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Title

**Developing EFL Learners' Speaking Skill via Blended Learning during
the Covid-19 Pandemic**

**The Case of First Year Students of English at Mohammed Khider
University, Biskra**

Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages as Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Sciences of Language.

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Declaration

I, DEHINA Aouatef Nihal do hereby declare that this submitted work is my original work and has not previously been submitted for any institution or university for a degree. I also declare that a list of references is provided forward indicating all the sources of the cited and quoted information. This work was certified and completed at Mohammed KHEIDER University of Biskra.

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Dedication

I wholehearted my dissertation to:

Myself that stumbled, fell, cried and face a lot of obstacles in completing her dissertation then finally got up and she is now writing these lines with love and gratitude.

My hero father, for his endless great support and encouragement and for being with in all my may.

To the source of continuous care, my lovely mother.

To my sisters Abir and Maram, I am really grateful to you, you have been my soul mates.

To my brothers Omar, Ala, and Islam

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To my whole family and friends thank you for being a good part in my life.

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Abstract

During the covid-19 pandemic, many universities adopted blended learning that combines two different approaches which are face-to-face learning and online learning. Therefore, the present study seeks to show how can 1st year LMD students of English at Mohammed Khider University of Biskra, enhance their speaking skill through blended learning which is considered as a new way of learning. It aims to present a way that may push the EFL students to be more competent and skilled in their speaking. For that reason, we have used mixed method based on using three data gathering tools, a questionnaire administered to sixteen first-year EFL students, a classroom observation in a face-to-face class and in a blended class as well, and an interview with five oral expression teachers who have used this system, we hypothesize the following: blended learning aids students to know more about the given topic before their speaking performance so that they will be more active and competent in the speaking session and students' speaking skill will be enhanced during the blended learning system. By using the previous tools, results show that the students speaking skill have been enhanced and they become more active inside their classroom. Furthermore, they become more competent and had extra information during their presentation. Finally, blended learning used as an alternative system to continue the learning program during the covid-19 with sustaining the student's progress in their study.

Key words: blended learning, first-year EFL students, Speaking skill, Covid-19.

List of Abbreviation and Acronyms

1st year: First-year

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

LMD: License, Master, Doctorate

Moodle: Modular Object Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment

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General Introduction

Introduction

English language students take various speaking activities inside their classroom. They are required to engage in face-to-face, individual, and collaborative speaking activities in the class such as debates, oral presentations, conducting interviews, and role-playing by presenting it in front of the whole class. Due to COVID-19, which appeared in March 2019, the world shifted to a new way of learning which is blended learning. It is a method that integrates traditional learning with online equipment because of the need to continue the teaching-learning process during such a period. Besides, it aids EFL students to enhance their speaking skill and to be more competent in their oral performance.

In a normal situation, the campus is the best-followed tool for the teaching and learning process. The current study was inspired by students' struggling to improve their speaking skill. As an alternative step, universities has adopted the blended learning approach as an alternative way to the traditional face-to-face approach. Therefore, students at Mohammed Khider of Biskra relied on several online platforms such as email and Moodle platform to develop their performance in the oral expression module in particular.

Since enhancing the speaking skill requires further practice, this study seeks to discover the most effective activities to develop the speaking skill. It also aims to explore the appropriate way to engage students in a blended classroom and enhance their speaking performance.

1. Statement of the Problem

The covid-19 pandemic has not only caused health problems but also obstacles in the educational process. The current study is inspired by students' struggle to improve their speaking skill during the present pandemic. First-year EFL learners at Mohammed khider

University of Biskra have faced a lack in practicing the language and fewer opportunities to enhance their speaking skill. Therefore, in this research, it is supposed to find a method to engage EFL students to communicate effectively. The present research focuses on establishing a blended classroom to enhance EFL first-year students' speaking ability. Besides, we aim to demonstrate how effective is blended learning to first-year students in their oral session module.

2. Research Questions.

To reach the appropriate method to enhance EFL learners' speaking skill during the covid-19; we gave first-year EFL learners at Mohammed Khider University the chance to be engaged in a blended classroom, which is based on online and face-to-face learning. The online platform and activities will be used to facilitate the communication between the students and their teachers, which leads to enhance the student's oral proficiency level. To conduct this topic we will ask the following questions:

- * What are the main changes in practicing the speaking skill during the blended learning approach?
- * How does the blended learning influence the way of developing the speaking skill of EFL learners?
- * Does blended learning coincide or diverge with the development of the students' speaking skill?

We have hypothesized the following hypothesis,

- Students' speaking skill will be enhanced during their blended learning.
- Blended learning aids students to know more about the given topic before their performance so that they will be more active, enthusiastic and competent in the speaking session.

3. Significance of the Study.

The main objective of the present study is to explore the effectiveness of blended learning to improve the students' speaking skill. A blended classroom has seemed to aid students to be more knowledgeable about the topic and have enough resources about the needed information. It also asserts that incorporating a blended system is a good way to improve the student's speaking abilities.

The present study helps to establish an effective solution to the obstacles that face the learners in practicing the language in the blended classroom. Thus, providing electronically, i.e. via Moodle platform, students with videos about a specific topic to develop their lexical competencies. In other words, the teacher posts videos and texts about a certain topic via email, or Moodle for students to practice and go through the videos and texts to develop their lexical package. So that, students can gain and enhance their lexical competencies and become more competent in their speaking skill.

This research seeks to aid both teachers and learners to find an ultimate solution to the speaking skill practice. Observing this problem and analyzing it provides EFL teachers with an extended look around it and aids them to innovate new methods and activities to overcome such problems. A sum up, online platforms and new activities in the blended learning approach open the door for EFL teachers to teach their learners as well as aid learners to develop their speaking skill wherever they are.

4. Aims of the Study

This work aims to conduct a study on first-year EFL students at the Mohammed Khider University of Biskra, for the case of enhancing their speaking skill during the pandemic through implementing the blended learning system. We can list the aims as follows:

- Identifying the role of blended learning in promoting first-year EFL students speaking skill.
- Exploring the relationship between blended learning as a system of teaching and learning and the student's speaking skill.

5. Methodology of the study

The purpose of this mixed-method study is to explore the benefits of the blended learning method by first-year students at Mohammed Khider University Biskra and describe their speaking performance after using this method. This research seeks to provide teachers with effective blended classroom activities, at the same time helping the students to enhance their speaking skill. The goal of providing students with videos and texts about the same topic which be discussed is to have a background about the topic so that they can perform and share information inside the classroom.

6. Population and Sample

The study's sample includes first-year EFL students and instructors from the Mohammed Khider University of Biskra, Department of English. We have chosen two groups that have witnessed the blended learning system. So that, they can be beneficial during our study conducting about their speaking improvements.

The sample of teachers mainly comprises the oral expression teachers, at the Department of English at Mohammed Khider University. They were chosen because they experienced the blended learning approach during their oral expression module teaching process.

7. Structure of the Study

This research paper consists of three sections, begins with a general introduction and ends with a general conclusion. Our study contains two theoretical chapters and one practical chapter which involves field studies and the analysis of data.

The first chapter is dedicated to an overview of the speaking skill. It presents the speaking skill definition, significance, components and factors affecting the speaking skill. Besides, difficulties facing EFL learners in oral performance, and presents ways to improve the speaking skill. Furthermore, goals of teaching the speaking skill the conclusion.

The second chapter concerned with the concept of blended learning. The chapter reveals the blended learning definition, components, models, and techniques. Moreover, it includes course design in blended learning, advantages and its challenges. At the end of the chapter, it is mentioned the implementation of blended learning in EFL class then we conclude.

Ultimately, the third chapter focuses on the practical implementation of our study. We investigate our data collection tools: classroom observation, students' questionnaire, and teachers' interview. The three tools were described in detail in the third chapter. Furthermore, it shows the analysis of our findings. Finally, the chapter discusses the findings and we propose some pedagogical recommendations for both teachers and students at Mohammed Khider University Biskra in the English Department as a way of facilitation in case of opting the blended learning.

Chapter One:

Speaking Skill

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Introduction

The present chapter is the theoretical part of the presented study. It is about the speaking skill. The chapter deals first with the definition of speaking as a productive ability and as a term that is used interchangeably with several terms such as communication ability, communicative ability, oral performance, etc. In addition, this chapter goes through the significance and the different components of speaking skill based on two famous writers (Vanderkeven and Harris). Then, we mention some activities that may contribute to improving this proficiency such as conversation, information-gap activity, roleplay, and storytelling. The chapter includes difficulties that may face EFL learners when they speak English as a foreign language.

1. Definition of Speaking Skill

Speaking is the second productive skill among the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and a crucial means of connecting with others. It is considered the basic core of any language, especially English as a global language. Therefore, EFL learners are more interested in communication skills and put much more focus on them than other skills.

Hedge (2000, p.261), defined speaking as "an art of transmitting thoughts, beliefs, ideas, feeling, meaning, and events from the speaker to the hearer. That means that speaking is a process between speakers who produce speech and listeners who try to understand it". The previous quote shows that the existence of speech requires the presence of thoughts and emotions, and the listener in return receives these thoughts and emotions. It shows also the interrelated relationship between the speaker and the listener.

Chaney and Burke (1998, p.13) claimed that speaking is " the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a verity of contexts".

The speaking process allows speakers to present their thoughts and convey to others personal beliefs. It permits the speakers to express their ideas and emotions effectively.

Hedge (2000, p.261) reported that speaking is an aptitude whereby individuals are evaluated as first perceptions. The speaking skill is considered as tool for expressing the learner's personality, based on this they are evaluated and this justifies their increased interest in learning this skill more than other skills.

Based on the previous different definitions, it is possible to deduce that oral performance is linked with communication. It is a means of encoding ideas, thoughts, feelings, and viewpoints effectively. The hearer has to decode the transmitted idea.

2. The Significance of Speaking Skill

Considering the English language as a global language, speaking this language and enhancing oral abilities become a crucial aim for EFL learners to use English effectively and without any constraints.

Nuan (1991, p.39) emphasized the importance of speaking by stating that "mastering the art of speaking is the single most important factor of learning a second or a foreign language". One of the most crucial aspects of acquiring a second language is trying to improve the quality and perfect the basics of communication. Speaking a language is considered a communicative instrument, we tend to speak with individuals to convey our thoughts and to find out about the other's views. In this context, Celce-Murcia (2001) claimed that "speech is the most basic means of human communication" (p.103). Wherever there is a speech, there is communication, we cannot communicate with others if we do not have the flexibility to speak. Therefore, having effective speaking skills means having effective communication.

