysis of technology use in English language teaching and learning show that technology plays a very important role in English teaching. They claim that the rapid rising and development of information technology has offered a new teaching

model. Their literature review reveals that application of multimedia technology to ELT is important because it cultivates students' interest, promote students' communication ability, and widen their knowledge; hence, they gain insightful understanding of western culture. Further, it creates a context for language teaching, provides flexibility to course contents, improves teaching effect, and increases interaction between teacher and students.

Motteram (2013), editor of the British Council *Innovations in learning technologies for English language teaching*, explains how the arrival of digital technologies in the classroom has helped learning. He says that technology is very much part of language learning throughout the world at all different levels, at the primary sector as much as in adult education. He recalls his observation that computers abound in all their modern forms, traditional computers in laboratories, teachers and students walking around with laptops or tablet PCs, and people keeping mobile phone in their pockets. He argues that digital technologies are ideally placed to help teachers working with learners, and learners working independently, to do the necessary 'linguaging' that makes their language development possible.

Zazulak (2016) observes that technology has gained a more prominent place in the classrooms and is of particular use to blended teachers. She enumerates instructional technology, e.g., language apps, learning games, and websites that may help ESL learners practice conversational language and online tools that can perform online assessment and monitor student progress; hence, the students themselves can gauge their four macro language skills. Likewise, Wekke and Hamid (2013) investigated how Pesantren, an Islamic Boarding School in Makassar City, South Sulawesi, Indonesia uses technology in language teaching and learning. They conducted observation and in-depth interviews to collect data, and then validated the interview and observation data through document analysis. The results of the analysis indicated that technology-based activities are meaningful class tasks. Their data revealed that Pesantren has two sides: 1) a source of learning that allows young people to reach the world, and 2) technology as part of teaching and learning process has an important role in developing students academically.

Shu (2014) looked into the optimization of modern educational technology under multimedia network environment in English teaching. She analyzed the utilization of modern educational technology, provided the theoretical bases for such utilization, elaborated on the teaching practice of the optimization network-based multimedia in teaching, and shared the insights on such modern practice. She found that multimedia network teaching is resource sharing and that all kinds of media information processing and function of human-computer interaction are accessible through modern educational technology. Further, the online multimedia information resource sharing represents the up-to-date and inevitable trend of the application of multimedia network to teaching environment.

Multimedia network teaching is interactive teaching which she describes as the two-way network information transmission. In the process of teaching, the students receive information from the teachers and send their feedback back to the teachers through the network; therefore, real-time messages can be exchanged between teachers and students. Multimedia network teaching also promotes personalized learning inasmuch as it is the students who choose when and where to study and how much they would need of network technology. Their learning enthusiasm and creativity therefore is mobilized to the fullest extent. Finally, she asserts that multimedia network teaching means timeliness assessing. The extent to which learners receive necessary and timely assessment is one dimension of the process of network teaching. Timeliness can be viewed as the interaction between results of learning and teachers' review, both of which are expected to influence the effectiveness of learning process.

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Technology (ACTFL) 2017 advances that through the purposeful use of technology: 1) students read, listen to, and view authentic and timely materials from the target culture; 2) they practice interpersonal skills as they interact via video, audio, or text in real-time with other speakers of the target language; 3) they collaborate on presentational tasks with their peers or teacher; 4) they work at their own pace as they access online content and/or utilize computer adaptive programs managed by their teacher; 5) they practice discrete skills with engaging online games and applications; and 6) they benefit from differentiated instruction where multiple applications can be used to assess students, assign varied tasks, track data, give real-time feedback, and manage classrooms and lessons.

Technology integration in the ESL classrooms internationalizes instruction. The terms *internationalizing* or *internationalization* has become the word of the 21<sup>st</sup> century globalization era. Frigo and Fulford (2018) convey that *internationalizing* classes, curricula, or institutions is tantamount to enhancing students' abilities to be able to compete in a globalized world with new and different environments. Likewise, for Khadka (2012) internationalizing the classroom means providing students with a *global composition outlook* i.e., making the classroom a venue for more relevant learning where educators create culturally inclusive courses that develop students' global competencies.

