



The Effects of Blended Learning in LINC

A LearnIT2teach Demonstration Project

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THE EFFECTS OF BLENDED LEARNING IN LINC – A LEARNIT2TEACH DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

As a student and an immigrant, I have been in the blended class for almost one year, so I have enriched numerous essential skills not only in English but also Canadian culture. Honestly, I strongly love this program, and it is a great innovation in the ESL field. (Student Research Project Participant, Self-Reflective Writing, Learner Conference Preparation Activity)

This report presents the background, procedures, main findings, and implications of the research project “Researching the Effects of Blended Learning in LINC” conducted by the LearnIT2Teach Project (now New Language Solutions; formerly TVLT New Media Language Training) during September 2017 – June 2018. The purpose of the research project was to examine the effects of blended learning for learning and teaching in LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada), the language and settlement program for immigrants funded by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC; formerly Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). This research is significant in light of the need to enhance accessibility to English language learning for newcomers to Canada and the paucity of research related to blended learning for settlement needs (Kennell & Moriarty, 2014; Lawrence, 2014).

The following reports the research in this order: I. Overview of the Research Project; II. Background and Relevance of the Research; III. Research Approach, Questions, Context, and Methodology; IV. The Teaching/Learning Context and Blended Learning Approach in LINC; V. Findings of the Study; VI. Implications and Recommendations.

1. OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This research was carried out in three blended learning classes at the LINC levels of 6 - 7/8 at a school board-sponsored LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) program and site in British Columbia during December 2017 - June 2018. The purpose was to examine and demonstrate the effects of blended learning in LINC for the learners, the instructors, and the program.

“Blended learning describes a teaching and learning environment in which face-to-face classroom instruction and learning is combined or “blended” with online and other computer-mediated activities.” (LearnIT2teach, 2018, para 3). In this particular school board LINC program, the blended learning approach involved participation of students in face-to-face (f2f) classes part time at the school followed by learning activities outside the classroom using blended English language learning and teaching via online technology and activities during the remainder of the week. Forty-five (45) LINC students in the three classes at the site participated. These classes included two full-time blended learning classes (LINC Level 6 and Level 7/8) which had f2f classes for 16.5 hours over three days each week at the school and had at least 5.5 hours of online learning each week; and, a part-time (evening) blended learning class at Level 7/8 which had 5.5 hours of f2f classes two nights each week and at least 5.5 hours of online learning and activities each week. Their three LINC instructors, each of whom was well-versed in the blended learning approach and using technology for English language teaching/ learning, participated in the research; as well, the program administrator of the school’s LINC classes and adult and continuing education programs and a resource teacher, who helped with school events, field trips, childcare resources, and other supports.

The three blended learning LINC classes in this research project involved students who were placed in their classes according to the Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) descriptors of levels 6 – 7/8 – intermediate levels of listening, speaking, reading, and writing English language proficiency skills in LINC. The CLB is the national standard used in Canada for describing and recognizing the English language proficiency of adult immigrants. The benchmarks describe language tasks that people can perform in listening, speaking, reading and writing. The CLB are used to assess and describe the student level of proficiency for placement in the LINC class levels in the Language Instructions for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs. According to the CLB, in speaking, students begin to communicate in slightly formal contexts and straightforward phone conversations (CLB 6) until they adapt their style and register to different audiences and situations (CLB 7) and communicate with clear evidence of connected discourse, even in unfamiliar

groups (CLB 8). In reading, students typically understand some moderately complex texts in predictable, practical situations, both formal and informal (CLB 6), before they can recognize purpose, main ideas, specific details and many implied meanings (CLB 7), and then are able to identify mood, attitude and register while finding, integrating, and contrasting a wide variety of information (CLB 8). In writing, students are expected to form an adequate paragraph structure with a main idea and some supporting details, use of connective words and phrases, and adequate control of spelling, punctuation and format (CLB 6), progressing to constructing passages that are moderate in length with a number of short, coherent paragraphs that clearly express the main ideas and adequate supporting details (CLB 7) until they can construct clear, moderately complex texts on familiar concrete and some abstract topics within predictable, practical and relevant formal and informal contexts (CLB 8). In listening, students can understand moderately complex conversation, including some abstract concepts and ideas related to life experience (CLB 6) until they can understand and respond to moderately complex conversation in formal and informal settings while comprehending an increasing range of abstract ideas and concepts (CLB 7), and they can understand moderately complex communication in formal and informal settings, including abstract concepts and ideas related to specialized situations (CLB 8). (Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2012, p. XI; Campbell Cohen, 2018; Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2018).

A demonstration research project model was implemented to examine practices for blended learning/teaching and effects in an authentic setting as teaching/learning unfolded. Demonstration research projects are used to investigate and disseminate what is learned about an actual program and practices in the field so that the approach may be replicated and/or adapted and extended to other areas and programs. There is often a distinction made between two types of demonstration research projects – *experimental* and *exemplary* (Ware & Johnson, 2000). The latter, the exemplary approach, was chosen for this research as the school board program in this demonstration project presented as an effective, well-developed model of blending learning for English language instruction and technology enhanced language learning (TELL) that has the potential for adoption, extension, and adaptation to various LINC and English Second Language (ESL) contexts for the benefit of learners, teachers, and programs. Also, LearnIT2teach uses a participatory action research model to support constant improvement of what is offered to language programs, learners, teachers, administrators, and funders (Kennell & Moriarty, 2014), and the demonstration project approach is aligned with that approach.

The questions for the research project which inform this report are:

1. What were the effects of the blended learning approach for the LINC student participants, particularly for their participation and engagement in LINC, their English language learning, and for their achievement of other settlement goals (such as applying for employment, schooling for dependents, and orientation to the community)?
2. What were the effects of the blended language learning approach for learners' self-efficacy and knowledge for using technology for language learning and their settlement goals?
3. a) What were the effects of the blended learning approach for LINC teachers, instruction, and the program?; and,
(b) What effective or “best” practices for the teaching and learning of LINC using a blended learning approach were demonstrated in this LINC research context?

The importance of these questions becomes apparent as we consider the background for and relevance of this project in the following section.

2. BACKGROUND AND RELEVANCE

Learning one of the official languages has been shown to be one of the most important factors for the effective settlement and success of the over 109,000 newcomers who participate in LINC classes each year in Canada (Jackson, 2013; McBride, 2018). This research examined the effects of f2f English language classes co-ordinated with TELL activities and teaching done mainly outside the classroom (although teachers and students did work on these online activities at times in class as well) – in other words, *blended learning*, an increasingly used approach for enhancing accessibility to classes and learning/teaching of English for newcomers in Canada.

Recent reviews of literature and other reports related to blended language learning and adult settlement language learning point to the need for this research. The annotated bibliography by Kennell and Moriarty (2014), an IRCC funded report on research about blended learning for second language learning/teaching in Canada, identifies the key issues investigated and reported herein, namely, the effects of a blended learning approach for 1) learners and English language learning; 2) participation, access, and engagement in adult settlement language programs; and, 3) learner self-efficacy for use of technology for language learning and other settlement purposes. Fahy, Sturm, McBride, & Edgar (2016), *The Narrative and Evaluation Report: Blended Learning Innovation for IRCC Settlement Language Training*, also serves as important background; as does the survey and report on e-learning in ESL in Ontario (Fahy & Sturm, 2012). Lawrence's report on the feasibility of integrating e-learning in adult ESL in Ontario (Lawrence, 2014) provides pertinent insights as well.

Kennell and Moriarty (2014) note: “When we began the search for material related to adult settlement blended language learning we quickly learned that although there is a significant body of research literature in the area of blended learning, much of it doesn't look directly at adult settlement blended language learning.” (p. 2). Kennell & Moriarty (2014, p. 5) point out that findings related to the use of blended learning and TELL are positive, citing Grgurovic et al. (2013): “... the results of 36 years of research show that computer-assisted language learning (CALL) is not inferior to traditional classroom teaching.” However, most studies were conducted in a higher education setting with no mention of adult settlement language programs such as LINC. This was a gap that the research project here aimed to fill.

Key background about the use of technology by newcomers to Canada (Kennell & Moriarty, 2014) indicates the need to incorporate blended learning and TELL in adult settlement language training to help immigrants become more adept at using technologies in the settlement process and language learning, and for employment and integration (Caidi, Allard, Dechief, & Longford, 2008). Technology use is a means to reduce the social isolation and exclusion that newcomers experience and

to develop practices for seeking information that enable successful integration in Canadian society (Caidi, Allard, & Dechief, 2008). Researchers and educators “...point to the need for adults in settlement language training programs to be familiar and comfortable with the kinds of technology they will be facing at work, in Canadian society, and in other facets of education.” (Kennell & Moriarty, 2014, p. 5). These studies recommend knowledge and self-efficacy for technology use as an important affordance and benefit of a blended learning approach, an issue addressed in the research project detailed here. It was particularly important that the research project here examined these factors in context during students’ blended learning LINC classes and activities in a demonstration project according to learner and teacher perspectives.

The report by Fahy and Sturm (2012), “Learning English with Modern Technology”, provides useful background about technology use for this research project. Online student surveys about the use of technology for language learning were developed and used in lessons with 176 students, 98.8 % in LINC classes and 1.2% in ESL classes in Ontario (Fahy & Sturm, 2012). Various reasons for using computing devices were reported by students, and most learners (80%) used laptops and other ICT (Information and Communications Technology) devices for searching for information – news and weather, banking, and using government resources, as well as learning English. Most learners had a personal digital device, usually a cell phone; however, many reported barriers to using technology devices. The most common difficulties were lack of a computer or Internet connection, lack of English skills, a computer not always being available, lack of computing skills, technical difficulties, and lack of bandwidth. Ninety-three per cent (93 %) of the students thought that newcomers should use technology to learn English; over half reported a preference for a blended learning approach. Access to and use of technology for English language learning and other settlement purposes were examined extensively in the demonstration research project reported here.

Lawrence (2014) on the feasibility of the integration of e-learning into adult ESL provides related background for this research project. Based on extensive surveys and focus groups with stakeholders, Lawrence found that a blended learning approach was favoured by a majority of the stakeholders (students, instructors, administrators) who recognized and were enthusiastic about the potential of a blended learning approach to extend learning and participation. The research reported here further demonstrates and substantiates these benefits of blended learning.

Also important is background related to effective teaching/learning practices in online learning (Anderson, 2018; Lowenthal, 2009; Scollins-Mantha, 2017; Swan, 2002), which explains the importance of teaching and social presence in blended learning. Teaching and teacher presence have been examined through the lens of a community of inquiry framework (Anderson, 2018; Lowenthal, 2009) showing the importance of teaching and social presence in digital contexts. In other words, a sense of “connectedness” amongst learners and teachers are central to effective practices for developing learner engagement in online learning. Teacher engagement is foundational to modelling, informing, supporting, motivating, and enhancing student goals, participation, and learning online and in class. Teachers,

effective instruction, and teacher engagement have been shown to be one of the most important factors in promoting student engagement, participation, and satisfaction in online learning (Anderson, 2018; Lowenthal, 2009; Swan, 2002).

Consistent and frequent participation of teachers with students online are not the only means by which instructors engage students online. Anderson (2018) explains that teachers enhance connectedness with learners online also by including a variety of learning activities and modes – that is, by using audio and video as well as text-based activities, by implementing and integrating social media, and by including icebreaker and digital storytelling activities (audio and video presentations) in their online teaching. Lowenthal (2009) and other educators (see, for example, Schindler & Burkholder, 2014; Scollins-Mantha, 2017) explain that instructors draw on a variety of these “compensatory strategies” and media that increase their visibility in online courses and support the engagement and effectiveness of online learning. By adding audio and video, including their own short audio/podcasts and short video presentations as well as “welcome” or introductory videos, teachers increase “face time” with their students. At times, they may also organize and engage in synchronous, f2f e-meetings or video conferences with students when a video conferencing e-classroom/meeting room is available in the online course. These strategies develop presence and connectedness amongst teachers and students and improve student engagement and uptake of learning in the digital context (Anderson, 2018).

Teacher presence and effective practices for developing engagement and connections amongst and with students are ample within the demonstration research project here. These findings are significant for implications and recommendations about best practices for blending learning in LINC.

2.1 Background: LINC program access and participation, effectiveness, and needs

IRCC reports indicate that the LINC program is having a positive impact on English language skills and newcomer orientation to Canada (Government of Canada, 2010, p. 44). However, there are still some issues related to the levels of newcomer participation and access to LINC, effectiveness of the program, and additional needs (Government of Canada, 2010).

Access and Participation

At first sight the LINC program seems to score well on measures of accessibility. It is funded and free; learner assessment and placement are in place and work well; transportation, disability and childcare assistance expand its client base, especially for caregivers; multiple service providers such as colleges, school boards, and community organizations mean convenient locations (Government of Canada, 2010, p. 22-23). However, “the perception about the program is that the uptake rate for LINC is low” (Government of Canada, 2010, p. 30).

In 2016 – 17, LINC and other IRCC-funded settlement language programs provided instruction to 109,006 newcomers, an increase of 4.2% over the previous year (McBride, 2018). “This increase reflects increased funding for language training since 2012 resulting in an unquantified reduction of waiting lists for training and improved access for newcomers. Still, waiting lists persist, and many prospective

learners may simply get discouraged and make do without LINC, and an unknown number may simply not seek language training at all in favour of immediate employment.” (McBride, 2018, p. 6)

Many LINC centres continue to have long waiting lists. Low uptake indicates the need for flexible options for the delivery of LINC programming such as those made possible through blended learning. The TESL (Teaching English as A Second Language) SLNN Survey (Canada Settlement Language National Network, 2015; Sturm, McBride, & Edgar, 2018) revealed trends in declining enrolment in ESL classes and a need to better address vulnerable/multi-barriered populations, as well as successes with respect to blended learning and online initiatives (Costa, Lohrenz, & McNeil, 2016). “One hope for the better integration of learning technology is improved language training accessibility as it enables flexible program options such as blended or online distance classes that may better match the time constraints of newcomers struggling with entry-level employment, family obligations or illness.” (Sturm et al, 2018, p.4).

The results from the SLNN survey (2015) provide additional indicators about the potential of blended learning to improve access and participation of LINC students. The survey was completed by 51.7% LINC instructors and 17.5% LINC administrators, 22.7% Provincial ESL Program (for immigrants) instructors/administrators, 7.5% Employment Language (for immigrants) instructors/administrators, 8.3% assessors, 6.5% Classroom resource teachers, and 0.7% FSL/CLIC (French as a Second Language/Cours de langue pour les immigrants au Canada) teachers. Program delivery was 86.6% f2f instruction, 25% used a blended approach, 8.9% online instruction, and 7.5% other means like tutoring or home study, across the country. Some programs (28.6%) had computers in the classroom including computers on wheels and many (68.5%) had access to a computer lab. Most programs (86.2%) had Wifi/Internet access. More than three quarters of respondents said that they used email or other online tools to communicate with learners (80.5%), that they accessed various websites to accompany classroom materials (79.7%), and that they used MS Office or other Word tools to create handouts and presentations (78.5%). More than a fifth of programs (21.7%) reported that they used a Learning Management System (LMS) to deliver programs; more than half (51%) said they used Tutela.ca, an IRCC-funded, national online repository of resources for second language teachers. These findings indicate increasing readiness to adopt TELL and blended learning on a national scale.

The SLNN survey (2015) also showed an increase in requests for flexible class time options (32.8%) and for online options (9.4%). Instructors indicated that students need more flexible options to attend courses while continuing to work, opportunities to complete assignments beyond class time, as well as an environment that is more conducive to learning at students’ own pace and schedules. An increasing number of teachers (18%) identified blended/online learning as among the top three most important concerns the sector is facing in terms of organization capacity, teacher training, and support. The analysis of selected results of the SLNN survey showed that ESL and LINC educators see these many advantages to using technology for language learning (Sturm et al, 2018, pp.6-7).

In addition, “more than a third (37%) of LINC administrators and instructors confirmed that they saw a difference in attendance and/or interest among learners

in classes that use blended learning” (Sturm et al, 2018, p.11). Requests of support for flexible delivery options had increased and so had the belief among LINC administrators that access to technology enables flexible delivery.

The recently published LearnIT2teach *LINC Program Impact Evaluation Report* (Sturm et al, 2018) explains that, to improve access and delivery in LINC via technology and blended learning/teaching integration, a proactive approach at the local program level is needed: “...the local development of a vision of blended learning for language instruction and the demonstration of leadership and active support by administrators to implement that vision are essential drivers for learning technology integration at LINC programs” (Sturm et al, 2018, p.22). The research project reported here takes up this call for action and demonstrates how one such local model of blended learning was effectively developed and implemented through the leadership and actions of teachers, administrator, and students that enhanced student access, participation and engagement, and learning.

Needs

However, at the moment, there are some factors in LINC that constrain the development of blended learning. These relate to the Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA) and professional development time for teachers.

When instructors were asked what the main issues were about LINC (SLNN, 2015), the implementation of Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA) topped the list at 53.5% of the respondents. PBLA is the mandated method of assessment used in LINC programs to track and recognize student learning and achievement and to assist learners in progressing through the LINC levels and classes (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2019) - see further background and description of PBLA in section IV of this report. These concerns about implementation of the PBLA are also supported by data collected throughout the LearnIT2teach project training stages for LINC teachers – they reflect that teachers need to take extensive time for PBLA and therefore may not have much time remaining for blended learning integration (Fahy et al, 2016). The research reported on here addresses this issue highlighting “ways forward” for implementation of the PBLA and how blended learning actually eases implementation of PBLA. This research demonstrates how blended learning activities are connected to and, in fact, enhance PBLA use and integration through the effective TELL practices observed and explained in this blended learning project.

A related point (Fahy et al, 2016) pertains to LINC program and LINC teacher professional needs in order to develop and implement TELL and blended learning. In Ontario, 87.5% of LINC teachers who participated in the LearnIT2teach training agreed that improving access to learning technologies improves language learning. However, results also indicated that instructors need more professional development opportunities (75%) to meet the needs of students who expected technology integration in their learning (71.4%) to enable flexible delivery of instruction (67.9%) (Fahy et al, 2016). These teacher and program needs are examined in the research reported here.

The professional needs of LINC instructors were also identified in the LINC impact report (Sturm et al, 2018; Fahy et al, 2016). The report recommends the “...recognition of instructors’ skills and knowledge and efforts to attain

or improve these to support the use of blended learning need to be provided through more paid release for professional development, tech support, resource development, credential recognition and higher compensation for higher skills.” (Sturm et al, 2018, p.22). Based on comparisons of results from surveys with LINC administrators in 2012 and 2016-17, the report found that many issues had persisted between 2012 and 2016-17 (Sturm et al, 2018). Although funding for professional development was found to be a slightly lesser issue, instructors’ knowledge of blended learning and their technology skills had become more of a concern. Sturm et al (2018) underline that knowledgeable, well-trained instructors are key to implementation of effective blended learning, but that recognition and designated, paid release for professional development to develop their skills and knowledge related to technology integration remain a need.

Also, program and technology needs were apparent (Sturm et al, 2018). In many programs reliable Internet access improved but quality of high-speed access worsened, which is significant as programs rely more on using mobile devices such as tablets and implement Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policies for students. More than two thirds of LINC programs were found to have adequate tech support but not all the time and one third did not have technical support.

The demonstration research project reported here shows in concrete ways how these issues of access and participation, technology support and resources, and instructor professional needs play out in an exemplary blended learning LINC program. For example, the implementation of a BYOD policy in the program provides important insights about effective practices for blended learning for other programs facing these needs; as do student and teacher input about technology use and resources, and the teacher perspectives on professional needs inform us about teacher training and professional development needed to effectively implement blended learning.

Effectiveness

With respect to the effectiveness of LINC, IRCC stated in the 2010 program review that “LINC training is high quality and designed to meet the needs of students” (Government of Canada, 2010, p. 42), however language gains are mainly in reading and writing whereas “...for listening and speaking, the gains were not beyond what they would have achieved from [just] living in Canada” (2010, p. 32). This report noted that real learning gains seem to appear only when learners spend at least 1,000 hours in the program (2010, p. 32). These concerns about English language learning and use are addressed in the demonstration project reported herein. The effects of blended learning for the learners and their English learning development are highlighted in response to question one, in fact, demonstrating that in blended learning classes there are notable gains in English language learning and use, and more specifically, for all skills – listening and speaking, as well as reading and writing.

It should be noted, however, in response to the 2010 report information cited above, that 1,000 hours of English language instruction could be argued to be a highly limited number of hours for achieving English language proficiency, especially in light of frequently cited findings about how long it takes for English language learners to develop proficiency – up to two years to develop BICS (basic interpersonal communication skills or conversational English); and five – seven

years of study to develop cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 2008; Derwing & Waugh, 2012; Khatib, & Taie, M., 2016). It may also be that the assessment of the language skills cited (Government of Canada, 2010, pp. 32 – 36) was not sufficiently “finely tuned” to demonstrate the full extent of the language learning achieved by these newcomers to Canada – a point about such general English language proficiency tests highlighted in research (Green, 2005), as well as the statement (see Appendix P) from the Research and Development Office of Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program (CELPPI). Because of these limitations of assessment of English language development, a demonstration project model was used in the research reported here to demonstrate students’ English language learning through the actual learning activities and tools such as the PBLA that were used in the blended learning classes (rather than isolated tests and assessments) – that is, observations of classes and activities, the students’ portfolios of language learning activities and achievements (artefacts for their PBLA), interviews with students and teachers, and focus group discussion activities in which students discussed, explained and demonstrated the benefits of blended learning and their increase in English language skills and ease in using English. This issue of effectiveness of blended learning in LINC for development of English language learning by students was thus included in this research. This is closely related to the following section.

2.2 What are indicators of learning and language development?

This research project draws on research and conceptualization of English language learning and improvements in performance that are aligned with the Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment (CLBA) and the Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA) used in LINC programs.

Assessment processes in LINC and the PBLA are rooted in notions of English language learning as an ongoing process in which ongoing (formative) assessment and summative assessment are interrelated to affect student outcomes and learning. In the rationale for the PBLA, research by Black and William (1998) is cited. This explains how assessment should support learning, stating that “...research has determined that all assessment should be carried out formatively...” to promote and support learning. (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2017, para 4 – 5)

Indicators of learning and development that are aligned with this conceptualization of ongoing assessment were therefore important in this research. Learning was seen through the lens of the student and teacher observations of learning and the learning artefacts that learners kept on an ongoing basis in their portfolios (PBLA) to demonstrate their achievements; as well as indicators that they explained in their interviews and focus group discussion activities about their English language improvement. These indicators of learning and development were included in this research project just as they are required for demonstration of student progress and achievement according to the PBLA process that is used in LINC.

Self-efficacy for language learning and use are also important indicators of development. Student self-efficacy has been extensively researched and supported as closely related to English language learning and performance (Bandura, 1997; Cumming, Cummings, and Erdosy, 2006; Raoofi, Tan, Chan, 2012). Self-efficacy

(that is, learners' beliefs about their capabilities) affect and predict performance... (Bandura, 1997; Cave, 2017). Therefore, students' developing self-efficacy for English language learning and use of technology are reported here as indicators of learning development. For example, the students reported the following about their developing self-efficacy for listening and speaking skills:

FIGURE 1: Focus group discussion (Batgirl, Arli, Sailor Moon, Kelly)



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Language development & confidence

- *Listening and comprehension - All of us say now that we have become better listeners because we can ask some questions to show interest and support the speaker. Another improvement is that we can easily catch or guess the main points of what people want to express.*
- *Speaking - This is what we all feel we have improved most in: we all want to take risks to talk with people. Before, we might have avoided to speak in English or tried to keep it short. Now, we are getting more confident to talk and go out of our comfort zone.*

(Batgirl, Arli, Sailor Moon, Kelly; Focus Group)

2.3 LearnIT2teach project and EduLINC

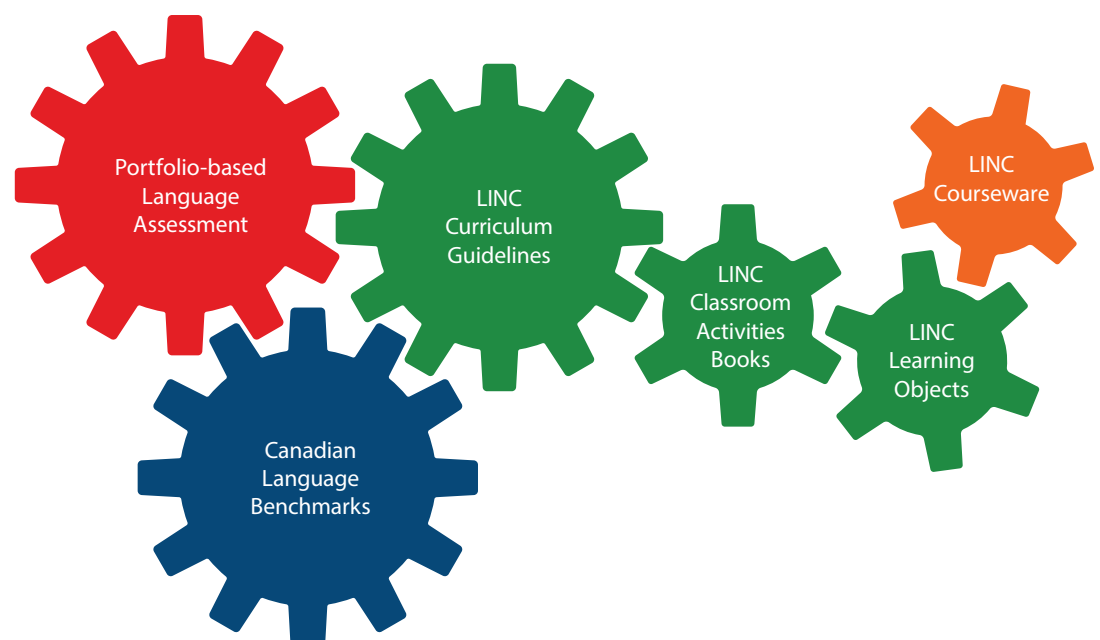
Another factor that figures centrally in this report on the effects of blended learning is that of the LearnIT2teach project and its teacher training community for blended learning, as well as EduLINC, the online learning courseware that is the media for blended learning in these LINC classes.

In 2007, CIC (now IRCC) contracted a research report on the potential for learning technology in CIC-funded language training programs. The resulting report, *Fast Forward: An Analysis of Online and Distance Language Training* (Kelly, Kennell, McBride & Sturm, 2008), presented evidence to support an expanded role for online learning and information technology in adult newcomer second language training. Projects to develop online curricula for blended learning were initiated in 2008 in the Ontario Region of the CIC federal department. The LearnIT2teach Project was then launched in January 2010 to distribute the resulting learner courseware for blended classes by hosting it in an open-source learning management system (Moodle) called EduLINC. Through this distributed learning site, the project has developed, updated and maintained more than 40 'starter' courses for teachers. The starter courses represent a turnkey solution to various language benchmark levels and are multi-level or level specific as required. Initially

the courseware was only available to LINC and ESL teachers in the Ontario Region, but distribution and teacher training have progressively expanded to be available to LINC teachers and programs in every province and the Yukon in 2018.

The LINC courseware, EduLINC, is a product of years of development of foundation resources, documents and policies. The courseware works hand-in-hand with the LINC Curriculum Guidelines (Hajer, Kaskens, & Stasiak, 2007; Toronto Catholic District School Board, 2002) that assist instructors and administrators with program planning by providing curriculum content, activities, and resources that are consistent with LINC and the CLB. EduLINC is learner-centred and task-based and serves the objectives of the LINC Curriculum Guidelines. These objectives provide language instruction that facilitates social, cultural and economic integration into Canada. EduLINC includes modules from LINC levels 1 to 7 (CLB levels 1-8) and includes appropriate LINC learning objects, class organizers, glossaries, learner support materials, questionnaires and other resources suitable for PBLA and social communication features such as blogs, wikis and forums. The online learning objects and activities extend the learning opportunities in language programs and are related to the activities in the LINC classroom activities resources (Allan, Edgar, O'Brien, and McBride, 2018, p.17). Also, they meet SCORM (Sharable Content Object Reference Model) standards for providing interactive and media rich learning opportunities and assure transferability to other LMSs (see figure 2 below). EduLINC has been vetted by LINC professionals and there is a continuous cycle of evaluation of EduLINC as part of the LearnIT2teach project. IRCC is now in the process of updating the LINC Curriculum Guidelines, including an alignment with the new National Curriculum Guidelines and PBLA. Work on developing a new national Learning Management System (LMS) for LINC has also begun that will include electronic or e-portfolios for learners in the PBLA process, as well as a portal with a single log in that integrates Tutela, the LMS, and an automated courseware builder.