Speaking abilities are vital for work success in various professional goals as they may also benefit the individuals' personal life. In this direction, (Baker and Westrup, 2003) stated that learners who are fluent in English may have greater chances of obtaining a greater education and finding suitable employment. Indeed, speaking this language means having more opportunities in the person's life, whether in travel, communication, or even in obtaining jobs. It also opens up doors to pursue higher education at the best institutions in the world. Furthermore, to be a good speaker, the individual must be skilled in all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, the ability to speak fluently offers the speaker numerous significant benefits. Consequently, Ur (1996) confirms in his statement "of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), speaking seems intuitively the most important: people who know a language are referred to a 'speaker' of that language as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing"(p.120).

Learning speaking skills is one of the most significant goals that foreign language learners seek and they consider their good acquisition of this skill is a reflection of their professionalism in the three remaining skills.

3. Components of Speaking Skill

In the English language, various components may impact the learner's speaking ability, and the more they grasp these components the greater they will talk.

According to Vanderkeven (1990), stated that speaking includes three components: the speaker, the listener, and the utterance. The first component is the speaker who refers to the person who creates sounds that are used to communicate one's sentiments or thoughts to the listener. As long there is a speaker, there will be an expression of viewpoints, and sentiments. The second component is the listener. We can say an audience, hearer, or auditor. It refers to the individual/group of people, who hear or acquire the speaker's thoughts. As long there

is a listener, there is a speaker. The listener must hear and recognize sounds and words. In addition, the utterance refers to the sentiments and ideas that the speaker used to express his/her opinion. If no speech is made, the speaker and listener will employ gestures, facial expressions, or body language. The presence of the speaker and the listener is vital and the absence of one means the absence of the other. Furthermore, in oral communication, the utterance is an important thing that connects the two sides (the speaker and the listener).

Harris (1969, p. 81 in Lestari, Nababan & Erni, 2013, p. 30) reported that speaking performance has four components identified in the analysis of speech. The first component is called fluency. It refers to the capacity to talk fluently and effectively. According to Hornby (1974, p. 330), fluency is the ability to talk smoothly and easily. In the same vein, Hedge (2000) reported that “fluency means responding coherently with the turns of the conversation, linking words and phrases using intelligible pronunciation and appropriate intonation, and doing all this without undue hesitation” (p.261). It describes the capacity to talk clearly and in an effective manner without any hesitation through the speaker may make some errors whether in grammar or pronunciation. The second component is pronunciation. The term pronunciation refers to the way we speak. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, pronunciation "is the act of or manner of pronouncing something". Researchers determined that pronunciation refers to the study of how syllabus (words) in a certain language is formed simply and clearly during the individual's speaking. In addition, grammar is another component of speaking skill. Students must be able to form a correct statement in discussion. It is consistent with Warriner in Nani's (2002, p. 15 in Lestari et al., 1993, p. 3) assertion that if the speaker used grammar, the communication will be understood and clear, and this is due to its effective role in influencing the oral performance. The last component is vocabulary. It refers to the suitable words communication. EFL learners cannot communicate successfully or explain their views whether orally or in written form if they do

not have an adequate vocabulary. In this context, Hornby (1974, p. 979) claimed that students can express their thoughts and ideas easier, if they have enough vocabulary. The lack of vocabulary is an obstacle which prevents EFL learners to learn the language because they will be able to express just limited by their limited vocabulary.

All these components are important in the speaking process. Missing one of these components means missing an important part of our communication, and it will not be an effective communication that is based on transmitting thoughts and receiving messages.

4. Factors Affecting the Speaking Skill

During the English language acquisition, EFL learners confront a variety of obstacles that prevent them from becoming competent speaking English. A scientific study indicates that the learning of speaking abilities in English is impacted by a variety of factors, these factors contain:

4.1. The Student's Family Background and Lifestyle

The student's environment and background are necessary for the process of learning a foreign language. As an example: EFL learners whose families are illiterate or have low educational backgrounds face difficulties in speaking and in the process of learning the language. However, students whose families are educated and have high educational background acquire the language easily and they almost have enough information about the language and they just need to enhance their abilities.

4.2. The Learner's Mother Tongue

The term mother tongue refers to the language that individuals acquired as a kid in their home setting. Pokharal (as cited in Khati 2011, p.42) view that "first language, mother language, and native tongue are common terms for the language which a person acquires

first in his childhood because it is spoken in the family and/or it is the language of the country where he is living". During the process of learning English as a language, students tend to apply their mother tongue. In the same vein, Shsherba (1974, p. 88) claimed that:

The requirement to manage without the native language often causes the great time, energy, and ingenuity expenditures that are quite wasteful in most cases since the complete understanding usually comes after the student's finding his equivalent in the native language.

4.3. Motivation

Motivation is essential in all endeavors, including learning. A learner needs motivation during learning a language since it assists him in attempting and increasing his comprehension of a language. According to Dörnyei (2001, p.1), "motivation is one of the key issues in language learning". Therefore, without motivation EFL learners will fail to exert the essential effort. Lennon (1993, p. 41) claimed that motivation is "the most important factor influencing continuing development in oral proficiency". This quote shows the vital role of motivation in enhancing the learner's level of speaking proficiency.

4.4. Lack of Confidence

Self-confidence refers to the individual's trust and belief in being able to do something. In this context, Murray (2006, p.53) stated that "confidence is defined in my dictionary as 'firm is self-confidence' ". As Kakepoto (2012) reported "Confidence is an essential aspect of any good presentation. It provides impetus to speakers to communicate their ideas effectively" (p.71). Besides, Cole et al (2007, p. 20) stated that "Confidence was as important as competence in speaking". Confidence is the base of acquiring the language and pushes the students to be able to express ideas in a fluent and accurate way, therefore, EFL learners must be confident enough during their speaking learning process.

5. Difficulties Facing EFL Learners Oral Performance

As we all know, speaking is a way of communicating with others in the social environment. Usually, EFL learners face some difficulties in acquiring and enhancing this skill. Such as lack of vocabulary, low self-confidence, grammatical mistakes, shyness and fear of making mistakes, and anxiety.

5.1. Lack of Vocabulary

In learning the speaking skill the first challenging issue that faces EFL students is the lack of vocabulary. It is a vital part of learning the English Language and being competent in oral performance. Dewi and Jimmi (2018) expressed that the understudies who have a low package of vocabulary will have an influence on their own selves whenever they want to make contact with others. When students intend to speak they often struggle to choose a suitable word. Thornbury (2005) expressed that "spoken language also has relatively high protection of words and expressions". (p. 22). As a result, numerous students struggle with conversing since they have a limited amount of vocabulary that allows them to express and enhance their speaking ability.

5.2. Low Self-Confidence

One of the challenges commonly confronted by understudies is having low self-confidence. If educators possess basic self-doubts, they might be unable to flourish as learners (Dornyei 2001, p. 87). In many cases, EFL students are unable to speak just because they believe that their speaking performance is poor so they hesitate to be an active part of the classroom or interact with their instructors and classmates. Instructors should provide positive support to their students in order to instill self-belief in them.

5.3. Grammatical Mistakes

Grammar is a crucial aspect in oral performance, and one of the main elements of being a professional speaker. Therefore, EFL students consider the grammatical mistakes as one of the main challenges that face them during their speaking process and their oral performance progress. Davies and Pears (2000, p. 82) claimed that " we may worry about producing utterances with many errors or oddities in them". The quote shows that making grammatical mistakes affect the students' ability to produce an utterance or communicate in front their classmates in the classroom. Grammar errors are one of the obstacles which could prevent individuals from developing their speaking abilities, therefore, instructors should encourage their students to overcome such issue.

5.4. Shyness and Fear

Shyness and apprehension about committing errors are uncomfortable situation which make EFL students unable to participate. Speaking in public considered as a serious symptoms that some students face. The reason behind this issue is the fear of failure and making mistakes. Ur (2000) claimed" Learners are often inhibited about trying to say things in a foreign language in the classroom, worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism or losing face, or simply shy of the attention that their speech attracts"(p. 111). Thus, shyness and the apprehension of committing errors are contribute in preventing the student progress in communicative performance.

5.5. Anxiety

Anxiety regarded as a factor that widely affect learning languages, it impacts EFL students abilities inside the classroom negatively and make students feel deeply unease when attempt to perform. Gorham, Wrench, and Virginia (2009, p.55) claimed that when educators are terrified, nervous, apprehensive, or nervous, they do not gain knowledge. They cannot

make an effective information they feel stressed to interact with teachers. The fear of testing situations, make them perform poorly on tests. Basically, students who are frightened, perform badly in the classroom. Thus, anxiety has significant impact on the students' speaking ability.

The several mentioned difficulties that obstacle EFL learners in their learning speaking process are in return affected by some factors, therefore, students and teachers should take into consideration each difficulty and try to overcome it together by practice or making the appropriate environment inside the classroom.

6. Ways to Improve the Learner's Speaking Skill Inside the Classroom

EFL learners consider the speaking skill as a skill that needs the courage to be performed inside the classroom. They consider it as the bridge between their ideas and the way of expressing them in front of their teacher and classmates. To improve their speaking skills, EFL learners should practice a set of activities that assist them to enhance their abilities and use the language in an appropriate way. Scrivener (2005) confirms that "the main of communicative activity in class is to get learners to use the language they learn to interact in realistic and meaningful ways" (p.152). Using communicative activities inside the classroom aid learners to use it in their different realistic situations. There are several activities that are used to improve the learner's oral performance, we mention the following:

6.1. Conversation/Discussion

Discussion activity refers to spontaneously exchanging ideas, whether with the instructor or in a group of students. Byrne (1986) defined discussion as following "discussion is meant by any exchange of ideas and opinions either a basis, with you (teacher) the mediator and to some extent as the participator or within the context of the group with the student talking among them" (p.67). Frequently, EFL classrooms rely on discussion when it

comes to speaking activities, considering it an effective communicative activity. When the discussion goes in a spontaneous way without any preparation, makes the learner more flexible and expresses his ideas naturally. Usually, learners tend to participate in topics that seem interesting to them, therefore, choosing the topic is a crucial step in making discussion. Overall, classroom conversations push the learners to enhance their critical thinking and develop their speaking abilities. Besides, a classroom discussion, build the learners' personality through expressing their ideas and defining viewpoints by making logical explanation for each idea.