Further, Leask (2009, 2011) in Williams and Louw (2014) explain the key components of an internationalized curriculum such as: engagement of students with internationally informed research, cultural and linguistic diversity, purposeful development of students' international and cross-cultural perspectives, foundation of knowledge which remains within the context of the discipline. They recommend that the complexity of a problems must be understood from a broader perspective that acknowledges cultural, social, and linguistic diversity, as well as an international viewpoint of the field of study. Globalization and internationalization are concepts that have been part of an international education of all levels, from basic to higher education, the goal of which is to prepare graduates to survive and succeed in the interconnected huge global society.

In Saxena's (2013) discussion of 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom characteristics, she repeatedly underscores the element of technology integration in instruction. She explains that computers which are readily available for students' use are essential tools that have replaced pen and paper. They do not only give students access to online research and enhance their technology skills, but they also give teachers the opportunity to enhance their lessons. In addition, there are various kinds of software available for the modern approach of *adaptive learning* that teachers can use to enhance the learning of their students. According to her, a 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom has invitational environment because of the utilization of interactive whiteboards and LCD projectors. In addition, the *Bring-Your-Own-Device* (BYOD) approach is adopted, so that students bring their laptops or tablets to the classroom for better personalized learning.

Personalized learning is a feature of an important approach that can internationalize ESL instruction with technology use, *blended learning* with its offshoot, flipped *classroom*. Scholars describe it as online learning combined with classroom methods and independent study to create a new, hybrid teaching methodology. For instance, Maxwell (2016) and Spiro (2018) advance that *blended learning* is hybrid learning that combines traditional and online lessons. Similarly, Dziuban, Hartman, and Moskal, (2004) cited in PLB (2019) posit that *blended learning* should be viewed as a pedagogical approach that combines the effectiveness and socialization opportunities in the classroom with the technologically enhanced active learning possibilities of the online environment.

According to Sharma (2007), blended learning is a purely distance learning where no face-to-face lessons happen; students learn autonomously via combination of media and tools in an e-learning environment. The virtual teacher and learner communicate through: email, telephone, or social media. Likewise, blended learning means employment of a variety of media and electronic materials as well as different teaching methods and assessment tools (Sharma & Barrett, 2007). They also suggest that blended learning is the combination of a number of pedagogic approaches or methodologies irrespective of the learning technology used, and that it combines *transmission* and *constructivist* approaches such as task-based learning. Blended learning has produced *flipped classroom* that has become a distinct approach. Flipped classes refer to classes that are structured almost exclusively around a reversal of expectations for lectures and homework. Students are expected to watch lectures online at home, and do homework while they are in class (What Is Blended Learning, Mindflash).

The literature review reveals that limited studies on technology use in the public/government schools and teachers' familiarity and employment of blended learning have been done in the Philippines at least that this researcher is aware of. None of the studies reviewed investigated on public school teachers' employment of blended learning and identification of electronic tools and specific applications utilized in the ESL classrooms nor with the strategies teachers apply to internationalize instruction; therefore, this paper intends to fill these identified gaps. Specifically, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What electronic educational materials are commonly used by the ESL teacher participants?
2. Are the participants familiar with *blended learning*? Do they employ blended instruction?
3. How do the teacher participants perceive blended learning in terms of internationalizing ESL classrooms.

## II. METHOD

### **2.1 Research Design**

This is a mixed qualitative-quantitative study of elementary and high school ESL teachers' familiarity with electronic instructional tools as well as with blended learning in teaching English language skills to internationalize instruction.

## **2.2 Participants**

For RQ<sub>1</sub> that requires simple identification or enumeration of technological tools ESL teachers use in teaching, the researchers involved 50 participants from secondary schools and higher education institutions in a region in the Philippines from whom answers were elicited.

The only requirement for the choice of the participants was, they must be elementary and secondary level ESL teachers. The results of the crowdsourcing revealed ten 20-28 year-old respondents, seven 29-30 respondents, eight 31-37 respondents, seven 38-40 teachers, eight 41-46, five 47-52, and five 53-60-year-old teacher respondents. Respecting ethical considerations, their identities as well as of the institutions where they are affiliated are kept confidential.

Out of the 50 participants for RQ<sub>1</sub> who have been into English Language Teaching in public elementary and secondary institutions from 2-20 years, 20 participants were considered for RQs<sub>2,3</sub>, i.e., 10 for the structured interviews and the other 10 who were divided into two smaller groups for focus group discussions. They were the ones who expressed willingness to participate because they could be available for the next phase of data gathering. The purposive sampling for structured interview participants revealed five middle aged 25 to 31 years old ESL teachers, three female teachers and two males who were categorized as young adults. The remaining five were three 47 and two 36-year old teachers who were categorized as adults.

