

Impacts of Blended Instruction on Students' Autonomous Learning and Motivation to Practice Speaking Skills

Mengistu Burka Kilisa^{1,2*}, Mesfin Aberra Yimiru¹, Felekech G/Egziabher Abdi¹ and Kassa Mihiret Woldeyes¹

¹Department of English Language and Literature, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hawassa University, Hawassa, Sidaama Regional State, Ethiopia

² Language Stream, Teacher educator, Hawassa College of Teacher Education, Hawassa, Sidaama Regional State, Ethiopia

*Corresponding author, Email address: mengistuburka58@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigated the impact of blended learning on students' autonomous learning and motivation to practice speaking skills. The researchers used a quasi-experimental design involving two groups (experimental group and a control one). The participants were 66 Ethiopian students at Hawassa college of Teacher Education. The experimental group was subjected to the flex model of blended learning treatment whereas the control group was taught conventionally for three months. The data were collected through a learner autonomy questionnaire and interviews. The researchers analyzed the quantitative data by using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics like t-test for, and the qualitative data using thematic analysis. The results demonstrated that the blended learning group had a higher level of autonomy and motivation to practice speaking skills after the intervention, whereas the increase in the level of autonomy of control group was not statistically significant. Thus, based on the findings, some implications of the study were formulated.

Keywords: Blended learning, autonomous learning, speaking skills, motivation,

1. Introduction

In recent years, the landscape of education has undergone significant transformations, largely due to the integration of technology in teaching methodologies. Blended instruction, which combines traditional face-to-face learning with online components, has emerged as a prominent approach in various educational contexts (Anthony Jr et al., 2019). This instructional approach offers flexibility, personalized learning experiences, and the potential to cater to different learning preferences among students (Rivera, 2019).

The ability to learn is a crucial feature of human being. Autonomous learning, which has gained importance in the context of 21st-century education, is defined as the skill of students to take control of their own learning practices, including goal setting, resources selection, and evaluating their progress (Masouleh & Jooneghani, 2012). Similarly, this concept emphasizes the ability of individuals to manage their own learning, choose methods for acquiring knowledge, and evaluate their progress independently (Higgs, 2012a). As learners are encouraged to become independent

learners, the need for effective strategies that foster autonomy is principal (Erickson & Wharton-McDonald, 2019).

In relation to this, research shows that when students involve in autonomous learning, they are more likely to improve critical thinking skills, develop their problem-solving abilities, and implement a proactive approach to their studies (Higgs, 2012b). According to (Baker-Malungu, 2024), when learners are provided with the flexibility to choose how and when they involve with learning materials, they are more likely to enhance a sense of possession over their educational experiences. Moreover, the online components of blended learning often encourage collaborative learning opportunities, where students can interact with peers and teachers, more supporting their autonomous learning journey (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

Furthermore, motivation plays a pivotal role in language learning, mainly in enhancing oral skills (Aleidan, 2024). Speaking skills is often seen as one of the most challenging aspects of foreign language learning due to its dependence on both cognitive and social factors. Motivation serves as the driving force that pushes learners toward mastering this language skill, influencing the students' persistence and engagement in practice. Nevertheless, without adequate motivation, learners may struggle to overcome challenges, leading to frustration and weakened progress. According to (Kassem, 2018), blended learning, by combining interactive online tools and collaborative platforms with in-person learning, can potentially improve learners' motivation to practice speaking skills. Thus, fostering a supportive environment that develops motivation can meaningfully improve the learning experience, making speaking a new language more pleasant and effective.

Although there is growing body of literature on blended learning and its benefits, there is limited research specifically addressing its effects on students' independent learning and motivation, specifically in the context of practicing speaking skills. The aim of this study is to fill this gap by investigating how blended learning impacts these critical aspects of language learning. Understanding the interplay between blended learning approach, student autonomy, and motivation to practice speaking can provide valuable insights for educators seeking to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching practices and improve student learning outcomes. These insights can play a role in enhancing foreign language learning in general and practicing English language speaking skills in particular (Susanti, 2017).

Different studies indicate that many students struggle with autonomous learning due to a lack of awareness with online educational tools and resources. For example, the study by (Brenya, 2024) highlighted that learners in developing countries often face problems in navigating online platforms, which can hinder their skill to take charge of their learning. As we have explained in our previous work (Kilisa et al., 2025) and other scholars explored, this issue is compounded by infrastructural challenges, such as limited internet access and insufficient technological resources, which create inequalities in learning opportunities (Zhou & Zhang, 2024). In addition, the work of (McHone, 2020) found that students in lower-resource settings often lack the essential support systems to engage efficiently with blended learning.

