

Using hybrid learning during the COVID-19 outbreak for developing EFL first-year secondary stage students' oral vocabulary use and interaction

A Research Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this research is to investigate the effect of using hybrid learning on developing EFL first-year secondary stage students' oral vocabulary use and interaction. Two statistical hypotheses were formulated to guide this research. The research adopted the one group research design to examine the study hypotheses. The participants consisted of (N=30) first-year secondary stage students in 6th October secondary school for girls, 6th October educational directorate, in the academic year 2020/2021. The researcher designed instruments and materials which included a pre-post oral vocabulary use and interaction test, an analytic rubric of oral vocabulary use and interaction, and a hybrid learning-based program. The researcher used t-test for paired samples to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the pre and the post-administration. The results were analyzed statistically and revealed that the treatment group post-measurement outperformed the treatment group pre-measurement. Hence, results concluded that using hybrid learning was effective in developing EFL first-year secondary stage students' oral vocabulary use and interaction.

Key Words: Hybrid learning – oral vocabulary use – oral interaction.

Introduction

In a rapidly changing world, educators were required to meet the new challenges. In the field of education, the enormous breakthroughs in information, communication and social software technologies altered common approaches of teaching and learning and helped to develop learning modalities to suit the times. The progression was highlighted by various movements from *Socratic method* in which Grondin (2018) revealed that speech was primarily enforced through questioning and discussion-based methods, to *lecture and stand-alone courses* which included, as Dolničar et al. (2017) explained, lecture-style and other teacher-centered delivery methods, and *distance education and online instruction* in which, as claimed by Kentnor (2015), the course was offered through online and distance modalities. In addition, the world went through global pandemics from time to time that prevented students from attending schools to avoid health risks. Hence, traditional teaching or learning strategies that required face-to-face interaction in the classroom were no longer effective. In this context, Mahaye (2020) asserted that there became highly desirable to adopt *hybrid learning* to make use of the best features of the traditional face-to-face and online learning. However, English language teaching for secondary stage students as a whole was and is still quite far from achieving substantial adoption of hybrid learning strategies despite its significance.

On the other hand, with the increasing communication between the peoples of the world and the need for an intermediate language that enables them to communicate their messages, English has become the most widely used language for this purpose. Hence the urgent need to develop oral communication has emerged as an effective component of 21st century skills that must be mastered by English learners. Accordingly, it has become necessary to develop students' oral competencies, which include oral vocabulary use and oral interaction.

Taslim, et al. (2019) claimed that developing students' vocabulary was an essential component of language teaching. This would be a cored component of language as well as a source or basis when students speak English. Students used vocabulary in composing sentences to express ideas, opinions, thoughts, feelings, etc. Vocabulary mastery was one

component for mastering English as a foreign language from elementary to secondary and advanced levels.

Tuan & Nhu (2010) stated that the main aim of learning a language is to use it in communication in its spoken form. Classroom interaction is a key to reach that goal. It is the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings or ideas between two or more people, leading to a mutual effect on each other. Hence, oral interaction implies that students interact with others by speaking in class, answering and asking questions, making comments, and taking part in discussions.

Review of Literature and Related Studies

Hybrid learning stemmed from the idea of making use of technological development in education. Along with the development of trends and needs of information and communication technology in the world of education, there were many innovations and inventions in the form of multimedia devices, and ideas and methods in an effort to optimize technological devices into the world of education. Hediensah & Surjono (2020) claimed that one of the innovations was the hybrid learning approach.

The terms hybrid learning, blended learning, and mixed-mode learning were used interchangeably in research literature but referred to the same concept (Watson, 2008 and Graham, 2006); however, in the United States, hybrid learning was used most often (Martyn, 2003). Before the relatively new term blended learning was first introduced and became widely used 20 years ago in 1998, the term hybrid learning was used quite often (Yu, 2018). The term hybrid learning might have been more widely adopted in practice than in research, as there were quite few highly cited papers on hybrid learning, as compared with blended learning research (Hrastinski, 2019).