6.2. Information Gap Activities

EFL teachers especially oral expression teachers always tend to vary the activities inside the classroom as an encouragement for their students. Information gap activities are one of the most activities that are offered to the learners to make them use their target language. Teachers resort to this activity to make the interaction with learners and share their previous information with each other. According to Gower. et.al (1995)" A situation where information is known by only one or some of those present, students use the language they have at their command to bridge the information gap".(p. 211).

Information gap-activity session is considered for some students as an input session and for the others as an output session and it may be both for each individual.

6.3. Role play

Engaging learners in speaking activities is a big challenge for EFL teachers. Therefore, they try to look for a more creative and fun activity to assist learners to perform inside the classroom. Roleplay is an activity that encourages learners to identify their personalities. "Role play [...] is used to refer to all of activities where learners imagine themselves in situation outside the classroom" Ur (1984, p. 131). It permits learners to try different

situations inside the classroom and apply them outside the classroom". In EFL classrooms, learners deal with role play as a fun activity, it encourages them to interact with themselves without any embarrassment.

6.4. Storytelling

Storytelling is a combination of speaking and listening skills. It is considered a traditional way of teaching EFL learners to be more skilled in their speaking skill. Cameron (2001, p.11) reported that storytelling might be a useful method for honing both communication skills and verbal expression. According to Zaro and Salaberri (1995, p. 3), storytelling can aid with foreign language instructions. It is used inside the classroom as a comfortable activity that aids students to perform easily.

The previous activities are used to assist students to enhance their speaking performance. Platt and Weber (1986, as cited in Lee, 2000, p. 31) confirmed that "the use of a variety of different tasks in language teaching is said to make language teaching more communicative[...]since it claimed that the practice of speaking inside the classroom offers students to reach new vocabularies and give them the chance to utilize their target language.

7. The Aims of Oral Performance

In learning the English language, EFL learners put their focus on the speaking skill considering it the main tool of communication. The speaking skill contains several major aims which are to inform, discuss, persuade and entertain (Tarigan, 2008, p. 30-36). The first aim of speaking is 'to discuss'; discussing an idea or a topic means to talk about it in details in a serious way. Byrne (1986) claimed that "by discussion is meant by any exchange of ideas and opinions". Students while discussing any topic will exchange their previous knowledge and their opinions about the same topic. Another aim of speaking is 'to persuade', persuading is trying to convince others by using strong arguments to show how true your

idea is. Persuasive speaking considering an art that not all speakers are good at. Therefore, persuasive speakers get the attention easily and reach the point they want directly. Furthermore, entertaining is also included under the aims of speaking. In this case, speakers seek to make the listener feels at ease via telling jokes, and telling stories.... Entertaining makes the speaker behave more relaxed and without restriction or planning. The listener in this case will be more interested and give natural attention to the speaker. The last aim is 'to inform', when the speaker speaks for the sake of informing, the purpose is to notify the audience about a certain issue. The speaker to inform others may organize his instructive speech using a variety of frameworks. Usually, in the case of informing, the speaker will notify a fact to the listener.

During the speaking process, the speaker may discuss, persuade, entertain or inform the listener as a form of communication.

8. Goals of Teaching Speaking

Recently, the tendency to learn English, especially the speaking skill, is one the most prominent trends. It has become the most demanded language to be learned all over the world. EFL teachers seek to teach this universal language for a variety of reasons. In general, teachers hope to achieve certain goals during their speaking teaching process in EFL classes. For instance, assuring that students pronounce correct words and construct proper sentences. In addition, teaching speaking encourages students to be more confident and use the language in their real-life and different situations.

Baker and Westrup (2003, p. 5) stated that teaching the speaking skill allows students to apply their newly acquired English. Through teaching the speaking skill, teachers encourage effective language acquisition and diagnose their student's abilities and limitations. Besides, teaching them to communicate verbally leads to their effective speaking

without trouble or impediment. McCarthy (1972, p.9) reported that, When individuals are learning to talk a dialect, they are concerned primarily with two things; to begin with, knowing what to say- what words and expressions to utilize at any given moment, in any given circumstance- and moment, being able to say it- able to perform the required activities, the development fundamental, for saying those words and expressions out loud;(i.e. Students who want to speak fluently need to learn both sides. In the first, they must master the language's grammatical rules. In the second, they must master phonology features.).

Teaching the speaking skill, facilitating students the way of acquiring the language and making them more familiar with numerous vocabularies of different situations, and aiding them to use the language step by step under the teacher's guidance and according to the student's ability.

Conclusion

Due to the importance of speaking, the chapter was completely devoted to talk about some points related to this skill. The elements mentioned before, starting from the definition to the last element which is the goals of teaching English the speaking are carry important ideas which help EFL learners to be more accurate and fluent in their oral performance under the guidance of the instructor and with different manners when the instructor knows the possible reason and factors which may affect the student's oral performance, he will work on these defects and try to fix it by providing his students with the required activities which will aid them to enhance their level and become more competent. With the instructor's guidance, students can determine their weaknesses in their speaking performance, and with the given activities and practices they will overcome these weaknesses and try to build a strong base to be more skillful in their communicative ability.

Chapter Two:

Blended Learning

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Introduction

Blended learning is an approach adopted recently in our universities that encompasses online and traditional learning. This section shows the different related elements to this approach. Starting from the blended learning definition, moving to its three components: media, learning environment, and the instructional component. Considering blended learning as a system that includes more than one possible studying situation, this chapter presents the four blended learning models, beginning with rotation, the first model with its four distinct manners, then flex, a la carte, and the enriched model. The next element is under the title of the blended learning techniques, which includes the two different techniques, asynchronous and synchronous learning. Course design as an important part of blended learning that has four main steps to get an effective curriculum is also included in the chapter. In addition, the advantages of this approach and the possible challenges that may face EFL students during their blended learning. Finally, this section presents how we can implement this approach in EFL classes in the appropriate way to have positive incomes.

1. Definition of Blended Learning

Recently, the world adopted blended learning due to the health condition caused by the Coronavirus. This system represented the overlap of traditional education with distance learning.

According to Graham (2006, p. 1), blended learning is " a combination of instruction from two historically separate models of teaching and learning: traditional face-to-face learning system and computer-mediated learning". This system of learning refers to the situation when the teaching and learning process does not all the time happens inside the classroom but in different places (i.e.: the teacher and the student do not all the time at the

same place (classroom), they contact each other from different places). In the same vein, Garrison and Kanuka (2004, p.97) stated that blending entails combining traditional face-to-face instruction with internet encounters (as it showed in Figure1). Students during their blended learning experience both the in-person and the online courses.

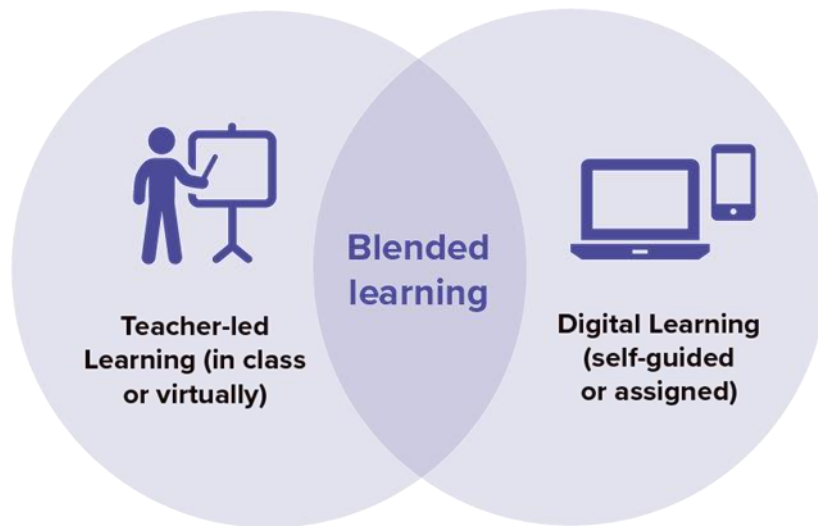


Figure 1: Blended Learning

<https://www.reallyenglish.com/blended-learning-solutions>.

According to Bath and Bourke (2010)

Blended learning is realized in teaching and learning environments where there is no effective integration of different modes of delivery. Models of teaching and styles of learning as a result of adopting a strategic and systematic approach to the use of technology combined with the best features of face-to-face interaction. (p.11)

Blended learning happens in educational settings when differing modes of conveyance, directions, models, and learning styles are successfully coordinated due to a deliberate and precise approach. A systematic approach to the use of innovation matched the best characteristics of face-to-face interaction. Garinson and Kanuka (2004) stated that" BL is the

thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online experiences" (p.96). This approach can give content regarding the space and time constraints with the ability to maintain the interactive learning to be conducted, allowing for optimum learning.

Most definitions go to the same definition of blended learning as a system that combines the traditional face-to-face learning, which requires the presence of the teacher and the student in the same place, and distance learning, which is based on the communication between the instructor and the student from two different locations outside the classroom via the internet.

2. Components of Blended Learning

Blended learning as an education system has three main components that may impact learning. These components are indicated below:

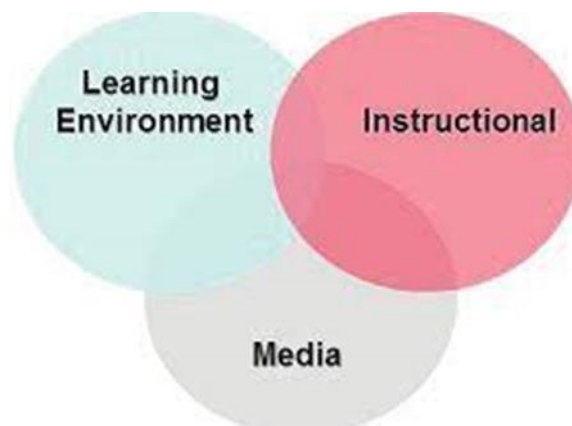


Figure 2: Components of Blended Learning (Kaur, 2013, p. 613)

2.1. Media: Media in blended learning alludes to any instrument or strategy that makes the instructor-student engaging and interaction more effective and sustained. If media technologies are creatively blended with the classroom, students may collaborate and be more involved in the learning process. Media

in blended learning has an important benefit, which is making students during their online period more guided and less isolated. The verity of social media platforms acknowledged implies several proposals and arguments regarding which platform might be employed for what goal within the educational process. For instance, Moodle, Google Meet, and Facebook are the most used ones during the blended learning period.