Moreover, in-person pedagogical approaches prevalent in many developing countries often emphasize rote learning and teacher-centered methods, which can hinder the enhancement of autonomous learning skills. Regardless of these challenges, there is a lack of comprehensive

studies that examine how blended learning specifically impacts students' independent learning in developing countries. A systematic review by (Cao, 2023) emphasized the need for further research to explore the nuances of blended learning in different contexts, especially in regions where conventional educational practices dominate. The present study therefore explores the impact of blended learning on students' autonomous learning and motivation to practice their speaking skills, contributing to the wider discourse on effective language teaching practices in an increasingly digital world, while aiming to answer the following research questions:

1. What impact does blended learning have on students' autonomous learning?
2. How does blended learning affect students' motivation to practice their speaking skills?
3. How do learners perceive blended learning in relation to its impact on their independent learning?

2. Literature Review

Blended learning, which combines in-person face-to-face learning with online learning approach, has gained important attention in educational research due to its potential to improve student engagement and learning outcomes. Blended learning is defined as an instructional approach that integrates conventional face-to-face teaching method with digital learning activities, characterized by accessibility, flexibility, and a variety of resources that increase the learning experience (Graham, 2006).

Autonomous learning refers to the ability of students to take control of their own learning processes, encompassing goal-setting, self-regulation, and independent study (Masouleh & Jooneghani, 2012). Basic indicators of autonomous learning include increased self-directed behavior, higher levels of initiative, and effective use of learning strategies (Papamitsiou & Economides, 2019). Blended instruction enhances independent learning by encouraging students to take charge of their educational experiences. In addition, blended learning environments provide opportunities for autonomous learning, as students can choose when and how to engage with course materials. The integration of online components encourages learners to develop essential skills such as time management, self-regulation, and critical thinking (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004).

On the other hand, motivation incorporates the internal and external factors that stimulate students to involve in learning activities. Motivation can be classified into intrinsic motivation, which is driven by personal interest and enjoyment in learning, and extrinsic motivation, which is driven by external rewards or forces (Klimova, 2011). The combination of online and face-to-face instruction allows for varied learning experiences that cater to different learning styles that can enhance learners' motivation (Dziuban et al., 2018). Additionally, the interactive nature of blended learning has been shown to increase student motivation and engagement, and increased engagement often transforms to higher academic achievement and a greater likelihood of students taking initiative in their learning. Even though blended learning presents many benefits, it also poses challenges. Some learners struggle with the self-directed nature of online learning, leading to feelings of isolation and disengagement (Rienties & Toetenel, 2016). Teachers need to provide sufficient support and resources to help students transition to this learning model effectively.

Language learning is an ongoing journey that extends beyond the classroom, both in theory and practice. Therefore, fostering learner autonomy is essential in language education (Benson, 2001). To enhance students' language skills, they need to engage actively both in and out of the classroom. The concept of learner autonomy allows students to take control of their own learning, which may include educational activities without direct teacher supervision (Benson, 2016). In this environment, learners set their own objectives and employ self-developed strategies to achieve them, leading to more efficient and effective independent study. As this involvement can lead to deeper and higher-quality learning experiences, it is imperative for learners to assume responsibility for their education (Najeeb, 2013). Consequently, it can be concluded that the freedom to learn can be nurtured both inside and outside the classroom.

The notions of independent and autonomous learning are increasingly significant in language instruction and are often interconnected (Little, 2007). Independent language learning include maximizing learner choice, prioritizing individual student needs over those of teachers or institutions, and granting students the freedom to make their own decisions. This method is learner-centered, recognizing students as unique individuals with specific needs and rights who can take charge of their own education. Independent learners must develop the skill to engage with, communicate in, and benefit from learning environments that are not directly mediated by teachers (Benson, 2016).

The essential pedagogical principles underpinning autonomy in language learning are learner involvement (encouraging students to take ownership of their learning), learner reflection (helping students improve critical thinking skills as they plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning), and appropriate use of the target language (utilizing the target language as the primary medium of instruction) (Little, 2007). As noted by Chia et al., (2016) autonomous learners are those who are willing to learn collaboratively and can reflect on their learning through an understanding of the learning process. These learners comprehend the objectives of their learning programs, accept responsibility for their education, participate in setting learning goals, take initiative in planning and executing learning activities, and regularly assess their learning and its effectiveness. In essence, it is agreed that practicing learner autonomy requires insight, a positive attitude, reflective capacity, and a willingness to proactively manage oneself and interact with others (Collier, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

Regarding the theoretical base of this study, the researchers followed the eclectic theory. Eclectic theory of language teaching provides a comprehensive and flexible approach to understanding the effects of blended learning on students' autonomous learning and motivation to practice speaking skills. This approach is particularly relevant in the context of the increasing integration of technology in educational practices, as it allows teachers to draw from different methodologies and strategies to meet the various needs of learners (Kumar, 2013). This theory emphasizes the use of various teaching methodologies to meet the diverse needs of learners, combining face-to-face interactions with online resources. As a result, this study utilized connectivism, constructivism, self-determination theory, and the community of inquiry framework to examine the impact of blended instruction on students' autonomous learning and motivation for practicing speaking skills.

