The Effect of Blended Instruction on Oral Expression Classes

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ABSTRACT:

 In the main, language teachers' target is to productively tackle the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The essential focus in teaching oral expression for EFL settings is principally the receptive and productive skills. Language teachers need to take into consideration the improvement of their learners' aptitudes to listen, understand, and speak the target language. Nowadays, this focus needs to be adapted in a blended instruction after The Covid 19 health calamity. For that reason, the main objective of this work is to investigate the effect of blended instruction on Oral Expression courses in developing as well as improving the teachers' lesson plans, objectives, and achievements. To conduct our study, we constructed a questionnaire for ten Oral Expression teachers at the Department of Letters and English at the University of 'Kasdi Merbah', Ouargla ; aiming at unveiling their attitudes about the efficiency of the blended instruction and their approach to implement along with develop the students' speaking and listening skills. With reference to the gathered results from the teachers' questionnaire, we conclude that there is reason to judge the positive efficiency of blended instruction in facilitating and improving the quality of oral expression classes.

KEYWORDS: Blended Instruction, Teaching Oral Expression, Speaking skills, Listening Skills

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ملخص:

على الأغلب، هدف معلّمي اللغة هو معالجة المهارات اللغوية الأربع: الاستماع، التحدث، القراءة والكتابة بشكل فعال. التركيز الأساسي في تدريس التعبير الشفهي لإعدادات اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية هو بشكل أساسي على المهارات الاستيعابية والإنتاجية. يحتاج معلمو اللغة إلى مراعاة تحسين قدرات الطلبة للاستماع إلى اللغة المستهدفة، فهمها والتحدث بها. في الوقت الحاضر بعد الكارثة الصحية كورونا ، يجب تكييف هذا التركيز عن طريق إدماج التعليم الحضوري والتعليم عبر الإنترنت، فإن الهدف الرئيسي من هذا العمل هو التحقيق في تأثير التعليمات المختلطة على أقسام التعبير الشفوي في تطوير وتحسين خطط دروس المعلمين وأهدافهم وإنجازاتهم. لإجراء دراستنا ، قمنا ببناء استبيان لعشرة مدرسين للتعبير الشفهي في قسم الآداب واللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة "قصدي مرباح" بورقلة ؛ بهدف الكشف عن مواقفهم حول كفاءة التعليم المدمج ونهجهم في التنفيذ جنبا إلى جنب مع تطوير مهارات التحدث والاستماع لدى الطلاب. بالإشارة إلى النتائج التي تم جمعها من استبيان المعلمين ، نستنتج أن هناك سببا للحكم على الكفاءة الإيجابية للتعليم المختلط في تسهيل وتحسين جودة فصول التعبير الشفوي.

كلمات دالة: التدريس المختلط، تعليم التعبير الشفهي ، مهارات التحدث ، مهارات الاستماع.

1.Introduction:

Developing the students' speaking skills is an inevitable perplexing step foreign language teachers may encounter since it necessitates certain conditions to reach a native-like mastery of the target language. To do so, learners need to interact with each other in an approximately authentic way as in real life (Allwright, 1984). In other words, not only teachers must communicate with their students using the target language, but also ensure real life situations among students to interact with each other to guarantee a positive productive practice of the target language (Baker, 2000).

For that reason, Nunan (1991, p39) states that "to most people, mastering the art of speaking is the single most important aspect of learning a second or a foreign language, and success is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the language". In the light of this, the teacher's vital phase in developing the students' speaking skills is by creating classroom opportunities for learners to share ideas, practice the target language, and get industrious feedback for future interactions (Walsh, 2002).

2.Teaching Oral Expression at the University Level:

Teaching English at the University level involves the use of specific modules that ensure the delivery of the needed input by using the target language. Indeed, every module is as important as the other one and they do complete each other. Oral Expression module is vital in permitting the students to practice as well as to develop the mastery of the target language. The combination of the speaking and the listening skills is the groundwork for the success of this module as they are considered to be the keystone for the achievement of communicative proficiency. Oral expression teachers tend to use different activities to develop the previous skills such as: debates, role plays, problem solving, free discussions, conversations, songs and games…etc. The input of the target language is presented via the former activities to ensure real life occasions for authentic-like communication. At this point, the Oral Expression teacher endeavors to monitor the learners debating topics, performing tasks, and sharing

thoughts in the target language through well-structured activities (Meddour, 2006).