2.2. Learning Environment Component: The numerous settings and physical places where students learn are referred to as the learning environment. In this context, Husten and Potlethwaite (1991) claimed that "all those physical sensory elements, such as color, sound, space, furniture, and so on, which characterize the place in which a student is expected to learn". Blended learning allows EFL students to study from different areas other than their classroom to improve the particular good aspects of each location to make the best use of resources for achieving the learning objectives.

2.3. Instructional Component: The instructional component aids in accomplishing the learning objectives and makes the exchange of the learning process easier. According to Reigeluth and Carr-Chellman (2009, p.6) "anything that is done purposely to facilitate learning". During planning the blended learning, it is basic to preserve directions quality and consider the learning outcomes in establishing the blended learning solution and ought to not be ignored.

The previous three components permit the blended learning process to be more effective and useful to the students during their learning process inside and outside the classroom.

3. Models of Blended Learning

Blended learning is the educational system that allows students to learn through two different ways of study: the first way, students are guided by the instructor and get the information face-to-face inside the classroom. However, the second way, students rely on online learning regarding place (where they study), time (when they study), pace (rate and speed of studying), and path (the way of learning). According to (Horn and Staker, 2014) there are several blended learning models that the instructor may implement (see: figure3).

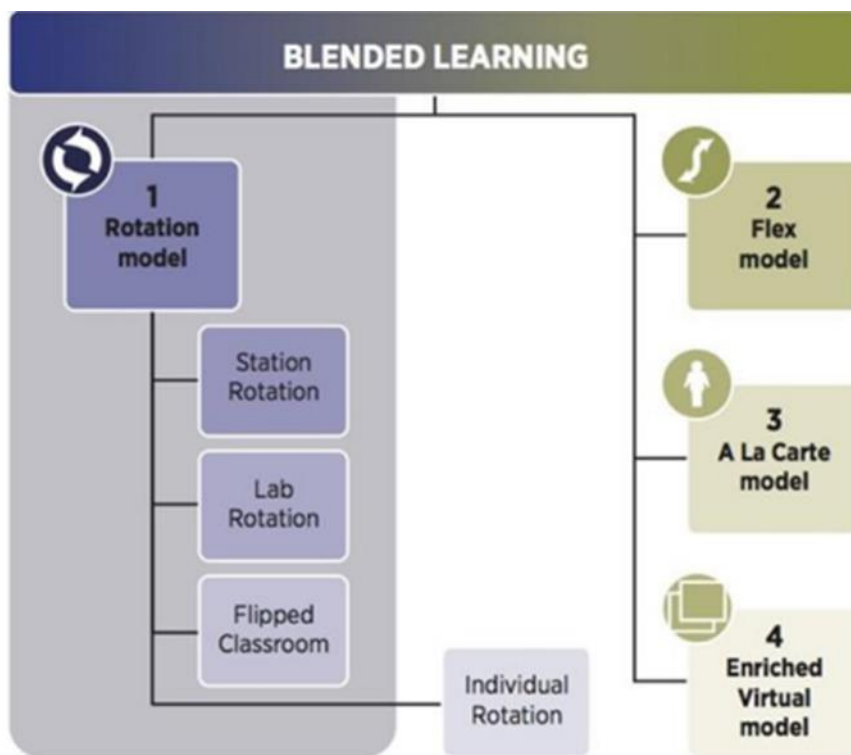


Figure 3: Modals of Blended Learning according to Christiansen Institute, Christiansen, Horn, and Staker (2014)

3.1. Rotation Model: This model is based on the student's cycle among learning sessions on a set of educator timetables and online sessions. The rotation model includes: first the station rotation, where the students rotate through a set of stations in a small group (an online station, a teacher-led station, and an offline station). For example, the first station could be designed as an unsupervised online-learning station, a collaborative learning station as a second station, in this station students complete their exercises with one or more of their classmates (they may use the internet in this station or it may be fully offline). The last station understudies and the instructor must be at the same time in the same place without using the internet. The idea of station rotation is one at least of the stations must incorporate online-learning, and one station must predominately face-to-face and offline station. Second, lab rotation is similar to the station rotation in allowing students to cycle among stations on a set timetable. However, for online study, learners cycle to the existing computer lab. Furthermore, flipped classroom is another model of blended learning. The flipped classroom is one of the blended learning models. In this model, the information is presented to the students at home then they apply it inside the classroom, unlike other models based on delivering the information inside the classroom and giving the students assigned to be accomplished at home. Besides, individual rotation where students have their own playlist, and they are not obliged to rotate through all of the various stations. The students' timetable is determined by the instructor (Christiansen, Horn and Staker, 2013).

3.2. Flex Modal: According to the Clayton Cristensen Institute (2015) This modal relies on online preparing, with the in-person enhancement given within the shape of little bunch instruction, bunch ventures, and one-on-one mentoring as required.

3.3. Self-Blend Model: The understudy takes a completely online course to supplement other encounters at a conversational school or learning office. The online instructor is

the official teacher for the a la carte course. Understudies can take the a la carte course on-campus or off-campus. Since it is not a full-school involvement, this changes from a full-time pondering. (Liubchenko, Eng, Assoc, 2014, p. 211)

3.4. Enriched Virtual Model: In this case, students are obliged to go to face-to-face learning sessions with their instructor, after which they are free to total the leftover portion of their school works autonomously of the face-to-face instructor. When the learners are put absent, online learning is the spine of their instruction (Clayton Cristensen Institute, 2015).

4. Techniques of Blended Learning

A blended learning system gives the instructor a great opportunity to assist his students using different techniques. The instructor might be surprised by how the students connect and interact effectively with the different techniques.

4.1. Asynchronous Learning: Asynchronous learning allows the student to learn about his/her claim plan and a specific timeframe. EFL students can connect and finish lessons, passages, worksheets, and any learning tools during the specified period by the instructor. Mayadas (1997, p.2-3) claimed that asynchronous learning refers to the learner-centered teaching-learning method in which online devices are utilized to assist in sharing data outside the barriers of place and time. The online asynchronous courses may consist of educational clips, which show essential elements and key ideas, and students can watch as many times as they need to. Sometimes students can obtain feedback immediately when they finish their tasks, rather than waiting for teachers to assess them. Nevertheless, asynchronous learning is not less strict than synchronous classes.

4.2. Synchronous Learning: Synchronous learning necessitates the simultaneous presence of the students and instructor for teaching and learning to take place. The face-to-face

study is a regular time commitment that cannot be transformed or modified. EFL students in synchronous learning have coursework and readings to accomplish outside of classroom settings, similar to in-person attending, start preparing them to engage in the conversation. This student's level of readiness, combined with a specialized plan established by the class teacher, assure that each class workshop is successful (Tuckman, 2007).

5. Course Design in Blended Learning

When adopting the blended learning system, designing the course is an important step and a crucial part of getting a useful curriculum. The following steps are included within the blended learning course plan handle.

5.1. Planning the Course: According to Stein and Graham (2014) to plan a blended course, the instructor should:

5.1.1. Identify Course Learning Outcomes: Teachers should determine the learning goals, which refers to the outline that students are supposed to exhibit from a specific course (Ibid).

5.1.2. Determine the Evaluations to Measure each Outcome: After identifying the learning outcomes instructors, instructors will establish the activities that may be used to confirm that students have achieved the needed goals. For example, problem solving, tasks, writing essays, and role-plays (Ibid).

5.1.3. Plan the Course Learning Activities: Refers to any activity that students must do to fulfill course aims. For instance: taking quizzes, readings, attending online lectures and others (Ibid)

5.1.4. Determine the Order and Mechanism of Presenting each Activity: The ultimate stage within the planning process is to put all the three previous steps together and draw the course (Ibid).

5.2. Blended Learning Materials Designing and Developing: In designing the materials step, instructors should diversify the provided materials, so all learners accomplish (Stein and Graham, 2020). Following that, the teacher prepares and develops the designed materials that may take the form of papers, online tools, collaborative activities, videos, and movies.

5.3. Uploading the Materials to the Online Learning Platform: uploading the learning process materials to the online platform is the last step in course design.

The teacher should provide the students with the syllabus and the course plan and arrange a simple communication mechanism with these students to give them the chance to ask about their difficulties.

6. Advantages of Blended Learning

Blended learning consists of positive aspects from both real and virtual learning approaches. (Kazu & Demirkol, 2014, p. 79) “blended learning is a new type of education prepared for a certain group by combining the positive aspects of different learning approaches”. Since the teaching process is necessary for complete discipline, digital learning allows learners to personalize their schooling. The following are among the benefits of blended learning.

- Blended learning allows students to keep in touch with their instructors about their updates, tasks, diagnostic testing, or whatever they may have to recognize.
- Blended learning strategies encourage EFL learners to develop relevant data and knowledge online that they would obtain whenever they need it while learning. Wingard (2004) "they like to have the ability to access course materials anytime, anywhere"(p.27).

- The teaching and learning process is more than just academic studies, but rather about self-control and time-management skill "have control over their time"(Monteiro & Morrison, 2014, p. 583), and this system permits instructors and understudies to learn better at their planned pace.
- Dziuban et al (2011) (as cited in Namyssova et al., 2019, p.23) "providing more opportunities to enroll a high number of students". Blended learning makes education more affordable and available to a wider extent of students.
- Blended learning encourages learners to be more familiar in terms of using technology. "Digital literacy for learning is more than just knowing how to operate the technology but also having the right information management and critical thinking skills, as well as proper online behaviors"(Tang & Chaw, 2016, p. 54), and the various educational tools or approaches, for instance, e-learning, instructional videos and PowerPoint.

The instructional framework must receive strategies like blended learning to guarantee that the learning methods never stop. Various options must be performed in order to stay relevant to the curve. It is crucial to give technology the attention and incorporate policies such as blended learning as a central component of the teaching and learning process in the current educational system.

7. Challenges of Blended Learning

Blended learning may be a challenge for a specific category of students that have not already experienced in-person learning. The following are the known challenges that face EFL learners. First, the key challenge of blended learning for EFL students is that they must be self-disciplined to accomplish their learning from anywhere. EFL students need to be given the necessary tools during their blended learning process, and they should be inspected

and verified by their instructors regularly to make sure that they are progressing as planned. The other challenge that may face the students is the absence of contact. Rovai et al (2005, p.4) stated that online students feel a weaker sense of connectedness and belonging. Therefore, Disconnection can be a challenge in the case of studying away from the university. In this system, students are more vulnerable to loneliness, affecting their educational program.

