

Access to English Medium Education through Blended Learning at Higher Education in Southeast Asia

The MEd LAC Team

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Introduction

- Globalization → English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) → Need for developing formal/academic English literacy
- Multiple **semiotic resources** scaffolding students' content learning (Kress, et al., 2001).
- **Blended learning**: mixed-mode, hybrid-, or web-enhanced learning (Miller & King, 2003) integrating traditional **face-to-face instruction** with **online communication**

Literature Review

- **Web-based communication tools** in **blended education** studied, ranging from Moodle (Deng & Tavares, 2013), Facebook (Deng & Tavares, 2013; McCarthy, 2013), blogs (Deng and Yuen, 2011; Dickey, 2004; Wopereis et al., 2010), to Web 2.0 technology (Crook, 2008; Deng & Tavares, 2015).
- Little research on **real-time and interactive communication tools** such as **Skype**
- Less attention paid to the **programme level** (than individual classes) while evaluating the effectiveness of blended learning (Ayala, 2009; Phipps & Merisotis, 1999).

Research questions

- Q1: What are the **experiences** of a foreign student in **using Skype** for classroom learning? Are there any **difficulties** or **challenges** in using Skype in blended learning?
- Q2: What are a group of MEd LAC students' **perceptions** of utilizing **Moodle** as an online communication tool such as Moodle and Skype for mixed-mode instruction?
- Q3: How do instructors help **geographically-diverse** learners fulfil **the same task** in a blended learning context?