Connectivism expands on this concept by emphasizing the role of networks and digital tools in the learning process (Foroughi, 2015). Constructivist theory advocates that students construct their knowledge through interactions with their environment, while self-determination theory emphasizes intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Bada & Olusegun, 2015) and (Zimmerman, 1990). Blended learning develops intrinsic motivation by providing learners with choices in their learning activities, fostering a sense of ownership. In addition, the community of inquiry framework highlights the interplay of social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence in online and blended learning environments (Zhang, 2020). Understanding these interconnected theories helps educators design effective blended learning environments that improve student engagement, motivation, and proficiency in speaking.

Conceptual Framework

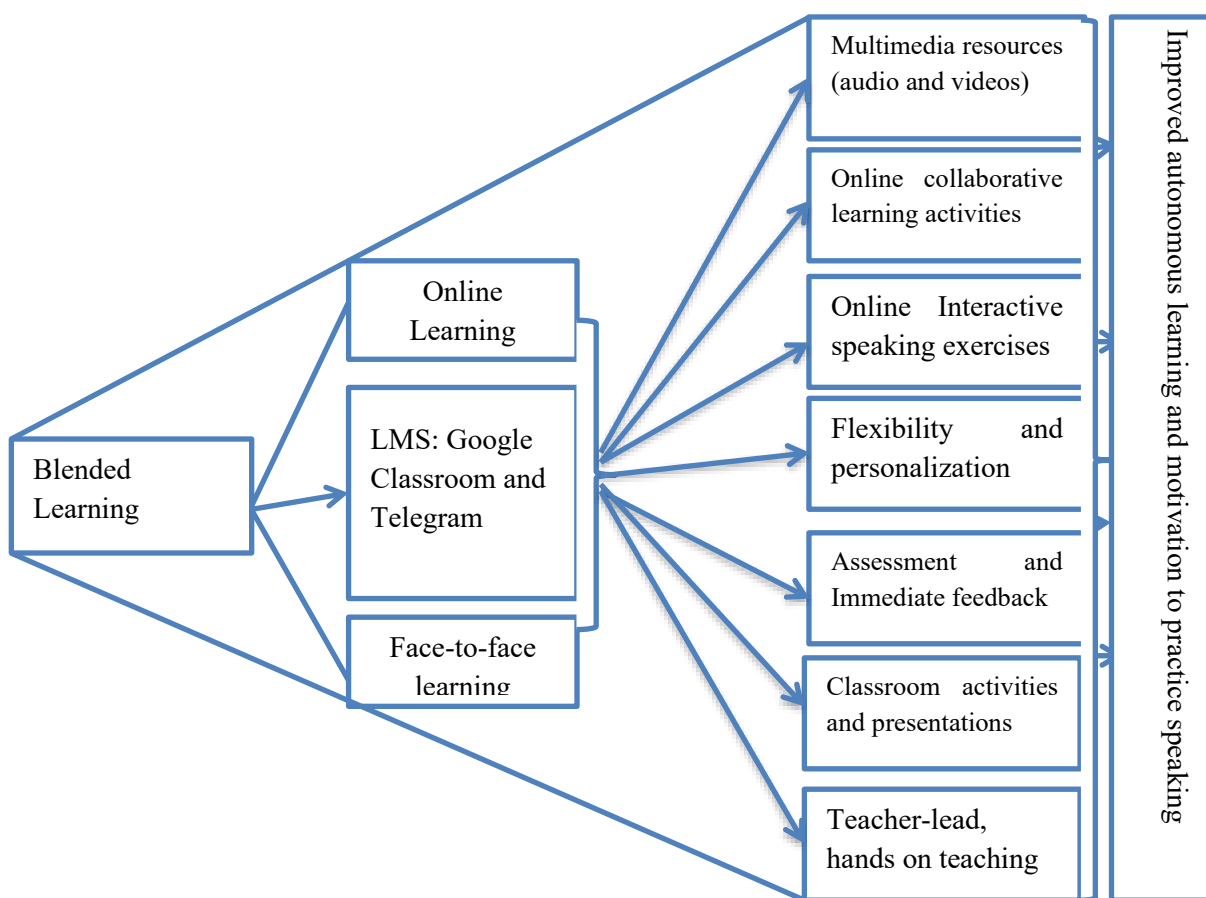


Figure1: Conceptual framework (deigned by researchers)

As shown in the diagram above, the conceptual framework for this study illustrates the relationships between variables like blended learning, autonomous learning, and motivation in the context of learning speaking skills. In this framework, blended instruction enhances autonomous learning by providing an environment that permits learners to choose their learning tracks, use various resources, and take-part in self-directed activities. This flexibility improves

self-regulation and initiative among students. Moreover, the varied and interactive nature of blended learning can boost both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Thus, by integrating engaging online activities and opportunities for collaboration, students are more likely to feel motivated to participate in oral tasks.