FIGURE 2: The working components and relationships of the LINC courseware (EduLINC) to LINC

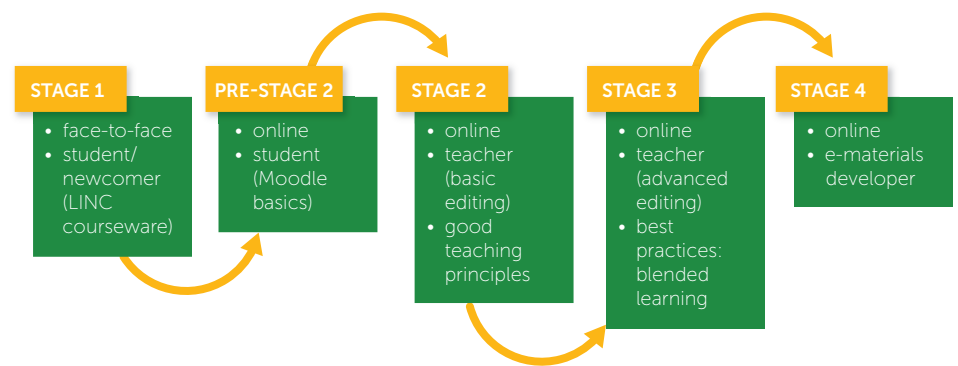


In the 2016-2017 survey, LINC administrators reported that “...learners are becoming a bit more independent when accessing the courseware but still need a lot of help, and that they are thrilled to access important employment resources as well as language learning SCORMs from anywhere at any time.” (Sturm et al, 2018, p.15). According to Sturm et al. (2018, p. 22), “...many issues of concern have persisted over the course of five years from 2012 to 2016-17”, identifying the need for local development of a vision of blended learning and its implementation for effective learning technology integration in LINC. How teachers develop and implement EduLINC and online activities locally in context to support their blended learning classes and students is a topic central to the investigation undertaken in the demonstration project reported herein, particularly in relation to question 3 – that is, the effects of blended learning for teachers, instruction, and the program.

Another need identified is for development of a community of practice and ongoing professional development for LINC instructors using blended learning (Sturm et al, 2018). LearnIT2teach does already provide four brief stages of teacher training re. the use of EduLINC; however, there is a need to extend and expand that community of practice in an ongoing way for teachers engaged in developing and implementing blended learning.

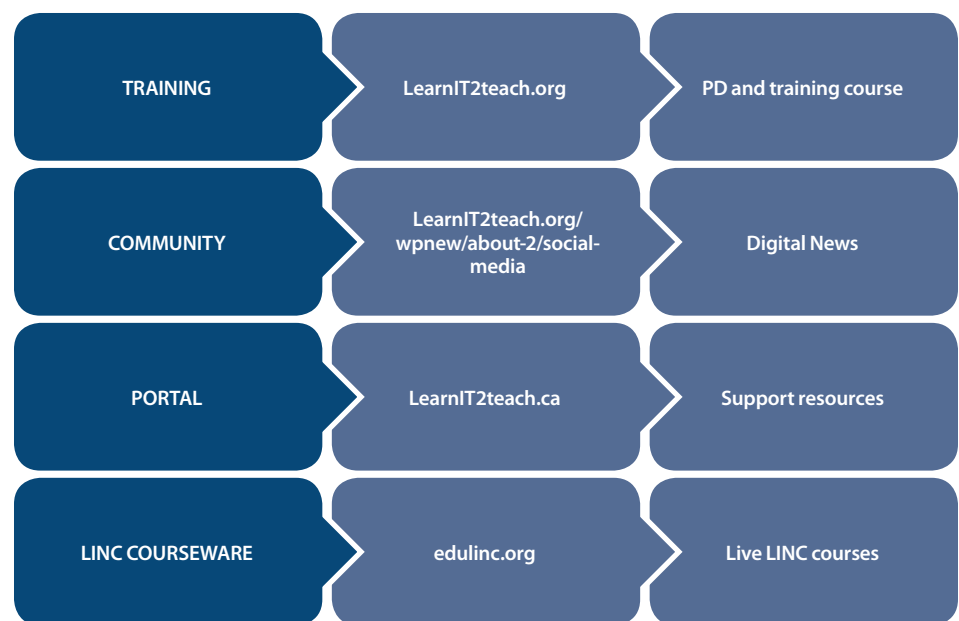
Concurrent with development work on EduLINC, and to enable and assist teachers to implement the LINC courseware in EduLINC locally in blended learning settings, four stages of teacher training for blended learning/teaching were developed in the early stages of the LearnIT2teach project – Stages 1, 2, 3, 4. Stage 1 is an initial 2.5 hour f2f introduction from the teacher learner’s perspective, followed by three online stages, all mentored by LearnIT2teach experts. To implement blended learning, the initial 2.5 hours of online learning about blended teaching in Stage 2 (Pre-stage 2) are required before teachers are assigned a language level appropriate starter course in EduLINC and sufficient student Moodle accounts to provide blended learning in their programs and classes. The balance of Stages 2 and 3 focus on enhancing course management and editing skills. The teachers in the research herein had all achieved at least Stage 2 of LearnIT2teach teacher training; two had achieved Stage 3, and one had Stage 4, which is about e-materials development, in progress.

FIGURE 3: LearnIT2teach teacher training stages



The LearnIT2teach project is currently made up of three main components, the LearnIT2teach portal, the teacher training site, and the EduLINC. All of these figure importantly in the exemplary blended learning program featured in this research – all of the teachers had trained through the LearnIT2teach project. EduLINC was the prime source of the activities and resources that they drew on in implementing the blended learning approach and PBLA (see further on this in Section IV where we describe the blended learning context and approach in detail). A learning community has emerged and continues to develop as a result of the LearnIT2teach teacher training. It has become an integral part of the LearnIT2teach project and, thus, underlines the importance of learning communities for the adoption and implementation of blended LINC learning. Figure 4 below shows the components of the LearnIT2teach project, where to access them, and what they provide. The teachers involved in the demonstration project reported on here were active participants and “drivers” of this teacher learning community and explained their needs and ways forward for developing this community and continuing professional development.

FIGURE 4: The components of the LearnIT2teach project



2.4 Potential of blended learning and TELL adoption

From CALL to TELL

Allan et al. (2018) in the LearnIT2teach Language Learning Leadership Guide: Supporting Flexible Learning through Technology highlight the importance and potential of blended learning for English language learning, and traces the evolution of blended learning from the early days of computer-assisted learning/teaching towards the current approach identified as TELL (technology enhanced language learning) and blended learning/teaching in which online and classroom activities, resources, and instruction are co-ordinated and interdependent:

The impact of [the] Web on life and learning is hard to overstate. Information technology is now threaded through life, work and study in ways that were unanticipated just two decades ago. The current or emerging reality for language teaching professionals and learners is that “...digital technologies bring the real world into the classroom and take the classroom into the world” (Walker & White, 2013, p. 179). Can extending the walls of the classroom through learning technology address shortcomings identified in settlement language training programs? Flexible delivery models that incorporate more independent study online lessen the need to attend class in person and help newcomers balance language learning with work or family responsibilities. When mobile learning is enabled, it will add even greater flexibility. Will increased program flexibility lead to higher participation rates? Probably.

Concurrent with the early days of personal computing and the Internet, Warschauer published influential thinking on the relationship between technology and language learning. The first phase of technology integration he described was ‘structured CALL’, based on a view that language is a system of structures that can be broken down into discrete lessons for drill and practice to build competency and accuracy (Walker & White, 2013, p. 2). Warschauer’s second phase was labelled ‘communicative CALL’ and based on the premise that language learning is constructed in the learner’s mind, and the best use of technology was to assist communicative language learning based on developing a learner’s understanding rather than drill and practice towards an internalization of sets of grammar, syntax and other external rules (Walker & White, 2013, p. 2).

Other theorists have moved beyond Warschauer to assert that ‘integrated CALL’ represents a new phase of information technology integration. In this phase, learning technology becomes normalized in the learning process; integrated to the extent that it becomes an assumption and an expectation of learners (Walker & White, 2013, p. 2). When first introduced, technology such as the iPad is “...seen as having the power to transform life as we know it...” (Walker & White, 2013, p. 2), whereas the Integrated CALL phase is realized when, “...CALL is no longer a meaningful construct because technology is an everyday part of life and learning” (Walker & White, 2013, p. 2).

The acronym TELL, Technology-enhanced language learning, reflects a further degree of normalization of technology into language training, representing as it does technology not just assisting language learning, but “...as part of the environment in which language exists and is used” (Walker & White, 2013, p. 9). TELL encompasses not only personal computers but other ‘smart’ devices such as tablets, game consoles and smartphones, and even devices not yet invented or used. Also, TELL encompasses social communication that goes way beyond CALL’s original focus on discrete skills, and in fact goes beyond language learning itself to make possible communities of practice among newcomers. A language classroom by itself, cannot be a true Community of Practice “...because there is no body of expert members at the heart of the learner community in the classroom” (p. 5). Digital networks make possible online environments where newcomers can participate with ‘experts’ and ‘apprentice’ and “...learn through lurking...” (Walker & White, p. 5).

These technology innovations, “compel us to re-define what it means to teach, to learn, and to know” (Bouchard, 2013, p. 305) in an age with nearly ubiquitous access to the Internet. Learners can now create “their own personal learning network” (Bouchard, 2013, p. 307). The work of Siemens (2006, 2008) and Downes (2012) in articulating a theory of connectivism is evidence of a genuine paradigm shift. This is a worldview where knowledge resides at least partly in machines. A related concept of ‘rhizomatic knowledge’ has emerged “which argues that knowledge is something which exists in its own right, independent of people (platonic knowledge) but is rather located in the minds of many individuals...” (Walker & White, 2013, p. 6). In this environment, social constructivist theories of learning and knowing are actualized, “...as new ideas are constructed through shared thinking and conversations” (Walker & White, 2013, p. 6). Whether or not learning technology will increase accessibility and program uptake, learning technology needs to be incorporated in settlement language training because the implicit skills enable broader and more effective participation in Canadian society.

In an era when technology can do so much, do language classes still have value? Can non-formal independent learning replace formalized government programs? The value of autonomous or semi-autonomous settlement language training to newcomers is an open question. Without 2f opportunities, can learners be expected to engage with technology and rehearse authentic language? A LINC or other language training classroom provides 2f social interaction with immigrant peers and a language training professional. The classroom represents a protected social environment where the potential for embarrassment or communication failure is minimized, and a low risk ‘rehearsal’ environment for language and cultural exploration and experimentation.

McBride (2018, p.4) adds that “from an adult newcomer’s point of view, how can information technology assist the immigration project? Can technology skills facilitate learning English and enable more flexible, accessible course delivery?” Government funders and policymakers want to know if learning technology innovation can make settlement language training more effective and efficient.

McBride continues: “over the past 25 years, research has revealed an increasing time lag between the arrival of immigrants and positive economic outcomes. Labelled by some as ‘the settlement gap’ McBride notes that the ‘settlement gap’ has been explained in a TD Bank report: “a gap between earnings of newcomers and Canadian-born individuals on entering the labour market is widening. While immigrants in the past could hope to close that earnings gap with time, the ability to do so today is in question” (Alexander, 2010, p. 3; McBride, 2018, p.4)

LINC blended learning innovation has an essential factor in its favour for reducing this ‘settlement gap’ because EduLINC and its LINC courseware has high potential for re-invention “defined as the degree to which an innovation is changed or modified by a use in the process of its adoption and implementation” (Rogers, 2005, p.180). To assist in this innovation, teachers are given ready-made courses but can also edit, remove, and add to any course element, once they understand the course editing controls in the Moodle-based LMS. They can completely adapt and reinvent the way the LINC courseware in EduLINC is adapted and implemented to suit their

local needs. “Adopters generally think that re-invention is a very desirable quality” (Rogers, 2005, p.185). How LINC instructors adopted and adapted blended learning and EduLINC activities and resources for the needs and benefit of their students’ settlement goals is highlighted in this research.

To assist in the adoption and implementation of blended learning and TELL, the LearnIT2teach Project has understood the importance of recruiting and preparing language training sector leaders since its inception in January 2010. Previous project evaluations (Fahy et al, 2016; Sturm et al, 2018) have shown that, for some professionals in the LINC sector, and for a range of reasons, the relative advantage of implementing blended LINC learning has seemed to be not yet high enough to justify adoption. Relative advantage refers to the ratio of the expected benefits and the costs of adoption of an innovation (Rogers, 2005). In other words, the higher the perceived relative advantage of an innovation, the higher the rate of innovation adoption. To foster an awareness of the relative advantage of blended learning to LINC programs, an online Learning Technology Innovation Leadership course for LINC administrators and instructors was piloted between September 2015 and January 2017 and is the latest project initiative aimed at this goal to ease and advance the adoption of blended learning. (McBride, 2018, p.1-2). Teachers in this research project had completed and contributed to this online leadership course. Throughout the research reported here they indicated the importance of this training. As well, they advocated for ongoing training and support for continued effective implementation of blended learning.

The teachers and exemplary model of blended learning in LINC demonstrated here in this research project show that the resistance to adoption of innovation may be overcome through planned and effective implementation and delivery of blended learning along with professional development support and training. The research here examines the effects of blended learning for enhancing adoption of blended learning and technology and associated needs (for example, ongoing training and a community of practice for teachers and administrators); in addition to improving the afore-mentioned “settlement gap” and serving the settlement and language learning needs of learners.

3. THE RESEARCH APPROACH, QUESTIONS, CONTEXT, AND METHODOLOGY

In this section we detail the blended learning research project and procedures in-depth to explain how the needs and issues were investigated.

3.1 A demonstration research approach

This research project was implemented according to a demonstration research approach to examine the effects of the blended learning approach in LINC in an authentic and exemplary practice context during December 2017 – June 2018. Demonstration project models (or, a demonstration approach) (Ware & Johnson, 2000) are often used in education and health care as an applied research approach to closely examine applications of approaches and innovations as they unfold in “real time” in context – see, for example, A New Program Model for Supporting Applied Research and Program Evaluation, Education and Professional Development, and Knowledge Exchange in Public Health (Government of Ontario, 2011). The purpose of a demonstration project is to see real applications of innovations in progress in order to extrapolate possible extensions and adaptations of these innovations (in this case, blended learning) to additional classes and contexts.

According to our current knowledge, no other major demonstration research projects such as this have previously researched the effects of blended learning for English language learning/teaching in adult settlement programs in Canada. A pilot of the research documented here was begun in 2014 with a LINC Program at a community college in Ontario. Lack of funding at that time (2014 – 2015) curtailed that initial pilot project, so the research reported on here was undertaken when support became available in 2017 – 2018. The original 2014 research proposal plan for that pilot project to investigate the effects of blended learning in LINC had been developed to examine a blended learning program/classes in another setting, so the proposal and ethical review were updated by the LearnIT2teach Research Committee during May – August 2017 for the commencement of the 2017-2018 research in September 2017. Since implementation of blended learning programs and EduLINC training for teachers of blended learning has become more widespread in Canada since 2014 – 2015, it was recommended by the Research Committee to undertake the blended learning research project outside of Ontario to build research capacity across Canada. LINC Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) in British Columbia include a number of exemplary part-time and full time programs through school board and community settlement programs where the blended learning approach has been implemented.

After review of the proposal and development of the plan for this research were completed, the demonstration research project was initiated by a principal researcher and two research associates of LearnIT2teach with the assistance of community settlement and school board programs interested in the effects of blended learning for LINC and supportive of the work of LearnIT2teach in British Columbia in Fall, 2017. Consultations, observations, and trials of the research with these community programs were begun – first at two community organization programs that provided Saturday programs with f2f classes and ongoing blended learning throughout the remainder of the week for learners studying in LINC programs at the LINC levels of 5, 6 and 7. It was found that the numbers of learners in Saturday programs developed very gradually over time, and lack of sufficient densities of students from the outset lead the Research Committee to seek out additional programs. We ultimately decided to conduct the research project in an established blended learning school board program that provides both full-time and part-time blended learning classes during the week for LINC students at the LINC levels of 6 and 7/8.

Blended Learning in LINC

The LearnIT2teach Project defines the blended learning approach in English language learning as the combination of f2f learning with instructor-facilitated use by learners of online activities and resources that complement and co-ordinate with the in-class teaching and activities (Kennell & Moriarty, 2014). LearnIT2teach has been using a very broad definition to include many different modalities of blended learning. Only a general definition can capture all modalities of blended learning that LearnIT2teach supports, but the project is working towards a blended learning working definition that specifically reflects best practices in the LINC and ESL sector that will include instructional as well as professional development considerations.

The LearnIT2teach Project develops and hosts Moodle-based LINC courseware (EduLINC) which has been developed for use in the blended learning approach for LINC learners at the Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) levels of 2-7, as well as more than 300 learning objects based on existing print-based LINC curriculum (Kennell & Moriarty, 2014). As explained in the previous section, in early 2010, the LearnIT2teach project began working to provide both the learner courseware and the teacher training to support the integration of e-learning into Ontario CIC newcomer settlement and language programs.

In 2013, the project's mandate for the Ontario Region of IRCC was expanded to the Prairies and the Maritime provinces. In January 2014, the first training events took place outside Ontario (Sturm et al, 2018). TELL has been used increasingly in LINC programs across Canada and has been adopted in British Columbia (BC), the site of the research project reported here. As of May 2018, there are 157 LINC teachers trained by LearnIT2teach in B.C. to support blended learning; of these 49 LINC teachers were actively using EduLINC during the same period the research was undertaken.

Kennell & Moriarty (2014) noted a major gap in the literature is research related to the effects of blended learning for adult settlement language learning in programs such as LINC. Therefore, the primary goals of this research project were identified as:

- To examine and demonstrate the effects of the blended learning approach for LINC participants and their English language learning and achievement of their settlement goals;
- To examine and demonstrate the effects of these blended learning approaches for participation of learners in the LINC program/classes;
- To examine and demonstrate the effects of the blended language learning approach for learners' self-efficacy and knowledge for using technology for language learning and other settlement needs;
- To examine and demonstrate the effects of the blended learning approach for instruction and teachers in LINC; and,
- To demonstrate, examine and describe effective or “best” practices for blended learning teaching/learning.

Principles guiding the research and data analyses

In addition to the goals and procedures of the demonstration research project approach outlined above, these principles and approaches guided the research. Multiple research tools and data sources were implemented. These included: student and instructor questionnaires and interviews (Appendix B-F); class observations and observations of online activities (Appendix G); a student self-efficacy questionnaire about technology knowledge and use (Appendix H); student focus group discussions (Appendix I); observations of portfolio-based assessment student tasks and PBLA artefacts (Appendix J); a Research Consent Form (Appendix K) and, a CELPIP English language test to establish a baseline of learners' English language proficiency (Appendix L-P). These were implemented and analyzed to ensure triangulation of evidence, that is, to view and verify findings from multiple perspectives.

Data were analyzed using methods of constant comparison to identify and confirm recurring themes across data sets. The researchers identified major themes and conferred to identify and confirm themes and findings.

Research questions

The specific research questions for investigating the effects of blended learning included:

1. What were the effects of the blended learning approach for the LINC students' English learning, particularly for their participation and engagement in LINC and their learning, and for their achievement of other settlement goals?
2. What were the effects of the blended language learning approach for learners' self-efficacy and knowledge for using technology for language learning and their settlement goals?
3. a) What were the effects of the blended learning approach for LINC teachers, instruction, and the program?; b) What effective or “best” practices for teaching and learning in LINC using a blended learning approach were demonstrated in this LINC research context?

These questions were investigated according to the following research plan and methods.

Plan of the study and research methods

The project was conducted with 45 student participants during their studies in the blended learning classes of a LINC Program at a major school board in British Columbia. Three blended learning classes participated in the research project – two, full-time blended learning classes (LINC Level 6 and 7/8) which had f2f classes for 16.5 hours over three days each week and had at least 5.5 hours of online learning each week; and, a part-time (evening) blended learning class at Level 7/8 which had 5.5 hours of f2f classes two nights each week and at least 5.5 hours of online learning and activities each week. Levels 6 and 7/8 classes were chosen so that student participants would have sufficient English language to explain their learning. See Appendix A for an overview of the student participants. Most students in these LINC classes were female. The participants needed childcare which was provided by the program. Participants were between the ages of 26 and 65 and were from a variety of first language backgrounds, including Arabic, Cantonese, Czech, Farsi, Japanese, Kurdish, Korean, Mandarin, Persian, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Spanish. All had completed high school in their country of origin; most had completed university; several had completed graduate school. Their work experience prior to arriving in Canada included employment as physicians, chemists, nurses, software engineers, accountants, managers, instructors and teachers, office assistants, bankers, firefighters, dental hygienists, and sales persons, and showed a high level of expertise. Twenty-two of the forty-five participants said they were not working outside the home in Canada at the time of the research project; however, the others had jobs in construction, cleaning, serving and cooking, reception, and cashier work.

The project was undertaken with LINC teachers who had a high level of expertise and training in the blended learning approach. Three LINC teachers – Andrada, Annabelle, Eleanor (pseudonyms) and the program administrator, Gladys (pseudonym), participated in the research, along with a resource teacher (Charlotte) who provided support for school events, guest speakers, field trips, and childcare resources. Further background about the context and teaching are provided in-depth in Section III about the teaching context, instructors, and the blended learning approach.

Research methodology and tools

This research study employed a variety of complementary research tools detailed below. For student research participants, completing the questionnaire and participating in an interview took approximately 1.5 hours for each. All other student tasks of the research study were completed as learning activities during regular class time. For teacher and staff research participants completing the questionnaire and participating in an interview took 2 hours maximum for each.

All of the questionnaires, interviews, activities, and data gathered during the research project are confidential. Students, teachers, and staff were asked to choose pseudonyms (not their real name) to be used to conceal their identity. Data was stored securely, and no information was given to teachers, administrators, students, colleagues or others about student data or their participation in the study. Participation in the research was voluntary and optional according to the letter of consent explained to and signed by each participant. All research participants could withdraw from the study at any time and were not to feel any stress or risk.

Two research associates conducted the interviews with students, teachers, and staff, as well as the classroom observations and other data collection. Students and teachers received a small honorarium for participating in this study.

- **CELPIP Testing** was done when student participants joined the project to establish a baseline description of student English language proficiency (see Appendix L-P). CELPIP (Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program) is an English language proficiency test that is designed to assess students in a “variety of everyday situations, such as communicating with coworkers and superiors in the workplace, interacting with friends, understanding newscasts, and interpreting and responding to written materials” (Paragon, 2018). CELPIP is a Canadian-based general English language proficiency test which is accepted by IRCC for the purposes of citizenship and permanent residency applications in Canada (Paragon, 2018). Students participants in the research took the test at the beginning to establish a baseline description of their English language proficiency and, also a post-test near the conclusion of the research. See further information about CELPIP and its use in this project below. CELPIP test scores are reported according to indicators that are aligned with the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB).

There are two versions of the CELPIP Test: The CELPIP-General Test and the CELPIP-General LS Test. The CELPIP-General Test was used in this research project. It assesses functional Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking skills, and is accepted by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) as proof of English language proficiency for permanent residency and citizenship in Canada. As noted earlier in this report, the CELPIP assessment scores were used as a baseline test of English language proficiency of student participants in this research and were not taken as the means to determine if English language gains occurred during the period of research. Students were eager to take the test for practice reasons as well as to become more familiar and more comfortable with the test design and physical demands of language assessments that require engagement with test content in a variety of ways for an extended period of time (3-4 hours). For the students of the day classes, two sittings per day were arranged by Paragon/CELPIP staff on the research site for the pre and the post test. Students in the evening class were able to take the test at one of the official test centres. The associate researchers booked test appointments and provided public transit tickets. The project gratefully acknowledges Paragon for providing CELPIP test opportunities for the students in this study.

The results of the CELPIP tests are provided in Appendix O. The findings show that student participants demonstrated English language proficiency skills during the pre-test commensurate with CLB levels 6 – 8.

- **Student Questionnaires and Interviews** – The students participating in this study completed a background questionnaire (Appendix B) during class time with the support of the teacher. Early in the study, each student participated in a 30-minute semi-structured interview about the effects and their perceptions of blended learning (Appendix C) with one of the associate researchers. The interviews took place in a separate room for privacy and confidentiality reasons; however, doors were kept open to allow students to leave.

- **Teacher/Staff Questionnaires and Interviews** – The teachers and staff participating in this study also completed a background questionnaire (Appendix D). They participated in a 60-minute interview (Appendix E) about the effects of blended learning and their practices with one of the associated researchers in a separate room for privacy and confidentiality reasons.
- **Self-Efficacy Questionnaire about Confidence in Using Technology and Computers** (see Appendix H) – Students completed a 10-point Likert scale questionnaire as an activity during class time to gather information on their knowledge and confidence for using technology.
- **Observations and Collection of Tasks and Artefacts** (Appendix J) – Classroom observations were done in each of the three LINC blended learning classes to describe the blended learning approach and activities. The online activities of students and teachers in EduLINC were also observed and documented for a period of time during the study. Impact statements were prepared by students for the Literacy Innovation Award. Some tasks and artefacts for PBLA were identified by the teachers as examples of assessments for language gains (Appendix R).
- **Student Focus Group Discussions and PowerPoints** (see Appendix I) – Students were asked to discuss in-depth questions about the benefits and challenges of their participation in blended learning LINC classes via focus group discussion activities. They were asked to assume the role of researchers by way of recording their focus groups' experiences and preparing explanations of their findings in PowerPoint.

The focus group discussion activities involved an innovative approach to the design, development, and implementation of focus groups which emerged during the course of the project. It was decided that the students would develop the focus group questions and lead the discussions themselves in order to involve students as researchers in the project, as well as a means to observing and documenting their English skills. The teachers explained to the students that focus group discussions are usually research activities that are conducted as interviews with a group of people about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards a product or service. A researcher usually takes notes or records the vital points from each focus group discussion. In these focus group discussions in the blended learning classes, students were both members of the focus groups and the researchers acting as recorders of the discussions. One student took notes and the group recorded their findings. The notes about the effects, benefits, challenges that each focus group recorded were collected by the teacher and the main points are reported as part of the findings of the research here. At the beginning of the activity, each student completed a Personal Goals Review activity to prepare for the group discussions (Appendix M) and to gather data about students' perceptions of the effects of blended learning. These were also collected.

In one of the daytime classes, each focus group presented the findings of their discussions by preparing explanations of their findings in PowerPoint and sharing them online in EduLINC. The purpose of the focus group activity was to talk about the effects of the blended learning classes in helping students develop their English communication skills, study and research skills, and settlement in the community. Students were asked to share examples of their experiences and explain if and how their LINC class and EduLINC played a role.

These were the data sources for the research reported here. Details of the teaching and learning context and the blended learning approach demonstrated are highlighted and detailed in the next section as additional background for the research findings.

4. THE TEACHING/LEARNING CONTEXT AND BLENDED LEARNING APPROACH IN LINC

4.1 The blended learning LINC program

The research project was conducted in three blended LINC classes at a school board program and site in British Columbia: two daytime full-time classes – LINC 6 and English for the Workplace/LINC 7/8 – and one evening part-time class – LINC 7/8, all three of them operating out of the same neighbourhood adult and continuing education learning centre. The teachers of these three classes chose the pseudonyms Anabelle, Andrada, and Eleanor. As previously indicated, this program was chosen for the research site to demonstrate the effects of blended learning for learning and teaching in LINC as it is an established program with developed expertise and experience in blended learning delivery. The following describes the history and context of this blended learning LINC program, the teachers, and the teaching approach as background for discussion of the findings of the study.

The school board district was established in the early nineteen hundreds to provide public education. Adult education programs were added over time. Today, a variety of courses are available there for the growing population, such as academic upgrading, vocational programs, and recreational courses. With an increase in the number of newcomers choosing Canada as their home, the school district started offering LINC classes in the early nineties. At present, the program has three locations and offers 26 classes, from LINC 1 (Foundations) to LINC 8, with two of those having a workplace focus. Eight classes are blended and range from LINC 4 to LINC 8, with plans to have more classes offered in a blended format.