The focus groups were composed of 10 young teachers from the original big crowdsourced group, all young because young adults and adults refused to participate in such a group discussion and gave the honor to the young generation. They were divided into two small focused groups for this paper's objective. Literature shows that six to twelve members usually composed a focus group; however, Morgan (1996) as cited in Johnson (n.d.) points out that there may be reasons to have smaller or slightly larger groups.

## **2.3 Data Gathering Instruments**

The data for RQ<sub>1</sub> were gathered by crowdsourcing through the most accessible medium, FB messenger. Scholars (e.g., Kenton, 2018; Jones, n.d.; Salazar, 2014.) are in agreement on the sense of the term crowdsourcing, i.e., it is a collective intellectual gathering of information that comes from a big number of individuals. Crowdsourcing is one of the biggest Internet buzzwords today (Salazar 2014). She explains that the word refers to the practice of accomplishing complex tasks by enlisting the help of a large number of people. She adds that using the internet to harness the collective intelligence of a crowd has been proven successful in a wide variety of contexts, from software design and genetic research to documentary film-making and crime investigation. Another blog site reviewed by Kenton (2018) confirms the earlier sense and means i.e., participants submit their data via the internet, social media and smartphone apps.

The study used basically one data gathering instrument, interview questions for crowdsourcing, structured interviews, and focus group discussions. The three basic questions thrown during the crowdsourcing phase elicited the participants' age, number of years in the teaching field, and the technology, tools, or applications used in the classrooms.

The structured interview guide is composed of five basic questions; nonetheless, light conversational out of the topic queries intended to eliminate the possible feeling of discomfort and boringness due to the seriousness of the topic were also prepared. The five kernel interview questions are as follows: 1) *Who to you is an innovative teacher? Would you consider yourself an innovative teacher?* 2) *Could you share with us, relate one of, you think best teaching that you have delivered.* 3) *Do you do blended teaching? What is a blended classroom?* 4) *Does it help you teach? ...How does it help you...your students?* 5) *Do you think you can internationalize your teaching through blended instruction?* The same questions were utilized during the two focused group discussions.

To save time and money from meeting the 50 participants from different schools across the region for RQ<sub>1</sub> data, to free themselves from the time consuming task of transcribing the interview exchanges, and purposely establish one significant role of technology in education and research, crowdsourcing and structured interviews were conducted through the FB messenger.

## **2.4 Data Gathering Procedures**

As stated earlier, to determine the common electronic tools that the teacher participants use in the classrooms, the technology-based oral and written tasks they administer in the classrooms and outside the classrooms as well as their familiarity with blended learning, crowdsourcing and structured interviews and focused group discussions were

conducted. This phase of the study was started off by preparing interview questions and follow-up questions for crowdsourcing and structured interviews. The applicability of the same structured interview questions for focused group discussions was tried out with five teachers who were not part of the study. They were found feasible for focused group discussion, so the instrument was finalized.

The gathering of answers to RQ<sub>1</sub> was done lightly and casually; the information on the technology the participants use in teaching English were collected through crowdsourcing via social media. Jones (n.d.) claims that language and multimedia technology research often relies on large manually constructed datasets; however, constructing these datasets is often expensive in terms of recruitment of personnel to carry out the work. Crowdsourcing methods using scalable pools of available workers offers a flexible means of rapid low-cost construction of datasets to support existing research requirements.

At this point of data gathering, the researchers chatted with 50 ESL teachers, one at a time any time. The crowdsourcing and interviews were conducted any time the researchers would find a prospective participant online and available to spare a few minute-chat with them, i.e., daytime of weekends and evenings of weekdays in November and December of 2018. It was kind of playful data gathering; the interviewer would greet an ESL teacher online, throw a casual greeting, and ask permission if they can be spared a few minutes for the crowdsourcing, then would inform him/her of the study they were conducting, and finally threw the crowdsourcing questions earlier stated.

After having collected the data for RQ<sub>1</sub>, the participants for RQ<sub>S2,3</sub> and from the 50 participants from whom answers to RQ<sub>1</sub> were crowdsourced were identified. The participants were informed about RQ<sub>S2,3</sub> and were requested for more FB chatting time and meetings for focused group discussions. Only 20 of them positively responded to the invitation for the interviews and focus group discussion. The rest excused themselves from the study for various personal concerns.