Bärenfänger (2005) explained that the term hybrid learning was not a simple combination of classroom instruction with e-learning but comprised a standard instructional setting (class meetings) as well as offline activities outside the classroom (tutorials, classes from other institutions on the campus, peer review workshops), and computer-mediated learning (online lessons).

Driscoll (2002) summarized four different concepts that hybrid learning was referred to in the literature as :

- To combine or mix modes of Web-based technology (e.g., live virtual classroom, self-paced instruction, collaborative learning, streaming video, audio, and text) to accomplish an educational goal.
- To combine various pedagogical approaches (e.g., constructivism, behaviorism, cognitivism) to produce an optimal learning outcome with or without instructional technology.
- To combine any form of instructional technology (e.g., videotape, CD ROM, Web-based training, film) with face-to-face instructor-led training.
- To mix or combine instructional technology with actual job tasks in order to create a harmonious effect of learning and working.

Hybrid learning was based on the solid theoretical foundation of constructivism and other learning theories. Learning was promoted when learners were engaged in solving real-world problems, and when existing knowledge was activated as a foundation for new knowledge, demonstrated to the learner, applied by the learner and integrated into the learner's world. Briefly speaking, Merrill (2002) claimed that effective learning could happen when the learner was given the right task (problem-centered tasks) to accomplish by informing them of the right method (such as activation, demonstration, application, and integration) to use.

To examine the effectiveness of hybrid learning, a recent quasi-experiment study using a sample of 100 students (an experimental group of 50 students, and a control group of 50 students), University of Muhammadiyah Malang in Indonesia by Rahardjanto et al. (2019) revealed the significant influence of Hybrid-PjBL (Hybrid Project-Based Learning) implementation on the achievement of learning outcomes, creative thinking skills and student's learning motivation. The study also confirmed that Hybrid-PjBL was an alternative learning, suitable to the demands of the twenty-first century. Potter (2015) also conducted a study whose findings revealed that student grades were significantly

higher in the hybrid option than for the traditional face-to-face format and concluded that the use of an online component in a course could enhance students' learning.

With respect to vocabulary use, Beck et al. (2013) revealed that having vocabulary, either *expressive/productive vocabulary* – the words a student actively used when talking, writing, or otherwise communicating or *receptive vocabulary* – the words that a student understands based on context and background experiences, was a key part of developing students' oral proficiency.

Nation (2001) further described the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language use as complementary: knowledge of vocabulary enabled language use and, conversely, language use led to an increase in vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, Lehr (2004) confirmed that teaching vocabulary helped students understand and communicate with others in English and added that learning vocabulary also helped students master English for their purposes.

In an attempt to find effective methods to improve Iranian students' vocabulary as a component of the students' oral proficiency, Ebadi & Ghuchi (2018) conducted a study to investigate the effects of hybrid learning strategy in enhancing vocabulary on Iranian students through asynchronous using of Memrise Application outside the scheduled class time. Results of the study revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the achievement of the students who used hybrid learning approach and the achievement of those using only the traditional method. The findings also indicated that the students held positive attitudes towards the hybrid learning approach as it influenced their learning positively.

Concerning oral interaction, Lexico (2019) referred to interaction as one's communication or direct involvement with someone else or something. Kang (2015) claimed that interaction was a dynamic process which could benefit learners in various ways by creating opportunities to produce and modify output, receive feedback, and engage in collaborative dialogue. Among the many types of interaction that learners engaged in, perhaps the most common in a classroom environment were peer interaction and interaction with teachers which

provided learners with the chance to produce output and provided one another with feedback allowing them to modify what was ungrammatical or incomprehensible in their production.

In this respect, Siddig & AlKhoudary (2018) conducted a study which focused on teacher and learner interaction carried out with the sole purpose of understanding the collaborative behavior and the impact of different individuals on classroom environment. The results of this study concluded that the model of classroom interaction formulated was comprehensive of interrelated factors such as effects of a foreign language on learning, outer contexts surrounding classroom, learning materials, and learning objectives. The study also revealed that interaction was a large field that comprehended various beliefs and cultures to influence the ultimate performance in a classroom.