Furthermore, as students develop their autonomous learning skills; their intrinsic motivation is likely to increase. Once learners feel in control of their educational experiences, they are more inclined to engage actively and persist in challenging speaking tasks (Aubrey et al., 2022). This conceptual framework highlights the dynamic interactions among blended instruction, autonomous learning, and motivation, underscoring the importance of designing effective blended learning environments that foster student engagement, autonomy, and motivation, eventually developing language learning.

3. Methods

This study aims to investigate the effects of blended learning on students' autonomous learning specifically in the context of communicative English language skills II. Utilizing a quasi-experimental research design, the study involved two intact groups of students enrolled in communicative English courses at Hawassa College of Teacher Education in Ethiopia. Purposive selection was identified these groups, with one class serving as the experimental group, receiving blended learning instruction, and the other as the control group, which followed conventional face-to-face teaching methods.

A total sample size of 66 students (31 comparison group participants and 35 treatment group participants), were recruited and data were gathered through questionnaire and interview. The researchers used pre-survey as pretest and post-surveys as a posttest to evaluate effects of blended learning on students' autonomous learning. The questionnaires, used for investigating self-directed learning, motivation, and participants' perception were designed in Likert-scale, and adapted from (Ruelens, 2019), (Najeeb, 2013) and (Peng & Fu, 2021). The item reliability was checked by pilot test and calculating Cronbach's alpha test which results .82; indicating the strong predictive power of the questionnaire items.

To complement the quantitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of students from experimental group. This qualitative approach allows for deeper exploration of students' experiences and perceptions regarding blended learning and the development of their autonomous learning skills. Finally, the researchers used t-test and descriptive statistics on SPSS version 27 to analyze the quantitative data, and thematic analysis for the qualitative data.

The research procedure will unfold in several phases. During the preparation phase, which lasts one month, assessment tools were developed and validated, and ethical approval was obtained from Hawassa University. The implementation phase took three months, beginning with pre-test administration to both groups to assess initial autonomous learning practice and communicative English skills. Then the experimental group was engaged in a blended learning program combining online resources and face-to-face instruction, while the control group was taught with conventional methods. Following the intervention, a posttest (post-survey) was conducted to measure any changes in speaking skills. Afterward, questionnaires were distributed, and interviews were conducted to gather qualitative data. Finally, the researchers' analyzed data

using statistical software (SPSS version 27) for quantitative and thematic analysis for qualitative data.

The researchers implemented a blended learning intervention over a 12-week period to enhance students' autonomous learning and motivation to practice English speaking skills. The treatment group was provided with access to essential online resources, including video tutorials and audio materials, delivered via Google Classroom and a dedicated Telegram page. This approach aimed to foster personalized learning paths, allowing students to utilize self-assessment tools such as online quizzes and surveys to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Flexible learning audio and video materials were introduced, enabling students to choose topics and resources that aligned with their interests, thereby tailoring their learning experience.

In addition to the online resources, the treatment group engaged in a series of interactive activities designed to facilitate engagement and speaking practice. These included discussion forums for idea sharing, real-time speaking practice sessions and task-based activities such as role-playing scenarios and project-based learning. Peer feedback and collaboration were incorporated through peer review sessions and group discussions, providing a safe space for practice and interaction. In contrast, the control group took only in-person instruction within the classroom, without access to the blended learning resources. By combining these instructional strategies and activities, the research aimed to investigate whether the blended learning environment significantly enhances students' autonomy and motivation to practice English speaking skills.

4. Results

4.1 Analysis of Quantitative Data

4.1.1 Effects of blended learning on students' Autonomous Learning

Independent Samples Test of Pre-survey							
Aspects of Autonomous Learning	t-test for Equality of Means						
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Identifying needs and setting goal	1.081	64	.284	.08272	.07655	-.07020	.23564
Selecting learning resource and material	1.618	64	.111	.12995	.08034	-.03054	.29045
Organizing learning process & resources	-.765	64	.447	-.06221	.08133	-.22468	.10026
Monitoring learning progress	1.698	64	.094	.17327	.10207	-.03063	.37718
Seeking social assistance	1.887	64	.064	.18272	.09683	-.01072	.37616
Evaluating learning outcomes	-.407	64	.686	-.03710	.09122	-.21933	.14514
Transferring learnt skills to other context	-.434	64	.666	-.03779	.08711	-.21182	.13624
Total Autonomous Learning result	.902	64	.370	.05752	.06377	-.06988	.18492

Table 1: Independent sample t-test result of pre-survey

As it is indicated in Table 1, the Independent Samples Test of the Pre-survey results provides valuable insights into the effects of blended learning on students' autonomous learning skills. The analysis reveals that, prior to any intervention; there are generally no significant differences in the various aspects of autonomous learning among the students surveyed. This lack of significant difference suggests uniformity in how students approach their learning, which might indicate that the skills related to autonomous learning are similarly developed across the sample.