Before the conduct of the interview, the participants were informed about the interview parts' details and gave them assurance of ethical principles such as anonymity and confidentiality. Social media, indeed served its purpose beyond expectations; no issues regarding establishing rapport with the interviewees was encountered because it was an online interview which was tantamount to casual chatting of friends. Technology offered them solution, so they finished the interviews with ease using the FB messenger.

The principal researcher handled the third stage of data collection through focus groups. Gill et.al. (2008) posit that focus groups are used for generating information on collective views and the meanings that lie behind those views. In addition, Moyle (2006) states that focus groups consist of small groups of informed people addressing research questions and are a form of group interview. She furthers that in education research, focus groups may be conversations that are initiated by the researcher for the specific purpose of obtaining data relevant to the specified research outcomes.

The principal author with the secondary author moderated the interviews with their two focus groups in a small classroom. While author 1 was facilitating the oral discussion, author 2 focused on recording the conversation and note-taking of the group's attitudes and the answers' emerging themes. Immediately after the focus group interviews, the two reviewed their field notes, listened to the recordings, and requested a student assistant to transcribe the recorded discourse verbatim for synthesis without any bias. The transcripts were read, reread for common themes as well as contrasting answers. The researchers' synthesis of the participants' answers to RQ<sub>S2,3</sub> was anchored on the literature reviewed; while, their analysis of the participants' familiarity with blended learning was done using the frameworks discussed in the subsequent section.

### ***2.5 Frameworks for analysis***

Spiro's (2018) and Maxwell's (2016) frameworks of blended learning were utilized in determining the participants' understanding of the approach. A blended classroom as described by Spiro (2018) is made up of face-to-face (F2F) learning and online material that the students complete independently. He conveys that a blended classroom is a classroom where students spend their class engaging themselves in an online course, collaborating with their peers and getting on-time support and assistance from a teacher. He explains that in order to improve the quality of learning, the students perform homework in class and make sense of the lesson at home. This, he explains, is because the lesson normally entails the learning of processes and information; whereas, the homework applies this knowledge. The teacher focuses on correctly applying these home processed information.

Spiro's (2018) framework presented in Whitepaper consists of four models: 1) *Rotation* model that features both face-to-face instruction time and online learning; 2) *Flex* model or the online instruction that gives students chance to manage their learning; 3) *A la carte* model which lets learners take an online course in addition to compulsory offline courses providing them with more flexibility over their schedules; and 4) *Enriched virtual* model full-time online school that allows students to complete the majority of coursework online at home, but requires them to attend school for scheduled face-to-face sessions with a teacher.

This paper uses the first model, the Station Rotation model which transform traditional theory-based classroom into a virtually enriched hands-on workshop. According to Spiro, during the class, students rotate on a fixed schedule which usually include three learning stations: 1) online learning, 2) face-to-face instruction, and 3) group projects. For instance, a learner may complete an online course online, then participate in a group activity, and then attend a meet-up discussion as practiced by students of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) offered by American Universities and facilitated by Filipino ESL teachers who serve as leaders per area.

To understand the approach fully Maxwell's (2016) discussion is acknowledged and utilized as well. Maxwell (2016) relates that the phenomenon of blended learning has its roots in online learning and represents a fundamental shift in instruction that has the potential to optimize for the individual student in ways that traditional instruction never could. He explains that though schools are using computers and technology, they are not providing students with real blended instruction that gives them autonomy and control over their learning.

Maxwell (2016) explains the definition of blended learning by breaking it down to the its features. First, it is any formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online learning, with certain degree of control over time, place, path, or pace. Online learning means a bigger instructional shift from a face-to-face teacher to web-based content and instruction. That means, students manage some of their learning via the internet and not merely use any digital tools. It is important to remember that the technology used for the online learning must shift content and instruction to the control of the student in at least some way for it to qualify as blended learning from the student's perspective, rather than just the use of digital tools from the classroom teacher's perspective.

A second quality of blended learning, according to Maxwell (2016) is that the student learns in part in a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home, i.e., s/he attends a physical school, learning center or computer laboratory/shop which could be inside a shopping mall. that has been converted into a drop-in computer laboratory. Thirdly, Maxwell (2016) posits that the modalities along each student's learning path within a course or subject are connected to provide him an integrated learning experience, i.e., the online and face-to-face components of instruction work together to give the learner an integrated learning experience. Moreover, he claims that most blended-learning programs use a computer-based data system to track each student's progress and try to match the modalities: online, one-on-one, or small group depending upon the appropriate level and topic.