In keeping with Osada (2004), Listening is a straightforward language skill that needs to be developed since 80% of what we know is acquired through listening. The prominence of listening in Oral Expression classes lies in allowing learners -through this skill- to understand, deduce and evaluate meaning of messages from their own perception. Consistent with this, Sen (2013, p33) sheds light on the strength of the speaking skills in the success of Oral Expression classes by stating the following points:
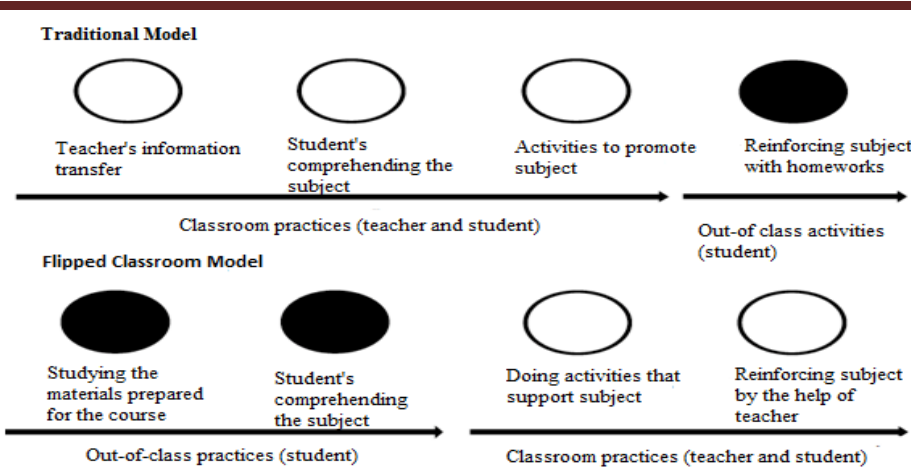
- It helps in building rapport with teachers, classmates, and people with whom to interact using English.
- It helps in comprehension and understanding assignments; thus, answering questions.
- Listening involves reduced forms of language that sometimes cannot all be covered in class lessons such as "I wanna play".
- Listening encompasses a variety of ways of information delivery that is, in some cases, difficult for teachers to transmit using the other skills like subjects that are related to phonetics.
- Listening to various varieties of language permits second language learners to enrich their background about that language.

Bygate (Bygate ,1987) states that: 'Speaking is the vehicle par excellence of social solidarity, of social ranking, of professional advancement and of business. It is also the medium through which much language is learnt, and which for many is particularly conductive for learning. Perhaps, then, the teaching of speaking merits more thought'. Speaking plays a crucial role in Oral Expression classes for it empowers learners to communicate; hence, approximately most learners if not all are eager in learning to speak Ur (2012). For that reason, Oral Expression teachers lean towards the designing of specific activities to foster the learners 'accuracy and fluency since it is regarded as a factor to judge the development of the communicative proficiency (Scrivener, 2005).

Oral Expression teachers come across certain hindrances not only in designing lesson plans but also in maintaining learners' communication. Not all leaners are interested in sharing their thoughts, some feel powerless in providing correct statements, and others just feel hesitative which negatively disturb their oral communicative skills. Therefore, those factors obstruct the accomplishment of interaction among learners (Meddour, 2006). With the spread and development of technology new ways of teaching have been developed to facilitate teaching and learning. Blended instruction is among these innovative ways of teaching/learning simplification (Bushweller, 2011).

3.Blended Instruction:

Blended instruction is a model of an intermingled education which consists of two parts. First, there is a kind of an individual teaching online where students learn the content of the lesson, usually at home. Concerning the second part, during class time, students bring their homework to be corrected by their teachers and discuss together what has been presented online. Therefore, in the flipped classroom, a teacher interacting with students and students with each other is more emphasized than lecturing. (Nolan and Washington, 2013). Simply said the blended instruction is: "what is done at school done at home, homework done at home completed in class" (Bergmann and Sam, 2014, p29). This model has been first used in 2007 by chemistry teachers Jonathan Bergman and Aaron Sam from Woodland Park High School who recorded and broadcasted online lessons for their absent students and since then the terms reversed instruction, inverted classroom, flipped classroom and blended instruction have been on the surface (Bergmann and Sam, 2014 ,p44). The following figure illustrates the difference between the traditional model and the flipped one (Hamdan et al, 2013, p04).

Traditional Model

⬭	⬭	⬭	⬛
Teacher's information transfer	Student's comprehending the subject	Activities to promote subject	Reinforcing subject with homeworks

Classroom practices (teacher and student) →   Out-of class activities (student) →

Flipped Classroom Model

⬛	⬛	⬭	⬭
Studying the materials prepared for the course	Student's comprehending the subject	Doing activities that support subject	Reinforcing subject by the help of teacher

Out-of-class practices (student) →   Classroom practices (teacher and student) →

For this reason this model is said to emphasize a student-centered learning where students prepare themselves before class by watching videos, listening to podcasts, and going through articles to foster learning in and out the classroom (mull, 2012).