The technology base for the blended learning LINC program has recently been upgraded considerably with the approval and purchase of iPads and additional laptops for classroom use. This took place soon after the program became involved in the research study reported here. At present, there are about 98 devices available to LINC students attending the three locations, most of them laptops and iPads. At the school where the research was conducted, these devices are kept in carts that can be easily wheeled into the classrooms. Also, students now have access to free wifi, so they can use their own devices. In the classes where the teacher has a Bring-Your-Own-Device (BYOD) policy, some choose to bring their iPads, but, most often, students will use their smartphones.

The student population ranges from young people to seniors who have diverse language and educational backgrounds, as well as diverse employment, education, parenting and community involvement goals. The LINC program has continuous

intake, so students can join at any time. However, continuous intake, while allowing for flexibility, presents its own set of challenges, especially when the format is blended and some of the students have had limited exposure to the use of technology for language learning purposes. These challenges became even more obvious as more classes started transitioning to the blended format. A variety of solutions were discussed with the final decision to implement the completion of a Transitions to blended learning class as a pre-requisite for all students who wish to enroll in a blended class. This decision was also seen to provide a partial solution to the huge waitlists for the program's daycare/childcare as students in Transitions classes have access to daycare spaces when students in blended classes are online at home.

Transition classes – Orientation to blended learning

Transitions to blended learning classes started being offered to new students in the fall of 2017, shortly before the research study reported here began. Because of this timing, not all the research participants in this study had a chance to take a Transitions class as some of the students were already in the blended learning program at that time. In addition, no Transitions class was being offered in the evening, so the students in the evening class had not taken a Transitions to blended learning class. Eleanor, the Transitions instructor, developed the curriculum in consultation with the blended learning instructors and the program administrator in order to determine the best way to address needs. The curriculum and the schedule for these classes continue to be regularly reviewed and modified when gaps are identified; for example, recently, an evening class was deemed necessary and added. Typically, the Transitions to blended learning classes run two times a week for 4 or 6 weeks, depending on the LINC level. For the final assessment and exit from Transitions to blended learning classes, the students have to demonstrate an understanding of the features of EduLINC and be able to complete sample activities. If absolutely necessary, they can repeat the course. Therefore, when students start in blended classes, they already have accounts for EduLINC and are familiar with the online work, which makes for a smooth transition to the blended learning classes.

Daytime daycare program for pre-school children

The LINC program offers a daytime daycare/childcare program for pre-school children ages 1 year and a half to 5 years old. This service is in high demand and there are long waitlists. Children have opportunities for early learning development, language learning and social development. As many as 40 preschoolers might be in daycare during the day at the location where the research was conducted. At lunch time, the children join their parents in the classroom. This allows for the children to interact with their parents, their classmates and teacher – bonds that go beyond classroom walls are formed. It's not unusual for students and their families to plan or join activities together after school, often the kind that encourage community involvement. They sometimes refer to their learning community as "our big LINC family". Many of the parents report that this type of support is vital for them as it helps break the isolation of a stay-at-home immigrant parent who often doesn't have the social network to start integrating into Canadian society and has to delay language learning.

Guest speakers, field trips, and recognition awards

To support newcomers' integration and facilitate their contribution to Canadian society, guest speakers and field trips are regularly scheduled and information about community events is curated and shared. This is mainly the responsibility of two resource teachers, who are also part time LINC instructors. They consult with the instructors during the decision-making process; they also actively initiate and maintain relationships with community partners. Preparation for many of these events, follow-up activities, and feedback gathering are often done online. Social media, in particular Twitter, is also used as a tool to promote these events, share resources and information, and connect with community partners. Charlotte, one of the resource teachers, maintains a Twitter school account; some classes also have Twitter accounts.

The concerted efforts of everyone involved in making this program relevant have been rewarded with students' successes and public recognition. Over the past three years, this LINC program has won several contests and received a few awards. In 2016, the program was the BC recipient of The Council of the Federation Literacy Award, and, most recently, the Blended and Transition to Blended Program was awarded an Honourable Mention in the Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life Literacy Innovation Award, to mention a few of the most memorable ones.

The blended approach – How it started and evolved

The success of the blended approach was possible through teachers' dedication and the program administrator's support and openness to new initiatives and ideas. Of no less importance was the advocacy of the early adopters of the approach. Officially, so to speak, the implementation began in the LINC program in 2012, when the decision was made to change the schedule of two LINC 7 and 8 f2f classes from three evenings and one Saturday f2f class to three evenings f2f and one evening online in response to students' needs. Moodle, which was hosted by the school district, was used for the online component. By that time, LINC instructors had already been introduced to Moodle basics as part of their professional development and had been encouraged to include an online learning component in their classes. The online classes were mostly used to supplement the in-class teaching with activities that students could do at home. Community and language reference resources were also often part of the package. Ongoing support for instructors in the use of Moodle was made available, mostly online, but also f2f if requested. As far as the online course content was concerned, instructors were entirely responsible for its development.

In 2013, more opportunities opened up for instructors interested in the use of technology in education when the provincial organization responsible at the time for organizing ELSA/LINC professional development offered a "Teaching with Technology" certificate. As part of the training, the instructors were introduced to Edmodo and asked to use it with their classes; however, since some instructors were already using Moodle, that was an option as well. Two of the school district LINC instructors continued to use Edmodo with their classes, even after the training was done. One of them was a LINC 7 class instructor. The other one was Andrada, the class instructor in the study reported here. Back then she was teaching a LINC 1 and 2 class. She was immediately drawn to the user-friendly interface of Edmodo. She felt it was a chance to make students' learning experience more relevant and

in line with their interests and goals and, not in the least, the real world. At that point most students were already using their smartphones to access resources recommended in class. She saw this as an opportunity to empower her students, many of whom were facing multiple barriers to social and employment integration.

During the process of implementing an online component in her class, Andrada learned that the key elements for success in blended learning are the relevance of the materials and resources to students' lives and goals, a sense of online community, and, not in the least, strong teacher presence. She also realized that learning how to use the platform, creating the online activities and planning the in-class facilitation of online work required a considerable amount of time. Nevertheless, what kept her going were the rewards, which, in her own words, were "creating a community of learners who are more connected to the community at large, who have more chances to practice language in context, develop their confidence, and shape their new identity...and also witnessing students' progress and increased motivation, especially in the case of those illiterate in their first language or with no computer skills at all (or both)"(Andrada, Teacher Questionnaire and Interview). Some of the students who didn't have any computer skills to start with were really appreciative of the opportunity; they said that, quite often, younger family members considered them "too old" to learn these new skills and didn't want to "waste their time" trying to teach them. She remembers one student, in particular, who said that one of the highlights of her day was the time she spent in the evening when, after putting her kids to bed, she had a chance to review her lessons or communicate with her classmates or teacher using her phone.

In the meantime, the LearnIT2teach project was launched, and, as more instructors learned about it, the conversation around online and blended learning evolved and created more opportunities for an exchange of ideas and perspectives. One of the LearnIT2teach mentors, who also worked as one of the school district LINC instructors for almost two years at that time, generously shared ideas with the teachers and her own experience using EduLINC with the LINC 3 students she was teaching. Forums, polls for needs assessments, the calendar and the news forum to remind students of upcoming events, and an RSS feed block ("News in Levels") were most commonly used features. Since the students were using EduLINC mostly for independent practice, Quizlet, videos, and links were also added to reinforce what was done in class. In terms of devices, initially it was laptops, but later it became smartphones. Many of the ideas were shared either in f2f or online discussions with teachers – such as bi-weekly twitter chats #CdnELTchat, which this mentor was co-moderating with Andrada and two other educators from Ontario and Alberta. A community of practice of blended learning teachers had begun to develop.

Some of the LINC instructors teaching in the school district completed the first steps of their LearnIT2teach training as early as 2014 at a conference they attended. Then others followed, understanding that students needed to be supported in developing or refining their digital literacy skills in order to reach their employment, education, parenting and community involvement goals. In 2016, with the approach of a new LINC contract proposal submission, conversations started taking place around possible changes in class offerings and format. Three instructors expressed a willingness to adopt the blended learning approach - Andrada, Eleanor, and a LINC 5 instructor who was also a PBLA lead. Andrada

was in favour of a period of transition, and she also thought that the use of the same LMS, in this case EduLINC, by all instructors would be an advantage. Here are some of the ideas she put forward in an email exchange with management in November 2016 in response to management's encouragement to share ideas:

I think we need to take into account the fact that we are already undergoing major changes with the implementation of PBLA and, also, the fact that our tech base needs upgrading. It might probably be useful to think ... in terms of a period of piloting/transitioning into ... blended/online...The change from a f2f format to a blended one translates into increased workload, especially in the first year or so, even for a teacher with skills and experience in the use of educational technology. E-learning design does require methodologies that are often different from the ones used in a face-to-face class.

Another point I would like to make is the importance of using an LMS (Learning Management System) for the online component of the blended classes, for a truly successful e-learning experience. Ideally, all teachers/classes should use the same one, which would facilitate collaboration, PD offerings, and tech support. The LearnIT2teach project provides this through EduLINC.

Some of the teachers...have the expertise and probably the willingness to take on the challenge and transition into some form of blended format. It would probably help to see what these teachers' vision is in this respect. (Communication with Program Administrator; Andrada, LINC teacher, 2016)

Andrada's class was the first to transition to blended learning. Before starting the implementation, she surveyed the students to determine their preferences in terms of schedule; otherwise, she didn't foresee any big challenges, as the students were already using EduLINC in class. Following the approval of her implementation plan (see Appendix Q) by the LINC administrator, in January, Andrada started transitioning with her full-time class into blended, first with half a day online. During the implementation period, she kept the manager informed about the progress in terms of planned online activities and students' responses.

Eleanor started the transition to blended learning/teaching in February (in a LINC 5/6 class), with the LINC 5 instructor following in the spring of 2017. Also, in March 2017, the program administrator arranged for a LearnIT2teach Stage 1 workshop to be delivered at school and encouraged all instructors to attend the training – Anabelle was one of them. In September 2017, she started transitioning her classes to blended learning. At present, all 18 school district LINC instructors have completed one or more stages of the LearnIT2teach training; some have completed all the way up to Stage 4. In addition to the training, which one of the lower level LINC instructors explained was well-structured and kept her focused, the teachers appreciated the ongoing support with access to a personal mentor and the EduLINC courseware provided by LearnIT2teach. In terms of challenges, the biggest one, according to the participants, was and continues to be the time commitment, whether it be time for the training, the implementation, or the e-materials development.

Teachers and teaching – Expertise

Eleanor teaches a blended class four nights a week (two f2f and two online) and the Transition to blended learning classes which introduce students to blended learning and EduLINC. She began working for the school board LINC program in 2015. She previously worked as a LINC instructor for a different provider; also as a program coordinator and teacher for a private company that organized summer exchange and experience programs for Japanese and Chinese high school students. Her LINC experience ranges from teaching LINC 3 to LINC 8. She has a B.A. in History and a BED (Artists in Community Education). Her certificates include Studio Performance, TESL Certificate (Douglas College), TESL Canada Level 2, and a Post-Graduate Certificate in Teaching ESL (Queen's University). She was introduced to blended learning and EduLINC in 2015 when she started teaching the evening class. Eleanor, together with other school district instructors, had a chance to complete the introductory LearnIT2teach training stages in 2016 as a PD event supported by the program administrator. Eleanor explained: "LearnIT2teach training provided great skills practice". At present, she is working on Stage 4. She also took a Technology in the Classroom course from Queen's University. At present, she uses the blended learning approach in all her classes. She calls herself "a total convert" (Eleanor, Teacher Questionnaire and Interview).

Anabelle teaches a full-time blended Workplace class with three days f2f (with access to daycare) and one online. Her class focuses on preparing the students to settle in their community with a particular emphasis on supporting them to find a job and keep it. She has been teaching in the school district since 2000, with a chance to work with LINC levels 4 through 8 since 2008. She has a B.A. in Economics from Georgetown University, a master's degree in Economics from the University of Los Angeles, a bachelor's degree in Teaching from the Teachers' College of Columbia, and a bachelor's degree in Translation from the Polytechnic University of Columbia. She also has achieved a TESL Certificate. She has completed Stage 2 of LearnIT2teach training.

Andrada is a full-time, blended learning instructor. In her class, instruction is delivered f2f Monday to Wednesday from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm; students also complete assignments and interact online for a total of at least 5.5 hours (one day) weekly. Andrada has a long and varied teaching experience with more than 20 years in the school district. Over her extended career she has worked mainly with high school students and adults, whom she taught and advised in academic, business and settlement programs. She completed a B.A. in Philology (English and French language and literature) and Teaching. In 2014, she went back to school and obtained a Bachelor of Education with a Minor in Curriculum and Instruction from Simon Fraser University (SFU). She has a B.C. Professional Teaching Certificate of Qualification for Secondary School English and French and a TESL Canada Professional Certificate Level Three. She has also been involved in assessment design and delivery. She has taken advantage of many PD and certification opportunities and has made time to volunteer in the EAL community as an e-tutor, co-chair for the Teacher Inquiry Groups/BC TEAL, and co-moderator of #CdnELTchat.

Andrada realized that Moodle offered a lot more than Edmodo soon after starting her LearnIT2teach training in 2014, and she was happy to switch platforms.

She found the training to be well-designed and her LearnIT2teach mentor extremely supportive. She continues to use the LearnIT2teach website on a regular basis, whether to read the Digital News and the latest reports, to access research resources, to find support for the implementation of the latest features, or to watch a Podcast. She finds the Live Chat particularly useful as she can get answers in a timely manner, and she recommends it every time she has a chance. In 2016, with her program administrator's support and recommendation, she also completed the LearnIT2teach Learning Technology Innovation Leadership Course: Introduction to Facilitating Blended Learning – Administrator Training. It was a great opportunity to connect with other educators and reflect in a structured way on a blended model implementation.

Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA) , EduLINC, and teaching approaches

The current nationwide teaching approach in LINC is informed by Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA) (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2019a). All LINC teachers are required to undergo training to familiarize themselves with the principles and practices of PBLA. Portfolio-Based Language Assessment is aligned with the Canadian Language Benchmarks and was developed with the aim to “enhance nationwide consistency and standards of quality in ESL training for adult newcomers to Canada.” (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2019b, p. 1). “It is teacher-led and classroom-based and integrated throughout the teaching/ learning cycle. Together, teachers and learners collaborate to set language learning goals, compile examples of language proficiency and learning in a variety of contexts over time, analyze the data, and reflect on progress.” (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2019b, p. 9). PBLA doesn't use standardized or externally developed tests. Assessment is done through teacher-developed task-based assessments, which are an integral part of each theme-based module in each LINC level and class. PBLA embeds needs assessment and formative assessment into the teaching/ learning cycle to help teachers adjust their teaching to meet students' needs.

The instructional cycle LINC teachers follow is one of *plan, teach, assess and reflect* (PBLA Emerging Practice Guidelines, 2019a). Ongoing assessment is accompanied by ongoing teacher feedback to students and student reflection. Theme-based modules provide the overall coherence in LINC, and the module-planning follows the instructional cycle of plan, teach, assess, and reflect mentioned above. In the blended learning LINC program where this research project was conducted, there are set themes for each month. The needs assessment, often conducted online, helps determine the topic and the real-world tasks for the four skills. These tasks replicate real-world communication in a community/work/school context and specify what the students will be able to do at the end of the unit. The task analysis that comes next allows the teacher to identify the grammatical, textual, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategic task features. Following this analysis, the teacher develops the assessment tasks and identifies and creates skill-building and skill-using activities that will support students' performance on the tasks.

The impact of the PBLA approach on the online activities in blended learning was highlighted in the answers the teachers involved in the research provided in response to the question: “Describe briefly how PBLA works in your classroom.

Are PBLA activities connected to Blended Learning activities? Are there any PBLA activities online?” The research data note the high degree of interactions between blended learning and implementation of the PBLA:

It is impossible to separate PBLA in any way – the requirements for PBLA drive the development of all class activities due to the time limitations of part time classes. Prior to PBLA there was time to explore tangents or topical stories, etc. but not now – now it needs to fit within the module. We have monthly topics and I assess students’ needs, then develop skill building + using activities that will build to assessments. Any portion of this process can occur online. (Eleanor, Teacher Questionnaire)

In response to another question in the Teacher Questionnaire, Eleanor indicated that “online work is assessed on an ongoing basis rotating through the skills. For example, reading criteria are assessed over three months then an artefact for the PBLA portfolios is provided. Also, timed single date assessments can occur during online class time.” Anabelle explained that “most of my activities are PBLA...I use EduLINC to give my students skill building activities.” And Andrada stated that “everything we do online is connected to PBLA: skill building/skill using/assessment/reflections. I find the EduLINC PBLA Demo to be very useful in this respect”.

Teacher-student conferences in the PBLA process are when progress and student movement/progression to another class are discussed, and typically take place twice a year. The LINC instructors taking part in the study use EduLINC for this PBLA conferencing purpose in different ways. For example, Andrada’s students practice progress report and conference–related vocabulary through a Quizlet study set, review Can-Do Statements online and reflect in writing on their progress in a wiki in EduLINC. This PBLA process thus engages the students actively in their learning and develops metacognitive skills through regular reflection. Eleanor’s students complete online checklists to make sure their portfolios are ready for teacher review prior to the PBLA conferences with their teacher.

The PBLA was an integral part of the blended teaching/learning in this demonstration research project. The PBLA process was enhanced and facilitated by the blended approach and EduLINC. We discuss this further in the next section about teaching approach.

Teaching approach

All three teachers in the research project talked about the integration of online and f2f activities and its importance. Both Eleanor and Andrada explained that everything is interconnected, and it is difficult to separate the f2f and online experiences; the two components complement each other. Eleanor and Andrada noted this in response to the question about how often teachers use the blended learning approach with the overhead and a computer or a laptop with their LINC class:

We are always logged into EduLINC. We review what we do online in the next f2f class. I don’t have much time to waste because of PBLA so everything has to be connected to what we are doing, and I build in the online activities with f2f and PBLA. (Eleanor, Teacher Interview)

I believe that when technology becomes 'part of the environment' in the classroom, it actually mirrors real life use and increases the chances for more student engagement...Students have access to wi-fi and can use their own devices; these devices allow for a smoother integration of technology into the lesson. (Andrada, Teacher Interview)

Andrada and Eleanor apply the principles of *flipped learning* (Berrett, 2012) in their classes, with students working on the content at home in advance of classes – that means that class time can be mostly spent on using the knowledge acquired to engage in communication and collaborative activities with their classmates with the teacher's guidance. However, even online, many of the activities they plan involve communication and collaboration between fellow students and the teacher.

Andrada summarized what her students do online via EduLINC and other resources in this way: they access written, audio, video or multi-modal information developed or curated by teacher (and occasionally by other students), practice a variety of skills through self-correcting exercises, assignments, forums, wikis, occasional chats, blogs, Quizlet study sets, share information and ideas by means of forums, wikis, glossaries (culture glossary), blogs and tweets, set goals and reflect on their learning (questionnaires, checklists, comments, wikis), complete assessments, give and receive feedback (choice activities, wikis, forums, messaging, comments block), communicate and connect with teacher, classmates and communities at large.

Also, all three teachers noted that dedicated time for collaboration and exchange of ideas/activities amongst teachers is highly important. An attempt was made to collaborate when Andrada asked for an EduLINC class dedicated to this purpose; a few ideas and artefacts were shared at the beginning, but then lack of designated time constrained this initiative. The teachers continue to advocate for more time for collaborative planning and development of blended learning/teaching resources.

Overall, the research showed how teaching/learning and PBLA processes were consistently integrated and co-ordinated with the blended learning activities online and in class. These two features were mutually beneficial. The blended activities/resources via EduLINC and teaching facilitated both the learning and the portfolio-based assessment. The online and TELL activities were not only based on and connected to the PBLA, but enhanced the assessment process itself, and the EduLINC activities used in the blended learning provided the basis for portfolio tasks and artefacts that students discussed and explained with their teachers during the PBLA conferences in order to demonstrate and review their progress. This fact is significant in light of the issues related to teaching explained previously here – that is, that LINC teachers need extensive time for PBLA (Fahy et al, 2016; SLNN, 2015).

Time for development and collaboration were recurrent issues highlighted by the teachers during this research. However, in fact, blended learning actually facilitated the process of PBLA and its integration because the blended learning used the EduLINC activities/resources for the basis of PBLA activities and assessment. Teachers indicated the need for additional dedicated time for collaboration on the development and sharing of these PBLA activities/tasks, particularly advocating for paid release time for this collaborative development. That time and collaboration

would – in the long run – have improved the coordination of the use of these activities/resources and actually decreased the duplication of development time and effort. Teachers had found that the blended learning had begun to ease the process of PBLA integration and planning. More PBLA online activities/resources via EduLINC were still needed by the teachers. However, they had begun the process. Although further attention, development of PBLA online activities, and time for collaboration by teachers were seen as necessary, blended learning had, in fact, facilitated their process of implementing the PBLA in LINC. These issues are important and considered further in the next section reporting the research findings.

5. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Findings of the study are reported here in the order of the research questions detailed in section III.

5.1 Effects of blended learning for learners and learning

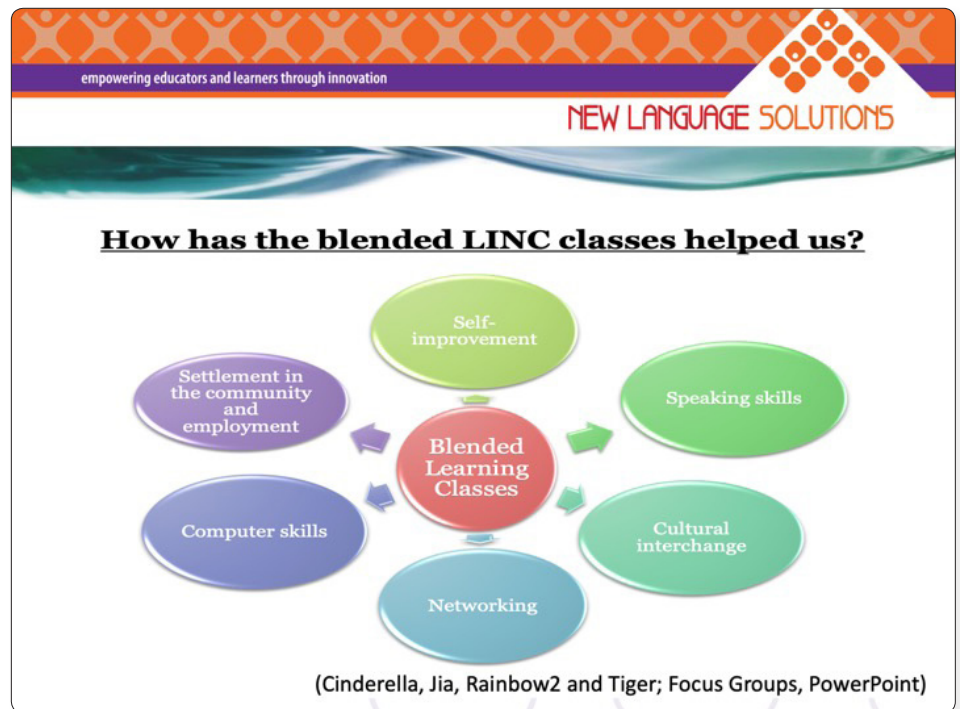
What were the effects of blended learning for the LINC students' English, particularly for their participation and engagement in LINC and the development of their English language learning, as well as the achievement of their other settlement goals?

The major, recurring themes related to the effects of blended learning for students and learning were:

- high levels of engagement and participation in LINC blended learning classes; improved attendance; and high interest in LINC classes and program and satisfaction with blended learning LINC classes and program
- increased use of English and ease in using English in pursuing settlement goals
- enhanced access to technology and increase in use of technology for learning English
- improved English language skills for listening and speaking, as well as reading and writing,
- improved opportunities for interaction and decreased sense of isolation: developed social and learning connections with community and school

These benefits were expressed repeatedly by students and teachers. They are reflected in figure 5 below – the map developed and explained by students about the effects of blended learning during their focus group activities.

FIGURE 5: Focus group discussions (Cinderella, Jia, Rainbow2, Tiger)



Attendance and participation in blended learning exceeded that of non-blended classes; and, blended learning increased access to LINC classes for students. Teachers Andrada and Eleanor explained these effects in the teacher interviews and questionnaires:

Attendance is really good... Students seem to look forward to sharing what they've done online and learn more in class; the secret is to choose topics and activities that they find relevant. (Andrada, Teacher Interview)

[blended learning] increases access for students who would normally drop out after LINC 4 when they have what they need (she was referring to LINC 4 as the level required for citizenship and residency in Canada). This way they have a way to feasibly continue and keep learning; often also to support their children's learning. (Eleanor, Teacher Interview and Questionnaire)

The program administrator, Gladys, reported that monthly attendance reports showed that blended learning classes had higher attendance than other classes – “in one (blended learning class) with EduLINC, average attendance is 95 % plus; 89 % across all [blended classes]”. (Gladys, Program Administrator Interview).

Furthermore, student participants emphasized the importance of blended learning in allowing them to access and participate in English language learning classes that they would otherwise miss due to work and home responsibilities. Aleesa, one of the many mothers who attended the LINC program, explained this:

I can manage my time better and use the flexibility of blended learning to manage my school work and personal life. (Aleesa, Student Interview)

And satisfaction with this blended learning LINC program was high. Abraham expressed the surprise that he and his wife (both physicians in their country of origin) felt – they enjoyed being back in school: “We think it’s weird that we enjoy it so much.” They both worked during the day and wanted to achieve high levels of English that would take them back to employment in the field of Medicine. Abraham explained that he would tell a friend or new student that the blended class is great for people who work – the teacher, the place, and the schedule. “It is worth it!” (Abraham, Student Interview).

Aleesa explained that she was so pleased with the blended learning program that she had already recommended blended learning LINC classes to her Facebook group – 2,000 Russian speaking mothers living in the lower mainland area of British Columbia. “I think it’s great!” (Aleesa, Student Interview). Similarly, Alin explained, as did the other students, that the flexibility and access to learning English provided by the blended program were highly beneficial: “It’s great for someone with a job and busy schedule.” (Alin, Student Interview)

Students frequently highlighted the numerous benefits of blended learning for improving their English language skills and use and achievement of their settlement goals. During their focus group discussions, they explained these effects in this way:

FIGURE 6: Focus group discussions (Batgirl, Arli, Sailor Moon, Kelly)

The slide features a decorative orange and white patterned header with the text "empowering educators and learners through innovation" and "NEW LANGUAGE SOLUTIONS". The main title is "Settlement goals and achievement". Below it is a bulleted list of six points, each in italics. The source attribution at the bottom reads "(Batgirl, Arli, Sailor Moon, Kelly; Focus Groups)".

empowering educators and learners through innovation

NEW LANGUAGE SOLUTIONS

Settlement goals and achievement

- *We gain tons of information about jobs, finance, family, and so on. We can use them in our real life, in the way that we can have a discussion about the topics, and we can also use the knowledge when we need it.*
- *Most of us have children, so we feel that we can communicate with our children's teachers better than before. In the beginning, we were too scared to talk with them in English, so we asked an interpreter to help us. But now, we can confidently do the talk.*
- *We can easily read most kinds of letters from school or government.*
- *When we are somewhere waiting, we don't feel nervous about making small talk with strangers anymore. One of our group members, when she waits at the bus stop, she can easily make small talk and follows the ABCDE steps.*
- *We can write an email to register for some programs.*

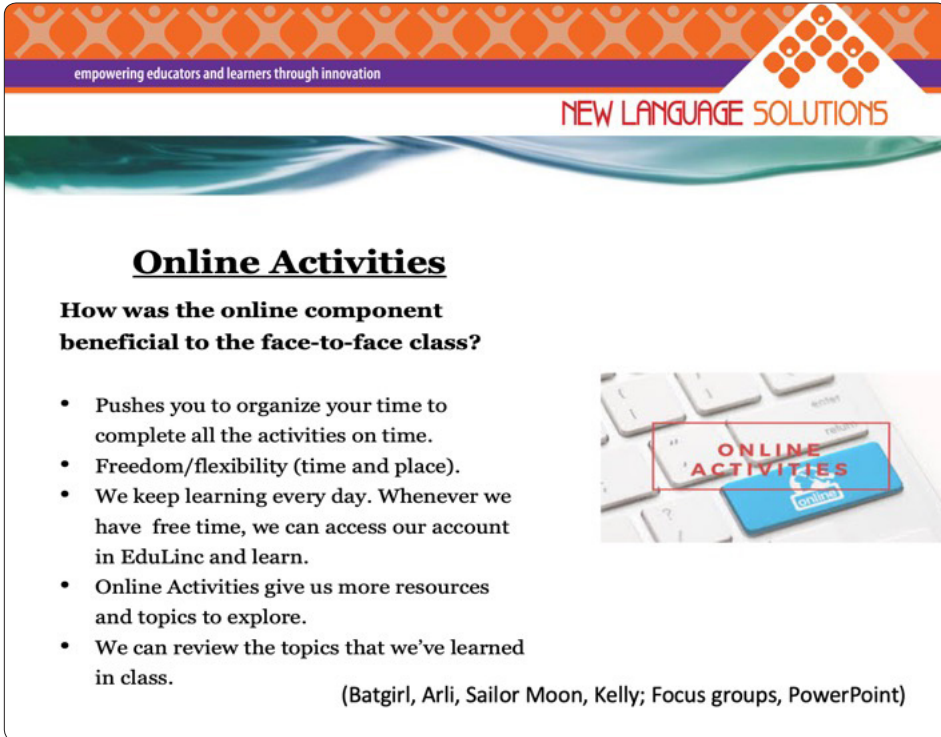
(Batgirl, Arli, Sailor Moon, Kelly; Focus Groups)

The flexibility in learning provided through the blended approach and access to classes with co-ordinated online activities were important to these students.