In terms of identifying learning needs and setting goals, the t-value of 1.081 and a p-value of .284 indicate no significant difference ($p > 0.05$). This finding suggests that students may possess similar abilities in recognizing their learning requirements and establishing relevant objectives before engaging in blended learning. A similar trend is observed in the selection of learning resources and materials, where the t-value of 1.618 and a p-value of .111 further reinforce the idea that students' skills in this area are not significantly different from one another. This uniformity could imply that students might benefit from more targeted training in resource selection to enhance their autonomous learning capabilities.

When examining the organization of the learning process and environment, the results indicate a t-value of -0.765 and a p-value of .447, which again shows no significant difference. This shows that students are likely to have similar levels of awareness in organizing their learning environment, which is vital for effective independent learning. In contrast, monitoring learning progress reveals a t-value of 1.698 with a p-value of .094, which approaches significance ($p < 0.1$). This finding indicates that there might be some variability in how students monitor their learning, suggesting that this could be an area where blended learning might have a more pronounced effect.

The aspect of seeking social assistance presents a t-value of 1.887 and a p-value of .064, also nearing significance. The ability to seek social assistance can greatly influence a student's learning experience, and blended learning initiatives could focus on fostering this skill. In addition, evaluation of learning outcomes shows a t-value of -0.407 and a p-value of .686, indicating no significant difference in students' ability to assess their learning results. Similarly, the ability to transfer acquired skills or information to other contexts demonstrates a t-value of -0.434 and a p-value of .666, suggesting uniformity in this skill area as well. These findings imply that, across the board, students appear to have similar competencies in evaluating their learning and applying skills in different contexts.

Finally, the overall assessment of total autonomous learning skills yields a t-value of 0.902 and a p-value of .370, confirming the absence of significant differences among students prior to the blended learning intervention. This consistency of results from both treatment and control groups suggests that students generally exhibit comparable levels of autonomous learning skills.

Independent Samples Test Result of Post-survey							
Aspects of Autonomous Learning	t-test for Equality of Means						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper

Setting goal	-9.357	64	.000	-.69332	.07410	-.84135	-.54529
Selecting learning resource and material	-7.349	64	.000	-.73986	.10068	-.94099	-.53873
Organizing learning process and resources	-12.22	64	.000	-1.08341	.08865	-1.26051	-.90631
Monitoring Learning progress	-6.746	64	.000	-.77235	.11448	-1.00106	-.54364
Seeking assistance	-6.904	64	.000	-.62903	.09111	-.81105	-.44702
Evaluating learning outcome	-10.568	64	.000	-.92212	.08725	-1.09643	-.74781
transferring acquired skills or information to other context	-5.925	64	.000	-.54401	.09182	-.72744	-.36057
Autonomous learning post-survey	-14.807	64	.000	-.76904	.05194	-.87279	-.66529

Table 2: Independent sample t-test result of post-survey

As it is presented in Table 2, the results of the Independent Samples Test from the Post-survey provide compelling evidence regarding the effects of blended learning on students' autonomous learning skills. The analysis reveals significant differences across various dimensions of autonomous learning, indicating that the blended learning approach has influenced students' autonomous learning abilities.

When we see the participants' goal setting skills, the analysis shows a significant difference with ($t(64) = -9.357$, $p = 0.00$). The mean difference of -0.69332 shows that, participants in the blended learning environment performed better than those in a conventional setting. This suggests that treatment group students may have shifted their approach to goal-setting, possibly becoming more focused and realistic in their objectives. The structured nature of blended learning might have encouraged them to set more achievable and relevant goals, reflecting a deeper understanding of their learning processes. Similarly, the ability to select learning resources and materials has significantly increased, as evidenced by a t-value of -7.349 and a p-value of $.000$ (mean difference = -0.73986). This increase may indicate a transition in how students evaluate and utilize resources. Furthermore, regarding the ability to organize learning process and resources, the results reveal a significant impact of blended learning with a t-value of -12.22 and a p-value of $.000$. The negative mean difference ($M = -1.08341$) suggests that the treatment group had a significantly higher posttest mean score compared to the control group. In terms of monitoring learning progress, the data shows a t-value of -6.746 and a p-value of $.000$; with mean difference = -0.77235 , reflecting a significant change in students' ability to track their learning outcomes. This finding suggests that treatment group students have become more skillful at self-assessment, which is a crucial component of autonomous learning.

The ability to seek assistance has also shown significant change, with a t-value of -6.904 and a p-value of $.000$ (mean difference = -0.62903). This result indicates that students may be developing greater independence in their learning processes, relying less on external support. Moreover, the

treatment group participants' ability to evaluate learning outcomes has significantly increased, as indicated by a t-value of -10.568 and a p-value of .000 (mean difference = -0.92212). This suggests that students are becoming more critical in assessing their learning experiences, indicating an increased awareness of their learning processes and outcomes. Similarly, the ability to transfer acquired skills or information to other contexts shows a t-value of -5.925 and a p-value of .000 (mean difference = -0.54401), highlighting a significant change in this area as well. This finding suggests that students may be focusing more on context-specific applications rather than generalizing their skills across different situations.

