The Effectiveness of Blended Learning in Improving Students' English Speaking Ability

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Abstract:
The advancement of technology and the age of the industrial revolution 4.0 today have changed the way people learn and acquire information. The availability of internet access and the large use of computers and smartphones in a campus environment can be directed to carry out the learning reform and to obtain the course learning outcomes. Therefore, blended learning as one method of choice was adopted to be implemented to achieve the learning outcomes. The study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of blended learning to improve students' English speaking ability. The participants of the study were 48 fourth-semester students, and the study was conducted for one semester in the English Business Conversation class. The research methods used were quantitative and qualitative. The use of quantitative in this research was to measure students' responses through questionnaire and the qualitative method was to describe what aspects of improving students' English speaking skills. From the data analyzed, the results revealed that blended learning had positive impacts on improving students' accuracy in speaking and students' learning attitude. Accuracy was concerned with comprehension, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Learning attitude was concerned with autonomy and motivation. The effectiveness of blended learning was proven to achieve course learning outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

The world has changed, the human lifestyle has changed, and how people learn and get knowledge and information must have changed as well. The progress of information and communication technology has an important role in the world of education. Education, which is a means to improve the quality of the nation's children, must be carried out as well as possible so that it can produce a quality generation. To achieve the best generation quality, education must be given the best method too. Blended learning, as one learning method, has been used in a lot of universities today, and it has been targeted by Menristekdikti to be implemented in all universities since 2018.

Face to face learning commonly applied by teachers and students is not fully relevant to the development of technology and current conditions. The face to face learning that involves direct interaction between teacher and students has weaknesses in several factors, including the

availability of a certain place and time to carry out the teaching and learning process, and limited teaching material that must be prepared by the teacher. Weaknesses in the face to face learning can be overcome by using e-learning. The teaching learning process, e-learning does not require a certain place and time, the teacher and students can carry out the process of teaching and learning wherever and whenever, and teaching materials can be searched more on the internet. The combination of face to face learning and e-learning is known as Blended Learning.

To make students able to speak English accurately and fluently, it needs a lot of effort from teachers and students. Blended learning was adopted to be used as it can help students to improve their English speaking skills. With face to face learning, teacher educates students in the class, deliver topics, have a discussion, do simulation, and give feedback. With e-learning, students study on their own pace autonomously and independently. Web-based activities facilitate learning for students, they learn topics from enormous sources on the internet where they can learn from English native speakers, such as what they say, how to pronounce words, and obtain other knowledge about English. In e-learning process, students experience a different learning process in which they motivate themselves to promote their language acquisition.

Blended learning is a learning method integrating face to face learning and e-learning. In face to face learning (offline), students and teachers have direct interaction in class, the activities done in class by students and teachers are giving presentations or tutorials, having discussion, doing simulation, giving feedback and assessment. Whereas in e-learning (online), students and teachers have virtual interaction using technology. E-learning creates new learning experiences for students through the use of information and communication technology. With e-learning, a teacher gives tasks to students to find and study materials on his own choice online, use orai application to practice their speaking skills, have an online discussion forum, and make a video recording. The combination of face to face learning and e-learning creates a different atmosphere and new experience of teaching and learning process. As stated by Bersin (2008:56), "the term 'blended' comes from the concept that traditional instructor-led training is being supplemented with other electronic formats". And Watson (2014:4) defines that blended learning includes the integration of face to face and online learning to enhance the classroom experience and extend learning through the innovative use of information and communications technology. And also Banados (2006:534) explains that blended learning is a combination of technology and classroom instruction in a flexible approach to learning that recognizing the benefit of delivering some training and assessment but also uses other models to make up a complete training program which can improve learning outcomes and/or save cost.

Choosing blended learning is very effective to achieve the learning goals as it brings a lot of positive impacts on students. The benefits not only increase students' academic knowledge but also change students' learning attitude. As described by Hasibuan (2006:4) that there are theories of constructive learning for blended learning: (1) active learners; (2) learners construct their knowledge; (3) subjective, dynamic, and expanding; (4) processing and understanding of information; (5) learners have their own learning. And also elaborated by Marsh (2012:4) that blended learning has some strengths, as follows:
1) Provides a more individualized learning experiences
2) Provides more personalized learning support
3) Supports and encourages independent and collaborative learning
4) Increases students engagement in learning
5) Accommodates a variety of learning styles
6) Provides a place to practice the target language beyond the class
7) Provides a less stressful practice environment for the target language
8) Provides flexibility study, anytime or anywhere, to meet learners need
9) Helps students develop valuable and necessary twenty-first-century learning skills.

The effectiveness of blended learning in teaching and learning language skills is described by Albiladi and Alshareef (2019: 334) that blended learning can be used effectively to develop the language competencies of the English language. The reviewed studies indicated that language teachers could utilize blended learning as a teaching model to develop various skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and vocabulary knowledge.

Types of Courses

Proportion of Content	Type of Course	Typical of Description
44%	Face to Face Learning	Course delivered in class: ▪ Tutorial ▪ Presentation ▪ Simulation ▪ Group discussion ▪ Giving feedback
44%	E-learning	Course with web-based technology: Synchronous: online discussion forum Asynchronous: ▪ Search and study materials online ▪ Record videos ▪ Upload videos on YouTube ▪ Practice speaking with *orai application* ▪ Share score and feedback from orai *application* to teacher's email address
12%	Evaluation	▪ Online quiz ▪ Mid-term exam ▪ Final exam

METHOD

The methods used in this study were qualitative and qualitative methods. The data are descriptive, and they are analysed through:

1. Case study research: The data are analysed based on similar study case research and reliable documents, such as journals, articles, books.
2. Record keeping: The data are analysed based on students' tasks, such as video recording, evaluation of speaking simulation, recorded script of *orai* application, and final scoring.
3. Process of observation: The data are analysed based on subjective methodologies to gather systematic information or data by using sight, feeling, and hearing.
4. Questionnaires: The data are taken from students' responses to 8 questions, then the data are analysed and finally described.