Also, both students and teachers emphasized that the interaction and integration of classroom with online activities were highly effective for increasing time on task and completion of the learning process – students could frequently and consistently

interact with their teachers and peers. Students explained how the online and f2f classroom activities were connected and mutually beneficial in this way. This focus group described these benefits:

FIGURE 7: Focus group discussion (Batgirl, Arli, Sailor Mon, Kelly)



empowering educators and learners through innovation

NEW LANGUAGE SOLUTIONS

Online Activities

How was the online component beneficial to the face-to-face class?

- Pushes you to organize your time to complete all the activities on time.
- Freedom/flexibility (time and place).
- We keep learning every day. Whenever we have free time, we can access our account in EduLinc and learn.
- Online Activities give us more resources and topics to explore.
- We can review the topics that we've learned in class.

(Batgirl, Arli, Sailor Moon, Kelly; Focus groups, PowerPoint)

In responses to interview questions about how they liked learning via the blended learning approach (Student Interview, Q. 4) and what they would tell a friend or new student about the blended learning classes and activities (Student Interview, Q. 7), students consistently expressed their satisfaction with this approach to learning English. Moreover, students wanted to continue in the blended learning program.

5.2 Preparation for further studies, independent learning, and intergenerational effects

Numerous other benefits of the blended learning program were highlighted by these students. They advocated for its extension to more classes beyond the current LINC levels that they attended, including academic preparation for purposes of transition to postsecondary at college and university levels and for preparation and requalification/certification in their professions and trades. They emphasized the blended learning as preparation for postsecondary studies and independent learning. This was particularly important for such a group of individuals, most who had previously worked in careers or professions that required a high level of post-secondary education and wanted to overcome “the settlement gap” that many immigrants to Canada face (McBride, 2018) as previously discussed in section II. Aleesa explained this: “In a blended class you prepare to study for post-secondary; it also prepares you for the workplace; and supports the independent learning.” She

explained how online learning helped her balance school, work, and personal life, as well as prepared her for life beyond LINC: “It helps me improve my life and build my future.” (Aleesa, Student Interview)

Students also highlighted the intergenerational educational benefits of blended learning, explaining that they were able to do online learning assignments and because of this approach knew how to help their children with their schooling. Hala (Student Interview) explained this in this way: “The platform used by my daughter at school is similar to the one in LINC (EduLINC)... the combination is good: to learn English and how to use technology at the same time.”

Jin (Student Interview) also emphasized the intergenerational benefits of blended learning: “I find information for kids (5-year-old), research for homework, and food recipes.”

Dolphin discussed how the blended approach helped students develop independent learning skills, as well as increase connections with other people. He explained: “For newcomers in their first year, f2f may better be because you are away from distractions at home; later... the blended approach is more useful, so you have some connections and are not isolated.” (Dolphin, Student Interview). Similarly, Donald (Student Interview) discussed the development of independence and learning skills in this way: “The approach is interesting. You can learn a lot if you are a committed online learner – you have to have self-discipline (many distractions at home).”

Accessibility, flexibility, and social connections

Mia, like most students, expressed how the blended learning program promoted access to learning English and provided flexibility in their learning. She appreciated how the blended learning is convenient, and how she loved having everything online for easy access, to keep track of work done, and to get updated information when needed. (Mia, Student Interview)

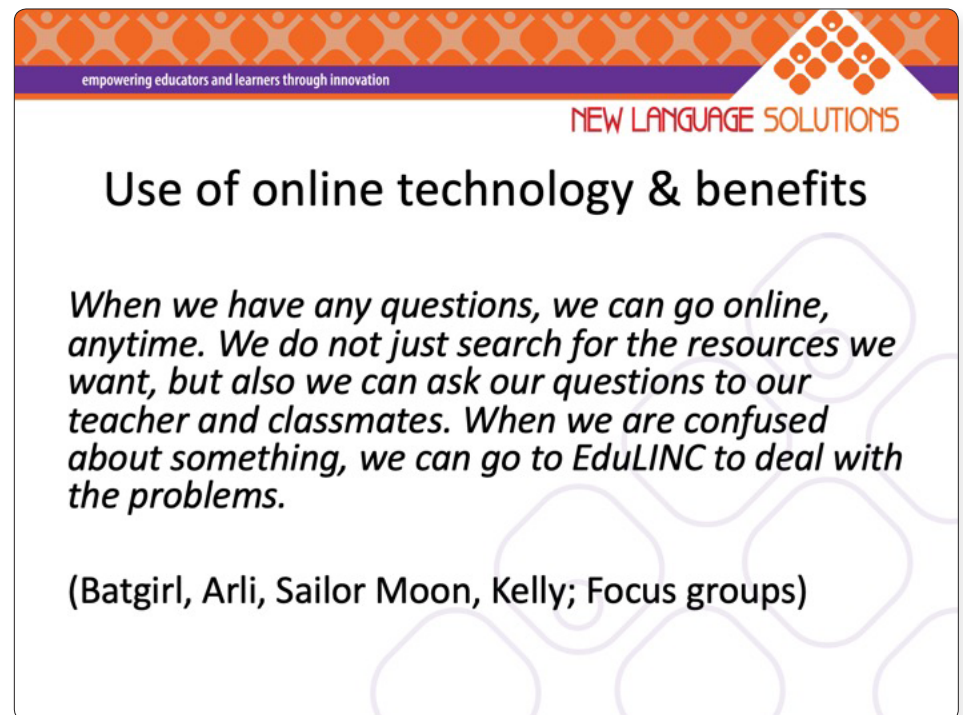
Students stressed the flexibility and accessibility of the blended program; students explained that the childcare that accompanied the LINC blended learning classes was a real advantage. Kelly (Student Interview) talked about this: “It’s very good when you have children – they have daycare and you can learn English.” She explained that an advantage was that you could choose part-time or full time. When asked if she was going to continue in the blended learning program in the future, she explained: “Yes, I am pregnant and now I live here and I want to know English.”

Likewise, Donya explained: “...because I have to look after my family, I can’t be a full-time student in school all week long. I use a few days learning in the class, talking with my classmates to practise my oral language and listening...to participate in this program makes me feel free in study. I maintain adding value to myself and [it] makes me more confident.” (Donya, Impact Statement, Literacy Innovation Award).

Ana (Student Interview), like Donya and many others, appreciated the interactions and connections that blended learning created: “...online offers lots of opportunities for interaction. The flexibility is great... you choose when you want or have time to do the work.”

Students explained how they valued the online component provided through the EduLINC and teacher developed activities. They emphasized how integrated applications within EduLINC such as POODLL, an interactive teaching tool that facilitates video and audio feedback and presentations in an online course/program, as well as links to online resources such as Quizlet and Typing.com, helped them to prepare for each f2f class and develop their skills. They were able to increase their participation in and preparation for activities, and to review new materials and vocabulary; also to listen to and practice pronunciation before and after their f2f classes. One focus group summed these benefits up in this way:

FIGURE 8: Focus group discussion (Batgirl, Arli, Sailor Mon, Kelly)



The accessibility, flexibility and the opportunity to interact and connect with teachers and others in a valuable learning community were recurrent benefits that students highlighted about blended learning. They expressed satisfaction with the “real life” activities and connections to community resources and additional learning resources provided through the blended learning activities and EduLINC materials and activities. These effects are explained in further detail in the next section.

5.3 Access to technology and technology use for learning

Another benefit of blended learning that students frequently indicated is closely related to question two and the effects for improving self-efficacy and knowledge of technology discussed in depth in section 5.8. However, access to technology deserves mention here. Students frequently expressed how the number of technological communication resources, skills, and activities that they used in the blended learning classes increased their access to technology for learning of English, which in turn helped them with their settlement in Canada, jobs,

and day-to-day life. For example, Aleesa explained how she used computers for learning English in the blended learning activities for a lengthy list of real life communication skills and activities: "...buying and selling things; searching for community events/ medical services; education for her daughter; communications with her case manager; activities in chat rooms such as What's App, Facebook, Messenger, Viber; listening to the news or Ted Talks; reading different articles and press releases; communication about volunteer work, the Work B.C. program; communicate with service providers such as B.C. Hydro..." (Aleesa, Student Interview).

Students recognized the technological learning and development of independence that came with the blended approach. SweetCoco2 admitted: "The first day of class, I was shocked. I realized I didn't really have the skills." However, she explained that she decided it was an opportunity, a challenge to get the skills she needed in these times for Canadian society and hoped it would help her get a job. She emphasized: "No more running away from the technology! ...being able to use technology is not a choice anymore." (SweetCoco2, Student Interview).

Jessie similarly explained this. She found that the combination of f2f with online learning assisted her in learning to use technology for studying English (Jessie, Student Interview). Michael (Student Interview) explained that learning English via TELL increased his learning and access to technology in a much-needed and engaging way: "Computer is very popular right now. I cannot imagine life without a computer. I learn directly and indirectly English when using a computer."

Students frequently talked about the number of TELL activities that they used in the context of the blended learning classes that helped them with their settlement in Canada, jobs, and day-to-day life. Batgirl (Student Interview) explained the wide range of "real life" activities that she was involved in using the computer and other communication technologies via the blended learning program: "...email with my daughter's school; Google maps to find directions to a destination; reading the news; use the phone to check vocabulary and spelling; email my teacher..." (Batgirl, Student Interview).

Access to technology and learning and practising their English online was an oft-repeated benefit of the blended learning program explained. Students found that the online component extended their use of technology for learning English.

Students appreciated the BYOD policy and practice encouraged by this blended learning program. Abraham noted this: "I am hungry for information – after all the restrictions in the first country." (Abraham, Student Interview). He explained that he relied heavily on his smartphone for learning English and about the community. He read the *New York Times* because he was interested in politics and listened to music in English and used Google Maps. Thus, blended learning was highly positive for individualizing access to content and customizing learning to individual needs and interests, as well as encouraging learning of English via online resources.

Jin (Student Interview) explained, as did most students, how learning to use technology via the blended learning classes and mobile devices such as their own cell phones improved students' use of technology for learning English, indeed, their learning in general. She explained how it was faster to find out about grammar

using EduLINC; also, using a dictionary on the phone to look up words and apps that allowed her to type and record audio notes greatly improved her access to and checking of information. Papula (Student Interview) explained how she became aware that the “...phone is easier. I don’t have to shut it down like a laptop.”

5.4 Effects for English language learning and development

As pointed out in Section II re. the background for this report, this research draws on indicators of learning and language development aligned with student self-efficacy as an important indicator of learning and predictor of performance (Bandura, 1997; Cumming, Cummings, and Erdosy, 2006; Raoofi, Tan, Chan, 2012). Repeated findings in the student data supported the increase in student confidence for their use of English in their daily lives and the classroom. We report these below. Most importantly, the English language learning achieved by students in this program showed gains in confidence for their use of English beyond the classroom and online context as students pursued their daily needs and settlement goals.

We also noted that there were positive changes in the students’ CELPIP test results and improvement in their pre and post-test scores (see Appendix O). Overall, during the course of the three – four months of student participation in the research, the student CELPIP test scores increased in terms of mean scores for the whole student group in this way:

Listening improved from 6.01 – 6.30

Reading improved from 6.00 – 7.00

Writing improved from 5.73 – 6.03

Speaking improved from 5.27 – 5.46

However, as previously noted, changes in scores of general English language proficiency tests such as CELPIP conducted with the student LINC participants in this research near the beginning and near the conclusion of the research, do not definitively indicate English language learning and development; rather these changes could also be attributed to familiarity with the test (“practice effect”) or other factors (see Appendix P).

More indicative of actual language learning and development are increases in student self-efficacy and confidence for using English and the important behavioural changes or performance indicators that students and teachers noted.

Students noted that they had most improved in speaking English and listening and comprehension. In their focus group discussions about the blended learning approach, they highlighted their development of their listening and speaking proficiency, as well as their growing confidence for using English. Students indicated the specifics of their improvement in their English language skills and use according to this diagram:

FIGURE 9: Focus group discussions (Early bird, Hanako, Jin, Snow White)

empowering educators and learners through innovation

What have you noticed about your improvement in English?

<p><u>.Speaking?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> .- I can use and respond to small talk .- I sound quite fluent .- I can change my style of speaking 	<p><u>.Pronunciation?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> .- I sound quite fluent .- People don't have trouble understanding my pronunciation 	<p><u>.Vocabulary?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> .- I understand topic-specific vocabulary .- I use vocabulary that is adequate for the topic
<p><u>.Listening and comprehension?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> .- I'm an active listener .- I can understand short group discussion .- I understand the importance of cultural knowledge 	<p><u>.Writing?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> .- I can take notes and summarize main ideas .- I think about my audience and purpose .- I can create multi media texts 	<p><u>.Reading?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> .- I can retell or summarize .- I can identify main ideas and details .- I use different strategies and tools to increase vocabulary

(Early bird, Hanako, Jin, Snow White; Focus Groups, PowerPoint)

Another focus group (Donya, Soda, Papula, Daisy) highlighted the following changes in their English language skills and use:

- *I can speak on the phone easily.*
- *I am more polite when I talk to friends using speaking skills I learned.*
- *I can easily understand now when I attend my children's school meetings.*
- *I can go shopping by myself.*
- *I chitchat with people in the parks.*
- *I can understand government workers easily when I go to government offices.*

These indicators of their growing ease of use of English, development of confidence and independence in speaking, listening, reading, and writing were prominent across all student participant activities and data. The following summarizes the themes and findings reported by one of the day time blended learning classes in their focus group activities:

How has your English improved since you began these classes?

- Searching on the Internet in English without the help of others (e.g. husband)
- Speaking on the phone in English
- Speaking more politely
- Going shopping without the help of others, order in restaurants
- Speaking and chatting with people more easily, small talk
- Understanding government workers more easily
- Presenting information to others
- Communicating with teacher of children better without an interpreter
- Reading letters from school or government
- Writing emails (e.g. to register in programs)

“To speak on the phone was so difficult for me! I was so nervous and couldn’t speak or understand anything. Now I can speak and understand 90%.” (Focus Group Discussion)

Where do you find you now speak English more easily?

- Speaking more fluently on the phone (e.g. BC Hydro) instead of asking someone else to do it or going there personally to avoid having to use the phone
- Talking more freely to people in the park and discuss diverse topics (e.g. schools, religion, travels, etc.) instead of only exchanging greetings
- Going shopping and speaking more freely to the shop assistants, asking about details or directions

What have you noticed about your improvement in English?

Discuss the skills in your group and share the commonalities among you.

Your listening and comprehension?

- Encouraging and supporting others to speak and participate
- Ask questions and show interest
- “We catch the main points of what people want to express more easily”
- Understanding group discussions
- Interacting with others
- Maintain conversations
- Feeling more relaxed
- Understanding presentations from guest speakers
- Understanding instructional videos
- Understanding main ideas of tv and radio shows

Speaking?

- Using and responding to small talk
- Speaking more fluently
- Change speaking style to adapt to different situations and people
- Speak publicly (e.g. presentation)
- More vocabulary
- “Vocabulary is the key to have a good conversation”
- Taking more risks speaking, more confidence (“outside comfort zone”)

Vocabulary?

- Understanding topic-specific vocabulary
- Using new vocabulary
- More easily read and listen but spelling and pronunciation is difficult

Pronunciation?

- Speaking fluently
- Noticing differences in pronunciation
- Using translation tool
- “You should practice a lot”

Writing?

- Creating multi-media texts (e.g. images, links, audio-visual)
- Taking notes and summarizing main ideas
- Learning formal and informal writing styles
- Using simple and complex sentence structure
- Writing self-reflections
- Organize writing (introduction, development, conclusion)
- Write emails for various purposes
- Complete forms (“with 30-40 items”)

Reading?

- Retelling and summarizing, identifying main ideas
- Using different strategies and tools to increase vocabulary
- Better understanding the purpose of an article
- “I can connect what I read with real life”
- Reading letters, newspapers (“guess the main idea”), websites in English

*“[In] our group, we totally agree this is the best way to understand assignments.”
(Focus Group Discussion)*

These performance indicators highlighted by students demonstrate the growing ease and independence that students in the blended learning classes experienced across skills. Moreover, students noted how blended learning directly benefited their learning – as detailed in the following section.

5.5 Benefits of blended learning for students

Student participants noted numerous benefits of the blended learning LINC classes for improving their English language proficiency and achievement of settlement goals.

Students in each class described in detail how the combination of f2f classes and online engagement in blended learning contributed to their achievements. They saw f2f classes and online learning as complementary to their achieving their English language learning and settlement goals.

In the Personal Goals Activity preceding the focus group discussions, students were asked to reflect specifically on how blended learning had contributed to achieving their education, work, and settlement goals. These representative quotes illustrate how the LINC blended learning helped student participants move towards these goals, and how the f2f class and online activities were linked and effective.

To tell the truth, blended learning program is quite new for me. Since I never took any online classes. In-person classes provide us the opportunity to talk to others as well as help us improve writing skills and reading strategies. While, on-line classes provide us more classes to do the practice. I like blended learning since I work daytime, on-line classes allow me to finish the assignment also take care of my family. We have different topics each month which are helpful for newcomers to get to know Canada as well as to improve our English skills.

[The blended learning program] gives me power to communicate with other persons. First, ESL study in school is good for newcomer. Because some people

don't know anything and can't speak English (or can speak little). They want to know more living information. Here is a good way to improve your English, make friends, learn Canadian culture, attend some activities. So many ways can push me to communicate with person. After f2f, then I can use online study. Because sometimes online study is different than f2f. But also I learn and get information, type, grammar, search websites.

It's very useful for us to practice English by using online system. We can keep tracking our learning records online easily, and [I] don't have to bring a lot of pens and papers to achieve that. Furthermore, we can share our ideas with our classmates and get their responses quickly even though we are not at school. By using online dictionary and online exercises I can easily get the correct answer also.

[The blended learning program helped me to be] more comfortable speaking English [and] more confident that I can find a job though the daily study of English, oral presentations, everyday [I] listen to the news writing reports [and] emails. Reading updated articles and get more information.

Lack of language is the most challenging obstacle to my way to success. The blended learning program helped me to overcome some of my difficulties I was stuck with. We had [a] plethora of listening activities. For instance, I was mesmerized by Stuart McLean voice. The online activities makes me more diligent student and more technologically aware. Not to mention that it is superb convenient.

5.6 Benefits of online activities and EduLINC

More specifically, students noted the important effects of the online and TELL activities that they experienced in the blended classes.

Students expressed how they valued the online component provided through EduLINC – not only that it provided opportunities to learn independently and on flexible schedules, but also how integrated applications within EduLINC and links to online resources and social media outside of it (such as POODLL, Quizlet, and Typing.com) helped them to prepare for the next f2f class and improved their English, as well as technology, research and other skills. Through the EduLINC activities/resources students were able to increase their participation in and understanding of activities, review new material and vocabulary, and listen to and practice pronunciation.

Student focus groups offered the following examples when asked how online activities and assignments outside of class using EduLINC helped them with their classroom activities.

We feel like online class and taking class at school is connected. We would prepare for the class at school because of the online class. Some program (example: Quizlet, typing.com,...) can use only online. It helps learning...We can check and review online. We could learn more details by ourselves.

As for the project presentation of "Discover Canada", we learned to work with our classmates by using EduLINC Wiki, chatting on-line, sharing ideas,

summarizing the topic, answering the questions. [We used] Quizlet to set up collocations, practice the collocations with the class. It is good for us to practice in class on speaking. It is a good resource for us to prepare the CELPIP.

On-line classes support in-person classes and help us to prepare our new class and go over what we have learned....

Students viewed the online engagement particularly useful for improving their reading and writing skills and using websites to find information. The EduLINC forums and discussions were effective for sharing and discussing with their peers. The online environment was also seen as beneficial for practising to better understand the main points of a newscast or a tv show – they were able to repeat listening and watching segments they didn’t fully understand by stopping the audio or video as often as needed. Students pointed out that they were able to improve their pronunciation and speaking skills in the same way. Students also valued their time using EduLINC and online activities because they were learning computer and technology skills that would be useful for them for further education and “real life” work. Online interactions with peers were particularly valued because they offered students support and connections in the community. The forum activities and messaging features in EduLINC proved useful to many students as they received and gave motivational support to each other, and exchanged information related to the class and their settlement needs. These benefits made possible through the integration of EduLINC activities with other resources and activities through the blended program were highlighted by the students in their focus group presentations in this way:

FIGURE 10: Tweets in Twitter class account accessed through an EduLINC block



5.7 Benefits of face-to-face class time

The in-class activities were also highly important to students. They pointed out that their time spent in the f2f class component of the blended learning classes was especially useful for speaking and listening opportunities to improve their pronunciation and understanding. They valued the engagement with a teacher f2f for her expertise and role modelling of good pronunciation and body language. They also explained that the teachers' efforts to engage them in in-class activities, field trips, and guest speakers related to their lives made a big difference.

They saw the teachers as a source for motivation and they valued the engagement with their peers for motivation and support, understanding other accents, obtaining feedback on learning activities, building a network, and exchanging information about settlement experiences.

Students valued the opportunities for engaging with one another and doing small talk as a classroom and presentation activity. This helped them to be more confident speaking in public and to speak with strangers in the park, the staff in their children's school, and agents on the phone without having to make notes before the call. The focus groups explained how their English had improved:

We feel more confident about communicating in English at school, in the community, at our stores. Our English has improved since we began these classes.

After starting this class, I can understand about 95% of the official topics, such as education, health, news, work, community services. And I can express myself very clearly, for example, when I talk to my manager, my doctor, they can understand me easily.

These students' reactions to, as well as their enhanced access to and participation and attendance in LINC due to blended learning classes, were all noteworthy effects of the blended approach. The numerous benefits of blended learning in LINC were effectively summed up in the students' self-reflections below when students were asked to prepare a text as a preparation activity for the bi-annual Learner Conference (when teachers review students' learning progress together with the students as part of the PBLA). One student summarized these effects of blended learning:

As a student and an immigrant, I have been in the blended class for almost one year, so I have enriched numerous essential skills not only English but also Canadian culture. Honestly, I strongly love this program, and it is a great innovation in the ESL field.

First of all, this program includes the f2f class and online activities. It looks just like the traditional learning style, so I can get used to it easily. But, at the same time, I can learn how to use digital device because we have online activities. Furthermore, you can choose the transition class to learn basic operation about Moodle, if you are not good at computer. It is a good opportunity for adults learning computer skills. Comparing with the f2f class, I learn more than what I can learn in the traditional class.

Secondly, I love the EduLINC Website because I can find richness information which is so easy to look up. I can find resources about learning English by studying different topics, and I can find about different cultural things because I live in the multicultural country. To get those resources, traditionally, we have a lot of paper materials, but now I just click the link to get the information. It does help to reduce the paper usage. Even we have to use paper in the class, we are also taught to recycle the paper. So it is a kind of sustainable development.

Thirdly, I can learn from each other by sharing our writing assignments online. It is the big different from the f2f class. When I was in f2f class, I can not learn from other classmates' articles. But when I am in the blended class, we have a good place to share our writing. I can read and learn some new vocabulary or idea. This is the main reason why I mentioned it was a great innovation in the beginning.

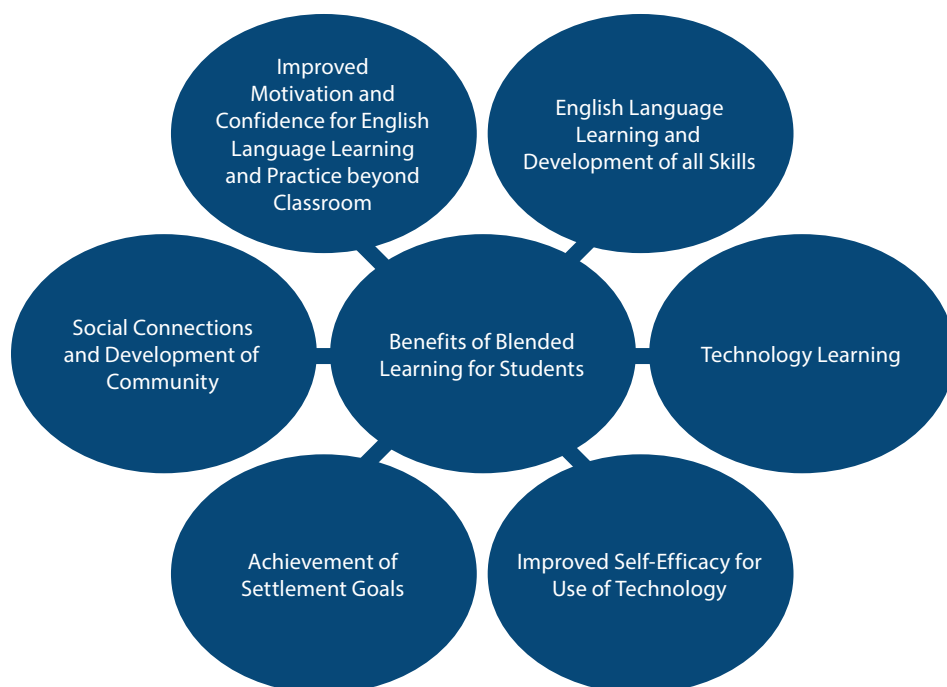
Finally, as the space is limited, I can not add too much my experiences, but it is a very worth program to participate in.

Finally, I would like to talk about the EduLINC website. There are so many blocks to explore. The twitter block give me a chance to understand how the people and organization connect together in Canada. The typing block helps me to improve my typing speed. These two are very practical. As the space is limited, I can not add too much my experiences, but it is a very good program which is worth participating in. (Cinderella, Learner Conference Preparation and Self-Reflective Writing)

Thus, students expressed high satisfaction with listening, reading, and writing activities for learning English via the blended approach. There were several requests for more speaking activities and opportunities to be included in the online activities. For example, Emily (Student Interview), in responding to a question about how the blended learning class was different from other English language learning classes, explained: "It's similar. I can read and listen, and we can discuss together. Only speaking doesn't work online." Similarly, Jojo (Student Interview) explained a need for more speaking opportunities in the blended program when asked if she would like to use this approach more often. She explained that she would prefer "half and half"; that f2f is really important for speaking skills. In light of these findings, as well as input from the teachers in this study, it may be important to include more opportunities for listening/speaking activities in the blended, online activities of these classes; as well as a video conferencing platform and means to schedule video conference interactions and listening/speaking activities amongst students and teachers. Plans to include such a video conferencing platform, Big Blue Button, via EduLINC in the near future will improve these opportunities for listening/ speaking practice activities via video conferencing. These interactive enhancements will extend the resources and opportunities for listening/speaking practice in the blended learning classes.

The notable effects of blended learning for the learners and learning are summarized in figure 11 below. Not only student participation and access were enhanced by the blended learning program. Achievements in English language learning and confidence to use their English were noted by students, as well as growing confidence and strategies for achieving other settlement goals.

FIGURE 11: Benefits of blended learning for students



5.8 Effects of blended learning for learners' self-efficacy and knowledge for technology use

2. What were the effects of the blended learning approach for learners' self-efficacy and knowledge for using technology for language learning and their settlement goals?

We focus now on findings related to students' self-efficacy for using technology, the second research question.