Theoretical framework

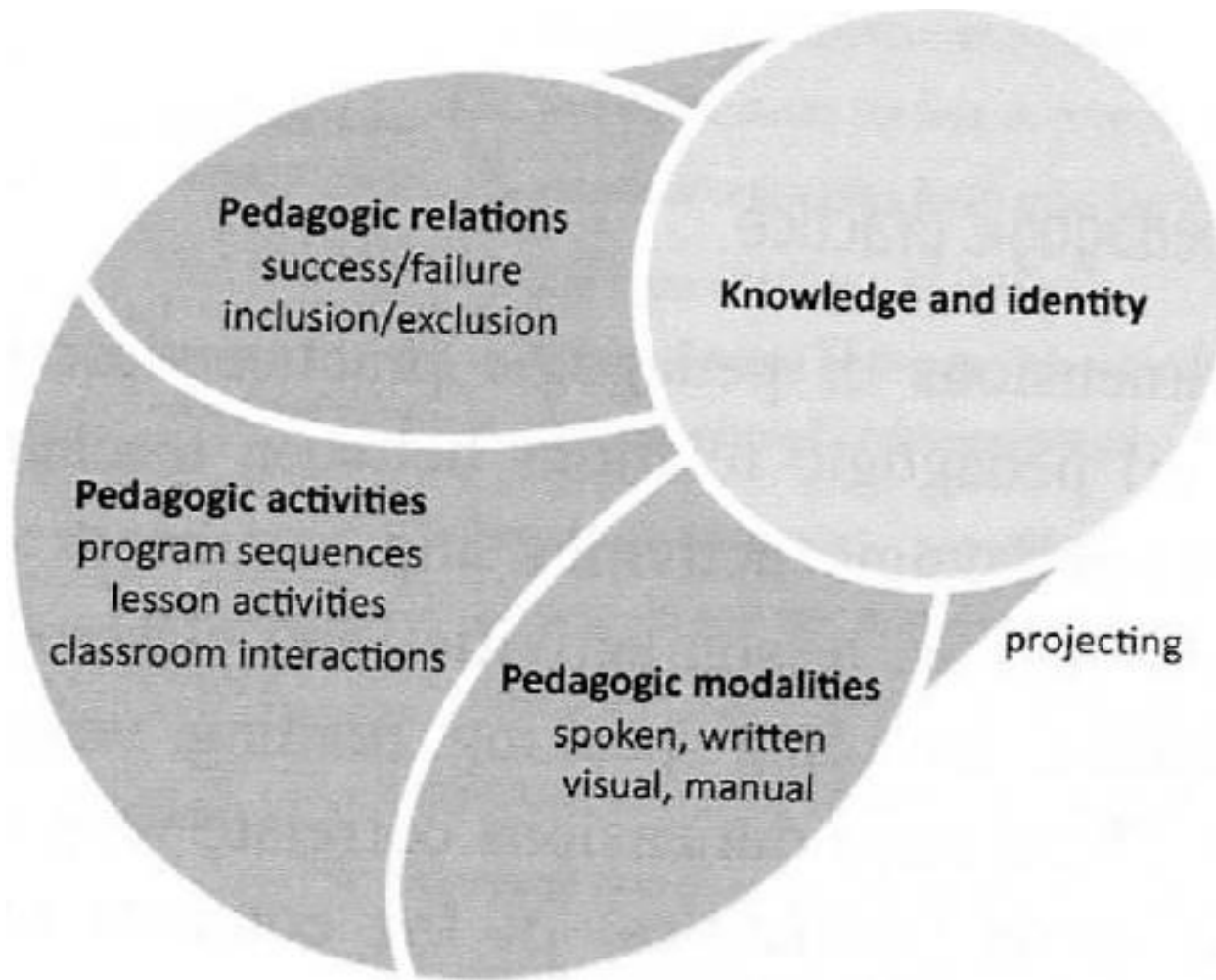


Figure 1: Knowledge and identity in relation to pedagogic practice (Martin & Rose, 2012, p.314)

Martin and Rose's (2012) model in the blended learning context

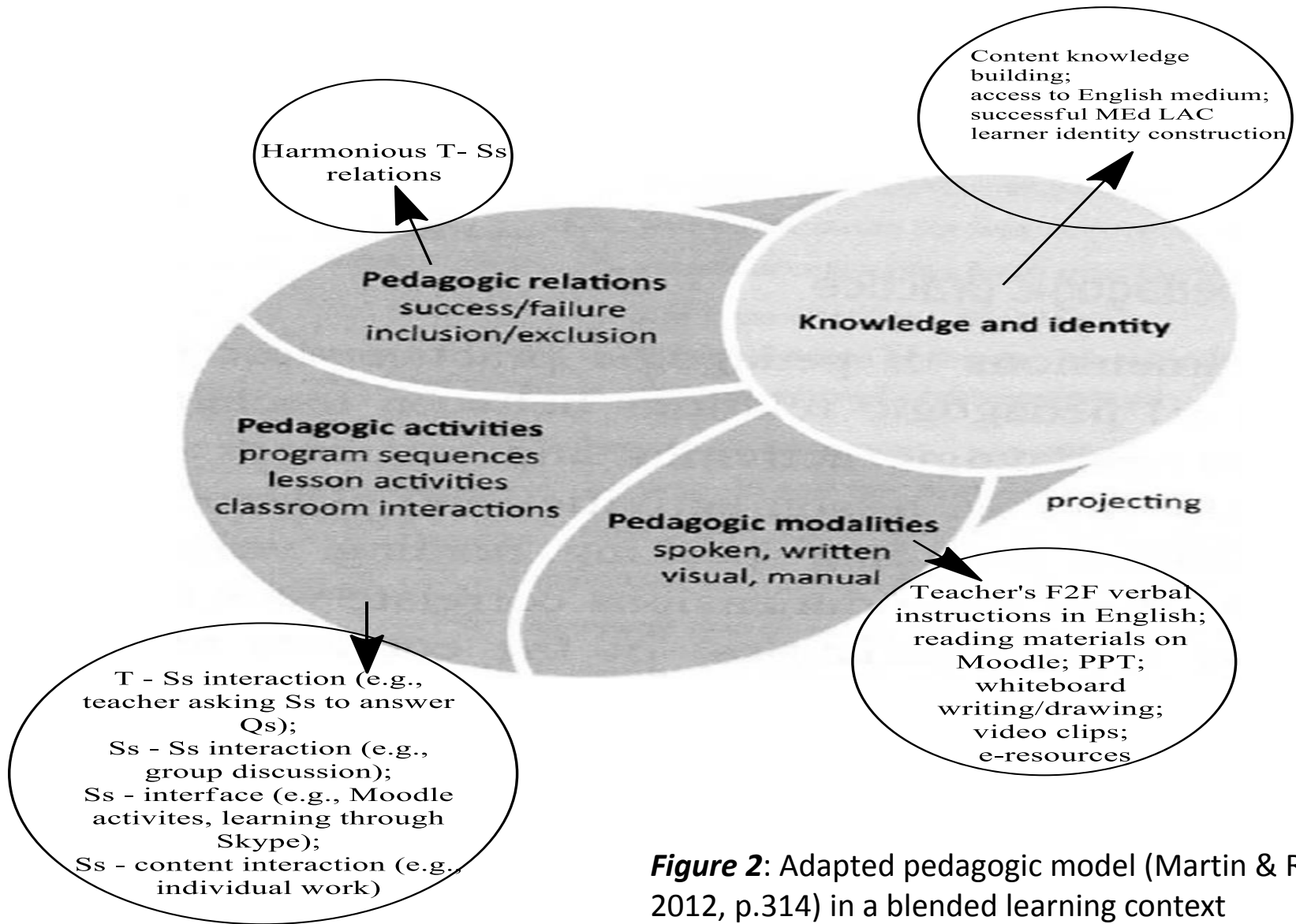


Figure 2: Adapted pedagogic model (Martin & Rose, 2012, p.314) in a blended learning context

Methodology

- Research design: **qualitative** and **exploratory case study**
- Research context: an **English medium university in Hong Kong**
- Participants:
 - 1) Four instructors who have been teaching the MEd LAC program for four years,
 - 2) one PhD student who was auditing the core courses of the program,
 - 3) 26 MEd LAC students: ① fresh undergraduate students from **Mainland** China; ② in-service **HK local** teachers of English, content-subject teachers conducting their lessons using English as the medium of communication; ③ one **Thai** student who holds an MSc. degree attained from a university in Thailand and experienced Skype classes.