### III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Electronic instructional materials used in ESL classrooms

The following table presents the results of the virtual crowdsourcing on common gadgets and electronic applications used in ESL classrooms.

**Table 1: Electronic Instructional Materials Used in ESL Classrooms**

Technology at hand	Number and age of ESL teacher utilizers								
	20-28	29-30	31-37	38-40	41-46	47-52	53-55	Total	%
<b>A.</b>									
Computer	10	7	8	7	8	5	5	50	100
Laptop	10	7	8	7	8	5	0	45	91
Cellphone	10	7	8	7	0	5	5	42	88
LCD Projector	10	4	8	7	0	5	5	39	85
WiFi/Internet	10	7	0	0	0	5	5	27	75

T.V.	1	2	0	7	0	0	5	15	63
Flashdrive	5	0	3	0	2	0	5	15	63
<b>B.</b>									
PowerPoint	10	7	8	7	8	0	5	45	91
MS Word	10	7	8	7	8	0	0	40	86
Dictionary	7	3	5	3	0	5	2	35	81
Google	10	7	8	7	0	0	0	32	79
academia.com	10	5	8	0	0	5	0	28	75
OTG connector	10	7	8	0	0	0	0	25	72
MS Excel	5	0	0	7	8	0	0	20	68
Blog spots	10	7	0	0	0	0	0	17	65
Pinterest	10	7	0	0	0	0	0	17	65
Slideshare	10	7	0	0	0	0	0	17	65
plagiarism checker	7	5	2	1	0	0	0	15	64
Wikipedia	0	0	8	7	0	0	0	15	64
YouTube	0	0	8	7	0	0	0	15	64
google drive	0	7	0	7	0	0	0	14	63
Mendeley	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	12	61
Prezi	10	2	0	0	0	0	0	12	61
android app	6	3	0	1	0	0	0	10	59
thought.com	1	2	2	2	0	0	0	7	56
FB/Messenger	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	7	56
Wordpress	2	4	0	1	0	0	0	7	56
Paraphrasing app	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	7	56
Gimp	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	6	55
Game-based app	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	5	55
Kahoot	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	5	55
IORA	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	5	55
MS Publisher	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	52

Table 1 presents the common ICT related instructional materials utilized by the ESL teacher respondents from whom such information were crowdsourced. As can be noted, the participants would have *computer*, *laptop*, and *mobile phone* as very important instruments that boost their classroom performance. The results of the crowdsourcing convey that young and old Filipino ESL teachers use either computers or laptop in the classrooms. This confirmed, Saxena's (2013) claim that computers which have replaced pen and paper are readily available, and they are essential tools for 21<sup>st</sup> century students. The Technology Assisted Language Learning (TALL) System explains that computers have historically carried out blended learning because it provides massive amounts of comprehensible input to learners through the use of video and other multimedia assets and other supplementary materials which enable them to comprehend their classroom lessons.

Nevertheless, the data show that not all students and teachers access the internet in the classroom as shown by the total number of its users-only 27 out of 50 or 75% of the participants surf the internet during class hours. This figure is supported by the interviewees' and focus group discussions participants' sharing of their technology integration in their classes.

*...because there is no sufficient internet service in our school I cannot use online application in teaching I just use laptop and projector in teaching English. I prepare PowerPoint presentations or I get ready-made videos from YouTube that I can use in teaching.*

*...sometimes I use application like bookworm games in teaching vocabulary **only** if we have internet connection in the school.*

*... I would always try Quipper but I sometimes fail because of poor internet connection. . . I seldom use these technologies because of budget constraints and limited access to Internet.*

This is a sad truth in some areas, not every classroom of a government school is installed with internet or Wi-Fi. In remote areas, pupils are not familiar with gadgets and applications which they can use to manage autonomous learning. In consonance with the foregoing, teachers and students need to be reminded about being resourceful to maximize digital learning. Indeed, Zazulak (2016) suggests organizing what she calls BYOD, an acronym which she equates to *Bring Your Own Device* when there is no available option. Indeed, she confirms that technology quickly becomes outdated, and when an old device appears worthless for a teacher with limited technology in the classroom, BYOD would make a valuable material.