Students in all three classes completed the Student Questionnaire about Confidence in Using Technology and Computers (see Appendix H). Students thought of computers, laptops, and mobile devices when completing the questionnaire, depending on their preference of use. The questionnaire included nine Likert scale questions (0=Not at All Confident to 10=Very Confident) and was distributed to students as an in-class activity. Students were asked to circle the number on the scale that best described their level of confidence for using a computer or laptop for finding information, writing, applying, and studying online. All students (45) completing the project returned their questionnaires. Likert scale points were grouped for analysis: Respondents with maximum confidence (scale point 10), respondents expressing greater rates of confidence (scale points 7-9), respondents who were unsure (scale points 4-6), and respondents who expressed greater doubts (scale points 1-3) in their ability. The questions were grouped in the analysis by themes as follows.

The findings from the student questionnaire about their self-efficacy for using technology for learning and for achieving their settlement needs are provided in figures 12 and 13 below.

FIGURE 12: Findings from Student Questionnaire about Confidence for using Technology and Computers

Q1. I am able to use a computer or laptop to find an apartment, house, room, or other residence.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Weighted Average
0.00%	0.00%	2.27%	0.00%	4.55%	2.27%	4.55%	13.64%	15.91%	56.82%	8.95

Q2. I am able to use a computer or laptop to find information about a school, college, or university program.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Weighted Average
0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.27%	4.55%	6.82%	18.18%	20.45%	47.73%	8.93

Q3. I am able to use a computer or laptop to write a letter.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Weighted Average
0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.27%	2.27%	0.00%	2.27%	20.45%	22.73%	50.00%	9.05

Q4. I am able to use a computer or laptop to apply for a job or school.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Weighted Average
0.00%	2.33%	0.00%	2.33%	6.98%	6.98%	6.98%	13.95%	16.28%	44.19%	8.4

Q5. I am able to use a computer or laptop to study English on my own.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Weighted Average
0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	4.55%	6.82%	4.55%	11.36%	22.73%	50.00%	8.91

Q6. I am able to use a computer or laptop to write a short report.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Weighted Average
0.00%	0.00%	2.27%	0.00%	6.82%	2.27%	9.09%	18.18%	22.73%	38.64%	8.55

Q7. I am able to use a computer or laptop to find out information about my province, city, town, or community.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Weighted Average
0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.27%	0.00%	4.55%	18.18%	9.09%	65.91%	9.3

Q8. I am able to use a computer or laptop to review my English lessons online in the lab or at home.

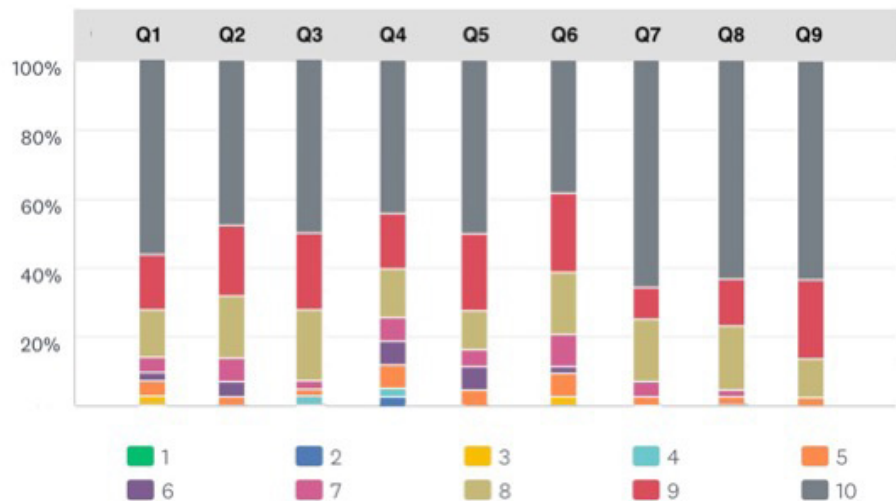
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Weighted Average
0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.27%	0.00%	2.27%	18.18%	13.64%	63.64%	9.32

Q9. I am able to use a computer or laptop to find out about the News.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Weighted Average
0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.27%	0.00%	0.00%	11.36%	22.73%	63.64%	9.43

FIGURE 13: Student Questionnaire about Confidence in Using Technology and Computers

- Q1. I am able to use a computer or laptop to find an apartment, house, room, or other residence. (8.95)
 Q2. I am able to use a computer or laptop to find information about a school, college, or university program. (8.93)
 Q3. I am able to use a computer or laptop to write a letter. (9.05)
 Q4. I am able to use a computer or laptop to apply for a job or school. (8.4)
 Q5. I am able to use a computer or laptop to study English on my own. (8.91)
 Q6. I am able to use a computer or laptop to write a short report. (8.55)
 Q7. I am able to use a computer or laptop to find out information about my province, city, town, or community. (9.3)
 Q8. I am able to use a computer or laptop to review my English lessons online in the lab or at home. (9.32)
 Q9. I am able to use a computer or laptop to find out about the News. (9.43)



Finding information online

Finding information online was a primary settlement need of students and an important benefit of the blended learning classes highlighted by students in these self-efficacy questionnaires and their background questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. When they were asked about their confidence for using a computer or laptop to find an apartment, house, room, or other residence (Q1), nine out of ten students said they were confident in their ability (57% were very confident and a further 34% were confident). A little over 7% were unsure and 2% expressed greater doubts in their ability to find information about housing online. Eight out of ten students asked if they were able to use a computer or laptop to find information about a school, college, or university program (Q2) expressed confidence (48% said that they were very confident; 35% were confident). Only 7% were unsure and no student expressed greater doubts in their ability to find information about an educational program. When asked if they used a computer or laptop to find information about their province, city, town, or community (Q7), almost all students expressed confidence in their ability (66% were very confident, 32% were confident), only 2% were unsure and no student expressed greater doubts in their ability to find information about where they live. When asked if they used a computer or laptop to find out about the News (Q9), the same percentage of students were confident that they could find information in the News (64% were very confident, 34% were confident), while 2% were unsure and no student expressed greater doubts in their ability. Ten (10) per cent of respondents

expressed uncertainty about their abilities to find information about housing and educational programs online. This may be a small percentage; however, it aligns with the importance of housing and education to newcomers and their higher level of anxiety about working towards these settlement goals in contrast to finding information about where they live and the News.

Studying and applying online

Newcomers' settlement goals in this study were closely related to educational goals like studying at college, and also to employment, including obtaining professional (re)certifications, and searching and applying for jobs. As using digital devices play a significant part in blended learning programs, students were asked if they used a computer or laptop to review their English lessons online in the lab or at home (Q8) – almost two thirds (64%) reported that they felt very confident and 34% were confident, a combined total of 98% of students. When asked if they used one to study English on their own (Q5), half of the students (50%) reported that they felt very confident and 39% felt confident for a total of 89% of students who felt that they were using digital devices for language learning with ease. However, 11% of students were unsure or had greater doubts about their abilities to study online in the program. This small yet significant group of students might experience challenges due to the online element in the program and may face similar challenges in their future participation in education. When asked about finding a job, studying in a professional program, or getting (re)certified in their profession, 44% of students responded that they felt very confident and 38% were confident using a computer or laptop to apply for a job or school (Q4). However, 16% were unsure and 2% had greater doubts about submitting online applications, representing a significant margin to consider given these newcomers' needs and goals for securing employment.

Writing online

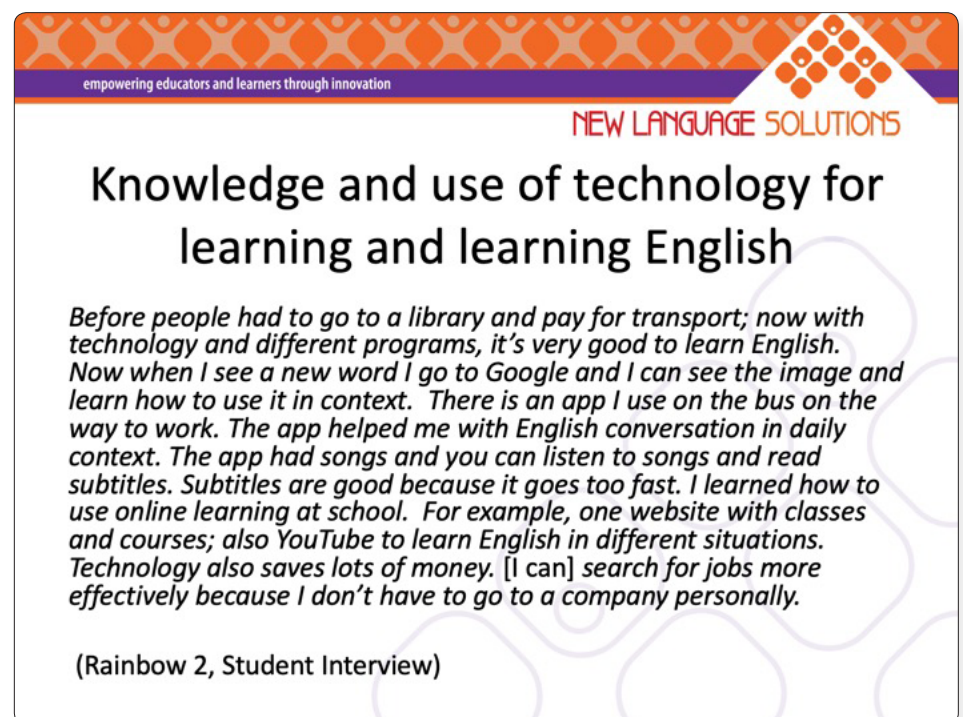
The results of this study also reveal that newcomer language students are immersed in writing, including writing online. When asked in this questionnaire if they could use a computer or laptop to write a letter (Q3) half of the students said that they were very confident (50%) and 45% said that they were confident in doing so, while only 5% were unsure. When asked if they could write a short report (Q6), still 39% said they were very confident and 50% reported that they were confident, while 11% were unsure.

Overall, these students self-reported fairly high scores about their confidence for using technological devices in order to achieve their daily settlement goals and life skills, on average 8-9 points on the Likert scale. However, the fact that more than 13 % rated themselves as unsure about how to review their English lessons at home and how to study English online may indicate a need for more transitional classes and learning related to online activities and studying. Some students in day classes had participated in the transition to blended learning classes; however, transition classes were not mandatory for students in blended learning classes at the time of the research, so some students had not taken the transition to blended learning classes. Also, students in evening classes had not attended transition classes as they were only offered during the day at that time. We would recommend that this question receives attention in future research. It will be important to follow students from before their transition to blended learning, even prior to

their participation in transitional courses and from the beginning of their blended learning classes to near the conclusion to note changes in their confidence for using technology for learning achieved during the blended learning classes. We also recommend further investigation of the growth of self-efficacy for using technology for various tasks and activities early in students' LINC studies prior to their transitional and blended learning classes, during their blended program, and post-blended learning classes, if possible, in order to investigate how this develops through blended learning. A longitudinal approach to this research question will provide more information.

The benefits of the blended LINC program reported on in this report, and TELL in general, for improving student confidence and learning through the use of technology were also highlighted in the student interviews and questionnaires such as in the following:

FIGURE 14: Knowledge and use of technology for learning and learning English (Rainbow 2, Student Interview)



Mainly, what was readily apparent from the student interviews and focus group activities in this research was that students increasingly were aware of their growing access and familiarity with using technology through blended learning. They recognized this learning as facilitating their settlement goals and as particularly useful for learning and developing their English.

5.9 Effects of blended learning for teachers, teaching, and LINC

3. a) What were the effects of the blended learning approach for LINC teachers, instruction, and the program?; b) What effective or “best” practices for the teaching and learning of LINC using a blended learning approach were demonstrated?

The effects of the blended learning approach for teachers and instruction as noted from our observations of classes, lesson plans and materials, PBLA artefacts, and from interviews with the students, instructors, and their questionnaires are detailed here.

The teacher participants consistently highlighted these benefits of blended learning:

- Students work at their own pace online.
- Their anxiety level is lowered.
- Because students engage online in more thoughtful discussions, they have time to craft their responses.
- Students develop multi-modal literacy skills.
- It builds/expands computer literacy/digital literacy and real-world skills.
- It supports learner autonomy and self-reflection.
- Students complete most individual activities online; it leaves time for communication and interaction when f2f.
- Students come prepared to work and interact at school.
- Students have more choice.
- More personalized learning. It increases motivation when topics and tasks are relevant to students' lives and engaging.
- Blended learning can accommodate a variety of learning styles.
- It supports diverse needs of students' lives and schedules, allows students at higher levels to continue to study by choice; and improves attendance, engagement, and retention.
- Blended learning supports the teacher.
- It expands access to knowledge/information for students and teachers.
- Blended learning eases independence and the transition out of LINC 8 by building a resource base for practice outside of the classroom [Note: Students exited the school board program at the end of LINC 8]. (Andrada, Anabelle, Eleanor; Teacher Interviews and Questionnaires)

Teachers found that blended learning enhanced and supported the teaching and learning for both students and teachers. The effects of blended learning for the teachers, instruction, and the program were notable – particularly, related to implementation of LINC according to student needs, interests, and goals and support of the curriculum; and, effectiveness and support of learning and teaching.

5.10 Attendance, participation and engagement, and retention

An important benefit to teachers, instruction, and the program was the consistent attendance and increased student engagement noted. “Attendance is really good... Students seem to look forward to sharing what they’ve done online and learn more in class... Class time is more focused as students come prepared to share, discuss, and to do follow up activities based on their online work at home.” (Andrada, Teacher Interview). As noted by Gladys, the program administrator, monthly attendance reports showed that blended learning classes had higher attendance than other classes – “in one (blended learning class) with EduLINC, average attendance is 95 % plus; 89 % across all [blended classes]”. (Gladys, Program

Administrator Interview). Eleanor noted how increasing the online component to 50 % of the learning time (from 25 %) had improved attendance: “When we went to 50/50 the attendance increased.” (Eleanor, Teacher Interview).

Anabelle, Eleanor, and Andrada also explained how blended learning helped retain students in the program by improving access: “... a couple of students had to return home and they kept working online with their teacher. If their kids are sick, they can work from home.” (Anabelle, Teacher Interview). Andrada explained how students could “catch up” via the online activities if they missed a class due to illness or work: “They always communicate with me through EduLINC messaging and write their classmates to find out what they need to work on. It is very rare that what we work on in class is not available online [as well] ...” (Andrada, Teacher Interview). Eleanor highlighted this improved access and retention of students as well, noting that blended learning “...increases access for students who would normally drop out after LINC 4 when they have what they need (referring to the LINC 4 level required for citizenship and residency in Canada). “This way they have a way to feasibly continue and keep learning; often also to support their children’s learning.” (Eleanor, Teacher Interview). Eleanor also explained: “There was faster turnover (of students) before blended learning; retention increased.”

Gladys, the program administrator, noted: “... [blended learning; provides flexibility for part time workers and because of daycare issues. ... Monthly reports show that blended learning classes have slightly higher attendance on average (than non-blended LINC classes)” (Gladys, Program Administrator Interview). The popularity of blended learning and interest of students in these classes was also indicated by these teachers by the fact that students who had to leave a class or move up to another level often asked for permission to stay enrolled in the class because of the resources and activities.

5.11 Student autonomy, engagement and motivation, and learning connections beyond the classroom

Teachers emphasized the student autonomy, engagement, motivation of learning, and connections beyond the classroom that resulted from blended learning. Anabelle, who taught a daytime, workplace-related, blended LINC class, explained: “Students have freedom to choose activities that are of interest to them...it’s not all about what I say. It’s interesting for students.” (Anabelle, Teacher Interview). She noted how TELL learning/teaching allowed her to integrate engaging and valuable “real world” topics and tasks into the program – for example, Anabelle had students listen to the news every morning, to take notes, and to share and discuss in groups and present to the class.

Eleanor also noted the autonomy and independent learning strategies that blended learning developed in students. “...especially for [my class], blended learning can build independent learning skills because I am not there all the time. It’s good because some have anxiety about what will happen after they leave LINC 8 since they will be on their own.” (Eleanor, Teacher Interview).

Andrada concurred: “...the teacher is not the dispenser of information anymore; students are, and they have more choice and control over their learning.” (Andrada, Teacher Interview).

Teachers found that blended learning enhanced student attention and engagement. Andrada noted: “Class time is more focused as students come prepared to share, discuss, and to do follow up activities based on their online work at home.” She explained how learner-control, active engagement in their own learning, and motivation were thus enhanced by the blended approach. She gave the example of individual student selection of their own vocabulary learning resources: “Students explore a variety of online resources for vocabulary development, evaluate them, and select according to personal preferences and styles.”

Anabelle stressed how blended learning allowed students to engage in and think more deeply about topics. “They work online and research themselves before asking the teacher. The questions are more detailed.” She also noted: “The ones who are very shy participate more because they have some information.” And she explained how the online materials and activities were useful for students “...to go back and look at items that they had done before.” (Anabelle, Teacher Interview)

Anabelle also noted how group activities introduced in class and through the online EduLINC practice extended connections outside of class: “With the project work students build relationships in class and continue that work outside of class...for example, for the garage sale activity they went out to the community to distribute flyers...”

Eleanor, whose evening class participated in the research project, explained: “I feel confident using EduLINC with the students and see great value in its application in and outside the classroom.”

Thus, teachers noted the effects of blended learning for increasing student engagement and supporting their development of independence in learning of English and pursuit of settlement goals.

5.12 Enhanced use of technology, access to knowledge/information, and integration of skills

Above all, the teachers recognized how students benefited from learning technological skills at the same time as developing their language skills and advancing their settlement needs. This included their growing appreciation for the learning and skills that the online aspects of the blended learning approach added to students’ learning, as well as their own teaching.

Andrada highlighted this in a profound way as she reflected on readings that distinguished TELL and CALL. Andrada had encountered these readings and concepts in the LearnIT2teach Learning Technology Innovation Leadership Course she took in 2016. She explained (Andrada, Teacher Questionnaire and Interview):

Technology has created an opportunity to apply the interactionist and social constructivist approaches to language learning in an unprecedented way; accessibility to and involvement in the larger community is within students’ reach when appropriately supported and guided. When our students are newcomers often struggling to understand and adapt to life in a new country, this is even more important. Social networking and mobile devices can definitely support this, among others. I strongly believe that when technology becomes “part of the environment” in the classroom, it actually mirrors real

life use and increases the chances for more student engagement. For example, students in my class don't use a computer lab, but the laptops are brought into the classroom. They also have access to wifi and can use their own devices, so, quite often, when feasible, quite a few of them prefer to use mobile devices/smart phones or iPads; these devices allow for a smoother integration of technology into the lesson. We might start with a needs assessment Twitter poll to narrow down the topic (students have Twitter accounts, which are protected and used exclusively for school communication, learning, and community connections), continue with a f2f discussion, access resources online, share information through short group presentations, and finally, reflect on the activities in a blog (all of the online activities available through EduLINC/Moodle).

[Note: These approaches – using Twitter while implementing technology as use of an authentic communication task while learning English are in Appendix R, which demonstrate the blended tasks and activities developed and implemented by teachers.]

These realizations by teachers had resulted in the BYOD policy that was implemented by the program at the school. This increased students' access to and use of technologies – wifi was made available at the school to support the blended program and mobile devices that students used; also, additional laptops were purchased for the program. From the perspectives of both the students and teachers, blended learning recognized and implemented learning/teaching that is inevitably tied to and improved by integration of technologies and TELL.

Andrada, Anabelle, and Eleanor demonstrated numerous ways in which English language teaching and learning were more effective because of TELL and blended learning.

Andrada explained the benefits of this integrated approach and use of authentic or “real life” resources and skills made possible through the blended learning classes and the use of technology. See the Lesson Plan (Appendix R), one of the teachers used in this study, as an example of this integrated approach observed in the blended program. The lesson plan clearly illustrates how the building of language skills was enabled because the teacher was able to draw on both f2f teaching/learning and online, technology-assisted learning in an integrated and complementary way using authentic tasks and resources that were relevant to students.

For example, in one such lesson, the outcome of the blended learning lesson had students delivering presentations in class based on various parts of the B.C. Newcomers Guide, which they accessed and researched both online and in class. This was achieved through a series of online and f2f activities in which multiple skills were practised through the use of authentic materials accessed via EduLINC. At the beginning of these activities, Andrada demonstrated the use of the online version of the Newcomer guide in class; then students selected, created, and practised a set of related vocabulary to study using Wordshift, software accessible through the EduLINC block; then shared these vocabulary sets via Quizlet online with the whole class. During this series of integrated activities, students also reviewed information about making effective presentations via EduLINC. They viewed a presentation about making effective presentations and took notes and outlined the presentation in their individual wikis; then created their own

PowerPoint presentations. Their presentations were video-recorded as well so that they could review their presentation and the teacher could provide oral feedback. Language teaching and learning thus advanced through a series of technology-assisted activities that at once taught language, technology, and “settlement” skills; not to mention the related effects of collaborative and independent learning skills, as well as a growing confidence and independence in learning that developed in the process.

Teacher knowledge, curriculum/program development, and PBLA implementation

And the effects for the program and curriculum were notable in other ways as well. The teachers had learned how to develop and implement the blended approach both through formal studies (LearnIT2teach and other courses) and informal learning through their own efforts in trying out blended learning and developing activities for students and teachers. Andrada explained her interest in this way: “I am very interested in the use of mobile technology and educational apps that I explore on a continuous basis...”. In talking about her level of comfort in using the blended approach in LINC, she explained that she was “...continuously learning new things and trying to improve my delivery. The LearnIT2teach website with its many resources is very useful in this respect (Live Chat is also an excellent support); my mentor is a great resource, too.” She went on to note that she didn’t believe that computer labs were the solution for blended learning (except for individual study), and that she “...favoured the use of mobile technology when students are at school.”

In effect, blended learning and being responsible for developing online activities to complement students’ f2f learning, had shaped their teacher knowledge, thinking about, and approach to teaching. They appreciated and demonstrated how authentic settlement resources and experiences, technology and English language practice and learning could be developed together using a variety of media, resources, technologies, and learning activities when skillfully implemented to complement each other (see Appendix R). As a result of these teacher insights, the BYOD policy developed at the school LINC program, and the curriculum and program were enhanced by development of TELL activities by teachers.

A primary theme that recurred throughout the teacher and staff data thus demonstrated how blended learning had contributed to the development of teacher knowledge and instruction, use of technology, and curriculum and program development according to student needs, interests, and in support of effectiveness of teaching and learning.

As well, as previously noted in Section III, blended learning had actually eased the implementation of the PBLA and vice versa. Each teacher stressed how the PBLA was connected to and integrated into the blended learning activities and classes. Andrada, Anabelle, and Eleanor explained how all teaching and learning activity was planned with the PBLA requirements in mind so that students would have appropriate and sufficient assessment artefacts to demonstrate their achievement in the PBLA conferences. EduLINC allowed for the development of blended activities that integrated preparation for PBLA and PBLA artefacts into the content – see, for example, the CLB 6 Speaking activity checklist and self-assessment/peer evaluation in figure 15 below that teachers implemented in the speaking/listening blended activities.

FIGURE 15: CLB 6 Speaking activity checklist and self-assessment/peer evaluation

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CLB 6 - Speaking IV. Sharing Information

Task: Your group will share/teach information and new vocabulary from the article each one of you was responsible for. At the end, give feedback to each other by using this rubric.

Self-Assessment	Criteria	Peer Assessment	Comments
1 2 3 4	Overall Effectiveness Able to complete the task well	1 2 3 4	
1 2 3 4	Content Ideas are relevant and clear	1 2 3 4	
1 2 3 4	Organization: introduction, well-developed ideas, conclusion; right length	1 2 3 4	
1 2 3 4	Vocabulary: adequate vocabulary and collocations/expressions for the topic	1 2 3 4	
1 2 3 4	Grammatical structures: good control of basic structures; developing control of more complex structures	1 2 3 4	
1 2 3 4	Speech is quite easy to understand and reasonably fluent good use of sentence stress and intonation pronunciation does not impede understanding few hesitations	1 2 3 4	
1 2 3 4	Body language (eye contact, gestures and posture) is used effectively; appropriate voice volume and speech rate	1 2 3 4	

A curriculum need explained by the teachers was that blended learning/ teaching requires investment in collaborative curriculum development and sharing time for the close work required by teachers implementing blended learning. This remained a challenge for the teachers in this demonstration research project and their advocacy for designated or paid release time for collaborative curriculum development continued, a finding that will be taken up further in the next section.

5.13 Challenges

Of course, not all effects of blended learning were seen in a completely positive light. There were challenges as noted by the teachers and the program administrator.

The program and students at the time of the research in 2017-2018 were using paper-based portfolios. This was the main challenge connected to implementing the PBLA into the blended program. Plans for the implementation of “an electronic portfolio solution” as part of the new “development of an augmented Moodle learning management system solution for teachers and learners” by the end of March 2020 was noted as a welcomed improvement for further integrating the PBLA into the blended LINC program in an announcement by LearnIT2teach (2019, para.1).

As well, instructors highlighted that planning for blended learning was “time intensive” and demanding. One teacher explained: “Online work needs to be carefully planned and all details dealt with properly, which is time consuming.” Integration of the PBLA with blended learning was found to be both necessary and

intensive. On the “upside”, implementation of PBLA had been eased because of the online activities. Blended learning/teaching allowed some of the PBLA preparation tasks and activities to be done online by students and teachers.

Teachers noted that “it takes a serious amount of time to implement this approach, especially in the first year or two of transitioning from the regular approach to blended.” They emphasized that regular paid PD and preparation time need to be provided for teachers and advocated for paid release time for collaborative curriculum development and PD and training for teachers.

Gladys, the program administrator, noted: “Students say that they love it (blended learning); teachers like it but say it is an awful amount of work.”

Another teacher noted the time challenges of planning for blended learning in this way: “It’s more time-consuming, but once you get in the swing of things, it’s okay. Sometimes it’s hard to find topics that are appropriate; requires a lot of work to make activities, and it’s hard to write reliable, valid assessments.”

Teachers also indicated that in the past wifi access had occasionally been “spotty” at the school, but that had stabilized; improvements and additions to technologies available for use in the classes had been added. Overall, the teachers recommended more tech support be provided at the school. However, they noted that “LearnIT2teach support, plus live chat and mentors were very much appreciated and useful.” One teacher explained that she was not sure that instructors were fully aware of all the resources and support available.

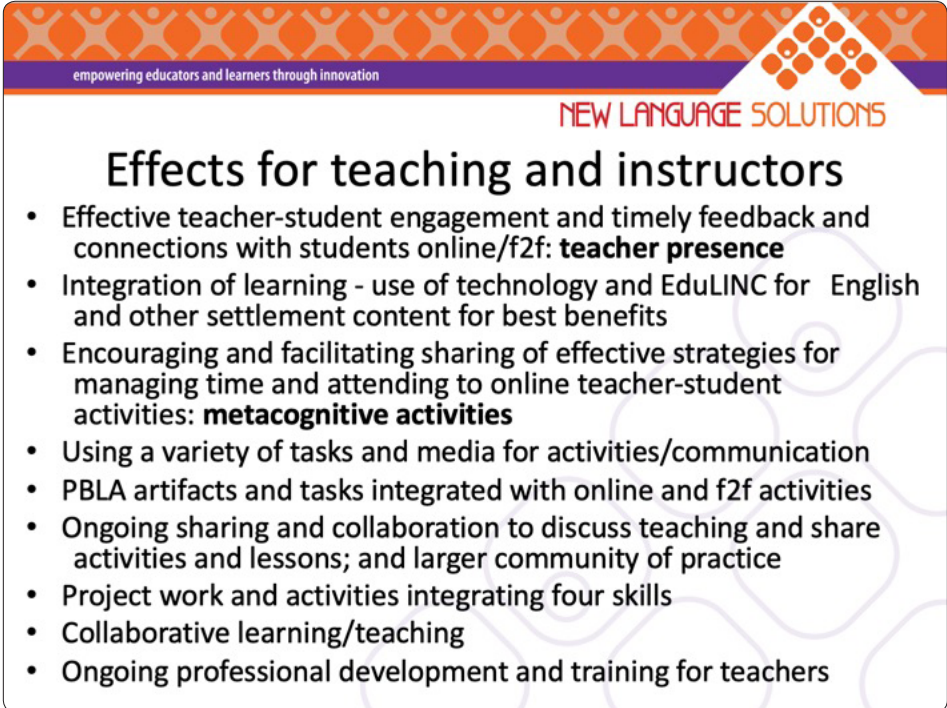
5.14 Summary

The students and teachers in this school board program indicated a high level of engagement with blended learning plus support and advocacy for the approach. The benefits they highlighted included accessibility to English language learning beyond the classroom. But above and beyond that, they demonstrated commitment to learning through this approach as a means to authentic learning of language, technology, and settlement or “life” skills, as well as the benefits of autonomy and flexibility which enhanced participation. There were notable benefits for curriculum, teaching, and program development, as well improvements in the implementation of PBLA and LINC activities.