Furthermore, offering assistance and support is another possible obstacle students may face during their online learning, "lack of faculty support" Tshabalala, Ndeya-Ndereya, and Merwe (2014, p.108). When instructors are on the same site with students, they are available to understudies to support and aid them. However, during the blended learning or online learning system. This could be more troublesome, such as battling to contact their teachers when they are away from campus. The last possible challenge that students may face during their blended learning is the quality of education. Therefore, a student stated "I believe there is a difference because when in class you get the benefit of learning a lot more from your peer" (Kirtman. 2009, p.110). Shifting to online learning as a part of blended learning lacks education quality. Students strongly believe that they are not receiving the same rewards from their online courses compared with in-person, which makes them upset that it would seriously affect their grades. Blended learning was an approved approach during the covid-19 period. It was a method to continue studying and complete the scheduled curriculum. Therefore, studying every detail related to this system is better to avoid the difficulties and challenges students may face.

8. Implementing Blended Learning in EFL Class

Blended learning is a system where online learning is blended with traditional learning to increase EFL students' engagement. To implement blended learning in EFL classes, several strategies should be followed. The present strategies are in charge of course content implementation and usefulness.

8.1. Using a Variety of Instructional Materials

Using coherent and comprehensive instructions helps to clarify ideas and promote long-term preservation. Furthermore, how instructions are delivered defines the quality of the educational methodology in use. Consequently, the instructor should first concentrate on giving the appropriate instruction inside the classroom. It is worth mentioning that a single and specific type of teaching material offers each objective in a blended learning classroom. "Designing constructivist learning environments recommends that students are provided with a range of different tools and resources to support their problem-solving" (Dalsgaard & Godsk, 2007, p. 31). Therefore, instructors should employ a variety of instructional materials and actively engage understudies in games and activities such as individual/ group tasks, presentations, and group conversations.

8.2. Technology and Promote Learning

Emerging technology provides new avenues for exploration and discovery. Virtual reality allows EFL students to access almost anything in real-time. Furthermore, technology is beneficial for learning. According to Tang and Chaw (2016, p.54) "digital literacy for learning is more than just knowing how to operate the technology, but also having the right information management and critical thinking skills". The emerging e-learning system implements various forms of media, making courses more interested for the students. The traditional and online learning techniques of instructing coexist in a blended learning

classroom. As a result, instructors can use tools, such as media platforms to involve students and improve educational outcomes.

8.3. Experiment with Different Teaching Method

In addition to teaching, the instructor facilitates learning in the classroom. A great teaching technique meets the students' learning needs and leads to learning objectives. Furthermore, the course's primary objectives and the educator's understanding level lead to a successful implementation of the learning-teaching process. As a result, instructors should exercise caution when selecting a teaching method. Besides, technology-based learning works hand in hand with traditional instruction in a blended learning system. This enables instructors to try out new teaching methods. Consequently, an instructor should investigate all opinions and test various teaching techniques to determine what is better for the students.

8.4. A Digital Interaction for Classwork

A blended learning classroom relies on technology and traditional learning methods to share information. Thus, it involves EFL students outside the classroom. In this context, Higgs, Miller, and Pearson (2013, p. 241) stated that "more attention has been paid to the use of digital tools to facilitate discussions among learners and expand interaction beyond traditionally bounded learning times and spaces" Instructors communicate regularly about a subject or attach the group to be completed via conversation in a virtual brand community; such activities assist EFL students in improving their speaking skill. Besides, as students begin looking for ways to collaborate on the internet, it allows them to improve their attitudes needed for information exchange.

Blended learning is still the only way to maintain learning in external situations. The use of blended learning strategies expands the scope of learning. The improvement in implementing this approach is investigating the future of learning.

9. Blended learning at Mohammed Khider University

The wide spread of covid-19 lead to a global pandemic, it influences the higher education of Mohammed Khider University of Biskra has adopted the blended learning approach for the continuity of education and the completion of the curriculum, and the preservation of the students and teachers' health. After a certain period, the university administration decided to include integrated education to complete the curriculum with respecting all health measures.

The five levels were divided into two wave. The first wave consists of the first-year and second-year students. However, the second contains third-year students and master one and master two students. The two waves take turns to study at the university week by week to ease the exposure and the interaction. Implementing blended learning was a new approach to the university. Therefore, at the beginning several constraints faced students and teachers as well, for instance; the absence of internet access for some educators and students has made it difficult for both parties to communicate during the distance study period. After getting used to this approach students and teachers become more interested and pleased with and they considered it a useful approach. In this context, E. Lamdjed (personal communication, Jun 12, 2022) stated that "it is very useful and practical when we use both modalities to keep teaching & learning alive everywhere and at any time". He believes that blended learning contributes to maintaining the continuity of teaching and learning process under any possible circumstances.

Conclusion

This chapter is dedicated to discussing various theoretical criteria of the blended learning system. Blended learning as a system that combines traditional learning and online

learning come language learning delays and expands students' incomes if planned, designed, and implemented properly.

Chapter Three:

Data Analysis and Discussion of Results

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Introduction

This chapter deals with the practical perspective of the presented study. In this chapter we went through different steps. Mentioning the population and sample, research methodology and research tools. Research tools consist three tools, we have started with: classroom observation as the first followed tool, we have described and analyzed the classroom observation obtained data, then we have discussed our data. The second used tool in this research is the students' questionnaire it was divided into two sections containing 9 questions. After collecting data we have analyzed and discussed it. The last used tool is the teachers' interview. We have mentioned the sample, described the interview criteria, and after analyzing and interpreting our data we have discussed it

1. Population and Sampling

The target of this study consists of 25 first-year LMD students from Mohammed Khider University, Biskra of the academic year 2021-2022. The 25 students have had the blended learning during the covid-19 period to obtain the questionnaire and their answers are based on their experience with such an approach that they have been through. Our target sample consists 16 students from the English department.

The sample of teachers mainly comprises five teachers of oral expression module at the same university who experienced the blended learning system.

2. Research Design and Methodology

The current study employs a mixed-methods approach, which relies on the combination of the qualitative and quantitative data collection, which are regarded as suitable to the nature of this study. As a first step, we have started by observing the targeted sample for two separated hours. After submitting the online students' questionnaire, we have interviewed oral expression teachers who have had blended learning in their classes.

3. Research Tools

To gather the needed information from both teachers and learners, we tend to use different tools, which are:

3.1. Classroom Observation

"Classroom observation as a primary method of collecting data on what is happening in the classroom"(Wilcox, 2000, as cited in AL-Balushi, 2021, p. 2017). Classroom observation is carefully selected as an approach to our study process to determine whether blended learning has positive or negative results on the first EFL learners speaking performance. To carry out the research and reveals the validity of our hypothesis. During our observation, we relied on taking notes about everything related to our study, for instance students' attitudes, and their performance. We have opted for specific criteria which are the classroom atmosphere, Students' attitudes towards online video, and the speaking performance of Students.

3.1.1. Description of Classroom Observation

For the sake of gaining data and taking a closer look at the target population, we were supposed to do the observation for six months, but because of the pandemic and the limited time, we did the observation in only six hours in the oral session module as a first step in collecting the needed data. Therefore, in the first session which was before applying the blended learning approach, we explained to the students the method that we are going to follow during the coming sessions, and kindly requested their permission to participate in our work. However, the other two sessions were after integrating traditional learning and online learning. The attendance was conducted to take notes about the student's attitudes towards the given activities before and after blending the two approaches.

In our first observational session (before adopting the blended learning), the teacher gave the students a set of activities concerned with one topic which is covid-19 without having any background from the teacher about it to be answered in 15 minutes as an individual work. In

the second activity, the students were asked to write a paragraph from 6 to 10 lines about covid-19 in pairs. The paragraph will be corrected by the teacher without performing it in front of their mates.

The second session was devoted to watching two videos about covid-19 more than once. Students were taking notes carefully because they were already informed that they will answer the same activities that they had done before, and they will also write another paragraph about covid-19. However, this time as an individual work and they will perform it in front of their mates and the teacher will note and assess them.

The students in the third session were devoted to performing the paragraph that were they asked to write after watching the videos inside the classroom and posting the same videos via email to watch them as much as they want to acquire more vocabulary about the topic.

We have selected the two videos due to their easy and clear pronunciation of speaking, the used animation was helpful to the student's level, and due to the importance of the presented information. The video's timing was not more than 5 minutes so that the students do not bored and focused till the end of the video.

The two presented videos were full of various, new and understandable vocabularies related to the topic which is covid-19. We deliberately intended to present the two videos by data show inside the classroom for many times and post it via email taking into consideration the ones whose do not have access to the internet.

3.1.2. Analysis of the Classroom Observation.

Part One: Face-to-Face Classroom.

In face-to-face class, we have observed that the student were satisfied with their class which located in block b and the tables was arranged in horseshoe form that make students feel at ease and comfortable and this form is suitable for oral expression session. In this regard we can say

that the classroom atmosphere does not affect the student's participation inside the classroom. The only problem that have affected the students inside the classroom was the external noise for neighboring classrooms near the end of the session, which negatively affected the students who were presenting at the end of the session which made them lose their focus and their ideas as well.

Concerning the teacher, she was in a good control over the internal situation of the class. The relation between the teacher and her students was a good relation. Although, the teacher kept motivating and pushing them to answer the questions in their own way and giving them the opportunity to express whatever they want but with using the English language not their mother tongue. Nevertheless, they were somehow passive, due to their unfamiliarity with the subject, their self-doubt and shyness.

During the face-to-face session, we have observed that most students even the active ones were upset from the questions, they were just turning the thief, and some students claimed that they are not able to answer the questions even when they tried to help each other they could not. With the second task which was writing paragraph from 6 to 10 lines in pairs, they invested a limited related vocabularies to the topic and they were not able to perform easily. The students inability could be because of the new way of teaching that they not familiar with. Another important fact that may cause the students' unwillingness is that they have not devoted time to participate their speaking skill outside the classroom.

Part two: Blended learning

In the first blended classroom, the session took place in room 11 where the tables were arranged in horseshoe form to facilitate watching the videos. In the beginning of the session we have fixed the data show, the teacher started explaining what the session will be about. After that, they start watching the videos with taking notes.

Concerning the teacher, she was dealing with her students in a friendly way. The whole class was under her control and students seem that they were comfortable without making noise or exaggerating in their actions. They had a comfortable environment at the same time she tried as much as she could to engage them and making them speak in English.