While teachers prohibit the use of cell phone during class discussion because young students may use it for games or examination cheating, it is interesting to note that 42 or 84% of the teacher interviewees use cell phones in the classroom. Again, this may be explained by the big percentage of online dictionary users.

*Whenever I teach poems or short stories, my students would always ask me about the definition of specific words. It's disastrous, distractive, time consuming, and it even violates the student-centered learning approach. So, I asked everyone to download and install Meriam Webster Dictionary and they would have to bring it the other day. When they're answering comprehension questions, I'm very happy because they are all busy using the app.*

As regards the common electronic applications used in ESL instruction, it is not surprising to know that 91% of the 50 participants use the commonest PowerPoint presentation. The informal occasional observations done by the principal researcher in nearby schools revealed that PPT has been the most used visual aids replacing the traditional well prepared printed texts in *Cartolina* or *manila paper*. As has been stated, the big number of cell phone users in the ESL classrooms may be justified by their use of online Webster's Dictionary. Indeed, the structured interviews and focus groups discussions bared the teachers and students' vocabulary reliance to online dictionary when doing vocabulary inside and outside the classrooms.

The small numbers of the uncommon educational tools, applications, websites or blog sites may be understood. As Table 1 reflects, these new e-educational materials are used by young teacher participants; it can be noticed, too, that the youngest group of participants are using the common available gadgets and tools and are exploring new educational sites. Likewise, the limited number of participants (7-2) who are not aware of new electronic instructional aides may suggest a negative trend in technology use, i.e., that young adults and adults do not explore other means of digitalizing instruction their classrooms. Nonetheless, it does not reflect total failure in innovating the teaching of English. In fact, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages reminds:

*The use of technology should never be the goal in and of itself, but rather one tool for helping language learners to use the target language in culturally appropriate ways to accomplish authentic tasks. Further, all language learning opportunities whether provided through technology or in a traditional classroom setting, should be standards-based and help develop students' proficiency in the target language through interactive, meaningful, and cognitively engaging learning experiences, facilitated by a qualified language teacher (ACTFL, 2017).*

### **3.2 Teachers' familiarity with Blended Learning**

Both the online crowdsourcing and interviews as well as focus groups discussions revealed that majority or 18 of the 20 participants, i.e., 10 interviewed participants and 10 focus group participants seem to have manifested familiarity with Blended Learning. The participants associated the concept with the combination of traditional teaching and technology based activities within and outside the classrooms, and Maxwell's (2016), Sharma's (2010), and Spiro's (2018) frameworks seem to subsume such a definition, although worded dissimilarly. The teachers claimed that they combine methods, approaches, and methods in teaching. The following excerpts from the interviews and focused group discussions reflect this level of their understanding of Blended Learning:

1. *Blended learning occurs when two or more learning strategies are used together in the teaching-learning process.* (From a 31-year-old teacher with 8 years teaching experience)

2. *Blended learning is a teaching tool for the teachers, a part of their innovative teaching strategies and a learning tool for the students where they easily access information with the use of internet.* (From a 25-year-old teacher with 3 years teaching experience)

3. *My idea about blended learning is that, it is about learning through two or more ways, methods, approaches, strategies, etc.* (From a 47-year-old teacher with 14 years teaching experience)

4. *Blended learning is a combination of traditional way of teaching and technology.* (From a 36-year-old teacher with 10 years teaching experience)

5. *I think blended learning is a kind of learning with a mix or a combination of learning strategies used by the learners.* (From a 50-year-old teacher with 20 years teaching experience)

The above teachers' definitions of Blended Learning connote similar sense expressed by the advocates of the frameworks utilized for this study. Spiro's (2018) *Rotation* model features both face-to-face instruction time and online learning, and *Enriched virtual* model combines full-time online school that allows students to complete the majority of coursework online at home, are reflected in definition 4. Maxwell's (2016) features of blended learning as: any formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online learning and learns in part in a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home are also subsumed by definitions 3 and 4. Sharma's (2007) qualification of BL which runs, a combination of methodologies, and a number of pedagogic approaches, irrespective of the learning technology used as well as a combination of technologies are suggested by all the self-worded definitions by the participants.

The participants shared that they give their students time to learn by themselves through electronic tasks; albeit, based on their admittance, these activities seemed to be limited to surfing the Internet, more often, when doing homework assignments and projects. They are all integrating and using electronic materials in presenting and discussing their language lessons (reading, speaking, writing, listening and literary), but they give their students limited tasks that will opportune them to learn autonomously or learn with scholars from foreign countries through online courses, blogs, or even through social media.