Finally, the general assessment of autonomous learning yields a t-value of -14.807 and a p-value of .000 (mean difference = -0.76904), demonstrating a significant overall impact of blended learning on students' autonomous learning abilities. This comprehensive effect indicates that the blended learning intervention has successfully fostered an environment that encourages greater independence among students. In general, the results from the post-survey highlight the substantial influence of blended learning on various dimensions of students' autonomous learning skills.

4.1.2 The Effects of Blended Learning on Students' Motivation to Learn Speaking Skills

The data provided includes responses from 35 treatment group students regarding their confidence and motivation related to speaking skills in a blended learning environment. The findings reveal several key insights.

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I feel confident about my speaking skills in English.	35	4.1429	.55002
Speaking skills are important for my future career.	35	4.6571	.48159
I seek out opportunities to practice speaking because I find it enjoyable.	35	3.9714	.61767
I feel more motivated to learn English speaking skills in a blended learning environment.	35	4.6857	.47101
Blended learning can enhance my speaking skills.	35	4.1429	.64820
The online components of the blended learning course enhance my understanding of English speaking.	35	4.3714	.54695
I enjoy the flexibility that blended learning offers for practicing speaking skills.	35	4.4571	.50543
I feel more confident speaking English after participating in blended learning activities.	35	4.6857	.47101
I prefer blended learning over traditional classroom learning for improving my speaking skills.	35	4.4286	.55761
The interactive online activities increase my motivation to practice speaking in English.	35	4.4000	.49705
Valid N (listwise)	35		

Table 3: The result of descriptive statistics on motivation to practice speaking skills

According to the results in Table 3, first, students generally felt confident about their speaking skills, with a mean score of 4.14. This shows a positive self-assessment, which is crucial for language learning. Also, the acknowledgement of oral skills as essential for future careers, reflected in a high mean of 4.66, suggests that this awareness may drive students' motivation to improve. When we see the participants' emotion in case of seeking out opportunities to practice speaking, the mean score is slightly lower at 3.97, indicating mixed feelings about enjoyment in practice. Nevertheless, students feel significantly more motivated to learn speaking skills in a blended environment, as shown by a mean of 4.69. This highlights the effectiveness of blended learning in enhancing motivation.

The trust that blended learning improves oral skills also shows a high level of agreement, with a mean of 4.14, suggesting positive perceptions of the method among students. Furthermore, the participants felt that online components of the course contributed to their understanding, with a mean score of 4.37, which may further enhance motivation. The mean score for flexibility in learning, which is another important factor, is 4.46 with SD of .50543. Also, students appreciated the ability to practice speaking skills at their convenience, which plays a significant role in their motivation. In addition, after participating in blended learning activities, students report feeling more confident, with a mean score of 4.69, reinforcing the positive impact of this learning approach. Furthermore, the preference for blended learning over conventional classroom methods is evident, with a mean of 4.43. This suggests that students find blended learning more effective for improving their oral skills. Likewise, interactive online activities are perceived to increase motivation, as reflected in a mean score of 4.40.

In general, the findings indicated that blended learning significantly improves students' motivation to practice English language speaking skills. The high means across various statements reflect positive perceptions of confidence, flexibility, and the effectiveness of blended learning methods. These findings support the notion that integrating online components with conventional learning environment can foster a more engaging and motivating environment for language learning.

4.1.3 Treatment group students' perception of blended learning in relation to its effect on their autonomous learning

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The blended learning made me look for more knowledge outside the classroom.	35	3.7714	1.05957
The blended learning helped me to gain knowledge in addition to what I learned in the classroom	35	4.2571	.65722
The blended learning helped me develop learning autonomy.	35	4.0857	.70174
The blended learning made me become more responsible for studying.	35	4.1714	.78537
Blended learning helped me to apply the online experience in the classroom learning.	35	4.0286	.78537
While working on the blended learning, I tried to search for	35	4.0571	.90563

what I wanted to know by myself.			
I can determine my strengths and weaknesses in practicing speaking by looking at my video on online.	35	4.3143	.52979
I can determine the level of my own speaking performance by looking at my video project.	35	3.6286	.64561
After completing the blended learning, I am confident that I can study efficiently outside classroom all by myself.	35	3.9429	.63906
When working on the blended learning, I did not need any help from the teacher.	35	4.0857	.88688
Valid N (listwise)	35		

Table 4: Students' perception of blended learning in relation to their autonomous learning

The data that is presented in Table 4 is related to the treatment group students' perception of blended learning in relation to its effect on their autonomous learning. The first item asks whether blended learning encourages students to seek knowledge outside the classroom, yielding a mean score of 3.77 (SD: 1.06). Subsequently most students agree that blended learning positively affects their desire to pursue knowledge independently. Similarly, the second item, which assesses whether blended learning helps students gain additional knowledge, shows a higher mean of 4.26 (SD: 0.66). This indicates that a significant number of students perceive that blended learning enhances their understanding beyond classroom learning, reflecting the effective integration of online and in-person resources.