Context of the problem

Despite the importance of developing vocabulary use and oral interaction for EFL students, first-year secondary stage students have problems with it.

The researcher confirmed this problem through his eighteen-year ELT experience and classroom observation. He noticed that most first-year secondary stage students had difficulties in their vocabulary use and oral interaction although they realized their importance in the classroom. They could not interact, negotiate and share information effectively. They could not go on participating in any long oral discourse. They were not well-trained to use vocabulary and develop oral interaction due to the teacher's reliance on reading and writing abilities as well as reading and writing-based summative tests. They used their native tongue in learning English as they lacked the adequate vocabulary. They did not have the willingness to interact in oral activities. They avoided taking part in oral interaction due to shyness or shame of making mistakes in public. They thought they should only interact orally if they speak perfect English.

Although developing students' EFL oral performance is important, it faces challenges that can affect it. Al-Sobhi & Preece (2018) revealed that developing English oral performance to Arab EFL learners was always an exacting task for Arab teachers of English

because it was considered a foreign language, i.e., not widely spoken, or used in everyday interactions. For such a reason, Arab teachers of English were required to persistently implement new teaching strategies to tackle the problems regarding oral performance abilities in the classroom.

The Pilot Study

Furthermore, the researcher conducted a pilot study in the form of a diagnostic test on 20 first-year secondary stage students, 6th October Secondary School for Girls, 6th October Educational Directorate, Giza. The results showed that they had difficulties with their vocabulary use and oral interaction as shown in the following:

- Many students (70 %) had so many problems with vocabulary use that they could not use precise and varied vocabulary appropriate to the topic. This resulted from their having insufficient vocabulary available to use to convey a particular meaning in oral communication and their misuse of the vocabulary that they had.
- Most students (75 %) had difficulties in contributing effectively throughout oral interaction. They had difficulties with oral interaction with peers to the extent that they could not exchange thoughts, feelings, or ideas interactively such as accepting, refusing, giving alternatives, and suggesting new ideas.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this research is that most first-year secondary stage students have difficulties in their vocabulary use and oral interaction. Therefore, the current research is an attempt to use hybrid learning in order to develop them.

Research Questions

To solve the problem of this research, these questions are formulated as follows:

1. What is the effect of using hybrid learning on developing first-year secondary stage students' vocabulary use and oral interaction?
2. How can hybrid learning be effective in developing first-year secondary stage students' vocabulary use and oral interaction?

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research can be stated as follows:

- 1- To investigate the effect of using hybrid learning on developing EFL first-year secondary stage students' vocabulary use and oral interaction
- 2- To examine the possibility of implementing hybrid learning for first-year secondary stage students and drawing conclusions to the suitability of teaching using hybrid learning at the secondary stage level

Research Hypotheses

To answer the research question, the hypotheses are formulated as follows:

1. There is a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level between the mean scores of the treatment group students in the vocabulary use domain on the oral performance pre-test and the oral performance post-test in favor of their post-test mean scores.
2. There is a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level between the mean scores of the treatment group students in the oral interaction domain on the oral performance pre-test and the oral performance post-test in favor of their post-test mean scores.

Significance of the Research

The importance of this research can be shown as follows:

- Shedding light on the importance of developing EFL oral interaction and vocabulary use for secondary stage students
- Emphasizing the importance of the EFL teacher's role and the student in the success of hybrid learning implementation
- Providing EFL teachers with a learning-rich environment filled with interesting collaborative oral activities on site and online and other different learning strategies
- Revolting against the traditional learning modality by introducing hybrid learning as a more effective alternative, especially during the outbreak of a pandemic
- Providing students, teachers, course designers and stakeholders with empirical evidence and more insights concerning the

potential of using hybrid learning for secondary stage students in English language instruction

- Drawing attention to the importance of not only integrating information and communication technologies in EFL instruction but also the need to make the best use of them through coordinating the use, selecting the appropriate activities for each tool, and making them accessible

Participants

The participants of this research included 30 EFL first-year secondary stage students at a public school called 6th October secondary school for girls, 6th October city, Giza. They received instruction based on hybrid learning. Also, the pre/posttest was given to the treatment group before and after the treatment.