In addition, the first look or surface level definitions given, indeed suggest that the teacher participants are doing blended instruction; however, closer scrutiny of their answers to concluding interview questions imply otherwise. The following sample extracts from the interviews reflect not blended instruction but Maxwell's (2016) *technology rich instruction* only.

1) *There are some instances that I let them use their Facebook accounts to post their assignment and gain likes and comments.*

2) *I do blended teaching with my grade 4 pupils because they easily lose attention in the class. They're fond of talking and playing with their seatmates. The use of computers, LED TV and Online Application help me get the attention of my pupils, ... they also help my pupils to easily understand the lesson.*

3) *I use videos downloaded from YouTube, e-dictionaries, literary quotes mobile app, hyperlinks for games and online puzzles. I also use social media flat forms like Facebook, for my students to share their pieces/works.*

4) *I integrate technology in the teaching process. For example, in my second demonstration teaching, my topic was 'Ang Alamat ni Maguyon,' a story about the origin of Mt. Mayon. My motivation was Pinoy Henyo in which I let the students guess the words used in the story. Next was the discussion itself, I used laptop and LED TV to show a short video clip about the story. Then for the abstraction of the topic, I let them have some differentiated activities. The first group sung, the second group presented a role play, the third group made a tableau and the last group made a PowerPoint presentation.*

5) *In the Classroom Observation Tool used by my principal and her master teachers, one of the indicators is the utilization of technology in class. In our post conference, they told me that I integrated technology well, and I really showed them the utilization of it because according to the manual, the real utilization of technology in the class is letting the students really do it. It was a good one and I scored 6 out of 8.*

Closer scrutiny of the above sharing of teacher participants of how they practice blended teaching reveal that they are not actually doing blended but participating only in what Maxwell (2016) calls *Technology Rich* instruction. According to him: when a teacher posts a class material online, the teacher uses the Internet to merely host information and not to manage the delivery of content or instruction; when a teacher lets her students use personal computer devices to read and write, however, make sense of the content as a single group performing the same task at the same time with no element of control over the time, place, path, or pace of learning, s/he is not doing blended instruction; or when she lets her students use Google documents for their writing exercises, they still write with the traditional pencil and paper and are simply utilizing electronic materials.

It may be disheartening to find that two interviewees of the 20 participants gave wrong answers to the question on their understanding of the digital approach and one honestly admitted unfamiliarity with blended learning saying:

*Personally Ma'am, I do not know the meaning of blended learning.*

The other two teachers manifested the same unawareness of the new approach to language teaching and shared misconception or their own understanding of this new teaching and learning approach revealed during the interview and focus group discussion. These are:

*Blended learning refers to the combined ideas, knowledge, or skills of two or more individuals who analyze ideas which are essential or associated under discussion. (From a 28-year-old teacher with 5 years teaching experience)*

*For me, blending learning means grouping the smart students together and the not too smart students in a heterogeneous class. (From a 23-year-old teacher with 2 years teaching experience)*

It can therefore be argued from the findings that the teacher participants under study misunderstand the approach blended learning and equate it to *technology rich* classroom within the framework of Maxwell (2016). Nevertheless, it is interesting and heartening to discover that they all agreed on the proposition that technology-based presentation and language tasks arouse students' interest and help them understand the lessons easily. When asked about the help of educational technology to them and to their students, they gave similar answers captured in the following extracts:

*The use of technology inside the classroom, I think should be pushed by the educational agencies like DepEd and CHED because it really helps both the teachers and the students to access information easily, to learn more creative and modern ways of teaching...but it should be used with moderation and only for educational purposes. (From a 28-year-old teacher with 5 years teaching experience)*

*Yes, technology helps me as a teacher and my students in the classroom. With its use, students get excited in learning. They can relate so much; they are more engaged in the classroom discussions and activities. They are more active role as they get involved or in generating information with the use of technology. For me, its use helps me to enhance my procedures in doing my motivation, instruction, and even assessment of my students' performance. (From a 23-year-old teacher with 3 years teaching experience)*

*These learners are into gadgets; it is easy to communicate and interact with them if technology is integrated in the class. For instance, instead of reading the whole story or the traditional way of teaching reading specially in elementary, the use of flat screen TV and speaker catches more their attention. (From a 36-year-old teacher with one year teaching experience)*