The students during the first blended session which devoted to watch videos and answer the activities, they were very active in comparison with their performance in the traditional classroom they were less stressed, dealing with vocabularies of the topic as a familiar ones, knowing more information about the topic, even in the time-out they were discussing and sharing information about the topic and using the information-gap unconsciously between each other, the given activities answered rapidly. Likewise, in the second blended session which devoted to perform the written paragraphs. Students were comfortable during their performance, they were brave enough to perform without reading from the paper, introducing the topic without reading from the topic even the weak students, they were fluent in pronouncing hard words related to the topic, moving from the largest aspect the specific details, moreover, some students wrote just notes and during their performance they speak spontaneously, using the eye contact while their performance as a prove that they are competent and able to perform without struggling with pronouncing words and using different vocabularies related to the topic and this is an evidence that they benefited from the submitted videos.

3.1.3. Discussion of the Classroom Observation

Based on what we have observed according to the collected data we can admit that blended learning approach has a great effect on the students speaking performance in comparison with traditional learning. Since blended learning enable students watching videos at home to be knowledgeable about the topic to enrich their vocabularies. This step leads first year students to be more motivated and active inside the classroom. Nevertheless, in face-to-face class,

students were trying to be more active it takes more time to repeat watching the videos. However, in blended class, they were active and motivated.

The blended learning system facilitate the engagement to first year student whether individually or in pairs. That is, learners were ready to participate. Besides, from our attendance before and after integrating blended learning with traditional learning, we have observed that the students' level have improved not only in the lexical side, but also in their pronunciation, they become more fluent during their performance. Whereas, in the traditional class, students were speaking with many pauses and turn to the teacher many times to help them in pronouncing words.

Generally, using a blended learning approach which is based in our case on delivering videos via email and inside the classroom gave students the opportunity to be more skilled in pronouncing words, and having a large vocabulary package and fluency. In addition, blended learning bridges for learners to rely on themselves instead of relying on their instructor. Our findings showed that the used method in combining face-to-face with online learning had proved successful in enhancing the students' speaking skill in pronouncing words, acquiring new vocabularies, and effective communication. Students also become more confident and able to perform effectively.

3.2. Questionnaire

We have used the questionnaire to collect the required information that allows for the construction of the results.

3.2.1. Description of the questionnaire

We used the questionnaire as a tool for collecting data for this study. The sample contains 25 first-year students who obtained a questionnaire that includes 9 questions, but we got only

16 answer. The first section deals with the first variable which is speaking skill. The second section handles the blended learning as a second variable.

The questionnaire consists open-ended and close-ended questions. Some students did not answer the open-ended questions and they left the answer space blank. However, close-ended questions were totally answered. Basically, the questionnaires' questions based on the required information for our research, to confirm or reject the hypothesis.

3.2.2. The analysis of the questionnaire

Section One: Speaking skill

1. Which skill is the most challenging one?

The skill	Listening	Speaking	Reading	writing	total
Number of students.	4	9	2	1	16
%	25%	56.3%	12.5%	6.3%	100%

Table 1: The challenging skill for students

Figure 1 and Table 1 show that more than half (9 students), with the largest percentage of 56% consider the speaking skill as the most challenging skill. The remaining three skills are divided up into the following small numbers and percentages: 4 for listening (25%), 2 for reading (12.5%), and 1 for writing (6.3%). The main reason behind the student's answers and the found results is related to the reason that the speaking skill is considered a hindrance for them to interacting effectively and sharing their information with others. The primary reason for choosing the speaking skill as the most challenging skill because they consider it as a barrier to communicate effectively and to express their ideas.

2. Do you seek to enhance your oral performance at home?

The purpose of asking this question is to know whether the students are trying to improve their speaking skill or they just practice it inside the classroom.

Options	Yes	No
Numbers	14	2
%	87.5%	12.5%

Table 2: The challenging skill for students

Results of figure 2 reveal that the largest group of students with a great percentage of 87.5% assure that they try to enhance their oral performance at home, while only 2 responses with a percentage of 12.5% showed that they practice the language only inside the classroom. Consequently, we can deduce that students practice the language at the home, nevertheless, they consider it as the most challenging skill which indicates that they do not follow the appropriate way to enhance their skill.

How? The students' way of practicing the language was diversified, their answers are the following:

- By listening to audio or watching some videos to improve my listening and read books to improve my reading and writing.
- By practice listening and speaking to become a confident.
- I am listening to many videos in English.
- Read books and listen to the pronunciation of the word, improve our pronunciation, improve our vocabulary.
- Reading.
- Reading stories.
- Trying to speak with the mirror.

- Watching movies.

3.How often do you participate in speaking activities?

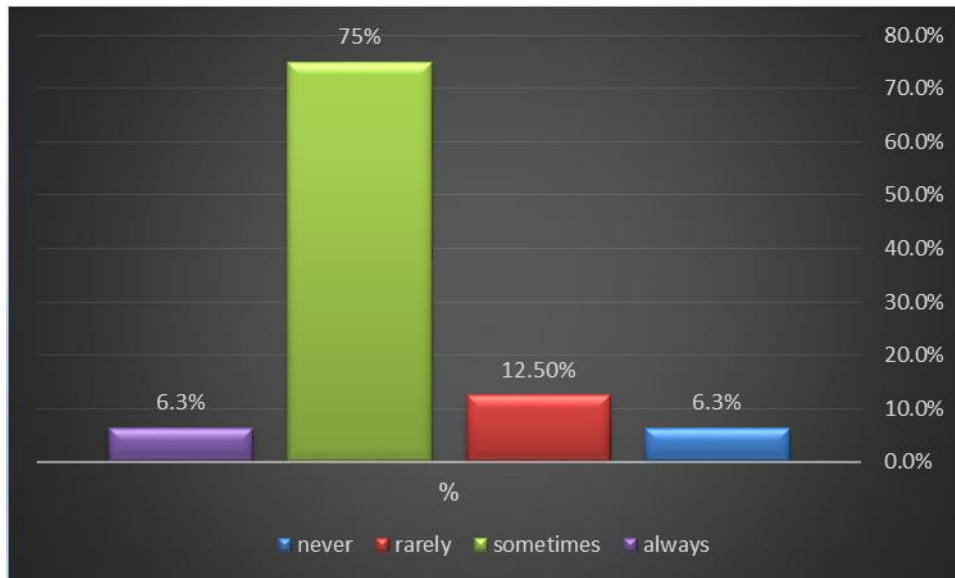


Figure 4: Students' participation in speaking activities

According to Figure3, the participation rate in the target group varies among students. Students who participate sometimes is the highest with the percentage of 75%, their engagement that they rarely actively engage in oral sessions. However, the same percentage of 6.3% goes for never and always, which means that the target group are in between not too active nor too passive. The reason beyond the students' participation may be related to their personality, the topic, or the classroom environment.

If never or rarely, why? The students' answers were as follows:

- I feel shy.
- Feeling shy.
- Feeling shy.

If sometimes or always, why?

- When I know the answer.
- When I have time I participate to speak English carefully.

- The first thing is that the language is my love and speaking it makes me develop more and more.
- Because the desire of doing it comes to me just sometimes.
- Because I do not find the person to talk with or to help me to improve this skill.
- I sometimes speak with people in the application.
- Because help me to speak very well.

4. During your blended learning, do you prefer:

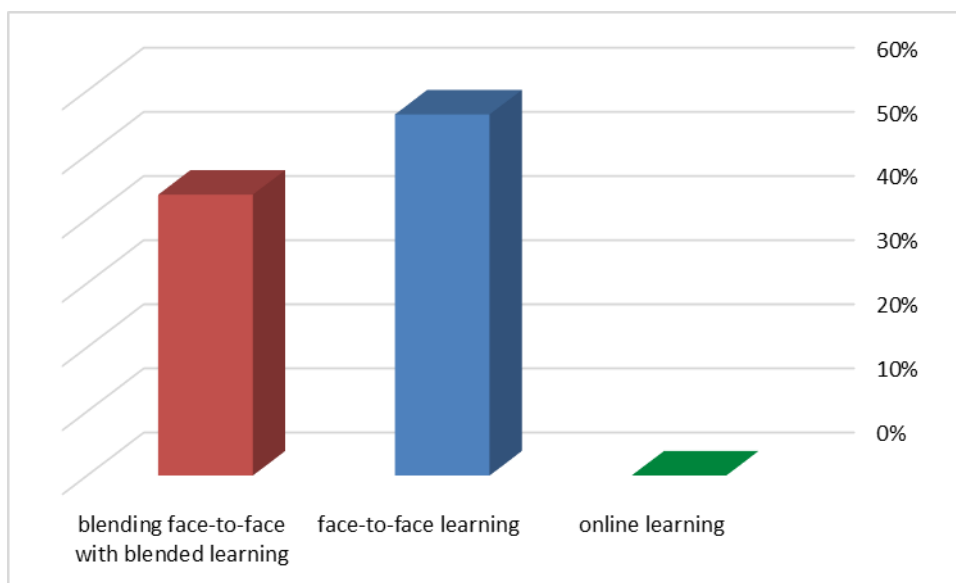


Figure 5: The students' preferred way of learning

As shown in item 4, the majority of students who presents the largest percentage (56.5%) prefer face-to-face learning. this implies that first-year students recommend the traditional learning approach over the other approaches. Choosing traditional learning means that students find their interest in face-to-face learning and they consider it beneficial in solving their speaking problems. Students with a percentage of (43.8%) indicated that they prefer blending face-to-face learning with online learning, this percentage may define that they acquire more knowledge and understand better the traditional way of learning. However, (0%) percentage goes for online learning this may be because of the lack of internet access.

5. How has blended learning helped you in enhancing your speaking?

The answer of the students are as follows:

- I have more information.
- I liked the way we did it.
- Help me get rid of fear when speaking this made me speak fluently.
- Like in order not to be ashamed.
- Knowing more about the topic.
- I have more information.
- Less shyness.
- We should speak with people and listen.
- Learn new words and improve our pronunciation.

Students were satisfied with blended learning system and the answers show that they valued it because of being knowledgeable about the topic and have a vocabulary package to use during their performance. Furthermore, they were interested with this system because they become more confident and less shyness. In this sense, we can admit that blended learning has a positive effect on the students' performance. The main obstacles that face students are lack of vocabulary and self-doubt issues.