Teachers may have noted that they needed more paid time available to them for professional development and preparation of online, blended activities and resources; however, they were committed to teaching in this way as highly effective.

These multiple effects and benefits of blended learning demonstrated in this research are summarized here:

FIGURE 16: Effects for teaching and instructors



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Effects for teaching and instructors

- Effective teacher-student engagement and timely feedback and connections with students online/f2f: **teacher presence**
- Integration of learning - use of technology and EduLINC for English and other settlement content for best benefits
- Encouraging and facilitating sharing of effective strategies for managing time and attending to online teacher-student activities: **metacognitive activities**
- Using a variety of tasks and media for activities/communication
- PBLA artifacts and tasks integrated with online and f2f activities
- Ongoing sharing and collaboration to discuss teaching and share activities and lessons; and larger community of practice
- Project work and activities integrating four skills
- Collaborative learning/teaching
- Ongoing professional development and training for teachers

In the words of one of these highly skilled teachers (Teacher Interview):

Blended learning transcends the classroom walls; it's engaging and creative; it connects us with the larger community; it breaks the potential of isolation of traditional, classroom-based language learning; it's flexible. It's also sometimes challenging – as a teacher using this approach you have to update skills and knowledge continuously. You become a learner yourself, which I love :-)

3 b) What effective or “best” practices for the teaching and learning of LINC using a blended learning approach were demonstrated?

This research project chose a developed blended learning program with experience and expertise amongst the teachers and administrator to demonstrate exemplary practices. “Best practices” for blended learning in LINC demonstrated in this research may be seen as a model of how blended learning, an innovation that improves student participation, engagement, and language learning, has been and can be developed and implemented for the benefit of learners, teachers, and LINC.

Key to the effectiveness of this blended learning LINC program were these “best” practices:

- Stable wi fi and consistent and sufficient technology support
- Sufficient portable devices on campus
- A Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy and practice at the school
- Teachers who were not only experienced and knowledgeable in teaching LINC, but enthusiastic about and professionally developed in using technology and EduLINC in their teaching/learning

- Ongoing leadership by administration to provide the technologies, childcare, and other resources (such as field trips and community activities) to support this LINC program and learners; as well as administrative collaboration with and support of teachers
- Transition to blended learning classes for students who needed them
- Ongoing professional development and training for teachers
- Consistent teacher-student engagement and teacher presence and interaction with students – online as well as in the classroom
- Integration of the PBLA activities into the blended learning program/curriculum and PBLA activities in the online activities

Some challenges for making blended learning/teaching work to its optimum advantage for students and the program remained. Teachers and the administrator noted the need for designated professional development time to support their ongoing professional development and training needs re. EduLINC and teaching LINC using TELL. Similarly, designated time for collaborative development of curriculum and online activities for use with the blended classes was needed.

As well, teachers recognized and advocated for a professional community of practice in which to develop, share, and refine their blended learning knowledge and practice. An informal community of practice had already begun to develop amongst the blended learning teachers in this program as they met to share activities. This had been constrained due to the need for more designated time for collaboration on curriculum development and implementation. A community of practice and professional development had also been initiated through interaction with the LearnIT2teach mentors provided during the teachers' LearnIT2teach training; however, these professional links needed to be expanded, developed and made more concrete and available in order to ensure continuing development of this blended learning program, the curriculum, and teachers. This will be discussed in more detail in the recommendations discussed following.

6. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research project here demonstrated the multiple and intertwined effects of the blended learning approach for students and learning, teachers, and the program in an exemplary blended learning LINC program. Important benefits were shown for: (i) LINC students' participation and engagement in LINC and their English language learning and achievement of their settlement goals; (ii) for students' self-efficacy and knowledge for using technology for learning and achievement of their settlement goals; (iii) and, for the LINC teacher development, instruction, curriculum integration, as well as implementation of PBLA and enhancement of the LINC program.

Effective or “best practices” for teaching and learning via a blended approach became increasingly evident in examining the LINC blended learning classes in this project; as well as challenges and needs still to be addressed. This research project demonstrated how blended learning in LINC works to maximize benefits and results for students and teachers when the following practices and conditions are provided:

- Reliable and sufficient technology resources, devices and technology support, and wifi for blended learning at the program level; invested teachers with expertise in developing and implementing blended learning according to the needs of their students; also, professional development and collaborative work time for these teachers.
- Leadership about blended learning approaches and needs; and, professional development support for administrators and teachers to enhance and support implementation and delivery.
- Program supports such as childcare and resource/staff persons to assist with community and settlement resources in the program integrated with the blended learning curriculum and program.
- Extended and a variety of opportunities/classes for students – for example, students wanted to continue in blended language learning beyond LINC 8, and asked for more types of classes. This included more academic preparation and English study opportunities via blended learning for students to reach for their education, employment, and professional certification goals.
- LINC curriculum development and support to ease the implementation of PBLA into the blended learning curriculum and delivery, particularly an electronic or e- PBLA portfolio system; also, more PBLA activities via EduLINC.
- “Transitions” to blended learning classes for students to effectively orient and practise the technology and resources used in the blended classes.
- Development and inclusion of blended learning activities and access via mobile devices, apps, and technology as evidenced from the student and teachers' use of smart phones and tablets.

- Time, strategies, and a variety of means for teacher engagement with students in the online, blended learning activities that enhance teaching and social presence and “connectedness” of online teaching/learning to the f2f class.
- Inclusion of more video conferencing and related synchronous activities between teacher and students and amongst students to further develop speaking and listening in the blended learning curriculum.
- Need for designated teacher preparation time for development and implementation of blended learning materials and curriculum.
- Development of a continuing or ongoing community of practice and professional development community for teachers and administrators needed.
- Need for development of a model for the implementation of the blended learning approach that more specifically describes effective foundations and strategies for implementation and delivery of blended learning in such programs.

These recommendations ensue from this research and model of effective blended learning:

1. Attention by LINC funders and program developers to the provision of more blended learning opportunities, programs, and classes for learners and teachers that will draw on and extend these benefits of blended learning to more students across regions, levels, programs, and varieties of classes.
2. Extended opportunities for teacher development and training for blended learning.
3. Development and implementation of more PBLA activities and resources in the EduLINC component of blended learning.
4. Support of teachers for designated time for professional development and collaborative curriculum development/implementation time as indicated as a need by the administrator and teachers herein.
5. Development of communities of practice and professional development for blended learning, sharing, and collaboration for blended learning teachers. These networks of learning and development could be addressed by supporting programs like LearnIT2teach to expand education and training opportunities in blended learning for teachers for a variety of blended learning contexts and classes, including transitions to blended learning. Another prime way to develop this community of practice for blended learning teachers, administrators, and support persons would be to further develop partnership programs and mentoring connections amongst the “established” or exemplary blended learning programs/teachers that are in place (as in the program here) and new or “novice” programs and groups of teachers/programs aiming to implement blended learning. Such a community of practice might be most effective if implemented in a “blended” way so that the teachers experience blended learning in the ways that their students do. Further research and work re. how blended learning/teaching may be included in initial ESL teacher programs need to be considered as well.

The blended learning program showcased in this demonstration project shows that resistance to “technology innovation adoption” (Rogers, 2005) for blended learning can be overcome in the LINC context. This was seen in the program development, leadership, and effective practices demonstrated in the blended learning program presented here.

The findings show how effectively managed opportunities for blended learning in LINC improve student access and participation in settlement language training, and increase learner engagement and the effectiveness of English language learning programs; develop knowledge and confidence for using technology for learning and settlement needs; and, enhance teacher expertise and satisfaction with teaching/learning via technology assisted learning.

The effects of BL research project here, in fact, demonstrates how a local vision for blended and TELL teaching/learning as recommended by Sturm et al. (2018) has been practically implemented through the leadership of administration and highly invested LINC instructors in the blended learning program described here. A “best practice model” for development, implementation, and delivery of BL in LINC has been demonstrated by this LINC program, its teachers, administrator, and students. Indeed, BL “works”.

Of course, more development and research are needed to ensure that the extension and adoption of blended learning by more LINC programs and varieties of classes continues effectively according to student and community needs. Research into the transition needs and the types of transition to blended learning courses/classes discussed in this research need to be conducted as transitional courses/classes are implemented. Also, research of blended learning with a variety of classes, levels, students, and contexts will help identify how additional needs of students and teachers in other contexts (for example, literacy learning, basic, and other LINC levels) may best be advanced.

We recommend further attention to blended learning in LINC in light of background studies and trends that indicate the move towards technology-assisted language learning will continue. Recent studies in learning, teaching, and education in general show a rapidly developing trend toward blended learning and its potential benefits. In 2013, major stakeholders from across Canada attended the CIC-funded Vision 2020 National Settlement Conference to discuss the theme of “2020 Vision for the Settlement Program”. The agenda included consideration of more responsive delivery to ensure positive, comparable newcomer outcomes (e.g., new methods and use of technology). In light of growing trends for increasing use of technology in teaching and learning, further research into the impact of the blended learning approach and development of programs, teacher professional development, and resources for blended learning as proposed here will ensure that newcomers do reap the benefits of technology in the classroom for English language learning and settlement. In the words of one of the LINC student participants in this research project: “This is the best method for modern society.” (Student Interview)

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7. APPENDICES

- A. Student Research Participants
- B. Student Background Questionnaire
- C. Student Interview
- D. Teacher/Staff Questionnaire
- E. Teacher Interview
- F. Staff Interview
- G. Classroom Observation
- H. Self-Efficacy Questionnaire about Confidence in Using Technology and Computers
- I. Student Focus Group Discussions and Presentations
- J. Observations and Collection of Tasks and Artefacts
- K. Research Consent Form
- L. CELPIP Scores Release Form
- M. Focus Group Consent Form
- N. CELPIP Level and Descriptors and CLB Levels
- O. CELPIP Pre/Post Scores
- P. CELPIP Testing to Establish a Baseline Description of Student English Language Proficiency
- Q. Blended Learning Implementation Plan
- R. Blended Learning Lesson Plan

A. Student Research Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Language	Education	Work abroad	Work Canada
Mishka	female	26-35	Persian	medical school	physician	department manager
Chicken	female	26-35	Japanese	university	midwife/nurse	server, precook
Abraham	male	36-45	Persian	medical school	medical doctor	store associate
Tiger	female	26-35	Cantonese	high school	no	no
Sailor moon	female	26-35	Japanese	college	sports instructor	language teacher, server
Donya	female	26-35	Chinese	high school	no	no
Cinderela	female	26-35	Portuguese	university	lawyer	no
Batgirl	female	26-35	Mandarin	university	family planning	n/a
Snow White	female	36-45	Korean	university	dental hygienist	n/a
Mary	female	26-35	Mandarin	graduate school	special education teacher	no
Smai ⁴	female	36-45	Russian	university	software developer	no
Dolphin	female	26-35	Mandarin	university	logistics	receptionist
Rainbow ¹	female	26-35	Russian	university	sales representative	cashier
Lotus	female	36-45	Mandarin	college	internet support engineer	no
Hala	female	26-35	Arabic	university	college instructor	no
Papula	female	26-35	Kurdish	graduate school	assistant	no
Grayson	male	33-45	Mandarin	graduate school	Software engineer	no
Raindrop	female	36-45	Mandarin	university	communications coordinator	n/a
Aleesa	female	36-45	Russian	university	chief accountant	no
Stella ⁶	female	36-45	Cantonese	university	nurse	no
David	female	36-45	Russian	university	chemist	no
Sweetcoco ²⁵	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Juliet ¹	female	36-45	Korean	university	school teacher	no
Toto	female	26-35	Arabic	university	language teacher	teaching volunteer
Jessie ^{3 5}	female	36-45	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Jin ³	female	26-35	Mandarin	university	hotel	no
Hanako ³	female	36-45	Japanese	high school	confectionary hygiene	no
Rainbow ²	female	36-45	Farsi	university	sales manager	construction
Soda ³	female	26-35	Mandarin	college	office clerk	cleaner

1 discontinued

2 moved to a part-time class not part of the research

3 questionnaire missing

4 returned to first country

5 discontinued due to family emergencies

6 left program because spouse got a job out of town

7 transferred to a school closer to residence 8 went back to first country because of family emergency

B. Student Background Questionnaire

Student Background Questionnaire

Answer the questions below.

Date:

1. First Name:

2. Pseudonym:

Please choose a different name or pseudonym to be used in this study. *It should not be a part of your real name* – use a first name that is common in your country or language of origin.

3. Participant Number (the researcher or instructor will give this number to you):

[.....]

4. Date: Time:

5. Contact Information:

Which class are you in:

Room #: Class Level:

Program/Course:

Instructor Name:

Site:

6. Schedule of Class: Days & Hours:

.....

7. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

8. Age Range (Check one):

☐ 18-25 ☐ 26-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 56-65 ☐ Over 65

9. Languages: What languages do you speak and write?

Speak:

Write:

10. (a) Country of Origin:
- (b) How long have you lived in Canada?
11. a) How long have you studied in this LINC program?
- b) When did you begin classes here at this program?
- c) Which level(s) and classes have you studied here:
12. How long did you study English before you started in this LINC program – begin with the most recent:
- Where:
- Type of Program:
- Level: When:
- Where:
- Type of Program:
- Level: When:
- Where:
- Type of Program:
- Level: When:
- Other Classes or Courses or times you studied English:
-
-
-
-
-
-

13. Educational Background:

Have you completed:

a) High School? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, Where:

When:

b) College or Training? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, Where:

When:

What training/program(s):

.....

.....

.....

c) A Bachelor's degree or university: ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, Where:

When:

What program(s)/degree(s):

.....

.....

.....

d) Other degrees or education: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please describe:

Where:

When:

Program/Certificate/Degree:

.....

e) Other courses and studies – Explain:

.....

.....

f) Other English language courses, education, and training: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please describe (type of program, where, when, how long...):

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

14. Work Experience and Background:

a) Did you work before you came to Canada? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What did you do:

How long:

When:

What language(s) did you speak at work there?

.....

b) Do you work outside of the home now: ☐ Yes ☐ No

What do you do?

Where do you work?

How long have you worked there?

What language (s) do you speak at work?

.....

15. What do you want to do for work in Canada? What are your goals for work?

.....

.....

.....

16. What are your goals for study, education and training in Canada?

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17. Additional Information – Explain additional information related to your language learning, work goals, and settlement goals in Canada:

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C. Student Interview

Student Interview

Interview # Date: Site:

Student Pseudonym:

Participant Number: Level:

Class: Instructor:

Interviewer/Researcher:

Interviewer – Note this is a semi-structured interview. You may adapt.

Hi/Hello, I am

Thank you very much for coming to this interview.

If you have any questions, please stop me and I will explain.

We are going to talk about the blended learning approach to learning English in your LINC classes – that is when your teacher uses the computer and you work on the computer to help you learn English.

The blended learning approach is the way your teacher and you use technology to help you study English in class and at home. This is called blended learning in the LINC classes.

I would like to talk to you about your learning with this approach (the blended learning approach).

Let's talk. Stop me if you want me to explain.

1. How do you use the computer to study English? What do you do?

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.....
.....

2. When do you study English using the computer? How often?

.....
.....
.....

How do you study English using the computer? What do you do? Tell me about it:

At school?

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.....

.....
.....
.....
At home?

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.....
.....
3. How is this blended learning approach and the computer useful for your learning of English? In what ways?

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.....
In what ways is it useful for learning to speak English?

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.....
.....
for practicing sounds and pronunciation?

.....
.....
.....
for grammar; vocabulary.... ..

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.....
In what ways was it useful for learning to listen in English?

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.....
In what ways was it useful for learning to read in English?

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.....
In what ways was it useful for learning to write in English?

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.....
What computer skills do you learn? How?

.....
.....
In what ways is it useful for learning how to use the online resources and materials?

-
.....
4. Do you like learning English this way? ☐ Yes ☐ No
(Do you enjoy it? Why or why not?)

.....
.....
Please tell me more:

5. How is this approach or way of learning English different from other activities that you do in class?

.....

.....

.....

- b) Would you like to use this approach more often? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Why or why not? How often?

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.....

- c) Are there any things you would change about this approach? Explain what they are.

.....

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6. What do you do outside of class to follow up these activities?

for example, do you go to the computer lab at school and practice; go on your own computer and on-line to practice at home and outside of class...

.....

.....

.....

How often?

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.....

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When?

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.....

.....

If you do not use these on-line activities and computer materials outside of class, why not?

(do you need more time at school; or, do you need a computer at home; or maybe you do not have time outside of school, or you need more time or help with using the computer and on-line materials)

7. What would you tell a friend or new student about using the blending learning approach and the materials? What is your advice?

8. What advice would you give a teacher about using these materials with the class?

9. Why did you choose to do the blended learning class or program?

Are you going to continue in the blended learning program in January and the future? What are your plans?

10. What changes would you suggest improving this blended learning approach used in your LINC classes?

In what ways? Why?

D. Teacher/Staff Questionnaire

Teacher/Staff Questionnaire

Background Questionnaire/Profile

Please answer the questions below. The researcher will review them quickly with you after. You may add information then.

Date:

1. First Name:

2. Pseudonym:

(please choose a pseudonym to be used in this study– NOT your real name)

3. Participant Number (will be assigned by the researcher): [.....]

4. Date: Time:

5. Contact Information:

Which class are you in:

Room #: Site Location:

Program:

6. Your Position/Role:

Class Level(s):

Program/Course(s):

Please describe what you do in this LINC program:

.....

.....

.....

7. Your Schedule at work:

.....

.....

8. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

9. Age Range (Check one):

☐ 18-25 ☐ 26-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 56-65 ☐ Over 65

10. Languages: What languages do you speak:

.....

- a) How long have you worked in the LINC program?
- b) When did you begin working here?
- c) Which level(s) and classes have you worked with?

11. How long did you teach English before you started in this LINC program:

Where:

When:

What type of program(s):

12. Educational Background:

a) What level(s) of university and college education have you achieved?

.....

.....

b) What degrees and areas of specialization?

.....

.....

c) What certificates?

.....

.....

d) What teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) studies and certification(s) have you achieved?

.....

.....

e) What is your background in training in the blended learning approach?

.....

.....

f) Have you taken LearnIT2teach/EduLINC training for teaching using the blended learning approach, computer and online resources?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Where:

When:

What levels/stages of this training have you completed:

☐ Stage 1 ☐ Stage 2 ☐ Stage 3 ☐ Stage 4

Is EduLINC used in your class(es)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you use another LMS? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Is it a Moodle LMS? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, can instructors use materials developed on EduLINC? ☐ Yes ☐ No

g) What additional areas of computer expertise and experience do you have?

[illegible]

h) How long have you used the blended learning approach in teaching LINC?

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i) Describe your level of comfort in using the blended learning approach in teaching LINC students (or working with LINC students in the lab/or in other ways).

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dashed lines, typical of primary school handwriting practice paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

[illegible]

l) Are any of the online activities directly connected to the Teacher-Student Conferences? For example, do any of them count as portfolio artefacts used to assign CLB and write progress reports?

E. Teacher Interview

Teacher Interview #

Date:

Note to Researcher: *This is a semi-structured interview.*

Instructor/Staff Pseudonym:

Participant #:

Level:

Program:

Site:

Date:

Interviewer/Researcher:

Interviewer:

Hi/Hello, I am

Thank you very much for coming to this interview.

If you have any questions, please stop me and I will explain. If you want to add anything, please do.

We are going to talk about the blended learning approach for learning English in LINC. The blended learning approach is the approach in which the teacher uses technology to help learners study English in class using online materials. I would like to talk to you about your experiences with the blended learning approach.

1. a) Could you tell me about your job in this LINC program? What do you do?

.....

.....

.....

-
- b) When did you begin using the blended learning approach and online materials?

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.....

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-
2. About how often do you use the blended learning approach with the overhead and a computer or a laptop with your LINC class?

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3. Did you find this presentation and activities effective for learning and teaching English?

a) In what ways? Please tell me about it.

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.....

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b) How was it useful for teaching?

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.....

c) What is useful for teaching new vocabulary?;

.....

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d) for practicing grammar?

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e) for pronunciation?

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In what ways was it useful for learning to speak English?

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In what ways was it useful for learning to listen in English?

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In what ways was it useful for learning to read in English?

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In what ways was it useful for learning to write in English?

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In what ways was it useful for learning computer skills?

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In what ways was it useful for learning how to use the online materials

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4. How does the blended learning/teaching approach affect your students' attention in class? Tell me about that. Could you give me some examples?

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-
5. How does the blended learning approach affect your students' English language learning? What have you noticed?

.....

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.....

In what ways? Explain and give examples.

-
-
-
-
6. How does the blended learning approach affect students in asking questions in class?

-
-
-
-
7. How does the blended learning approach affect students in asking questions after class?

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-
-
-
-
8. How does the blended learning/teaching approach affect your students' participation in classes? Tell me about that. Could you give me some examples?

-
-
-
-
-
9. a) How does the blended learning/teaching approach affect your students' attendance? Describe that and explain with examples if possible.

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-
- b) Does this approach help retain students in the program (for example, if someone has to work part time; or has someone ill at home....)?

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-
- c) How does the blended learning approach affect your teaching? Please tell me about that? (your pace....how quickly you go through a lesson; your instructions; group work...)

-
-
10. What do you do advise students do outside of class to follow up with classroom blended learning activities?

(for example, go to the computer lab at school and practice; go on their own computer and on-line to practice at home and outside of class...)

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.....

How often?

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-
-
11. If students do not practice English using these on-line activities outside of class, why do you think they do not? Explain and give examples where possible.

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(do you need more time in the lab at school; do you need a computer at home; do you not have time outside of school....)

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-
12. How is this type of learning, the blended learning approach, different from your other English class activities and materials? Could you explain that?

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-
13. How does this blended learning approach to teaching English help you
- a) plan your lessons, materials, and resources? Give examples.

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b) to enhance your lessons? Give examples.

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.....

.....

c) to improve teaching? Give examples.

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.....

d) to help you review with your students? Give examples.

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.....

e) other ways that it improves the teaching experience?

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14. From your point of view, tell me about the benefits of the blended approach for teaching English? Give examples where possible.
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a) for students:

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b) for teachers and staff:

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15. Do you enjoy teaching English this way? ☐ Yes ☐ No
(the blended learning teaching approach)

Please explain:

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.....
a) What do you like about teaching English this way? Describe and explain.

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.....
b) Would you like to use this approach more often? If so, how often? Why? If not, explain why not.

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.....
c) Are there any things you don't like or haven't liked about this approach in the past; what are they? Could you tell me about that?

.....
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.....
.....
d) How could this approach and opportunities be improved?

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.....
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.....
16. Do your students ever use this courseware and the on-line materials to review or catch up on their work if they have missed a class because they were sick or not able to go to class for another reason? Give some examples.

.....
.....
.....
.....
a) How useful was it to them for review or catch up? Please explain.

17. What advice would you give a new teacher about using the blending learning approach and the materials?

.....

.....

.....

18. What advice would you give a new student about using these materials and the approach?

.....

.....

.....

19. What advice would you give other teachers about using these materials and the blended learning approach with new students?

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.....

20. What advice or suggestions would you give administrators about the blended learning approach and materials?

.....

.....

.....

21. What changes would you suggest to improve the blended learning approach used in LINC in the future?

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.....

.....

22. What other comments or ideas would you like to add about the blended learning approach and materials for teaching English as a second language to adults?

.....

.....

.....

F. Staff Interview

Staff Interview

Interview #:

Date:

Note to Researcher: *This is a semi-structured interview.*

Staff Pseudonym:

Participant #:

Program:

Site:

Date:

Interviewer/Researcher:

Interviewer:

Hi/Hello, I am

Thank you very much for coming to this interview.

If you have any questions, please stop me and I will explain. If you want to add anything, please do.

We are going to talk about the blended learning approach for learning English in LINC. The blended learning approach is the approach in which the teacher uses technology to help learners study English in class using online materials. I would like to talk to you about your experiences with the blended learning approach.

1. a) Could you tell me about your job in this LINC program? What do you do?

.....
.....

- b) When did you begin using the blended learning approach and online materials?

.....
.....

2. a) What is your background in training in the blended learning approach?

.....
.....

- b) Have you taken LearnIT2teach/EduLINC training for teaching or the leadership/vision course?

☐ Yes ☐ No

e) for pronunciation?

In what ways was it useful for learning to speak English?

In what ways was it useful for learning to listen in English?

In what ways was it useful for learning to read in English?

In what ways was it useful for learning to write in English?

In what ways was it useful for learning computer skills?

In what ways was it useful for learning how to use the online materials

4. How does the blended learning/teaching approach affect students' attention in class? Tell me about that. Could you give me some examples?

5. How does the blended learning approach affect students' English language learning? What have you noticed?

.....

.....

.....

In what ways? Explain and give examples.

.....

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6. How does the blended learning approach affect students in asking questions in class?

.....

.....

.....

7. How does the blended learning approach affect students in asking questions after class?

.....

.....

.....

8. How does the blended learning/teaching approach affect students' participation in classes? Tell me about that. Could you give me some examples?

.....

.....

.....

9. a) How does the blended learning/teaching approach affect students' attendance? Describe that and explain with examples if possible.

.....

.....

.....

b) Does this approach help retain students in the program (for example, if someone has to work part time; or has someone ill at home...)?

.....

.....

.....

c) How does the blended learning approach affect teaching? Please tell me about that? (pace....how quickly lesson proceed; instructions; group work...)

.....

.....

.....

10. What are students advised to do outside of class to follow up with classroom blended learning activities?

(for example, go to the computer lab at school and practice; go on their own computer and on-line to practice at home and outside of class...)

.....

.....

.....

How often?

.....

.....

.....

11. If students do not practice English using these on-line activities outside of class, why do you think they do not? Explain and give examples where possible.

.....

.....

.....

(do you need more time in the lab at school; do you need a computer at home; do you not have time outside of school....)

12. How is this type of learning, the blended learning approach, different from other English class activities and materials? Could you explain that?

.....

.....

.....

13. How does this blended learning approach to teaching English help to
- a) plan lessons, materials, and resources? Give examples.

.....

.....

.....

b) enhance lessons? Give examples.

c) improve teaching? Give examples.

d) review feedback with students? Give examples.

e) improve the teaching experience?

14. From your point of view, tell me about the benefits of the blended approach for teaching English? Give examples where possible.

a) for students:

b) for teachers and staff:

15. a) Do teachers enjoy teaching English this way (the blended learning teaching approach)?

.....

c) How could this approach and opportunities be improved?

.....

.....

.....

16. a) Do students ever use the courseware and the online materials to review or catch up on their work if they have missed a class because they were sick or not able to go to class for another reason? Give some examples.

.....

.....

.....

.....

b) How useful was it to them for review or catch up? Please explain.

.....

.....

.....

17. What advice would you give a new teacher about using the blending learning approach and the materials?

.....

.....

.....

18. What advice would you give a new student about using these materials and the approach

.....

.....

.....

19. What advice would you give teachers about using these materials and the blended learning approach with new students?

.....

.....

.....

20. What advice or suggestions would you give other administrators about the blended learning approach and materials?

.....

.....
.....
21. What changes would you suggest to improve the blended learning approach used in LINC in the future?

.....
.....
.....
22. a) Describe briefly how PBLA works in classrooms. Are PBLA activities connected to Blended Learning activities? Are there any PBLA activities online?

.....
.....
.....
b) Are there guidelines using PBLA activities online? ☐ Yes ☐ No

c) Are any of the online activities directly connected to the Teacher-Student Conferences? For example, do any of them count as portfolio artefacts used to assign CLB and write progress reports?

.....
.....
.....
d) How often do Teacher-Student Conferences take place in classes?

.....
.....
.....
e) Is there paid prep. time for developing blended learning activities?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how much time?

G. Classroom Observation

Classroom Observation Chart

Note to Researcher: *You may record this information in a larger chart or in report form.*

Date:

Time::

Instructor Pseudonym::

Researcher::

Observation #:

Class::

Site::

Description of Lesson Materials and Attachments (courseware; overhead presentations; audio-visuals; practice activities; materials; other resources....)