Furthermore, the third items' mean score is 4.09 with SD=0.70, indicating that students recognized blended learning as a contributor to their autonomy. This bring into line with the fourth item, which reflects on students' responsibility for their studies, scoring 4.17 (SD: 0.78). The high mean scores for these items suggest that blended learning fosters a sense of ownership over their educational journey. The respondents also rated the ability to apply online experiences to classroom activities positively, with a mean of 4.03 (SD: 0.79). This indicates that students believe they can effectively merge their online learning with in-person activities, which is essential for meaningful learning. Additionally, the sixth item, which measures self-directed searching for information, scores 4.06 (SD: 0.91), indicating that a majority of students actively seek knowledge independently while engaged in blended learning.

Students feel particularly confident in evaluating their speaking performance through video analysis, as shown by the seventh item with a mean of 4.31 (SD: 0.53). This suggests that blended learning supports self-evaluation and improvement. However, the eighth item regarding the determination of speaking levels has a lower mean of 3.63 (SD: 0.65), indicating some variability in students' confidence regarding self-assessment. The ninth item, which assesses confidence in self-study, yields a mean of 3.94 (SD: 0.64). While students generally feel confident in their ability to study independently after blended learning, there remains room for improvement. The final item regarding reliance on teacher assistance scores 4.09 (SD: 0.89), suggesting that most students feel capable of working independently without needing help from instructors, which is a vital aspect of autonomous learning.

In general, the overall findings indicate a positive effect of blended learning on students' autonomous learning. The mean scores predominantly fall within the "Agree" category, with several items reflecting strong agreement particularly concerning the development of autonomy,

responsibility and the ability to seek knowledge independently, showed that the students have positive perception toward blended learning. However, areas such as self-evaluation and assessing speaking performance could benefit from additional support. To enhance these outcomes, it is recommended that teachers improve self-assessment tools, provide clearer guidelines for assessing performance, and foster a culture of independent inquiry through project-based learning opportunities. Continuous feedback sessions could also be beneficial in helping students reflect on their learning processes, thereby increasing their confidence in autonomous learning.

4.2 Analysis of Qualitative Data

The qualitative data that were collected through interviews focused on the effects of blended learning on students' autonomous learning, motivation to learn speaking skills and challenges they encounter in the blended learning environment.

Participants' Blended learning experience: The first item concerns the respondents' overall blended learning experiences. Every respondent provided a similar response to this question. They claimed that they didn't have the chance to implement blended learning up to that point. They have just been using their device to see some Facebook content. When discussing their experiences after this, the respondents shared a positive outlook on their experiences with blended learning, emphasizing its practical benefits for skill development. Respondent 1 stated, *"I have no experience before now. Now I have three months experience using it for practicing speaking skills,"* while Respondent 2 added, *"I feel more confident in my speaking after using blended learning for a few months."* Respondent 3 remarked, *"The combination of online and in-person helps me understand better,"* highlighting the effectiveness of this approach.

Autonomous Learning: For the item which asks whether blended learning has contributed for the participants' autonomous learning, all respondents replied "yes". For instance, in terms of time and resource management, respondents emphasized the advantages of having flexible access to learning materials. Respondent 2 noted, *"I have got a chance to access learning resources without any restriction of time and place."* Respondent 3 added, *"I can study late at night or early in the morning, which fits my schedule."* Respondent 4 mentioned, *"It's great to have resources available on my phone whenever I need them,"* further underscoring the convenience of blended learning. In relation to this, taking initiative in their learning was another common theme. Respondent 5 shared, *"I whenever and wherever, take my learning into my own hands,"* while Respondent 1 stated, *"I often look for additional resources online to enhance my understanding."* Respondent 2 remarked, *"I create my own study schedule based on what I feel I need to focus on,"* emphasizing their proactive approach.

Therefore, blended learning significantly fosters autonomous learning among students. Respondents consistently expressed increased control over their learning processes. The flexibility of accessing materials at any time allows students to tailor their study schedules to fit personal needs, enhancing their ability to take initiative. For instance, many participants reported creating their own study plans and seeking additional resources online, which reflects a proactive approach to learning. This autonomy not only empowers students but also cultivates a sense of responsibility for their educational journey.

Motivation to Practice Speaking Skills: In addition, under this category, the participants were requested whether blended learning has enhanced their motivation to practice English language speaking skills. When discussing their motivation for choosing blended learning, the respondents focused on the concept of autonomous learning. Respondent 4 said, *“I wanted more freedom in my learning process, blended learning approach has paved way for my interest”* and Respondent 5 echoed, *“Being able to set my own pace was a big factor for me, and blended learning gives me chance to set it.”* Respondent 1 noted, *“I’m motivated by the ability to choose when and how I learn,”* illustrating how this flexibility drives their engagement.