6. Blended learning with oral expression, does this way enhance your speaking abilities?

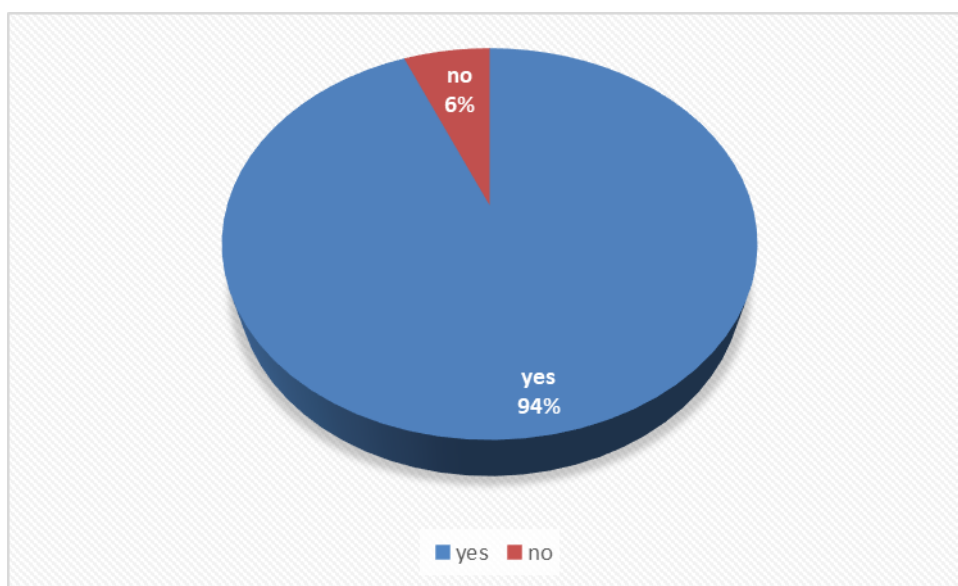


Figure 6: The students' preferred way of learning

Participants were asked whether they have improved their speaking performance after the used method or if they were still at the same level. Figure 5 shows that the majority of students with the percentage of 94% affirm that blended learning with oral expression is regarded as an effective strategy to enhance their speaking performance. However, student with a percentage of 6.3% did not find any enhancement in adopting this method. The possible reason of such results could be their attitude towards the used method. Whereas, students who followed the teachers' instructions and used the given instruments as it should be become better, and their performance got enhanced.

If yes, in which way?

- I become familiar with some information.
- All of us have the same ideas.
- I can know what is being studied tomorrow and that helped me a lot in preparing well for my speech.
- I become more active.

- It makes the speaker more confident.
- More knowledgeable.
- The way that the teacher adopted helped us to improve our skills.
- The oral expression helps enhance speaking.

If no, justify.

There is no justification.

7. How do you evaluate blended learning with oral expression presentation?

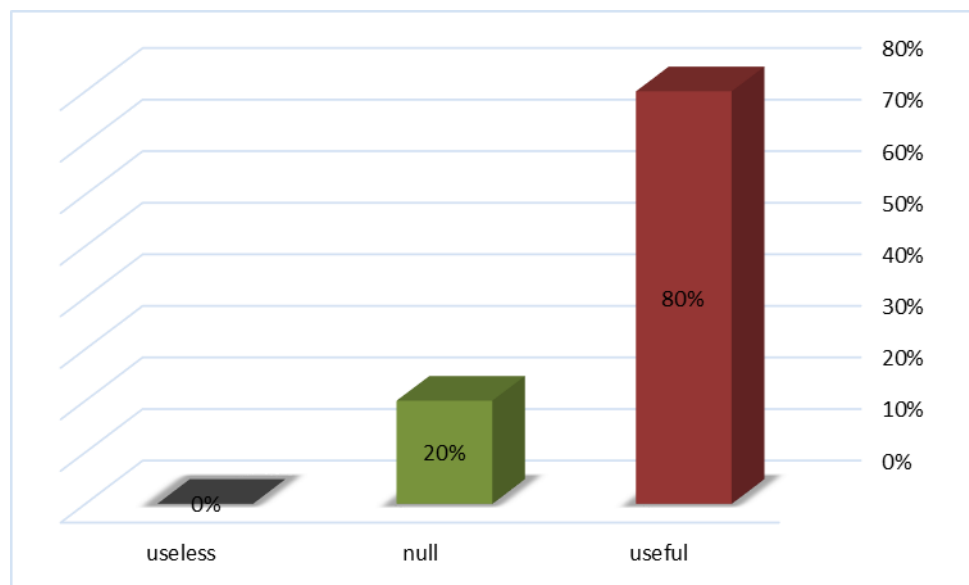


Figure 7: The students' opinions about oral expression in the blended learning system

Figure 6 shows that the majority of the study participants (80%) responded with "useful", indicating that they have benefited from blended learning. Students with a percentage of (20%) answered with "null", which means that they did not find any change between blended learning and traditional learning. However, no student considered blended learning with oral expression as a useful method. The answers show that the majority valued the blended learning system implementation in oral expression which indicates that students were interested with the used method and they got benefits from it.

8. What are the main advantages of blended learning?

- Blended learning enables the student to access the materials from anywhere at any time.
- There are a lot, the most important of which is the division of work between home and university, and this reduces a great deal of fatigue. Getting rid of the old routine which we have been working on for years has exhausted us.
- Have a lot of information also to improve your language.
- Learners can control the pace of their learning, different people learn different things in different ways, flipping the classroom improves comprehension, and improve outcomes with blended learning.
- Easy.
- We can read the idea more than one time.
- Help us in our speaking performance.

The students' answers focus mainly on two ideas which are having extra information about the topic and getting access to the information whenever they want. This indicates that students' difficulties are having a limited vocabularies which is a hindrance to the students' performance the limited time inside the classroom.

9. Do you think that your speaking skill has been enhanced with blended learning?

Options	Yes	No
Number of students	16	0
%	100%	0%

Table 3: The student's opinions about their speaking level with blended learning

The findings of this question reveal students with a percentage of 100% answered with "yes". This shows that students assume that their speaking skill has been enhanced during the

blended learning system and the used method aided them to be more active inside the classroom and competent. This indicates that blended learning has a positive effect on the students' progress in their speaking performance. Although in the previous questions there are some students who evaluated the blended learning with oral expression as null but in, nevertheless, they admit that they become more active and competent during this system.

Justify.

- I performed better than the previous times.
- My performance in this time I was have much ideas.
- Because I focused on speaking and writing.
- Yes, because it is a new system and I liked it.
- Because in the first time I hated the day that I have chosen the English as a branch.
- The level of my skill developed from the beginning of the year and now there is a big difference.
- L learn from my mistakes when I practice speaking.
- Because it improved my speaking level and my pronunciation as well.

3.2.3. Discussion of Students' Questionnaire

Based on the questionnaire's findings which were distributed to first-year students, for the sake of carrying out our studies. We assert that a large number of students value blended learning as a way of learning because they recognized that their speaking level become well. Similarly, they appreciate the used method which is based on posting videos and texts via email and believe that it is more beneficial than traditional learning. Moreover, the target group expressed a preference for face-to-face learning and blended learning over pure online learning. The students' answers are based on their need for the teacher's guidance and the facilitation provided by the instructor inside the classroom. Furthermore, blended learning was useful and

beneficial for the vast majority of students because it frequently allows them to watch and recognize the ideas in their own way which makes them feel that they are self-directed students.

The majority of students admit that their main barrier to participation is shyness; however, after using the blended learning system, some students reported that they became more confident. To summarize, the results of the students' questionnaire show that first-year students preferred blended learning over online learning and consider it as a beneficial and effective way to foster their speaking skills and improve their oral performance.

3.3. Teachers' interview

The teachers' interview was carefully selected as the third data gathering tool to obtain the instructors' perception about improving the students' speaking skill via blended learning.

3.3.1. The Sample

In order to promote information regarding the research topic, an interview was made with five teachers of oral expression who have experienced the blended learning approach during their teaching process. The teachers were chosen as a sample due to their adoption of blended learning. Teachers' feedback is very important for the purpose of the present study.

3.3.2. Description of the Interview

With our teachers, we conducted an unstructured interview in which we questioned an open-ended questions to our interviewees.

The interview questions were sent by email to our teachers whose already experienced the blended classroom to get more authentic and honest responses. Four questions were included in the interview. Some questions seek to determine whether EFL students at Mohammed Khider University of Biskra enhanced their speaking skill during this approach and to investigate the teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of implementing blended learning on the students' speaking performance. Others questions were designed to explore their thoughts

about the main changes that appeared on the students speaking performance. To keep the teachers' identities private for the sake of the research validity. We have regarded each teacher with a letter, for instance teacher 1 with "A", teacher 2 "B", teacher 3 "C", teacher 4 "D" and teacher 5 "E".

3.3.3. Results Analysis and Interpretation.

Question01: From your experience with blended learning, do you think this approach has a positive effect on the students' performance in oral expression?

Teachers.	Responses.
Teacher A	Yes, it depends on the nature of the topic.
Teacher B	Yes, for students who take it seriously and did their best.
Teacher C	Yes, it has a great positive effect and the prove is that they become more active and ask about the topic with a full interest.
Teacher D	For me yes, because my students become more active and participate without hesitating.
Teacher E	It depends on the students' interest with the topic.

Table7 : The Teachers' Perceptions about the Effectiveness of Blended Learning on the Students' Oral Performance.

Table 7 represents the teachers' perceptions about the effectiveness of blended learning on the student's oral performance. It is noticeable that all teachers argue that blended learning has a positive effect on the students' performance in oral expression. All respondents answered to the first question and clarified their answers. Two teachers asserted that their students become more active inside the classroom and they participate without any hesitation. Furthermore, another two teachers instructors believe that the blended learning effectiveness is related with

the students' interest with the topic. The last interviewee asserted that blended learning has a positive effect on the students' oral performance only if they take it seriously and make efforts. We conclude that blended learning has a positive effect but with different point of view for teachers. The majority of teachers were confident about the positive effect of this approach on the students' performance in oral expression due to many reasons such as: the blended learning provides ultimate flexibility in presenting content. Increase convenience over how and when the students participate in the classroom.

Question02: How do you evaluate the students' speaking skill development via blended learning (i.e., positive or negative).

Teachers.	Responses.
Teacher A	Positive when taken seriously by learners.
Teacher B	Of course positive.
Teacher C	For diligent students positive and for the lazy ones there is no development.
Teacher D	Positive, when they take it seriously.
Teacher E	In most cases it is positive.

Table8 : Evaluation of the students' speaking skill development via blended learning.