Instruments and Materials

1. A pre-post oral vocabulary use and interaction test
2. An analytic rubric of first-year secondary stage students' oral vocabulary use and interaction
3. A hybrid learning-based program

Validity and Reliability of the instrumentation

In designing a vocabulary use and oral interaction test and a vocabulary use and oral interaction rubric that are validated and proved to be credible and/or dependable, they were submitted to EFL supervisors and inspectors to verify its validity and they agreed on the suitability of the items for the grade level and the vocabulary used.

Furthermore, the test and the rubric were administered to a random pilot sample of (20) first-year secondary stage students to determine whether the items were clear, understood and workable. In the light of their responses, they proved to be homogenous, clear and comprehensible. The time taken for answering the test was calculated in this stage. The data collected from the pilot study were also used for calculating the reliability of the test.

Concerning the reliability of the test, the researcher measured the test reliability through using Cronbach's Alpha method and computing the values of the correlation coefficients between vocabulary use and

oral interaction and the total score of the test. The results could be shown in the following table 1:

Table 1

Correlation Coefficients between Vocabulary Use and Oral Interaction and Total Scores

The Test Domains	Vocabulary Use	Interaction	Total Score
Cronbach's Alpha	.90**	.79**	.88**
Correlation with Total	.81**	.66**	-

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

According to the results of table 1, the test proved to be reliable and ready to be administered in this study. In addition, the values of the correlation coefficients which ranged from (.66**) to (.81**) were all significant at the (0.01) level and hence the test proved to have good internal consistency.

Research Design

The present research adopted the one group treatment design to investigate the effect of using hybrid learning on developing first-year secondary stage students' oral vocabulary use and interaction.

Delimitations of the Research

This research is delimited to the following:

- First-year secondary stage female students in a public school called 6th October Secondary School for Girls, 6th October Educational Directorate, Giza
- Developing vocabulary use and oral interaction suitable for EFL first-year secondary stage students
- A hybrid learning-based program for developing the participants' vocabulary use and oral interaction

Definitions of Terms

a. Hybrid Learning (HL)

Kaur (2013) defined hybrid learning as an effective combination of different modes of delivery, teaching models and learning styles that can be exercised in an interactive learning environment on online learning (e-learning) and face-to-face learning.

Hybrid learning (HL), in the current research, can be defined not only as the integration of face-to-face and online learning to help enhance the classroom experience and extend learning through the innovative use of information and communications technology but also as a collection of integrated tools enabling the management of online learning outside the face-to-face classroom, providing a delivery mechanism, student tracking, assessment and access to learning resources at any time and in any place.

b. Vocabulary Use

Lessard (2013) defined vocabulary use as using the words of a language, including single items and phrases or chunks of several words which convey a particular meaning, the way individual words do.

In the current research, the researcher refers to vocabulary use as the students' ability to use precise and varied vocabulary appropriately in oral language not in printed language and in a productive form not in a receptive one to interact with others.

c. Oral interaction

Lexico (2019) defined oral interaction as one's oral communication or direct involvement with someone else or something.

In the current research, the researcher refers to oral interaction as the students' ability to contribute effectively throughout interaction by exchanging thoughts, feelings, or ideas interactively according to the social rules of communication.

Results and Discussion

Hypothesis One

This hypothesis states that there is a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level between the mean scores of the treatment group students on the vocabulary use pre-test and the vocabulary use post-test in favor of their post-test mean scores.