The Research Question
1. What is the effectiveness of blended learning in improving students' English speaking ability?
2. What aspects of speaking skills are improved by implementing blended learning?

The- of data were taken Polytechnic of LPKIA Bandung, the students of Business Administration Program, fourth-semester students, and in Business English Conversation 2 class. The number of samples are 48 students.

Students' Responses on their Speaking Improvement

NO.	Questions	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Partly Agreed	Disagreed
1.	Blended learning improved students' comprehension on the topics given	15	25	8	0
2.	Blended learning improved students' vocabulary knowledge.	14	29	5	0
3.	Blended learning improved students' pronunciation.	5	27	16	0

4.	Blended learning improved students' grammar.	12	24	11	1
5.	Blended learning improved students' comprehension in conversation order (opening-content-closing).	14	28	6	0
6.	Blended learning improved students' comprehension of formal and informal expressions.	7	30	10	1
7.	Blended learning made students more autonomous in the study.	13	30	5	0
8.	Blended learning motivated students to study.	12	29	6	1

Findings and Discussion

From the analyses done, students had a positive perception towards the implementation of blended learning in English speaking class. Students realized and admitted that blended learning brought benefits and improvement in several aspects. According to the survey, students responded that blended learning had improved six aspects of students' speaking skills:
1) Comprehension of materials, from the survey done, the result showed that 40 out of 48 (83%) students strongly agreed and agreed that blended learning had improved their comprehension on the materials given. With blended learning, the materials were delivered in two methods of learning. Some materials were delivered in face to face learning, and the others in e-learning. In face to face learning, materials were presented by a teacher with some tools, such as a computer, white-board, handouts. In e-learning, materials were searched and studied online, students maximized their effort to comprehend the materials from gigantic online sources.
2) Vocabulary building, from the survey done the result showed that 43 out of 48 (89%) students strongly agreed and agreed that blended learning had improved their vocabulary building. With blended learning, students increased their collection of words in face to face learning. The teacher provided a number of words that students had to memorize. In e-learning, students enriched their vocabulary with a lot of sources they chose.
3) Pronunciation, from the survey done the result showed that 32 out of 48 (67%) students strongly agreed and agreed that blended learning had improved their pronunciation. With blended learning, students improved their pronunciation with the teacher in face to face learning, the teacher corrected the students' pronunciation. Whereas in e-learning students improved it by listening and using orai application provided on the internet. This application is very useful to improve students' speaking skills, and it also had some features like instant score and feedback. Using this application students knew their strengths and weaknesses in speaking skills, especially pronunciation.
4) Grammar use in conversation, from the survey done the result showed that 36 out of 48 (75%) students strongly agreed and agreed that blended learning had improved their comprehension of grammar use in conversation. In face to face, the teacher gave a sample of conversation and explained it, and in e-learning, students understood from what they listened to the source they searched and chose.
5) Order of conversation (opening-content-closing), from the survey done the result showed that 42 out of 48 (88%) students strongly agreed and agreed that blended learning had improved their comprehension on the order of conversation. Based on the conversation samples given by the teacher, students understood the order of conversation, and in e-learning, students followed how the order of conversation done by the native speakers.
6) Formal and informal expression in conversation, from survey done the result showed that 37 out of 48 (77%) students strongly agreed and agreed that blended learning had improved their comprehension on the use of formal and informal expression in conversation. In face

to face learning, students learned from teacher's explanation and examples given. In e-learning, students learned from chosen sources on internet.

Using blended learning in teaching and learning also improved students' learning attitude. From the survey, students responded positively that blended learning improved 2 aspects of learning attitude:

7) Learning autonomy, from survey done the result showed that 43 out of 48 (90%) students strongly agreed and agreed that blended learning had changed their learning attitude to be more autonomous and independent. With e-learning, learning process became student centred not teacher centred. Students searched and studied autonomously and independently, they managed their time and place to study without teacher.

8) Learning motivation, from survey done the result showed that 41 out of 48 (85%) students strongly agreed and agreed that blended learning had motivated them more to study. Students encouraged themselves to study with teacher or without teacher.

CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of blended learning in English speaking class offered positive impacts for students' knowledge and learning experiences. The combination of face to face learning and e-learning had achieved the course outcomes. In face to face to face learning, students had full interaction with teacher and peers in class where they had discussion about the topics and sharing difficulties, simulation with the feedback, and evaluation. In e-learning, students used internet based technology to learn with flexible time and place to find and study the own choice of materials, practice speaking using orai application until they satisfied with the result, record a video of their conversation and upload it on YouTube. With those platforms of study, blended learning was one of best alternative methods which was affective to make students improve their speaking ability.

From the results of findings and discussion described above. It can be stated that the blended learning was effective to improve English speaking ability and learning attitude of fourth semester students at Polytechnic LPKIA. The effectiveness of blended learning was showed with the data which were analyzed. The data revealed that blended learning improved several aspects of students' speaking skills, such as students understood what they had to say in conversations on certain topics, enriched their vocabulary, pronounced words correctly, and understood grammar use in their conversation. Blended learning also created new learning experiences for students, such as promoting self-autonomy learning, maximizing interaction with the content, and providing authentic content material and informational sources.

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