Thus, the integration of blended learning appears to boost students' motivation to practice speaking skills. Many respondents noted that the ability to learn at their own pace and choose when to engage with the material significantly increased their confidence and interest in speaking. The combination of online and in-person interactions provides varied opportunities for practice, which is crucial for language acquisition. This motivational boost is vital, as it encourages learners to engage with speaking tasks more frequently and with greater enthusiasm.

Comparison with conventional methods: Finally, when comparing blended learning to traditional methods, respondents concluded that it is more effective. Respondent 2 stated, *“Blended learning is more helpful than traditional learning; it fits my needs better,”* while Respondent 3 agreed, saying, *“The support from both online and in-person learning is invaluable.”* Respondent 4 noted, *“I feel more equipped to handle challenges in a blended format,”* reinforcing the positive impact of this approach on their educational experiences.

Overall, the responses reflect a strong appreciation for the flexibility and accessibility of blended learning, alongside challenges that need to be addressed to enhance the experience further. The themes of motivation, autonomy, and proactive engagement are prevalent throughout their reflections.

5. Discussion

The results of this study indicate that blended learning has a significant impact on students' autonomous learning and motivation to practice speaking skills, aligning well with existing literature in the field. Prior to the intervention, the pre-survey results revealed no significant differences in students' autonomous learning skills, suggesting a uniform approach to learning among participants. This finding is consistent with previous research that emphasizes the need for targeted training in autonomous learning skills (Benson, 2013). The lack of variability in skills such as identifying learning needs and setting goals indicates that students may benefit from structured interventions aimed at enhancing these competencies before engaging in blended learning.

Post-intervention, the results demonstrated significant improvements across various dimensions of autonomous learning. The substantial decline in students' ability to set goals and select learning materials suggests a shift in how they approach these tasks, moving toward a more critical and realistic understanding of their learning processes. This aligns with the work of (Goh & Burns, 2012), who highlight the importance of fostering independence in resource selection. Moreover, the enhanced ability to monitor learning progress indicates that students are becoming

more adept at self-assessment, an essential component of autonomous learning (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). However, the challenges faced in organizing learning processes reflect the complexity and diversity of blended learning environments, suggesting a need for educators to provide additional support in structuring learning activities effectively.

In terms of motivation, the findings reveal that students feel significantly more motivated to practice speaking skills in a blended learning environment. The high mean scores associated with confidence, flexibility, and perceived effectiveness of blended methods highlight the positive perceptions among students. This finding supports the notion that blended learning not only enhances language acquisition but also fosters a more engaging and motivating atmosphere for learners (Osman & Hamzah, 2020). The qualitative data further corroborate this, as students expressed a strong appreciation for the autonomy and flexibility that blended learning offers. They reported that the ability to learn at their own pace and choose when to engage with content significantly increased their motivation to practice speaking skills.

Students' perceptions of blended learning's effectiveness in fostering autonomous learning contribute to the growing body of literature that advocates for this instructional approach. The qualitative responses indicate that students felt empowered to take control of their educational journeys, actively seeking out additional resources and managing their study schedules. This finding is consistent with (Mohammed et al., 2023), who emphasizes the importance of learner autonomy in language education. However, some challenges remain, particularly in areas such as self-evaluation and assessing speaking performance, which may require further instructional support.

In conclusion, the findings from this study underscore the transformative potential of blended learning in enhancing students' autonomous learning and motivation. While students showed significant improvements in various aspects of autonomous learning, the need for ongoing support in organizing learning processes was evident. Future research should delve deeper into these dynamics, exploring how blended learning can be optimized to better support students in their journey toward becoming more autonomous learners. By addressing the areas of difficulty and reinforcing successful strategies, educators can foster a more effective blended learning environment that meets the diverse needs of students.

6. Implications of Findings for Future Use of Blended Learning

The findings from this study underscore the significant potential of blended learning to enhance students' autonomous learning and motivation, suggesting vital implications for its future implementation in educational contexts. Specifically, the strong evidence supporting the development of learning autonomy indicates that educational institutions should prioritize training educators to design blended courses that promote self-directed learning through project-based assignments and self-assessment opportunities. Moreover, the positive student feedback on integrating online and in-person experiences highlights the need for curricula that seamlessly blend digital and face-to-face learning, fostering collaboration and relevance. Addressing the identified gaps in self-assessment confidence is crucial; thus, educational programs should include training and resources that empower students to evaluate their performance effectively. Finally, the emphasis on student-centered approaches, which encourage active participation and

engagement, aligns with constructivist learning theories and suggests that future blended learning initiatives should prioritize pedagogies that foster critical thinking and collaborative learning. By incorporating these strategies, educators can create a more effective and engaging blended learning environment that prepares students for lifelong learning.

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