

Blended Learning – glossary of terms

Adaptive learning

Adaptive learning uses technology which adapts to the input it receives from the learner in order to provide a more individualised or personalised programme of learning.

App

An app is a computer program that performs a specific task. The term is most often used to refer to programs that run on smartphones and tablet devices.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence can be defined as intelligence exhibited by machines. The ultimate goal of AI is a machine capable of awareness and thinking, rather than performing a predetermined program.

Asynchronous

Asynchronous communication involves a time difference between the sending and receiving of messages. This includes posting a message to a bulletin board, or discussion forum, and sending an email.

Augmented Reality (AR)

Augmented reality is the overlaying of virtual information on real objects or scenes. This is achieved by apps which use the camera of mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets.

Blended Language Learning (BLL)

Blended Language Learning is sometimes used to refer to blended learning specifically in the context of language learning.

Blog

A blog (or weblog) is a website structured like a diary. The entries or postings are displayed chronologically with the most recent first. The software used to create blogs is simple to learn and use and blogs are a component of many websites. The internet contains millions of blogs. Together they cover every imaginable topic.

Bricks and mortar

Bricks and mortar is a phrase used to distinguish activities such as teaching or selling when it takes place in traditional physical locations such as schools and shops rather than in a virtual space online.

Bulletin board

A bulletin board is a feature of some Learning Management Systems. It is typically used for teachers and instructors to post messages for course participants. Users can also exchange message as on a discussion forum (see below).

Business English (BE)

Business English is a form of English for Special Purposes (ESP) that focuses on teaching the language and forms of communication specific to the business world. In contrast to some forms of English Language Training (ELT), BE takes a more pragmatic approach to language use, prioritising effective communication over strict accuracy. There is also a strong focus on learner training and autonomy.

CD-ROM / DVD-ROM

CD-ROMs and DVD-ROMs are data storage systems that use standard 12cm discs. These discs are read by CD/DVD drives in older computers and, before highspeed internet connections, were used to deliver software installation files or multimedia learning packages. DVD is the newer technology and has a considerably larger storage capacity than a CD.

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is an internationally recognised system for describing an individual's ability to use a foreign language. It has a scale of numbers and letters. Each major step on the scale corresponds to a set of 'can do' statements for active production and comprehension of the language.

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC)

Computer Mediated Communication is the use of computer technology for both synchronous and asynchronous communication between individuals and groups of individuals.

Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

Computer-Assisted Language Learning is the use of computer technology to compliment and assist language learning. The term has been in use since the 1960s and its scope is continuously expanded to embrace the latest developments in computer technology and its uses.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

Content and Language Integrated Learning involves combining content and language by teaching a standard topic such as mathematics or geography using the target foreign language.

Data projector

A data projector is a device which projects the image from a computer monitor onto a screen to make it visible to everybody in the room. They originated in the business world where they were used for presentations and they are now standard equipment in many classrooms and lecture theatres.

Digi-book

A digi-book is a page-faithful version of a course book which can be used in-class using a data projector or interactive whiteboard.

Digital resident

A digital resident is somebody who has grown up in a world in which digital devices and internet access have always been part of their lives and environment. This is in contrast to digital immigrants who are old enough to remember life before the digital era. At the time of writing, the vast majority of language learners around the world are digital residents while their teachers are mostly digital immigrants.

Discussion forum

A discussion forum (or just forum) is an online space in which participants can conduct text-based discussions. A discussion forum is a feature of many Learning Management Systems (LMSs) and is a common way for teacher and instructors to communicate with course participants and for participants to communicate with each other. See bulletin boards above.

Distance learning (DL)

Distance learning refers to courses in which the teachers or instructors and course participants are geographically dispersed. All instruction and communication is done asynchronously through a LMS.

E-book

An e-book is a book made available in a digital format. In some digital formats, the e-book may follow the pagination and layout of the print version. In other formats, page numbers are discarded, and footnotes and indexes become direct links to the relevant parts of the text.

E-learning

E-learning is a broad term covering many different education and training approaches all of which use information and communication technologies.

English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

English for Academic Purposes is a form of English for Special Purposes which is concerned with preparing learners to study at universities where English is the language of instruction and assessment. EAP has a very strong focus on writing and discussion skills.

English for Special Purposes (ESP)

English for Special Purposes is a form of English Language Training (ELT) in which learners are engaged in learning English to achieve a specific end such as completing a university course, performing some aspect of their job or dealing with English-speaking visitors or tourists. The specific needs of the learners are used to determine the course programme rather than any standard syllabus or the demands of an examination. See English for Academic Purposes and Business English above.

English Language Teaching (ELT)

English Language Teaching is a catch-all term referring to teaching the English language to non-native speakers. It also encompasses the industry of teachers, schools and publishers that offer training, and teaching materials.

E-portfolio

E-portfolios are a form of summative assessment. The e-portfolio becomes the ongoing record of a learner's progress.

E-reader

E-reader refers to both books in an electronic format and the dedicated device for reading those books. A well-known example of the latter is the Amazon Kindle.

Face-to-face

Face-to-face is a term which is used when referring to the typical, same-time same-place teaching in traditional classroom. With the rise of online teaching using programmes like Skype™ the term is also used to describe online meetings and lessons. This is a shortened version of the term 'face-to-face online'.

Flipped classroom

In the flipped classroom approach, the online element of the lesson provides the input, or the actual teaching. Students receive this input before coming to the lesson. This is followed up in class through group work and the teacher providing individual attention.

Forum

See discussion forum above.

Gamification

Gamification is linked with training and attempts to inject a game-like element into certain tasks. Students receive points, are awarded badges and can see their performance against other players through a leader board.