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Notes about the class observation are recorded according to the categories explained below.

Attachments should be itemized and may include: Diagram of seating plan or arrangement used during the lesson; descriptions of materials and online resources used during the lesson; additional notes provided by the teacher.

- I. Instructional Routines/Tasks describe what the teacher and/or students are doing during each phase of the lesson. Indicate the start/stop time for each task or routine.
Examples: Discussion. T-directed. T asks individual students questions.
Pair work: Students edit each other's work. Indicate corrections using editing symbols.
Group Brainstorming: Developing ideas for a topic.
Presentation: T explains "how to develop a paragraph".
- II. Objectives describe the purpose (s) of each instructional routine/task or portion of the lesson.
Examples: To review the assigned reading: Comprehension check plus

vocabulary development.

To present and explain a new concept or point.

Topic development: Brainstorming of ideas related to topic.

- III. Verbal Exchanges note some of the pertinent verbal exchanges between the teacher and student(s) or student(s) to student(s) during each instructional routine/task.

Examples: T to Ss: "How do you feel about the article?"

S: "Is this the thesis statement?" T: "No. Look in the second second paragraph."

S to S: "Did you forget a word ...?"

- IV. Interactions describe the ways in which the teacher and students respond and interact with each other during each instructional routine/task.

Examples: Individual Ss answer T's questions

Ss take notes

T explains the purpose of the lesson

Ss call out ("brainstorm") suggestions for the topic. T notes ideas.

- V. Resources/Materials include the instructional materials and media used by the teacher and/or students to complete each instructional routine/task.

Examples: Overhead (p. 134.)

Heuristics/Models – e.g. chart showing the organization of a paragraph

Mind Maps/Idea and Vocabulary Trees/ Clustering Diagrams. Visuals/

Cartoons/Pictures/Video

FIGURE 17: Classroom Observation Chart

Notes												
Other												
Resources/Materials												
Interaction												
Verbal Exchange												
Objective												
Instructional Routine/ Task												
Time												

H. Self-Efficacy Questionnaire about Confidence in Using Technology and Computers

Student Questionnaire about Confidence in Using Technology and Computers

Student Pseudonym:

Date:

Participant Number:

Site:

Circle the number on the scale from 1 to 10 that best describes your level of confidence for using a computer or laptop for each of the activities below.

0 = Not at All Confident 10 = Very Confident

Example:

I am able to use a computer or laptop to write an email.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Not at All Confident

Very Confident

1. I am able to use a computer or laptop to find an apartment, house, room, or other residence.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Not at All Confident

Very Confident

2. I am able to use a computer or laptop to find information about a school, college, or university program.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Not at All Confident

Very Confident

3. I am able to use a computer or laptop to write a letter.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Not at All Confident

Very Confident

4. I am able to use a computer or laptop to apply for a job or school.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Not at All Confident

Very Confident

5. I am able to use a computer or laptop to study English on my own.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Not at All Confident

Very Confident

6. I am able to use a computer or laptop to write a short report.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Not at All Confident

Very Confident

7. I am able to use a computer or laptop to find out information about my province, city, town, or community.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Not at All Confident

Very Confident

8. I am able to use a computer or laptop to review my English lessons online in the lab or at home.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Not at All Confident

Very Confident

9. I am able to use a computer or laptop to find out about the News.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Not at All Confident

Very Confident

I. Student Focus Group Discussions and Presentations

Focus Group Discussion Activity for the Blended Research LINC Project

- The purpose of this activity is to talk about the effects of the blended learning classes in helping you develop your English communication skills, study and research skills, and settlement in the community.
- We would like you to share examples of your experiences and explain if and how your LINC class and EduLINC played a role. These examples will be added to the research project about blended learning that you have been involved since February 2018. This will help teachers and learners in LINC programs in the future.

What are Focus Groups?

- Focus Groups are a tool for qualitative research. Often, they are interviews with a group of people about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards a product or service. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members. A researcher takes notes or records the vital points.
- In this activity, you are both members of the focus groups and researchers. One of you will take notes, and another member of the group will present the findings back to the class. The notes are collected by the teacher at the end.

How to get started

- Get into groups of 3-4 students
- Note taker:
- Presenter:
- First do the Personal Goals Review activity at the end
- Use the Questions for Focus Group Discussion – Activity Sheets
- If you run out of room write on the back of the page

J. Observations and Collection of Tasks and Artefacts

Questions for Focus Group Discussion – Activity Sheets

Talk about and discuss the ways the blended learning classes here at the school have helped you develop your English skills.

Could you give some examples?

How do the online activities and assignments that you do outside of class using EduLINC help you with the classroom English activities that you do?

Please share some examples of this.

How has your English improved since you began these classes?

Give some examples of times when you feel more confident about communicating in English now – at work; in the community; at school; at your children's school; when talking to friends....

Where do you find you now speak English more easily?

Share a story of one of the group members.

Discuss the skills in your group and share the commonalities among you.

Speaking?

Vocabulary?

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Pronunciation?

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Writing?

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Reading?

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What role did the teacher play in improving your English?
Discuss as a group how your teacher influenced your learning.

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What role did your peers play in improving your English?

Discuss as a group how other students influenced your learning.

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How was the online component beneficial to the face-to-face class?

Discuss if EduLINC and using the Internet helped and how it did.

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How do you feel now when speaking with people in English as compared to before you started this class/these classes?

Explain why if you feel differently? In what ways has this class helped you?

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What additions to this LINC program would help you move towards your goals?

Use the information you wrote down about your goals to discuss in your group.

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Personal goals review activity

Write a short answer for each question to be ready to discuss in your group.

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What are your settlement goals now?

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What are your plans for work?

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What are your goals or plans for study?

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What would you like to achieve in the next year or two?

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How has the blended learning program helped you move forward towards these goals? In what ways?

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Learner Conferences – Self Reflection

Next week, you are going to attend your learner conference. You are going to meet with your teacher to discuss your progress. During the conference, you will share with the teacher your evaluation of the progress you have made while in this class. The teacher will share with you her evaluation of your progress, both orally and in writing. Write your self-evaluation/reflection in the “My Working Space” section, in the Reflections part of your wiki (click on your name/wiki to open it; then click on Reflections and Edit; date and write your reflection; don’t forget to click Save when you are done).

Start by thinking where you were when you started in this class and where you are now. Reflect on your attitude towards learning, the development of your skills as an independent learner, completion of assigned activities in class and online, progress in each skill, cooperation with classmates and teacher, effort and initiative to learn and practice English outside of school, and any other factors that contribute to the development of language skills.

Which skills do you think you have made most progress in? Also, what can you do to continue developing your skills? Give some examples, such as, “I am a better listener when I communicate with people; I use active listening strategies”, “I have a larger vocabulary and I use vocabulary tools such as Quizlet”, or “I learned how to use models when I write; I am constantly using the writing models in Edulinc Reference Resources to help myself improve my writing”.

I am looking forward to reading your reflections!

Note: Refer to the CLB 6 Can Do Statements in the EduLINC PBLA section; they can help you reflect on and write about your progress.

Sailor moon

When I started the class in January, I couldn't understand what the teacher was saying. Especially when she speaks fast. Today I can understand the teacher better. I believe my listening skill and understanding skill is improved. Also in the class I can small talk with my classmates a lot. It's very nice to me because I really like to talk with people but I need think about what I want to saying and what words should I use now. It mean is still I need practice conversation. My classmates are stop to listen for me or they will give some hints but outside of school is not happen. So I need more fast think and response.

About Reading skill, before I haven't done any account set up by myself. I was very afraid of mistakes but naw I could read and how to follow instructions. Even if I couldn't get I can guess. For example use my phone by English, bank deposit by my phone, compass card changed by myself but still I need learn (remember) many vocabulary because when I read three or more sentences I found some difficult words for me and I will stop to think or I have to search the word. So it's takes time and very hard and stressful for me.

Then also I need to continue working on my spelling. When I write something by handwriting I always worry about spelling but I am now able to write long sentences like this reflection.

Batgirl

I had been in this class since last June, and I am grad that I have established the foundation of my education in Canada. It is certain that I have moved a big step, and It includes two parts, personal ability and language ability.

First of all, I gained myself by studying diverse topics which involved family, employment, education, finance, health, law, and so on. When I studied these field, I acquire information which is different from my first country. At the same time, it helped me how to be a good person. I learned how to behave in a appropriate way. So, I think I have a good attitude to learn English. I put the resource I learned in the real situation. For example, looking for work session in the Edulinc, I really use it to identify my career and understand what do I need to improve in the future.

Second, I would like to talk about my English skills. The most process is writing. In the beginning of the year, my writing is the worst part. In order to improve this capacity, I did the weekly activities conscientiously. Now I am good at writing different purposes of emails.

As far as speaking skills are concerned, it is the one that I don't have any big change, but now I am ready to have routine social conversations. Sometimes I look for opportunities to practice my speaking, for example, I called customer service. In that case, it is usually tough for me to understand, but after several time, I found I started to get used to do it. I sound more fluent. For listening, I can confidently say I become a active listener. The part that can improve my listening is to listen more news or ted talk. Last, it is about reading. There is nothing special because I don't improve too much. I think I will try to find out my style to learn vocabulary. It will help me to read professional articles.

Third, comparing with the CELPIP test which I did the first time, I found that I felt more familiar when I did the listening and writing tasks. Reading and speaking are still the part that challenge me. It is a very good experience.

To sum up, I have made a big process to settle in Canada, but I still need to continue working on speaking and vocabulary.

Kelly

My progress through the school,

Speaking: I learn a lot about speaking. First I wont tell that I use to speak before but isn't was good way. Now I understand watch mean small talk and how is important in same situations. I communicate with more confidence in everyday situations and I'm no longer shy also I know to make and respond to suggestions or arrangements for an event, excuses or apologies in variety of situations. I need to continue developing on my grammar and pronunciation and I need to use more eye contact and body language.

Listening: I recognize formal and casual style; I can identify situation and relationship between speaker, also I can understand presentations from guest speaker or instructional video, takes notes, summarize and retell. I understand the importance of cultural knowledge, but I need constantly learn about Canadian customs and norms.

Reading: I can understand social messages, such as apologies and cancellations of arrangements also I can identify purpose & audience. I sometimes guess the meaning of unknown vocabulary from context, without a dictionary. I need increase my vocabulary and a lot help me different programs like Quizlet and Wordsift.

Writing: I can write informal messages for everyday social purposes, such as expressing congratulations, thanks, apologies, or offering assistance. I can write thoughtful forum posts; I review & edit my writing before I post, I can write wiki and blog entries....I need to continue working on my spelling and punctuation are adequate.

Papula

From the beginning till now I have so many improvements in my English. When I started I had some weakness point and it needs to develop. I improved most in some skill than other. I will explain several changes since I attend this class. In speaking section, I feel progress a lot especially small talk I can respond to it more easily and I can speak almost normal speed. Then, I can keep a conversation going. I can be an active listener, I recommend and support speaker in listening. My Writing skill also improved. I can take notes and reduce written or oral information to the important point with accurate details. I need to develop my vocabulary and my spelling. I need to continue working on my reading skill and effort to follow instructions and I need to identify main ideas and purpose & audience. I have started to read a book to improve these skill that I mentioned.

Donya

Reflection—The first term study in LINC6 full-time class

Having been in [a] blended program for one term study, I think I have some improvement in my English.

First, the biggest improvement is my speaking. In the past, I was so shy to open my mouth to talk with others due to my lack of self-confidence. But when I join the class, we practise small talk every day. It really helps me to getting more confident. I'm starting to try to find people to talk about a little bit when I took my children to play in the park. When I didn't understand what they said, I would ask them. When I read stories to my children, I tried to notice my tone of voice and volume familiar to Canadian. When I did presentation in the class, I felt more confident than before. But I'm developing getting more vocabularies to make my speaking more fluently and smoothly.

Second, I have started to practise my listening more and more. Such as listen to radio in English, or watch English cartoons with my kids. Sometimes, when I was in the middle of preparing super in the kitchen, I realized that why not turned on the radio to listen to the English channel, or turned on the TV but not in Chinese, just making some English noise whether I understood or not.

Above these are some changes what I found about me.

Snow White

Before attending learner conference, I thought about my progress of learning in English and reviewed reflects that I wrote last year. I'd like to share something that I realized in my daily life.

Frist, In speaking, It has been changed a lot. I can use and repond to small talk. I live in condo, I had small talk everyday in elveator before I always did answer that also difficult to me because I have to figure out what they are talking to me in a second. But these days, I answer and add some comment. Also sometimes, I remember puppy's name and call the name again. I think, when I speak with Candadian I can more relax than before. Of cause it is still not easy though. In

speaking, I knew my problem so I'm going to take a more risk when I speak. this was my first goal in speaking but still I need to keep working on it. Second, in listening, I can be an active listener, I can encourage & support speaker, I can ask relevant questions. After this class, I understood the importance of cultural knowledge. Honestly, I'm still struggle with listening. Starting of this class, all I worried was writing but listening is more difficult now to me. I can understand in the class but out of class people speak very fast so I can't catch between linked words and reduced words. I think, I need to spend time on listening and should find out good way to improve my listening.

Third, in reading, I can retell or summarize that we did many times in the class so I think I used to it. but still I need to keep working on paraphrasing skills. Lastly, In writing, this part I really focus on studying this class. I never took a writing class before. Only in grammar class, they taught how to write but they didn't teach about basic writing rules or structures so I was having difficult time in writing. I spent a lot of time on one paragraph. But these day, I think, I'm developing writing an e-mail, message, paragraph, story with good structures. Also, beginning of this class, I used to write with papers and a pen but, I'm typing on computer now.

In conclusion, I think, my progress of learning is going well. What best this class was I got confident by myself. After had a daughter, I always worried about my English and I was afraid of she realizes mother has trouble in English. These day, I felt I'm ok and I will be ok in English it doesn't matter still have some mistakes. I'm going to study hard. Thank you [Andrada].

Rainbow 2

According I have been in school short time, I was thinking how did I improve my English language skills. of course I've developed my vocabularies and phrases that helped me to have a better conversation and writing during the last couple months. But still needs to continue working on them. In comparing before I attend to this class, now I can do small talk fluently (that I really like it) and also in normal speed. So I'm trying and push myself to make a small talk with my customers (in my work place) as a practice.

Since I came to this class I participate in some workshop events that organized by stuff in school which helped me to improve my skills such as listening and writing. On the other hand I've learn a lot about Canadians cultures and customs .that was very useful to have a better relationships so I have started to use gestures , eye contact and body language in my conversations and how to interrupt politely when needed that I never knew that before , Or even how to ask question or make a compliment .Therefore I can better transfer my feeling.

I've learned networking and group working. Now I can see how progress do I have in sharing my opinions, ideas and expressions.

By the way I can do my errand by myself, before I asked my friend to talk to some companies behalf of mine due to my lack in language but now I can do it very confidently, such as BC Hydro, Cellphone company , Tax Revenue Canada. Tat it will give me a good feeling. The other thing that I wanted to ad

is my computer skills have improved because before I didn't have knowledge about online English working, but now I can use Edulinc.org and variety of methods.

Daisy

After i have attended this class,i feel more courageous in daily conversations. For example,i can go shopping by myself, reply e-mails from my sons teachers and counselors more easily. However,i can not participate social events, activities in daily life as much as i need;can not initiative to learn and practice English outside;so this class gave me a chance to communicate friends from different cultures face to face. I also know anymore how to prepare a presentation,what it's contents,how the audience can engage in .I have started to use edulinc, written and edited some ideas in forum posts; watched some videos(TED talks, hidden job market..);taken some tests; learned some vocabularies from quizlet or glossary. I can understand what the teacher says in the class better than at the beginning. In conclusion, i've been trying to do my best but I know that need to continue working on to improve my English skills, especially listening and speaking. If i can talk without fear,more listen and more repeat what i hear, it will be better.

early bird

After attending this class I gived small presentation about Traffic Laws in BC. I talked about rules, bans and fines. I am in a multicultural classroom. I know the importance of cultural knowledge; I constantly learn about Canadian customs and norms. I learned new vocabulary tools like Quizlet & Wordsift. I will use these different strategies and tools to increase my vocabulary. I hope I can write self-reflections without using the wrining models in Edulinc and I can reflect on my learning in writing.

Tweets in Twitter class account accessed through an EduLINC block

empowering educators and learners through innovation

We used the Money & Finances resources from [@EnglishOnlineMB](#) /took notes in our Edulinc wiki [@LearnIT2Teach](#) /created [@quizlet](#) study sets/ and, finally, we were ready to share all that useful information and vocabulary - mobile devices preferred [@moodle](#) TY All

CLB 6 Speaking activity checklist and self-assessment/peer evaluation

empowering educators and learners through innovation

CLB 6 - Speaking IV. Sharing information

Task: Your group will share/teach information and new vocabulary from the article each one of you was responsible for. At the end, give feedback to each other by using this rubric.

Self-Assessment	Criteria	Peer Assessment	Comments
1 2 3 4	Overall Effectiveness Able to complete the task well	1 2 3 4	
1 2 3 4	Content Ideas are relevant and clear	1 2 3 4	
1 2 3 4	Organization : introduction, well-developed ideas, conclusion; right length	1 2 3 4	
1 2 3 4	Vocabulary : adequate vocabulary and collocations/expressions for the topic	1 2 3 4	
1 2 3 4	Grammatical structures : good control of basic structures; developing control of more complex structures	1 2 3 4	
1 2 3 4	Speech is quite easy to understand and reasonably fluent good use of sentence stress and intonation pronunciation does not impede understanding few hesitations	1 2 3 4	
1 2 3 4	Body language (eye contact, gestures and posture) is used effectively; appropriate voice volume and speech rate	1 2 3 4	

CLB 6 Listening & Reading Skills II. Comprehending Instructions

SITUATION: CELPIP Test

Before the test, you will be given instructions about test procedure, and you will have to follow them closely.

During the test, you will have to read and follow instructions in order to complete all sections of the test.

TASK: Listen to/read the instructions and follow them.

Check all that apply

- ☐ I listened to the instructions and tried to memorize them/remember sequence
- ☐ I recognized register – formal
- ☐ I responded with actions to directions and instructions
- ☐ I read the instructions carefully to make sure I understood them
- ☐ I reread when necessary
- ☐ I followed the instructions

REFLECTION:

Which instructions were the easiest/the most difficult to understand and follow?

CLB 6 Writing III. Getting Things Done – ES/Document Use

SITUATION: As a participant in a research project, you have been asked to complete a background questionnaire that requires detailed personal information.

TASK/SELF-ASSESSMENT: Complete the questionnaire with all the required information. Use the checklist below to check your work before you submit it:

- ☐ I have provided all the required information
- ☐ I have provided accurate information
- ☐ I have spelled and used punctuation, capitalization, dates and numbers correctly
- ☐ I have answered questions in sentence format where necessary

CLB 6 Writing III. Getting Things Done – Document Use

SITUATION: As a participant in a research project, you have been asked to complete a background questionnaire that requires detailed personal information.

TASK/SELF-ASSESSMENT: Complete the questionnaire with all the required information. Use the checklist below to check your work before you submit it:

- ☐ I have provided all the required information
- ☐ I have provided accurate information
- ☐ I have spelled and used punctuation, capitalization, dates and numbers correctly
- ☐ I have answered questions in sentence format where necessary

CLB 6 – Speaking III. Getting Things Done IV. Sharing Information

SITUATION: You are taking part in a research study and you are being interviewed by a researcher about blended learning.

TASK: Answer the researcher's questions; provide the required information, express opinions and make suggestions when appropriate.

Speaking Criteria	Self Assessment & Comments			
Overall Effectiveness Able to achieve task	1	2	3	4
Content Information is relevant Clarification & confirmation when necessary	1	2	3	4
Vocabulary/expressions are adequate for the topic	1	2	3	4
Grammatical Structures Good control of simple structures with developing control of more complex structures	1	2	3	4
Speech is mostly clear and fluent Pronunciation does not impede understanding Appropriate voice volume and speech rate (with a few hesitations)	1	2	3	4
Level of formality Speech matches level of formality	1	2	3	4

- 1 – Minimally Achieved
2 – Somewhat Achieved
3 – Achieved/Satisfactory completion of the task
4 – Exceeds Expectations.

What I did well:

What I need to improve/Goal Setting:

Choose one thing you are going to focus on and try to improve

1. I am going to work on...

Literacy Innovation Award – Impact Statements

These Impact Statements were written by LINC blended learning students and submitted online as EduLINC assignments. They also counted as PBLA artefacts/assessments. To prepare for this activity, we read the application package (Skill-using activity). Please see below the instructions given to the students and the assessment rubric used:

Literacy Innovation Award – Impact Statement

SITUATION: Our organization is applying for the Literacy Innovation Award. This award recognizes adult-focused programs that make a positive contribution to the lives of the participants as well as the community. We have decided that our Blended Learning Program is a strong candidate, and we are asking you write an impact statement to share your experiences as a participant. The strongest impact statement will be selected and submitted together with the application.

TASK: In paragraph form, write about the impact the blended learning model (F2F and online) has had on you as a participant. Use the questions below to guide your writing:

- What are the highlights of your learning in the blended learning program?
- What essential and digital literacy skills has this program helped you develop?
- How is the blended learning program different and innovative for learning?
What can you do now that you were not able to do before in a traditional class that didn't use technology?
- How does the online and the F2F components support each other?
- How does it help you learn about Canadian culture and your community and be more aware of what's going on and more involved?
- What would you say to an organization that is thinking about adopting this model? What are its main benefits?

You don't have to write about all these points; choose the ones that are most important to you. You can also add other things you consider important.

LENGTH: about 250 words

WRITING ASSESSMENT – ACADEMIC HONESTY: The submission of this assignment confirms that it is entirely the result of my own work.

SUBMISSION: you have the choice of submitting your assignment as an online text or as a file. Also, for bonus points, you can record your impact statement; this is also good practice for your CELPIP test.

Don't forget to click on Submit Assignment when you are done; however, after you submit it, you can't change anything.



The submissions below have not been revised or edited by the teacher in any way; they are entirely the students' work and were completed as part of their online assignments from home.

Tiger:

I am happy to take part to the Blended Learning Program. Because it is a wonderful English learning program, On Monday to Wednesday is on class face to face learning from the teacher and community with the classmates. On thursday we stay at home online to learn. The teacher gives some assignments to guide us learn by ourselves. That's different from the tradition ESL class. You are not just learn in school but also learn anywhere anytime online. As you know now it is a science and technological society, everyone has a cellphone on hand, so we can learn easier in our time. Some ESL students have a job, they have limit time to go to school to learn so that this learning model helps to solve the problem. If you have any problems by online assignement you can sent Email to the teacher or classmate or you can ask when in school. Onlline assignment is also help you learn Canadian Culture and other imformantion for reading the resources that the teacher recommend. That's also a good way to save paper and improve reading skill and wirting skill. The benifit of this program is even after you stop the class, you still can master a skill of self-study. So intatal, I am glad to become a Blended Learning Program participant, I think it helps me learn English and learn more about Canada.

Batgirl:

As a student and an immigrant, I have been in the blend class for almost one year, so I have enriched numerous essential skills not only English but also Canadian culture. Honestly, I strongly love this program, and it is a great innovation in the ESL field.

First of all, this program includes the F2F class and online activities. It looks just like the traditional learning style, so I can get used to it easily. But, at the same time, I can learn how to use digital device because we have online activities. Furthermore, you can choose the transition class to learn basic operation about Moodle, if you are not good at computer. It is a good opportunity for adults learning computer skills. Comparing with the F2F class, I learn more than what I can learn in the traditional class.

Secondly, I love the Edulinc Website because I can find richness information which is so easy to look up. I can find resources about learning English by studing diferent topices, and I can find about different cultural things because I live in the multicultural country. To get those resources, traditionally, we have a lot of paper materials, but now I just click the link to get the information. It does help to reduce the paper usage. Even we have to use paper in the class, we are also taught to recycle the paper. So it is a kind of sustainable development.

Thirdly, I can learn form each other by sharing our writing assignments online. It is the big different from the F2F class. When I was in F2F class, I can not learn from other classmates' articles. But when I am in the blend class, we have a good place to share our writing. I can read and learn some new vocabulary or idea. This is the main reason why I mentioned it was a great innovation in the beginning.

Finally, as the space is limited, I can not add too much my experiences, but it is a very worth program to participate in.

Finally, I would like to talk about the Edulinc website. There are so many blocks to explore. The twitter block give me a chance to understand how the people and organization connect together in Canada. The typing block helps me to improve my typing speed. These two are very practical. As the space is limited, I can not add too much my experiences, but it is a very good program which is worth participating in.

Sailor moon:

In my opinion, the online and the F2F components is very convenient and perfect learning style in recent years for adults. Especially for me. As reasons for that, the F2F can feel easy to learn because we use to study by that style. Also it can make us confidence, trust teachers and keep study hard. In personality I like communicate with classmates and feeling easy to make new community by the F2F components. Truly I got good new community in my class. Then after we learned Canadian culture, we could practiced each other. For example praise. It was really good practice place because to speak Canadian is very hard to try that you just learned.

Then in recent years, the online learning is necessary to get technology skills. It already can not separate our life. The reason is useful, handy and more. So online class is very convenient for me. I can do any time any where I want. In my class I trying my best but sometimes can not spend a lot of time because of group work or limited time. Personally I like “write my post and reply to at classmate” style online activity because I can see my classmates ideas and I can practice to use their writing style. This is good change that I getting interested in what my classmates writing. It’s not post by somebody. So little by little, I am challenge to improve my reading skill.

Lastly I really like this learning style. Because to learn is not only one way.

Thank you,

Sailor moon

Donya:

How to keep reinventing ourselves while taking care of our families is the biggest challenge. However, Blended Learning Program helps us a lot. After taking part in this program, I felt that it’s fit for me.

In traditional class, we face to face teach and learn in a regular time but didn’t use technology at all. Teachers always stand in front of the class talking by themselves. They control the class and we just follow them to do what they ask. It’s good for auditory learners but not for visual learners and kinesthetic learners.

We can have online class at school or at home. Actually we can have it everywhere. It gives us enormous space and time. As an adult, we must have an ability of independent study. If we want to expand our reading, there are a lot of websites for reading online. If we expect practice our listening, there are various types of listening for us to choose. If we are interested in learning writing, we still can check by ourselves with some technologic tools (such as Microsoft Office Word Document) or send it to the teacher for revision. Even if you hope to practice your oral English, it still has many website for you to

practice. All of these activities you want to do out of the class are up to you. In one word, online study can maximize extending our learning. Therefore, we control ourselves to study more or less.

Blended Learning Program combines traditional class with online class together. It's flexible for me because I have to look after my family. I can't be a full-time student study in school all week long. I use a few days learning in the class, talking with my classmates to practice my oral language and listening. We can bring some questions to the class and discuss together as well. On the other hand, teacher put plenty of information she found and share with us online so that we can use it any time and any places. Participate this program makes me feel free in study. I will maintain adding value to myself and makes me more confident.

Kelly:

I'm so grateful for opportunity to participate in this program and I would like share my opinion from my English classes.

First at all I want to tell that I'm improve my English and also technology skills. Everybody should take this classes to improve themselves with speaking, reading, listening writing, skills and online skills as well. Most important is using technology skills because technology is very important in everyday life for work, searching job, community, social life....Throughout the whole school we are also had the opportunity to learn about Canadian culture but also some other culture. For me it is good choice to have choose a school hours some of them is a full time some of them is a part time. It is difficult to be at school full time with work and kids and all the things that need to be done in one day. But this school program is adapted for everyone. Some of student is parent and idea to have a daycare is a great deal. For me as a parent of small child is almost a gift because I got chance to participate in school. I couldn't do that without daycare and their staff. I'm so proud of them as well.

For me personally I wouldn't change anything in this school program but my suggest for some education school program it will be good that they have something like this program, because this school program is for everybody and without mistake.

Hanako:

The blended learning program is face-to-face and online class, then Link school is adopting that program. I have been learning it since last september at Linc school. I realized again that it is amazing program for everyone.

First, as everyone know face-to-face is that a teacher teaches students English at class. I have learned that how to write paragraph, how to explain direction and so on. Students can learn grammar skills, writing skills, reading skills and listening skills from a teacher. There are various nationality students at class. They have different culture and different language. Every students learn Canadian culture and system such as manner, small talk, RESP and searching job. Also a teacher explains about Canadian, for example, how to get communication, what kind of topic should I avoid. I think the way to understand someone is to not only understand their language, but also their culture. So this is the vital point that I would like to make.