Methodology

- Data collection: ① semi-structured individual interviews with students, ② instructors' reflections, ③ participant observation, ④ online artifacts.
- Data analysis: **Thematic data analysis** was used to examine the teachers' reflections, the interview data collected from the learners, and observation data.

A) Instructors' efforts in promoting blended learning via Moodle

1) Maximising the Use of Moodle as a Learning Platform

① The function of a 'glossary' on Moodle

- connecting the students at the start of the course,
- cultivating a more cohesive and hence collaborative learning atmosphere (Bates, 2005; Dawson, 2006; Yuen, et al., 2009)
- advocating their appreciation of individual differences (Graff, 2003) or learning styles (Parkinson, et al., 2003),

② Needs analysis

③ Private discussion forum

(Notes in the screenshots of a course Moodle interface: **A.** An example of a 'Random Glossary' entry; **B.** The needs analysis prompts for students to fill out using their mobile devices)

How the opening of the MEDD6316 course Moodle interface looks – with the tabs to A and B illustrated

hkumoodle Nicole Judith Tavares Student

MEDD6316 Academic literacy in science and mathematics [Section 1A, 2014]

Home > MEDD6316_1A_2014

NAVIGATION

- Home
 - My home
 - Site pages
 - My profile
 - Current course
 - MEDD6316_1A_2014**
 - Add Common Functions
 - Assignment
 - Turnitin Assignment
 - Forum
 - File
 - Course Content and Reading List
 - SIS Course Outline
 - Participants
 - Badges
 - General
 - Session 1: What is academic literacy? What is LAC?...
 - Session 2: Academic Genres in Mathematics I - The ...

Something about Me **Getting to know one another** **Announcements****Our Discussion Corner** **MEDD6316 Course Outline 2014-15** **Online Submission of Assignments** **Feedback on Assessment Task 1A: Analysis of a Maths Word Problem (30%)** **Assessment Task 1B: Analysis of a Science Text (30%)** **RANDOM GLOSSARY ENTRY****SEARCH FORUMS****LATEST NEWS**

RANDOM GLOSSARY ENTRY

HI I AM TERENCE V(^.^)V

I am a Science Teacher who has been teaching Biology and Junior Science for 13 years. I also teach DSE Liberal Studies too.

I like teaching (but not correcting homework), photography, travel as well as eating around with my wife, family and friends.

In this course, I aim to learn and apply LAC in my daily teaching. Let's explore the world of LAC together!

(1) Years of Teaching Experience* (0 - 20)

(2) Current School / Working Place*

(3) Subject(s) taught (if applicable)

(4) LAC(-related) duties (at school)*

(5) (At my school) these are some of the main initiatives to promote LAC:*

Figure 4: Private discussion forum

Sessions 9 - 10: Mini-Teaching

In these two sessions, you will be given the opportunity to put into practice all the methodologies, strategies and techniques we have been discussing on the course, on the basis of which you will practicalise, personalise and internalise the theories. We will also engage ourselves in joint reflections of your mini-teaching with your coursemates and teachers, and be guided to reflect critically on how you can play a more active role in promoting LAC initiatives in your (future) teaching context.

1st December 2014
Team 1: Cora, Kenneth, Lydia & Samuel
Team 2: Emily, Enoch, Holly, Ria & Summer

8th December 2014
Team 3: Anna, Jacqueline, Nicole & Terence
Team 4: Heidi, Kenny, Michael & Ocean

Team 1's Discussion Corner for the Mini-Teaching (Cora, Kenneth, Lydia & Samuel) (Team 1) Edit Group

Not available unless: You belong to a group in **Team 1** (hidden otherwise)

Video-clip of Team 1's Mini-Teaching - Teachers: Albert, Crystal, Joanna & Justina & Phoenix Edit

Team 2's Discussion Corner for the Mini-Teaching (Emily, Enoch, Holly, Ria & Summer) (Team 2) Edit Group

Not available unless: You belong to a group in **Team 2** (hidden otherwise)

Video-clip of Team 2's Mini-Teaching - Teachers: Cecilia, Esther, Gary C, Judy (& Karen) Edit

Advantages of using Moodle

- output from the students in class were uploaded onto Moodle for them to **take greater ownership** (Parkinson, et al., 2003) of their contributions, for **peer learning** and **joint reflections**
- **to free time for more focused and in-depth discussion** (Yuen, et al., 2009) during class;
- **'private forums'** were established for individual teams made up of members **in varied geographical locations** to discuss their ideas **free from time and space constraints** (Burge, 1994), upload drafts of materials developed and plan their part collaboratively.