Since EFL traditional classes' flaws are perceived by the insufficient and restricted communication opportunities given to large class sizes of learners, different didactic methods need to be applied to recover this impediment; among them is the blended instruction (Mclean, 2012, p32). Teachers tend to be dominant in a traditional class, so teaching speaking is problematic because learners' ability to interact is limited. In this respect, providing a blended instruction allows language learners to be more dynamic, self-governing, and industrious (Roehl,Reddy, and Shannon 2013). This goes in parallel with what is offered in the blended class as Herreid and Schiller mention concerning its advantages (Herreid and Schiller ,2013, p62).

- More time can be spent with students about the original research

- Students are able to spend more time with scientific equipment that can only be used in the classroom

- Students' being able to easily follow the classes which they couldn't because of sport, conference activities

- Method pushes up student to think and study inside and outside the classroom

- Students' being more active in the learning process

- Students will participate to the learning environment more actively, and this will cause students to love the work they do.

4.Methods and Materials:

Nowadays at the university level in Algeria, teachers are asked to flip their classes i.e. blend between online and in person classes. For that reason, we attempt to view the efficiency of flipped classroom in implementing and fostering the speaking and listening. We intend to get the attitudes and feedback of ten university teachers from the university of Kasdi Merbah, Ouargla, on how they apply the blended instruction as well as how they could develop the students' communicative proficiency, using this model.

Our study will be guided by the following questions:

- How is the blended instruction prepared for?

- How is the learning process perceived by teachers in the blended classroom?

- What position do teachers hold to develop their students' speaking and listening skills in the blended classroom?

The Teachers' Questionnaire is presented through fifteen questions alienated into three sections. Section One, Lesson planning (Q1-Q5), aims to have insights on teachers' perspective in preparing for a blended class (Q1), and the responsibility they hold as a facilitator of learning (Q2), the approach they follow in planning and

presenting the lesson (Q3, Q4), how do they assess students in a blended class (Q5). Section Two, Classroom Practices (Q6-Q10), seeks to collect teachers' opinion about the nature of the learning process in a blended class (Q6, Q9),to inspect the teachers' self-reflection about students' reaction to this model of teaching (Q10). Section three (Q10-Q15), of Students' Performance and Engagement, aimed at collecting teachers' insights and perceptions on the relevance and importance of the blended classroom in increasing students' engagement in the learning process why (Q10, Q15).

5.Results and discussion:

Lesson planning: In planning lessons for the blended classroom:	YES	NO
I use technological materials	100%	0%
I take the role of a facilitator	100%	0%
I emphasize speaking and listening activities	70%	30%
I accentuate assessments that develop students' points of view towards the subject presented.	70%	30%

Table 1: Lesson planning

How has the blended model changed the way you prepare for lessons?

Here, teachers' answers hovered mainly around one answer 'teachers changed the way of preparing the lessons, became more concise in establishing the most important points to record'. They reported that, in a blended classroom the teacher is encouraged to shift away from the traditional way of just stockpiling learners with knowledge into thinking about new ways to just pave the way for the students to discover their learning needs to achieve higher levels of learning.

Classroom Practices: In the application of the blended classroom:	YES	NO
The speaking class is shifted to a learner-centered one	100%	0%
more speaking class time becomes available	80%	20%
Learning is more dynamic and practical	80%	20%
I meet the needs of individual students in speaking	80%	20%

Table2: Classroom Practices

How are the students responding to this model?

Most teachers agreed upon the fact that students were at ease in using the technology device since they come from a digital generation. Moreover, students are allowed to study at their own pace; whenever they feel ready they check the video online and they might pause and review at any time and this helps in improving their listening skills.

Students' Performance/Engagement: In the application of the blended classroom	YES	NO
The students' role in the class is more dynamic	80%	20%
Students are more engaged in debates	90%	10%
Students interact more between each other	90%	10%
Students demonstrate an increase in understanding and achievement in listening activities	80%	20%

Table 3: Students' Performance/Engagement

In your opinion, how effective is the blended classroom model in your oral expression classroom?

Some teachers emphasized the importance of video presentations in a blended class and how it helped in the learning process. Teachers reported the struggle they faced since many of them did not have a training in the model. Some teachers are not skilled in technology devices such as making a video

With reference to the gathered results from the Teachers' Questionnaire, we conclude that there is reason to judge that blended instruction may foster students speaking and listening skills when it is employed attentively. The results obtained from the study as well, will pave the way for future consideration to assist and train teachers how to benefit from a blended class in empowering learners with the needed skills to develop and improve the mastery of the foreign language.

6.Conclusion:

Based on the findings from the review of literature and the results obtained from the practical part, it has been demonstrated that the considerate practice of the blended classroom may foster learners' speaking and listening skills. Consequently, it is valuable to contemplate its application. It is also advisable to consider the factors contributing to the effective realization of the blended class as it promotes students' understanding, commitment, and accomplishment in oral expression classes. That is why, it is prudent for a qualified education system to sustain with the new situation, scrutinize and fix the flaws, as well as develop more advanced learning approaches for the benefit of our students.

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