*PowerPoint presentation helps me discuss the lessons fast because I simply click it and then the slides will flash on the screen unlike in old method; it takes time because I need to use chalk and write the lesson on the board.*

*I began using PowerPoint presentation with eye-catching animations. Aside from PowerPoint, I also used the application Kahoot when we had activities. Since then, I observe that they are now enjoying every single day of our lesson. (From a 23-year-old teacher with 2 years teaching experience)*

*Using television also saves preparation time, because... like our school, has the direct connection to the internet, so I can easily search in the internet for the topic we are going to discuss.*

### **3.3 Blended Learning and Internationalization of Classrooms**

The 20 participants were in agreement that the electronic materials they use, the technology-based activities, and their utilization of language lessons, specifically reading lessons downloaded from various websites internationalize their instruction inasmuch as these tools help them develop among their students' global technology skills, bring them outside the Philippines, and silently develop in them multi-cultural awareness.

*Technology really helps me to make the presentation of the lesson creative, interesting and lively. I engaged my students to various learning experiences with the aid of technology, and through this, I make them globally minded learners who have capacities to perform. Technology in the classroom means innovation in*

*teaching which helps us teachers to catch the interests of the millennials who are born into this computer world. (From a 25-year-old teacher with 1 year teaching experience)*

*Yes, because this integration of technology is one way of showing that we teachers are advanced, and we adjust to the fast and changing world of high technology. (From a 25-year-old teacher with 3 year teaching experience)*

*I think it internationalizes my teaching and students as they get ready to be globally prepared and competitive especially in communication. English language tends to be the window of each individual to the world for the language is becoming universally acceptable. Whenever a student gained not only mastery but effectiveness on the use of the language in its very function, the hows and whys we use it, then he/she become ready to face international endeavor. (From a 30-year-old teacher with 8 year teaching experience)*

The participants were not asked about the downsides of technology integration; nonetheless, they gave their unsolicited thoughts on the disadvantages of technology use and remind the interviewers of some students' misuse of technology in the classroom. Some of their observations follow:

*However, integration of technology is not always a better choice, since there is limited gadgets in our school. We borrow them from time to time and the preparation is time consuming. There are also instances that technical problems can't be controlled*

*But there are still advantage and disadvantages with the use of it.*

*What is important now is to maximize the use of those technologies with responsibilities.*

*The downside of it, is they tend to just copy and paste information from the Internet, sometimes without reading and filtering the substance. (From a 31-year-old teacher with 8 year teaching experience)*

*However, there might still be the risk in using technology. With that, teachers must know its proper use, so that students will be guided in utilizing it effectively, and they will not abuse it.*

The above observations of the teacher participants jive with the ACTFL (2017) reminder that the use of technology is not a goal in and of itself; rather technology is one tool that supports language learners as they use the target language in culturally appropriate ways to accomplish authentic tasks.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The unprecedented boom of technology and social media evidently offers teachers and students a number of ways to innovate and internationalize classroom instruction as well as students' level of interest and learning. The present paper shows that both teachers and students welcome blended learning specially the part when students are left to autonomously and/or collaboratively manage their learning through technology. ESL teachers not only in affluent and high performing schools need to be encouraged to use other available technology. Language teachers, probably, more especially, the older generation, need to be educated further on integrating technology in the classrooms and of variety of latest educational tools in the teaching and learning of language skills. In addition, classrooms even in remote and poor areas need to be provided with Internet so that teachers may sustain their teaching of global language along with cultural and technological skills.

A dean in a university was once heard sharing sentiments that the students in her college have become lazy who no longer read books but rely only on the internet for homework assignments and projects; thus, she asked her teachers to require their students to buy books. Little does this head realize that it is now the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and students at all levels are out with the books and in with technology-based materials where they also find soft copies of books to read. Teaching in this age of digital technology requires teachers and learners to incorporate technology into the learning environment. The findings of this study may challenge not only this dean but also the 21<sup>st</sup> century language ESL teachers who are also required to conduct research to improve pedagogy as well as the Education sector of the government. The government may be inspired to spend generously not only for training programs and printed materials but also for the latest technology which should be installed in all government schools specially in the far-flung areas. Despite age, ESL teachers and researchers need to internationalize their classrooms, their teaching, their conduct of research, and their students' autonomous learning inside and outside the classroom.

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