Problems or challenges in using Moodle

- students often doubted the **presence** (Edirisingha, et al., 2009; Yuen, et al., 2009) of their coursemates on Moodle. This thus impacted negatively on their **degree of online participation**, leading to discussion forums being under-used and thereby affecting their overall quality of learning.

B) Experimentation with the Use of Skype

- An international participant a Thai student's (John) delay in joining the group for lessons in Hong Kong when courses commenced
- The instructor vividly recalls, *"I was a bit worried if he could follow us, so I kept asking him if he could once in a while. However, when I once asked the whole class a question and everybody was silent, suddenly an answer came from him out of my surprise!"*
- *John: "I could listen to every part of the discussion in the session and make notes for further understanding. This gave me the opportunity to recheck contents with online materials on Moodle. However, the problem lied mainly with time-lags on the Internet, mostly with visualization, that led to a blurred screen at times and this really hindered me from seeing everything in detail."*
- **How the use of Skype, Panopto or other such systems facilitate distant and e-learning** is nonetheless not fully explored (Murray, et al., 2015).

Advantages & disadvantages of using Skype

- **Advantage:** ① satisfy the urgent needs of experiencing classroom teaching setting **across time and space**.
- **Disadvantages:** ① **technical problems** eg blurred screen, background sounds impeding communication, unstable net connection, time-lag; ② **difficulty** in establishing **small-group interaction** among the students
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- **Possible solutions:** ① sent the PPT slides and other materials to John before the lessons; ② additional laptops or mobile devices and microphones for group work to be carried out more effectively; ③ Upgrade software systems and integral use of Skype, Panopto (a lecture capture service), & Moodle

Students' reflections on A) Moodle and B) Skype as blended Learning strategies

4 Themes/categories related to their experiences via semi-structured interviews:

1) Technological issues

- Using Moodle and Skype for learning is **convenient** and **flexible** across time and space;
- good for their **self-directed learning** by keeping track of the updated course materials via Moodle;
- fostering their **learning autonomy** (Herse & Lee, 2005)

Technological problems:

- the use of Skype, John “unstable connection, screen breakdown, unclear pictures, sometimes mute occurred, most of the time interaction with peers could not be achieved” (Interview1, Oct. 30, 2015).
- Moodle is “not so helpful to get **instant online feedback**” (Interview3, Nov. 2, 2015)

2) Interactivity

- Using Moodle for **downloading course materials, submitting course assignments,** and **receiving announcements** from instructors.
- However, students proposed that **online discussion related to course reading materials could be initiated and activated by course instructors at a particular time,** which give equal opportunity for everyone to post and answer questions, and is good for shy students who dare not raise questions in F2F classroom teaching.
- The Thai student John suggested that **iPad and microphone** could have been used to help him **join group discussion with his peers in the Skype class.**

3) Multimodal affordances

- All student interviewees agree that multimodal resources **facilitate their understanding of teaching content**, and **the integration of conventional F2F classroom instruction and e-learning platforms is more effective** than only F2F or only e-learning.
- “Written materials on Moodle and visuals, as well as verbal instruction in real-time classroom teaching help me **better understand the target content**” reported by John (Interview1, Oct. 30, 2015).
- “LAC is new to me. It is helpful and **useful** to use multimodal resources to **reduce my cognitive workload**” (Interview, Nov. 2, 2015).

4) Learner satisfaction

- Moodle and Skype **serve certain pedagogic purposes**. But students don't think these two online communication tools are **excellent media for social interaction**.
- But Moodle and Skype **foster a sense of cyber community** to some extent, or “a sense of belonging for a particular course”,
- “More **'human touch'** can be added on Moodle such as uploading a profile including pictures, self-introduction, conference or seminar information, sending e-birthday card to students, which can be a valuable asset for them in the future” (Interview3, Nov. 2, 2015).

Conclusion

- Following new **blended learning educational paradigm** (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008), this study explores the experiences of using Moodle and Skype in an MEd LAC program at a university in Hong Kong from both teachers' and learners' perspectives.
- The MEd LAC students are **acquiring content knowledge via English medium**, and they believe that traditional **F2F instruction complementing web-based learning is more effective** in helping them to acquire academic English literacy as well → achieving the dual goals of CLIL.