Second, online class is to learn English with technology. In my case, my online day is every Thursday. So, I check Edulinc site, then do assignment. It is good way to learn English, because there are many tools and information for English learner. Moreover, students can contact each other using Message forum teacher as well. Usually, using Edulinc site is for preparation and reviewing. In addition, students can sharing their assignment using forum.

Actually, I still having problems trying to use Edulinc site yet. It might take some time for me. However, using this site is able to improve typing skill and net searching skills. Those are necessary skills in this day and age.

In conclusion, this program is very helpful for English learner especially newcomer. After face-to-face at class, students can review at home as much as they want. Face-to-face and online have each other and support each other.

Jin:

This programs is useful and helpful for me. When I am a newcomer, many people recommend me to go to ESL school to learn English language. I am not only learn English but also build my network in Canada. I like all various types of learning ,such as: online, face to face. Face to face is good for me to community with teacher and classmate. When you find questions or problems ,you can first time to solve it. Teacher can through your communicate and behaviour to know which skills you need to enhance. So they can give you positive guidelines. Also face to face is good for us to build network. In school time, talking with classmates is good ways get new social information. I am a mother. Through communication, we share our parenting experiences, which activities they can learn, where place we can go to register, where and when have a good event for kids etc. So I like face to face learning. Another learning type is online. I also like it. School submit many useful information online. Especially EDULINC website, we can practice listening, speaking, writing and reading. According to the website, we can search information, read news or use watch videos. It's very useful and practical for me. Finally, thanks for this program. I learn and understand more Canada culture. It made me have enough courage to adapt the new life. You know ,live and adapt a new environment isn't easy.

Snow White:

The blended learning program helped me to obtain and learn more information about Canadian culture, and also helped to push myself to adapted because it gave me an information about Canadian culture and how the Canadian people thinking about ways of communication that they like. Thus, I'm going to discuss some of the good points that I have really learned in this program.

Firstly, the communication way of Canadian culture is very different than my culture. Then, the Canadian culture, been an active listener is a part of daily speech. Also, this program helped me to get information about a way to become an active listener by using body language, ask question, confirmation and clarification.... etc. The knowledge of these point and using them it makes you thinking like the Canadian people because It is the way to shows that you are paying attention to whom speak and it makes people be happy when they

have conversations with you. The second benefit that I have explored it is a way of apologies while facing a problem. There is a time for both of formal and informal way of apology depend on whom send an email. Then, I have learned about roles of being an apology. It has to address the problem and accept responsibility and you need to offer a solution that fixes a problem. Finally, the smalltalk is the most useful part that I have learnt in this program. It is a social communication that will happen with people who usually don't know them. It is an informal conversation. It is a general question because the Canadian people's don't like ask them about private questions.

Overall, the blended learning program has many of benefits, especially for newcomers. Personally, I learnt so many information about living in Canada and the Canadian culture. Of course, not only I obtain information about that point that I mentioned above but also I learned about the Canadian system for transportation, banking, parenting, marriage and friendship. There is a huge difference between my first culture and the Canadian culture.

Cinderela:

First of all it is important to emphasize that the success of any course, whether it's in a classroom or blended depends on a number of factors and in my opinion the organization and dedication of the professionals involved is actually what makes the difference. In this respect, I can say that our school is fully prepared!

The blended course was a great surprise to me. We have learned to use a variety of online tools (which I didn't know before) that provide us with faster and more dynamic learning. However, when participating in a blended course, the student must have discipline and be organized because it is important to meet deadlines, delivering the activities on the date established by the teacher.

Nowadays, I believe that technology is present in our lives at all times and online learning should also be part of this new era, but direct contact with colleagues and teachers is key.

I feel privileged to be part of this course that gives me not only the knowledge of the English language but also the insertion in the Canadian culture of which we became part in the moment we chose Canada as our new home. It's my wish that more and more people will have access to this incredible educational system.

Rainbow2:

Blended learning is an education program that is combination of online education working and participate in the classroom . It requires the physical presence of both teacher and students plus online working methods.

In my opinion blended learning is more effective than only face-to-face or online classes. The online and face-to-face modes together will be success in improving learning English, the online working has created an opportunity for a flexible learning environment and the other hand classroom helps to improve your communication with classmates and help to get a proper relationship and

familiar with Canadian culture that is very good networking for newcomers ,
Actually blender expand the networking and brain storm .It means everyone
shares this or her ideas and experience that helps to have a better life style .

There are some benefits:Blended learning offers flexibility in terms of
availability,Anytime, anywhere.also improve the quality of teaching and
learning

-efficiently and quickly training

-time and money saving

-Effective Communication and Finally “Working Groups” Work

Soda:

I am happy to heard that our school is applying for the Literacy Innovation
Award and our school is a strong candidate of the Literacy Innovation Award.
As a participant of our organization, I am so proud of you. Now I would like to
share some experiences to you as a participant.

As a student in this program, I think that highlights of my learning are
learning English, Canadian culture and anything we need to know and learn
how to build a new life here as a newcomer. In our school, there are two types
of teaching style.

The first one is face to face type, it means we study in the class with our
teacher. it is very traditional teaching style. Our school helped us develop our
essential and digital literacy skills. For example, taught us how to improve our
English skills, how to open an account in the bank, created some community
activities for us and how to job search through online. I was appreciated that
our teacher always helping us to hold a lot of useful presentations for us. For
example, parenting skill as a parent, how to build your credit report and
how and where can find a family doctor. Maybe for peoples who are living
here longer that it may be very easier for them. But for newcomers, It is very
important and useful information. It helped us quickly to create and get used
to live here.

The second one type of teaching style is study online. In our school, we had
our own online study resources such as an study online website. There are
some online course after you get to be linc 5 or high level student. We need
to do some homework online. It helped us to improve us typing skill. In an
English country, it is very important and essential ability as using a computer
to work. This is not able to do before in a traditional class. Now it is digital
technology age, there are many resources online. We can found more resources
to review by online after study in the class. And study online also helping us to
improve our time management and self-study skills. As an Canadian, I think
that may be a necessary ability of your career life.

In the end, I wish that our school will win for the Literacy Innovation Award.

Arli:

I really appreciate to involve in Literacy Innovation Award program. I think It
is very convenient and useful for very adult learner.

Innovative for learning is used technology to support your learning. We can search many resources about speaking/listening, writing and grammar skill in Reference Resources. We don't need looking for it from somewhere else. That is very convenient for us. We can use Quizlet to record new vocabulary and knowledge. And we can check it anywhere, anytime. We can do home work online. And you can get your teacher reply very soon. If your typing is not good. You can learn how to typing in Typing Practice until you proficient.

We can interact in EduLinc. If you have some information that you want to sharing. You can through Tweets to tell everyone. Or you can choose Comments to leave your message. Of course, you may direct connect your teacher. When you have some questions or absent.

In my opinion, the most different with traditional class is you can use it and without time and local limit. As adult learner, maybe they have many other things to do. For example, work, care children or other... This innovative brought them convenience. they can organize their time to use it.

CLB 6 – Writing III. Getting Things Done & IV. Sharing Information

This rubric will be used to assess your writing.

Criteria	Not really	Developing	Yes	Comments
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Holistic Criteria

Overall Effectiveness* Able to achieve task				
---	--	--	--	--

Analytic Criteria

Content* Main ideas clearly expressed and supported with relevant details				
Organization* Adequate paragraph structure; introduction, development and conclusion are present Appropriate connective words and phrases				
Vocabulary* Adequate vocabulary and collocations for the topic				
Grammatical structures* Good control of basic structures; developing control of complex structures Sentence Variety				
Impact Statement Recording (bonus) Easy to understand Sounds natural (not read out loud) Speech rate is close to normal				

SUCCESS: Yes in all marked with *

K. Research Consent Form

[insert date]

Dear LINC student, LINC teacher, or other LINC staff member

We are writing to ask you to participate in a research study called Researching the Effects of the Blended Learning Approach in LINC that I would like to conduct in the context of the LINC program that you are currently participating in or working with here.

We are conducting this study for the LearnIT2teach Project with New Media Language Training, which is a non-profit organization that develops training and content for Canada Immigration (IRCC), specifically the online courseware and resources for LINC programs.

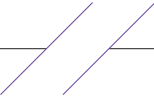
The purpose of the study is to investigate and describe the effects of the blended learning approach for: a) changes in the English language skills of LINC students; b) for students' participation and retention in LINC; and, c) for developing self-efficacy or confidence for using technology to learn English and for other settlement purposes. The blended learning approach in LINC is the way in which a teacher uses online materials and resources combined with in-class instruction to teach in the LINC classroom.

Your participation in this research project would involve:

- (f) completion of a background questionnaire about your education, languages you speak and write, and other background information;
- (g) two interviews about the effects of the blended learning approach for language learning/teaching – one in [insert date] and one in [insert date];
- (h) observation of 1-2 class sessions in which the blended learning approach is used – between [insert date] and [insert date];
- (i) follow up interviews with 5 – 8 of the LINC students individually or in a small group about the blended learning activities during those observed classes; and,
- (j) for LINC students who participate, a short questionnaire and survey in which you report or rate your self-efficacy (confidence) for using technology to learn English and for other purposes such as looking for information about housing.
- (k) for students and instructor(s) – presentation and discussion of one or two portfolio-based tasks/activities that have been included in the portfolio-based language assessment portfolios by 5 – 8 students (to be discussed).
- (l) two CELPIP tests by students – one in [insert date] and one in [insert date] to assess language gains.

CELPIP is the Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program, a standardized language proficiency test which uses the English variety as spoken in Canada. It is used for providing proof of English language proficiency for immigration to Canada, Canadian citizenship, employment, admission to various post-secondary programs, or for membership to various professional associations. CELPIP is rated according to the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB). The CELPIP will be administered with each learner who participates once at the beginning of the project and at the conclusion of the project. A sample practice test will be provided for students to practice in class before taking the test.





In total, the questionnaire and interviews will take approximately two hours maximum; and the other tasks and activities will be completed during regular class time.

All of the questionnaires, interviews, activities and data from the project will be confidential.

We will ask you to choose a pseudonym (not your real name) that will be used to conceal your identity. Data will be stored securely, and no information will be given to teachers, administrators, students, colleagues or others about your data or participation.

Participation in the research is voluntary and optional. You should not feel any stress or risk due to this research. You will be able to withdraw from the study at any time if you wish.

If you do have any questions or concerns about the research, please contact us at email: [\[insert email address\]](#).

If you ever feel there is reason to question the security of the information and data that you provide, please contact [\[insert name and position\]](#). [\[Insert name\]](#) may be reached at:

Phone: [\[insert phone number\]](#)

Email: [\[insert email address\]](#)

We hope to include 15 – 25 student participants in this study in order to get a view of the blended learning approach in LINC in its natural setting and use.

We can offer to share with you the findings of the research once the report is approved and accepted. The LINC co-ordinator at [\[insert name\]](#) will receive a paper copy of the research report if you would like to read about the findings. The report will also be posted on the LearnIT2teach website about one year after the conclusion of the research, that is by [\[insert date\]](#).

If you have any questions about this research project, we will be happy to answer them. We may be reached at [\[insert email address\]](#) or [\[insert phone number\]](#). [\[Insert name\]](#) will also visit your class in person in to talk with you about this research project and to invite you to participate.

If you agree to participate in this research, please keep this letter for future reference. Detach, sign and date the section below and return it to me when you meet me.

Thank you very much for your interest and assistance.

Consent

I have read the letter from [\[insert names\]](#), [\[insert date\]](#).

☐ I agree to participate in this research study.

☐ I do not agree to participate in this research study.

[Please check one of the above].

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

L. CELPIP Scores Release Form

I (print name clearly) _____
give my consent for the test results from the CELPIP testing that I did during the Blended Learning Research Project to be provided by CELPIP/Paragon Testing to the principal researcher [insert name] and lead associate researcher [insert name] for purposes of compiling data and writing reports on the project.

I understand that my scores/results are to be confidential; and that only my pseudonym will be used in any report.
I will not be identified.

There is to be no discussion of my CELPIP test results with any instructor or program.
All tests are to be reported anonymously and results are confidential.

Name (print name clearly): _____

Pseudonym for the Research (*name used in research*) (print clearly): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

M. Focus Group Consent Form

I (print name clearly) ____ give my consent for my participation in the Focus Group Discussion Activity for the Blended Learning Research Project and for it to be video and/or audio recorded.

I understand that this video/audio recording (or a part thereof) may be used in future presentations about the Blended Research Project and teaching/learning methods at teaching/learning conferences or as part of the report on this project. I give consent for this use of this video and/or audio recording.

Only my pseudonym used in this research project will be used in the presentation of this material and project report.

Name (print name clearly): _____

Pseudonym for the Research (*name used in research*) (print clearly): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

N. CELPIP Levels and Descriptors and CLB Levels

FIGURE 18: CELPIP Levels and Descriptors (from <https://www.celpip.ca/test-scoring/>)

CELP LEVEL	CELP DESCRIPTOR	CLB LEVEL
12	Advanced proficiency in workplace and community contexts	12
11	Advanced proficiency in workplace and community contexts	11
10	Highly effective proficiency in workplace and community contexts	10
9	Effective proficiency in workplace and community contexts	9
8	Good proficiency in workplace and community contexts	8
7	Adequate proficiency in workplace and community contexts	7
6	Developing proficiency in workplace and community contexts	6
5	Acquiring proficiency in workplace and community contexts	5
4	Adequate proficiency for daily life activities	4
3	Some proficiency in limited contexts	3
M	Minimal proficiency or insufficient information to assess	0, 1, 2
NA	Not Administered: test taker did not receive this test component	/

O. CELPIP Pre/Post Scores

FIGURE 19: CELPIP Pre/Post Scores Averages

Score analysis	Listening pre	Listening post	Reading pre	Reading post	Writing pre	Writing post	Speaking pre	Speaking post
Total scores	274	233	258	273	258	235	237	213
# of participants	45	37	43	39	45	39	45	39
Average/mean	6.089	6.297	6	7	5.733	6.026	5.267	5.462
Difference/ Improvement		0.208		1		0.293		0.195

M scores were disregarded for average/mean scores analysis

FIGURE 20: CELPIP Pre/Post Scores Results

Pseudonym	Listening pre	Listening post	Reading pre	Reading post	Writing pre	Writing post	Speaking pre	Speaking post
veveru	8	8	9	10	6	7	5	6
Mia (1)	8	n/a	10	n/a	6	n/a	6	n/a
JoJo	10	11	8	7	6	6	6	6
Emily (8)	4	n/a	5	n/a	5	n/a	6	n/a
Rodana	6	6	7	7	6	7	5	6
Kelly	5	6	4	5	5	5	5	5
Piglet (2)	6	n/a	7	n/a	6	n/a	5	n/a
Michael	6	6	6	5	6	6	5	5
Ovi	10	8	7	8	7	7	7	6
Anna (Ana) (3)	9	8	11	9	8	7	6	7
Mr.	4	M	M	3	5	4	4	3
Magneto	7	8	8	10	7	7	8	6
Donald	5	4	6	5	6	5	5	5
Hope	7	8	5	7	7	6	5	6
Alin	7	6	8	8	7	7	5	6
Mishka	8	8	9	11	7	7	6	6
Chicken	8	10	9	11	7	7	5	6
Abraham	6	5	5	6	6	6	6	6
Tiger	5	4	5	8	5	6	4	5
Sailor moon	4	3	3	3	5	5	5	4
Donya	4	4	6	6	6	7	6	5
Cinderela	7	5	7	12	6	6	6	6
Batgirl	7	6	7	9	6	7	5	6
Snow White	5	5	4	6	5	6	6	5
Mary	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5
Smai (4)	5	n/a	3	n/a	5	n/a	5	n/a
Dolphin	5	7	7	6	7	6	5	6
Rainbow1	6	7	7	9	5	7	5	5
Lotus	6	6	8	8	7	7	6	5
Hala	6	7	5	9	7	6	5	5
Papula	4	4	M	3	5	5	5	5
Grayson/Jeson	9	10	7	9	7	7	6	6
Raindrop	6	5	7	8	6	6	4	5
Aleesa	8	9	4	10	6	6	5	6
Stella (7)	5	n/a	4	n/a	5	n/a	5	n/a
David	8	6	6	9	6	7	6	6
Sweetcoco25	6	n/a	7	n/a	6	n/a	5	n/a
Juliet	8	8	6	7	6	6	6	5
Toto	6	5	5	6	6	5	5	6
Jessie (6)	9	12	7	9	8	8	8	8
Jin	4	M	3	6	5	5	5	4
Hanako	4	5	4	5	6	7	5	4
Rainbow2	4	4	4	4	5	6	5	6
Soda	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	4

(1) (3) discontinued (2) moved to a part-time class that is not part of the research (4) returned to first country
 (5) (6) discontinued due to family emergencies (7) left because husband got a job out of town
 (8) transferred to a school closer to residence (9) returned to first country because of a family emergency

P. CELPIP Testing to Establish a Baseline Description of Student English Language Proficiency

Below is information received from CELPIP/Paragon Testing about Test Scores and Test-Retest Reliability and General Language Proficiency Tests as Indicators of Achievement.

It is the case that test takers may retake the CELPIP Test only if the test sessions are at least thirty (30) calendar days apart. The CELPIP Office recommends that individuals who retake the test undertake additional language study before their next testing date. This recommendation is based on an understanding that test takers are more likely to show gains in their language proficiency if they actively seek to improve their language skills between test attempts.

Paragon does not monitor the nature of the language study that test takers undertake between test attempts nor the length of time between test attempts. However, we routinely review changes in test taker performance between each subsequent attempt (Paragon Testing Enterprises, forthcoming). Table 1 presents the test-retest correlations (Spearman's r) for the component scores. The correlation figures are moderate to high. This suggests that test takers' scores are relatively stable across their first and final test attempts.

TABLE 1: CELPIP Test-Retest Reliability

	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
First-Last Correlation	0.83	0.82	0.73	0.79

Since CELPIP Test results are reported as bands it is also important to inspect changes in band score between test attempts. Though test takers might receive a slightly different raw score for the various components, changes in the band score awarded are less common. Indeed, 79% of retests result in the same band score between each subsequent attempt. Table 2 presents the mean band score changes for each component when test takers retake the CELPIP Test. It indicates that, on average, test takers' component scores change by 0.15 – 0.50 of a band. Only if a test taker's original score was on the boundary between two bands would this score change result in a different band classification.

TABLE 2: CELPIP Test-Retest Mean Test-Retest Band Score Changes

Component	Mean Band Change	Standard Deviation of Band Changes
Listening	0.50	1.45
Reading	0.45	1.65
Writing	0.15	0.87
Speaking	0.18	0.94

We would like to point out, however, that the length of study required between test attempts remains unresolved. We provide a few references (appended) in case you are interested in the work that has been done (albeit primarily in the testing of English for Academic Purposes). The list includes a study by Green (2005), which focused on the writing component of a proficiency test of English for Academic Purposes, indicates that gains in language proficiency are unlikely to be observed

within a short period – in this case 200 hours of language study. Further, Green (2005, p. 58) concluded that “the interval between tests is a relatively poor predictor of outcomes”. Green (2005) also noted, however, that language learners who begin with low levels of language proficiency are more likely to demonstrate measurable gains than language learners who begin with mid to high levels of language proficiency. Most importantly, Green (2005) cautions against the use of proficiency tests for the evaluation of small increases in language skills. General language proficiency tests are intended to give test takers and score users an estimate of how well an individual can function in a particular language across all domains and contexts. The breadth of this scope means that general language proficiency tests are not designed to be sensitive to small changes in an individual’s language ability in one or more specific areas. In such cases, it is more appropriate to design an achievement test that specifically targets the areas of language that have been taught.

Green, A. (2005). EAP study recommendations and score gains on the IELTS Academic Writing test. *Assessing Writing*, 10(1), 44-60.

Humphreys, P., Haugh, M., Fenton-Smith, B., Lobo, A., Michael, R., & Walkinshaw, I. (2012). *Tracking international students’ English proficiency over the first semester of undergraduate study*. IELTS Research Report Series, no. 1, 2012. Available from: https://www.ielts.org/-/media/research-reports/ielts_online_rr_2012-1.ashx

Knoch, U., Rouhshad, A., Oon, S. P., & Storch, N. (2015). *What happens to ESL students’ writing after three years of study at an English medium university?* *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 28, 39-52.

O’Loughlin, K., & Arkoudis, S. (2009). *Investigating IELTS exit score gains in higher education*. *IELTS Research Reports, Volume 10*. Available from: https://www.ielts.org/-/media/research-reports/ielts_rr_volume10_report3.ashx

Paragon Testing Enterprises. (forthcoming). *CELPiP 2017 Report*. Vancouver, BC: Paragon Testing Enterprises.

Q. Blended Learning Implementation Plan

Andrada's plan for implementing the changes concerning the blended format and the inclusion of Essential Skills in the curriculum.

Blended Format:

LOCATION/WEBSITE: The online component will be hosted at www.edulinc.org. At present, the class is active and all the students have accounts; we have already completed a number of online activities during the first week.

CONTENT: The content will be a blend of teacher-generated activities, LINC Courseware (provided through the Edulinc website, with funding from the government), and activities based on ideas from the LearnIT2teach "Edulinc PBLA Demo" course. All online activities will be directly connected to the in-class ones, and they will serve different purposes, such as to prepare for in class practice, to reinforce what was taught in class, to individualize instruction and help students develop specific skills (resources curated by the teacher), to conduct PBLA assessment.

ACTIVITIES: They will encourage and support autonomous and collaborative learning and will be asynchronous and synchronous (Chat, Skype). I am also planning on creating some instructional videos to apply the principles of the flipped classroom. The Edulinc/Moodle features facilitating these types of activities will be introduced gradually, in class first; the ones requiring more advanced tech skills will be introduced later in the term. At this point, we have already practiced the use of Forums; Messaging will be introduced during the second week, with more to follow.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT: Choice (poll), Questionnaire activities in conjunction with the multitude of tracking tools Moodle has to offer will be used to make the necessary adjustments. As teacher presence is essential for successful online learning, feedback will be provided regularly.

Essential Skills:

RATIONALE: [My] students already possess Essential Skills (Reading, Document Use, Numeracy, Writing, Oral Communication, Working with Others, Thinking, Digital Technology, Continuous Learning) to various degrees. By providing relevant language activities, this class can support them in acquiring the language they need to demonstrate these skills, as well as further develop them. The appropriate workplace and community Essential Skills will be integrated into the course to help students reach their education/employment goals and to participate actively in Canadian community life, too. ES are "enabling/transferable skills" and are already being used in the program. However, by intentionally selecting some and focusing on them, students' chances of effectively using them will increase. Teacher's curriculum decisions will be informed by students' expressed needs and the information available in government documents and reports regarding this issue.

INTEGRATION: Each month, some of the activities/tasks will focus on some specific ES. In addition, when deemed appropriate, out of the 2+ topics for each month, one will address selected ES.

EXAMPLE: January topics: Urban Living and Transportation. ES addressed in January: Oral Communication/Invitations & Suggestions (invite a coworker to a community event); Writing (persuade coworkers to take part in the Commuter Challenge); Digital Technology/Online Learning skills

The resources I will be using most:

- LINC courseware (EduLinc website or Tutela) already designed for ES
- Language for Work: CLB and Essential Skills for ESL Instructors, Centre for Canadian

Language Benchmarks

- Alberta LINC Curriculum, Linking CLB to ES, developed by NorQuest
- The Critical Thinking Consortium website that our school district has subscribed to

R. Blended Learning Lesson Plan

Lesson Plan

Date: April 16, 2018; Classroom Observation – BL Research Study

THEME: Money & Finances

TOPIC: Credit History/Emergency Funds/Online Scams

CLB OUTCOME LEVEL: 6

CLB COMPETENCIES: Speaking I. Interacting with Others & IV. Sharing Information

Listening I. Interacting with Others & IV. Comprehending Information

Writing I. Interacting with Others

Reading I. Interacting with Others III. Getting Things Done

ESSENTIAL SKILLS: Oral Communication/Working with others/Continuous Learning – Knowing how to gain access to a variety of materials, resources and learning opportunities

Outcomes/CLB Competencies targeted

By the end of this lesson, students will recognize, understand, or be able to ...

Speaking

- participate in routine social conversations
 - use and respond to small talk
 - open, maintain and close a conversation (develop closure before exit)
- give detailed information in small groups
 - provide necessary information adequately supported with details
 - use an introduction, development and conclusion
 - show awareness of appropriate body language
 - use a range of vocabulary specific to the topic

Listening

- exhibit active listening behaviour
 - ask questions to get more details, show interest and support speaker
 - confirm and clarify understanding
 - use appropriate body language

Reading

- understand social messages – **Comments** in EduLINC and tweets in Twitter class account (accessed through an EduLINC block) <https://twitter.com/OurLINC6Class?lang=en>
- locate 2 or 3 pieces of information from moderately complex formatted texts (**Reference Resources** section in EduLINC)

Writing

- convey personal messages
 - share weekend highlights with the class through Comments/EduLINC
 - express thanks to provider of online resources through social media medium (Twitter)

Functional Knowledge

- typical discourse format for routine social conversations
- interactional communication skills for providing/sharing information in small group settings

Sociolinguistic Knowledge

culturally appropriate use of body language

Developing the skills

This lesson includes awareness-raising, explicit instruction, authentic input & output and interaction

Shape of the Day – April 16

*displayed on the board and referred to during the lesson

WARM-UP – Small Talk in your group

WEEKEND TALK (Monday routine)

PBLA Skill using

- **Think** about 3 adjectives or expressions to describe your weekend and post them in Comments/EduLINC.
For example, “Same as usual, busy and not very interesting”
“Relaxing, but also interesting; something exciting happened.”
“Relaxing, interesting, exciting.”
- **Read** your classmates’ comments and be ready to find out more about their weekends by asking questions.
- Get ready to interact – **Review** conversation management and active listening skills in Reference Resources/EduLINC
- Whole class Interaction – **Chat** with a few classmates about their weekend; ask them in what way their weekend was “busy”, etc. If you don’t remember exactly what they wrote, you could say, “I’m not sure I remember exactly the words you used. Could you remind me, please?”

ONLINE ASSIGNMENTS – Articles/Notes & Vocabulary/Quizlet

PBLA – Skill development & Skill using

- Online assignments **Reflection & Feedback** – Pair/Group Sharing
- **Share** the answers to these questions:
“What skills did you practice while working on your online assignments? Are any of these transferable skills (skills you can use across different areas of your life)?
<https://www.skillsyouneed.com/general/transferable-skills.html>
“Is any of the information in the articles useful for your everyday life?”
“What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?”
- **Source** “Do I really need an emergency fund?”/“Top-five scams newcomers should be aware of”/“Understanding your credit history” – **Source** of information/articles – access through Twitter in EduLINC; briefly **explore** website
- **Write** a short thank you Twitter message to the organization (initially on sticky notes; later in Twitter), same way we did after the field trip; write one per group)

• **Information sharing/Peer evaluation**

PBLA Peer Assessment

- In groups of three, take turns **teaching** the information from your article and the vocabulary you added to your Quizlet account; you can use your notes (from “My working Space” wiki in EduLINC or on paper)
* Remember to use your active listening skills; make sure you understand the vocabulary too
- Use the peer evaluation form to **give feedback** to your group members
* distribute forms

• **Vocabulary/Quizlet practice**

Find the study sets of the other two group members and take a few minutes to practice them; ask for help, if necessary.

ONLINE ASSIGNMENTS – PBLA Can Do Statements – Speaking

- **Share** with a partner the self-evaluation of your speaking skills – you can refer to the questionnaire in EduLINC
- EduLINC resources for speaking skills – explore and **share** in groups

*Lesson continued in pm (class runs 9:00-3:00)

Assessment

Formative assessment: Peer & Self-assessment

Materials and Resources

Teacher developed materials – Reference Resources in EduLINC (glossary with reference materials created by teacher and links to online resources curated by teacher)

English Online <https://livelearn.ca/article/money-finances/do-i-really-need-an-emergency-fund/>

CLB & Essential Skills Documents

Cart with laptops

Students' personal devices, mostly smart phones – BYOD policy in place in the class

Video recording of lesson/teaching – used personal iPad to record 1/2 of the lesson for later reflection

Post lesson notes:

- students, with two exceptions, used their phones to access the notes they took in their individual wikis in EduLINC and the Quizlet study sets; whenever feasible, many of them prefer to use their mobile devices
- teacher reviewed the video recording and reflected on it