Almost all the interview participants affirmed that the student speaking skill develop positively through blended learning. Teacher "A" and "D" evaluated positively only if it took seriously by students. Besides, teacher "B" answer with "positive of course" without any clarification. Teacher "C" claimed that "for diligent students is positive and for the lazy ones there is no development" and this goes for the same vein of teacher "A" and "D". Teacher "E"

affirmed that the students' speaking skill development via blended learning in most cases positive may be because of the seriousness of the majority of students. Consequently, we conclude that if students follow the teachers' instructions seriously no doubt that they will enhance their speaking skill. The results obtained from this question displays to what extent does the speaking skill development via blended learning. Hence, they agree that the students' achievement in speaking was influenced by the used methods

Question03: what are the main changes in your students' performance that you have observed during the blended learning approach?

Teachers.	Options.
Teacher A.	Cooperative work and more motivated especially when they like the topic.
Teacher B.	During their performance, the majority of my students become fluent and pronounce the word correctly.
Teacher C.	My students become more confident and motivated.
Teacher D.	Having more vocabularies and pronounce correct words.
Teacher E.	Less shyness and more confident.

Table9 : The Main Changes in the Students' Performance during the Blended Learning.

The question elicited differing responses from the five interviewees. Some argued that their students become more confident and motivated especially when the topic is one of their interest; for example, instructor "A", "C" and "E" declared respectively "more motivated especially when they like the topic", "My students become more confident and motivated", "more confident". However, teacher "B" and teacher "D" observed that their student performed

fluently unusually and pronounce correct words during their performance. Besides, they acquired new vocabularies. Finally, the findings of this question prove that students have enhanced positively during the blended learning approach. The outcomes show that the perspective of the majority of teachers were exposed to deal with the changes observed during the blended learning approach; they claimed that students exposed to blended learning improved their academic achievement and leveled-up their scores with those students non-exposed to blended learning.

Question04: Did you notice any change (positive/negative) in the way of performance in oral session before and after covid-19?

Teachers.	Options.
Teacher A.	Positive and negative, ie, with some students it was positive, and with others it was negative.
Teacher B.	When using the blended learning, it was positive, but before implementing this approach it was much more negative.
Teacher C.	After covid-19 there is a positive change.
Teacher D.	I think it is in between and there is no change.
Teacher E.	Before integrating face-to-face approach with online learning it was negative.

Table10: The Changes that Occurred on the Students' Performance after Covid-19.

Three interviewees stated in their feedback that after covid-19 there is a positive change. Teacher "B", "C" and " E" they mean that after adopting the blended learning approach they have observed a positive change in their students' performance. However, teacher "A" declared

that "with some students it was positive and with others it was negative" and this opinion is in line with the opinion of teacher "D". Therefore, we can deduce that covid-19 does not make any change in the students' performance before and after its appearance.

3.3.4. Discussion of the Results

To summarize, the current study intends to investigate the effectiveness of blended learning on EFL students' speaking skills during covid-19. As a result, it was able to propose a useful method that helps EFL students perform effectively and improve their speaking ability. As a result, the used method was designed and presented as a tool that allows students to improve their speaking skills and become more competent in oral sessions.

Since the information was collected, reviewed, and analyzed using multiple sources of data (three data collection methods) and figures, the four research questions have been answered and the two alternative hypotheses have been validated. The most recent findings from the analysis of the three data collection tools were overwhelming positive.

Conclusion.

Eventually, the present chapter was devoted to the practical field required to carry out our studies. We picked different data gathering tools: classroom observation, students' questionnaire and an interview with oral expression module teachers. From the gained information and the results obtained we can deduce that blended learning has a positive effect on first-year EFL students speaking skill and it valued from the two sides instructors and understudies. The acclaimed the used beneficial method during the blended learning system. Consequently, the findings we analyzed for the sake of answering the conducted research questions and confirm the validity of our proposed hypotheses.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion.

To reiterate, we intended to examine the impact of blended learning on EFL students' speaking skill during covid-19. Our study consists of three different chapters. The first two chapters focused on the theoretical framework about speaking skill and blended learning respectively. The first chapter addressed different parts that concern the speaking skill, such as definition, significance, components, difficulties, and other aspects. On the other hand, the second chapter was devoted to blended learning as a second variable. We produced various information related to blended learning, including the definition, components, models, techniques, advantages, as well as challenges and other elements.

In the third chapter, at the very beginning we conducted a classroom observation with our first-year sample group in the oral expression session to explore the difference between the students' speaking performance before and after integrating the traditional learning with online learning. Besides, we submitted an online questionnaire for our target group to elaborate their opinions about their oral performance when we used blended learning approach. Furthermore, we interviewed five oral expressions' teachers to get their feedback about their students' oral performance during the blended learning. The practical section attempts to provide analysis and discussion of the obtained findings from the three different tools. Consequently, our findings corresponds us to validate and affirm the research hypothesis.

Ultimately, this study illustrates the role of integrating face-to-face and online leaning in EFL classes. It allows students to engage accurately inside and outside the classroom. Consequently, students become more motivated and active during their oral classroom. Finally, from what we have analyzed and discussed above, we can say that adopting the blended learning approach in EFL classroom contributes in the students' oral level

improvement and raises their speaking competence so that we can confirm our hypothesis that Blended learning aids students to know more about the given topic before their performance so that they will be more active, enthusiastic and competent in the speaking session and their speaking skill will be enhanced during their blended learning and

Pedagogical Recommendations.

From what we have found from the obtained data, the following pedagogical suggestions are proposed:

For first-year EFL students:

- ✓ Students are encouraged to prove their collaborative effort with their teachers in order for the BL method to be successfully implemented; they must interfere actively.
- ✓ Students must follow the teacher's directions in order to complete their activities successfully.
- ✓ EFL students must recognize the significance of adopting the blended learning which allows them to expand their vocabulary variety and therefore enhance their communicative interaction

For Teachers:

- ✓ Teachers must select the best instructions that suites the students' interests and abilities.
- ✓ Teachers are supposed to provide their students with a feedback about the topic that will be discussed whether via online instruments or during the class session.
- ✓ Teachers are required to innovate new methods and strategies to keep their students motivated and active.

Limitation of the Study

As junior researchers, we have observed that first-year students struggle in the new situation of study in blended learning especially when it comes to oral expression and speaking. Therefore, we predict to be limited by some impediments for instance what are the possible activities used in enhancing the students speaking skill. Despite, this situation (the must of studying in a blended classroom) suddenly coming, we are obliged to find a quick solution that aids students to enhance their speaking abilities.

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Appendices

Appendices
Appendix 01

Classroom observation tecklist.

1. Clsroom atmosphere.

The needed observation.	Yes	No
Encouraging environment to the students' participation.		
Tables arranged to promote active engagement.		
Not well orgnized classroom.		

2. The students' speaking performance.

	Yes.	No.
The gained previous knowledge from videos improved the students' performance.		
Active and engaged students.		

Fluent and employing various vocabularies.		
Effective communication.		
Uninterested students.		

3. The students' attitude towards the given videos.

	Yes.	No.
Students are interested to the provided videos.		
Students followed the given instructions.		
Students tend disengaged and uninterested.		

Extra notes:

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Appendix 2

Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

This questionnaire attempts to gather information about the student's speaking performance during the blended learning system. We would be thankful if you could answer the following questions to help us in our research.

Section One: Speaking Skill.

1. Which skill is the most challenging on?

-Listening

-Speaking

-Reading

-Writing

2. Do you seek to enhance your oral performance at home?

-Yes

-No

How.....
.....
.....
.....

3. How often do you participate in speaking activities?

-Never

-Rarely

-Sometimes

-always

If never or rarely, why?

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

If sometimes or always, why?

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

Section Two: Blended Learning.

4. During your blended learning, do you prefer?

-Online Learning.

-Face-to-face Learning.

-Blending face-to-face with online learning.

5. How has blended learning helped you in enhancing your speaking?

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

6. Blended learning with oral expression, does this way enhance your speaking abilities?

-Yes.

-No

If yes, in which way?

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.....
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.....

If no, justify?

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.....

7. How do you evaluate blended learning with oral expression presentation?

-Useful.

-Null.

-Useless.

8. What are the main advantages of blended learning?

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.....
.....

9. Do you think that your speaking skill has been enhanced with blended learning?

-Yes.

-No.

Justify.

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

Appendix 3

The Teachers' Interview Questions

- 1. From your experience with blended learning, do you think this approach has a positive effect on the students' performance in oral expression?**
- 2. How do you evaluate the students' speaking skill development via blended learning (i.e., positive or negative).**
- 3. What are the main changes in your students' performance that you have observed during the blended learning approach?**
- 4. Did you notice any change (positive/negative) in the way of performance in oral session before and after covid-19?**

ملخص الدراسة

خلال كوفيد-19، تبنت العديد من الجامعات التعلم المدمج الذي يجمع بين نهجين مختلفين هما التعلم وجهاً لوجه والتعلم عبر الإنترنت. لذلك، تسعى الدراسة الحالية إلى إظهار كيف يمكن لطلبة السنة الأولى ل م د في جامعة محمد خيضر، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية تعزيز مهارات التحدث لديهم من خلال التعلم المدمج كنظام جديد للتعلم وتهدف إلى تقديم طريقة قد تدفع طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ليكونوا أكثر كفاءة ومهارة في حديثهم. في هذه الدراسة، استخدمنا طرقاً متعددة تعتمد على استخدام ثلاث أدوات لجمع البيانات، واستبيان تم إجراؤه على ستة عشر طالباً في السنة الأولى من اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وملاحظة الفصل الدراسي في الفصل وجهاً لوجه وفي الفصل المختلط أيضاً، ومقابلة مع خمسة من معلمي التعبير الشفهي الذين استخدموا هذا النهج. كفرضية لهذه الدراسة، لقد افترضنا ما يلي، سيتم تحسين مهارة الطلبة في التحدث أثناء نظام التعلم المدمج. علاوة على ذلك، يساعد التعلم المدمج الطلاب على معرفة المزيد عن الموضوع المحدد قبل أداء التحدث حتى يكونوا أكثر نشاطاً وكفاءة في جلسة التحدث. باستخدام الأدوات السابقة، تُظهر النتائج أنه تم تحسين مهارات التحدث لدى الطلاب وأصبحوا أكثر نشاطاً داخل الفصل الدراسي. علاوة على ذلك، يصبحون أكثر كفاءة ولديهم معلومات إضافية أثناء العرض التقديمي. أخيراً، تم استخدام التعلم المدمج كنهج بديل لمواصلة برنامج التعلم خلال covid-19 مع الحفاظ على تقدم الطالب في دراستهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعلم المدمج، طلاب السنة الأولى في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، مهارة التحدث.

