

Using Virtual Blended Mode for Preparing Graduates for International English Language Testing System

07 Nov.

SSH17

R. P. Dharmawardene^{1(*)}

¹*Department of English Language Teaching, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka*

(*) E.mail: ruwini@delt.cmb.ac.lk

The number of engineering graduates applying for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), seeking jobs abroad is increasing annually. As many find it challenging to achieve the required band score in reading component, the study explored whether different delivery modes (of face to face, online and blended) influenced their outcome achievement. Study duration was 3 months. Setting was the Department of Multidisciplinary Studies in the Faculty of Engineering, University of Sri Jayewardenepura. With the face to face mode continuing as a control group (n=15), the blended (n=15) and online (n=15) groups received six online modules on reading. Practicing materials included 12 reading passages prepared for the study, with ten questions at the end of each passage. Instructions on skimming and scanning were given online for the experimental groups. While the online group received all lessons online with no face to face instructions; the blended group received 70% of the course materials in the format of online activities with six face to face lessons to cover up the balance 30%. The control group too received the same learning materials in printed formats and practiced these only in their face to face classes with one tutor of English. While the three groups showed the performance as Blended mean =43.07, Online mean = 39.27, Face to face mean =45.00 at the pre-test having the reading skills tested in three reading passages with 20 questions, a similar course-end test showed the blended group participants to have scored significantly increased marks (mean = 51.20, $t = 7.176$, $p = .001$), compared to their counterparts (Online mean = 47.60, $t = 5.593$, $p = .002$, Face to face mean = 50.67, $t = 5.330$, $p = .001$) at the significance level of $p < .005$. This study can have implications for teaching English in the context of International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam.

Keywords: Virtual Blended Mode, IELTS, higher education