**SUMMARY OF THE THESIS**

**1. Full name:** Nguyen Thi Thu Hien

**2. Thesis title:** Factors affecting students’ blended learning- A study at a university in Vietnam (Những yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến việc học theo mô hình học tập kết hợp của sinh viên- Nghiên cứu tại một trường đại học ở Việt Nam)

**3. Major:** English teaching methodology

**4. Code:** 9140231.01

**5. Academic institution:** Post-graduate Faculty, University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University.

**6. Summary of the thesis**

This study was conducted with an aim to explore the factors that may contribute to or hinder students’ learning in an English blended course in Vietnamese context so that both the teachers and the policy makers can identify which needs to be improved and which should continue to be promoted.

The research participants of this study are 20 first year students attending the blended course in the first semester of 2019-2020 school year in a state university in Vietnam. Among them, there are 2 males, 18 females. In terms of English proficiency, 8 students are at intermediate level, 12 students are at pre-intermediate level. They have different years of learning English ranging from 7 years to more than 10 years. They come from different language majors and different classes and possess various experiences with blended learning (BL).

Qualitative approach is adopted in this study. To be more specific, among the five qualitative designs suggested by Creswell & Creswell (2018) including narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, case study, and grounded theory, phenomenological research was chosen to be the research design of this study because it is perfectly compatible with the aim of the current study which is targeted at exploring the live experiences of students of the facilitating and hindering factors to their learning in an English blended course that they have just participated. The research instruments include semi-structured interview which was employed as a primary data collection instrument and official documents of the university and the faculty which acted as a means of triangulation and supplement the data from the interviews by providing a rich profile of the study context. The Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System (CABLS) framework suggested by Wang et al. (2015) was employed as the theoretical as well as analytical framework of this study.

The findings were revealed as follows. Concerning the factors that facilitate students’ learning in the current English blended course, data collected from the interviews with students and document analysis indicated that there were 3 main contributing factors including students’ readiness for accommodation of blended learning, teachers’ active engagement in BL environment, and institution’s advocacy of blended learning implementation. Firstly, students’ readiness was manifested through their positive perceptions of BL, their relatively high self-regulatory skills, and their high technological competence. Secondly, teachers’ active engagement was reflected in their effort to create supportive learning discourse to motivate students, encourage collaborative learning, provide regular and elaborate feedback for students, prepare useful and suitable course content for students, and provide enthusiastic learning support to students in terms of both academic and technical support. Thirdly, institution’s advocacy of blended implementation was manifested in positive institutional strategy, positive institutional structure, technical and professional training and support for teachers.

With respect to the factors that hampered student’s learning in this English blended course, three key hindering factors were revealed including students’ insufficient preparation to learn in BL environments, Confucian heritage culture influences, and some institution-related issues. As regards students, many of them did not have proper understanding of BL and most of them had limited experiences with BL. Moreover, their degree of English proficiency was not high enough for them to feel confident to study in this English blended course. Another hindering factor, which had a profound influence on nearly all subsystems of BL environment, was CHC influences. It was imprinted in both students’ learning habit and teachers’ teaching habit. For example, most of the students in this study under CHC influences were under exam pressure, teacher-dependent and had restricted interactions with their teachers and other students. Also due to high-power-distance culture, most of the teachers still maintained teacher-centered pedagogy and played the main role as knowledge transmitter and the decision maker regarding what students learnt and how they learnt. Last but not least, some institution-related issues also negatively affected students’ learning in this blended course to some extent. In the first place, the untapped potentials of blended learning resulting from the shortcomings of the LMS seemed to impede students’ active and collaborative learning in this blended environment. In the second place, teachers’ lackluster role in online component of the English blended course resulted in insufficient feedback and opportunities for students to interact with their teachers and classmates due to time constraint and large class size in offline class. Finally, lack of institutional training and support for students before and during the blended course also led to their unfamiliarity and insufficient preparation for this new learning environment.

Theoretically, this research contributes greatly to the relevant literature in the field of blended learning research in Vietnamese higher education contexts. Vietnam is still at an initial stage of implementation; therefore, there is insufficient body of research concerning blended learning effectiveness and factors affecting its implementation in the context of Vietnam. Methodologically, the contribution of the study lies in the employment of *Complex Adaptive Blended Learning Systems (CABLS)* suggested by Wang et al. (2015) as a theoretical and analytical framework in a qualitative method research to explore the factors affecting students’ learning in a blended environment. Practically, the significance of this study is related to the practical implementations of the findings. The findings of this study are expected to make its contribution to enhance the effectiveness of blended courses in higher education not only in one university but also in other universities in Vietnam and other countries which have similar HE contexts.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Signature of PhD Candidate | Signature of Supervisor 1 | Signature of Supervisor 2 |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Nguyen Thi Thu Hien | Assoc. Prof. Hoang Tuyet Minh | Assoc. Prof. Nguyen Thi Mai Huong |