To verify this hypothesis, the researcher used *t*-test for paired samples to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-administrations. The mean and

standard deviation were also computed. The results of these statistical methods were shown in table 2 as follows:

Table 2

't'-Test Results for the Mean Scores of the Treatment Group Students on the Vocabulary Use Pre- and Post-test

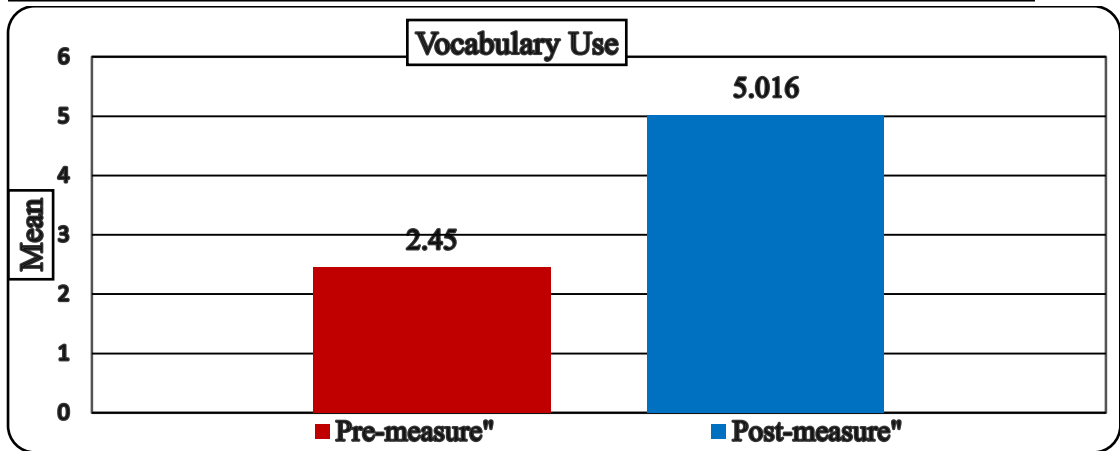
Domain	Measurement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig. (0.05)	Effect Size
Vocabulary Use	Pre	30	2.450	1.198	29	16.775	Significant	0.90
	Post	30	5.016	1.235				

Table 2 showed that there was a significant difference at the significance level (0.05) between the treatment group students' mean scores in the pre- and post-administrations of the vocabulary use test in favor of the post-administration. This was because the value of "t" calculated (16.775) was larger than the value of "t" tabulated (1.699). Moreover, the effect size value (0.90) was large.

This difference between the experimental group students' mean scores of the pre- and the post-administrations of the vocabulary use test was shown in the diagram of figure 1 as follows:

Figure 1

The Difference in Mean Scores Between the Treatment Group's Vocabulary Use Pre- and Post-tests



Hypothesis Two

This hypothesis states that there is a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level between the mean scores of the treatment group students on the oral interaction pre-test and the oral interaction post-test in favor of their post-test mean scores.

To verify this hypothesis, the researcher used *t*-test for paired samples to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-administrations. The mean and standard deviation were also computed. The results of these statistical methods were shown in table 3 as follows:

Table 3

t-Test Results for the Mean Scores of the Treatment Group Students on the Oral Interaction Pre- and Post-tests

Domain	Measurement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig. (0.05)	Effect Size
Oral Interaction	Pre	30	2.433	1.22287	29	15.661	Significant	0.89
	Post	30	5.000	1.36458				