Intelligent Tutor System (ITS)

Intelligent tutor systems are an example of adaptive learning. The feedback to learners provided by such systems is given automatically, without intervention by a human.

Interactive whiteboard (IWB)

An interactive whiteboard combines a data projector with a touch-sensitive board. This allows computer-based material to be displayed to the entire class and manipulated from the front of the room.

In-world

In-world is used to label activities such as classes or discussion that take place in a virtual world such as Second Life. See also 'Virtual world'.

Learner autonomy

Learner autonomy is the ability of the learner to take charge of their own learning. The responsibility of the teacher or instructor is to equip learners with effective strategies which allow them to develop this autonomy. This is particularly relevant to language learning where so much study and practice takes place outside the classroom and without the direct support of a teacher.

Learning Management System (LMS)

A Learning Management System is an online application that brings together a wide range of tools for administering and running educational and training courses in a single interface.

Likert scale

A Likert scale is used in questionnaires. It consists of a horizontal line divided into steps, for example, degrees of agreement/disagreement. Respondents mark the place on the scale that matches their response to a statement.

Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)

A Massive Open Online Course is a course of study made available over the internet. Massive means that several thousand participants are involved. Open means that anyone can take an online course. See SPOC below.

M-learning, mobile learning

The term mobile or m-learning is applied to a variety of approaches and practices. These can be categorised as learning which occurs when the students are mobile, learning that occurs using mobile devices and mobile learning experiences. Given that mobile devices are part of many people's everyday lives, mobile learning often occurs in real-world contexts.

Netiquette

Netiquette consists of principles for interacting respectfully with other people online. It covers both synchronous and asynchronous interactions.

Online learning (OL)

Online learning is learning that takes place using some form of online technology. OL can be synchronous, asynchronous or a blend of the two.

Open platform

An open platform essentially starts empty of content. It is populated with material created by an institution and its teachers. This is in contrast to a publisher-produced platform which is sold fully loaded with materials to complement existing coursebooks.

Platform

A platform is an online service which combines storage with communication tools. In education and training it is used to store and distribute learning materials and for teachers, course administrators and course participants to communicate with each other. Passwords ensure that platforms are only accessible to registered students.

Podcast

A podcast is a downloadable audio file. The content reproduces radio programme formats but without the time limitations of timetabled broadcasts.

QR code (Quick Response code)

QR code is a type of barcode which, when scanned, takes the user to a digital destination such as a website, a piece of text such as an instruction or a file stored online.

Robot-Assisted Language Learning (RALL)

Robot-Assisted Language Learning is an approach in which lessons with teachers are augmented by interaction with robot teaching assistants.

Screencast

A screencast is a video showing what is happening on the screen of a computer.

Self-access centre (SAC)

A self-access centre is a space – usually a room – within an educational institute that is equipped with computers which can be used by learners for independent study.

Small Personal Online Course (SPOC)

A Small Personal Online Course can have as few as 50 participants. This is compared to MOOCs onto which many thousands of people may register. This means the tutor can have a closer relationship with specific SPOC participants. See MOOCs above.

Smartphone

A smartphone is a pocket-sized, web-enabled, digital device that runs apps and is controlled by a touchscreen. It can also be used to make phone calls.

Synchronous

Synchronous communication takes place in real time. Participants may be anywhere. This includes running a webinar, or using a messaging app.

Tablet

A tablet is a larger version of a smartphone although generally without the capability for making phone calls.

TPACK (Technology Pedagogical Content Knowledge)

The TPACK model helps to identify the type of knowledge teachers and instructors require in order to integrate technology into their teaching.

Tracking tools

Tracking tools are features of a LMS that allow teachers and the institution to track which resources learners have accessed, the tests they have completed and assignment they have submitted. Tracking tools also collect and collate learners' scores and grades.

U-learning, ubiquitous-learning

U-learning refers to students doing their online study anywhere, anytime using mobile devices and apps.

URL (Universal Resource Locator)

URL is another name for web address.

Virtual classroom

A virtual classroom is an online – rather than physical – space in which a teacher and students come together synchronously for lessons. A virtual classroom may be created using a standard VOIP app such as Skype™ or more specialised services which offer features such as shared whiteboards and voting tools.

Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

A VLE is a Learning Management System, i.e. a password-protected area on the internet which houses the learning materials of a course and has integrated communication and tracking tools. The term is often used by universities while LMS is more commonly employed in corporate training.

Virtual Reality (VR)

VR is a technology that creates a 3D visual environment which is viewed through goggles. This environment can be fictional or modelled on the real world. Users interact with the virtual environment as though it were real by moving their heads and, in more advanced versions, their limbs or entire bodies.

Virtual world

A virtual world is an online environment which uses a 3D graphic interface to reproduce real-world places such as a classroom. Users are represented by avatars and can communicate with each other by chat or VOIP. The best known virtual world is Second Life. See in-world above.

Vlog

Vlog is short for video log. It is a form of blog in which the content is video rather than the text and pictures of conventional blogs.

Vodcast

A vodcast is the video equivalent of an audio podcast.

Voice over internet protocol (VOIP)

VOIP is a technology that allows synchronous voice and video communication using the internet. The best known VOIP service is Skype™.

Web 2.0

Web 2.0 (pronounced web two point oh or two point zero) is an umbrella term for technologies that use the internet to allow people to collaborate and share online.

Webinar

Webinar is short for web seminar. It is a presentation or workshop delivered online.

Weblog

See blog above.

Wiki

A wiki is a website comprising pages which can be created and edited by users.

Young learners (YL)

Young learners are those children in primary education, usually between the ages of 5 and 12.