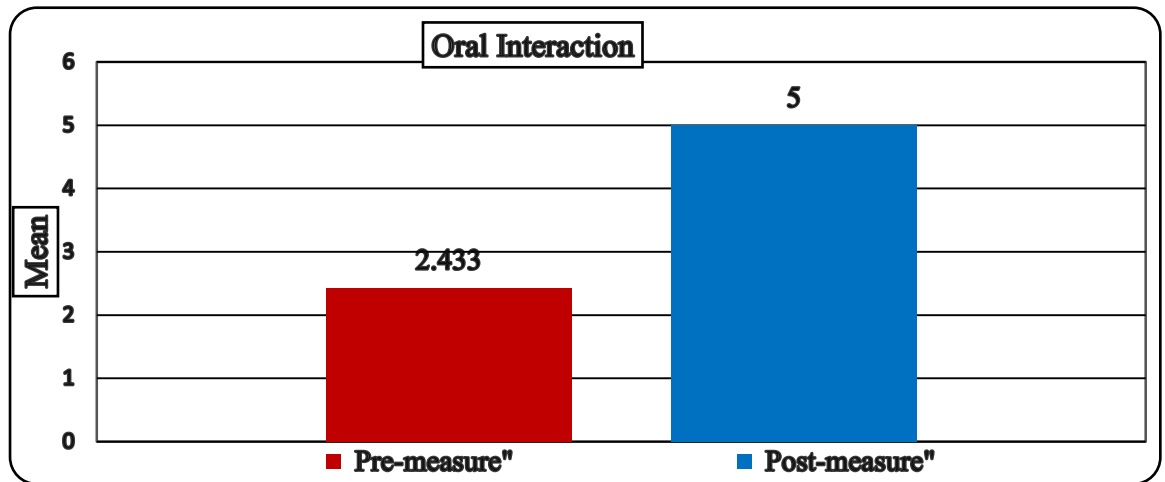
Table 3 showed that there was a significant difference at the significance level (0.05) between the treatment group students' mean scores in the pre- and post-administrations of the vocabulary use test in favor of the post-administration. This was because the value of "t"

calculated (15.661) was larger than the value of "t" tabulated (1.699). Moreover, the effect size value (0.89) was large.

This difference between the treatment group students' mean scores of the pre- and the post-administrations of the oral performance test regarding the oral interaction domain was shown in the diagram of figure 2 as follows:

Figure 2

The Difference in Mean Scores Between the Treatment Group's Oral Interaction Pre- and Post-tests



The results of the statistical analysis presented in this research showed that the treatment group participants taught using hybrid learning-based program did substantially well and significantly improved their vocabulary use and oral interaction. This was evident through the variation in their mean scores when comparing the mean values of the treatment group participants on the pre- and post-tests in which the participants' mean score value on the post-test exceeded theirs on the pre-test for the vocabulary use and oral interaction.

The reason for this result is that the hybrid learning-based program of this research provided the participants with considerable synchronous and asynchronous online activities, coupled with face-to-face sessions to benefit from the advantages of the two learning modalities, especially during the COVID19 outbreak. This reason went

with a study by Buran & Evseeva (2015) which concluded that the integration of a hybrid learning course could be implemented successfully through a combination of online learning and face-to-face classes.

Also, the instruments used for conducting the study program such as the proposed Edmodo class, *Hybrid Learning Class*, the closed WhatsApp group, *Fun with Hybrid Learning*, Zoom-video meetings, and the class groupings helped promote class community building, and create effective interaction among participants despite the difficulty of creating a class community or interaction for students considering the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic in Egypt during the time of the study program application.

Conclusions

This research came to the following conclusions:

- Using hybrid learning had a positive effect on EFL first-year secondary stage students' vocabulary use and oral interaction.
- The study provided research evidence that an integration of online learning and face-to-face classes could be implemented successfully for EFL secondary stage students.
- The integration of different web-based technologies such as WhatsApp, Zoom platform, and Edmodo in language learning promoted EFL secondary stage students' effective participation and interaction both in synchronous and asynchronous activities.
- Hybrid learning was effective in creating on-site and online class communities for EFL secondary stage students during the spread of global pandemics that prevented them from attending schools to avoid health risks.

Recommendations

In the light of the results of the current research, there are recommendations as follows:

- Hybrid learning should be a main format of instruction for EFL secondary stage students in Egypt.
- Vocabulary use and oral interaction needs to be given more attention by EFL curriculum designers and by EFL teachers.

- EFL teachers should be well trained to use hybrid learning in the teaching-learning process.
- Hybrid learning should be inculcated into the pre-service experiences of student-teacher.
- The tablets distributed for secondary stage students should allow the different educational technologies to be accessed to achieve equal and fair access to learning materials and interaction in various hybrid learning activities.

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