

Article



<https://doi.org/10.52696/RORX9828>

Reprints and permission:

The Malaysian English Language Teaching Association

Corresponding Author:

Joemar Miñoza joemar.minoza@ctu.edu.ph

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6707-7593>

Developing English-Speaking Proficiency in Pre and Post Covid-19 Pandemic: A Phenomenology

Arnold Dampios, Jr.

Cebu Technological University-Tuburan, Philippines

Ryan Jore

Cebu Technological University-Tuburan, Philippines

Joemar Miñoza

Cebu Technological University-Consolacion, Philippines

ABSTRACT

While several research studies have been conducted, there is a scarcity of studies examining changes in students' English-speaking proficiency during both the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic periods through in-depth interviews. This research aims to address this gap by exploring the experiences of BAEL-4 students in developing English speaking proficiency through a qualitative design, specifically the interpretative phenomenological method. Ten informants were purposively selected for in-depth interviews. The qualitative data collected from the interviews were transcribed and encoded using a word document to organize codes and identify emerging themes. The study revealed five themes before the pandemic: "Language Instruction and Audio-visual Methods, Enhancing English communication and proficiency with confidence, Enhancing English elocution through diverse communicative experiences, Self-led Study and Deliberate Teaching Practice Online, Improving English language acquisition through self-reflective digital resource use. And five themes after the pandemic: "Virtual Education and Digital Media Resources, Heightening and Deteriorating Spoken English Proficiency Amidst Social Distancing, Enhancing online speaking skills due to reduced physical social interaction, Varieties of language-learning activities, Blended Learning Approach" These findings contribute to the existing literature on language learning and provide recommendations for educators and policymakers to enhance English language education in similar crisis situations.

KEYWORDS: Students’ experiences, English-speaking proficiency; COVID-19; pre- and post-pandemic, phenomenology

Introduction

Schools worldwide have been closed for an average of 19 weeks as a measure to contain the spread of the epidemic. In some cases, schools have remained closed for as long as 55 weeks, leading to a necessary shift from traditional face-to-face instruction to online learning. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the international academic sphere has been necessitated to delve into innovative educational methodologies, ushering in novel paradigms of instruction (Kachra & Brown, 2020). The pandemic and the resulting changes in schooling have posed significant challenges for English learners, a subgroup of students learning the English language. According to Reed et al. (2022), English learners have experienced greater delays in learning, compared to the expected progress, in both English language arts (ELA) and math. This finding is consistent with the research conducted by Pier et al. (2021), which highlights that English learners have faced significant lags in academic achievement. Likewise, it has posed significant challenges for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, impacting their English language acquisition and proficiency (Verawardina et al. 2020). The closure of schools and transition to remote learning have required ESL students to adapt to the “new normal” and work towards maintaining and improving their speaking skills (Yen and Mohamad, 2020). This situation has compounded the difficulties faced by ESL learners, especially during online learning.

Prior studies have predominantly centered on student encounters amid the COVID-19 crisis. For instance, Nur Agung et al. (2020) conducted an investigation delving into the perspectives of English students regarding online learning amidst the pandemic, revealing that despite obstacles, students maintained a favorable outlook and contentment with the virtual learning milieu. Akhter (2020) undertook a comprehensive examination of the hurdles encountered by EFL learners in Saudi Arabia amidst the pandemic, uncovering obstacles related to resource accessibility, motivational deficiencies, and communication barriers with peers and educators. Similarly, Ying et al. (2021). conducted a rigorous analysis of the challenges confronting ESL learners during the pandemic, emphasizing impediments in English proficiency attainment stemming from social distancing measures, restricted opportunities for in-person instruction, and diminished motivation. The scholars advocated for the integration of social media platforms and video conferencing technologies as supplementary tools to mitigate these challenges.

However, there is a need for research that extends beyond the COVID-19 period, investigating changes in students’ experiences and perceptions during both during-pandemic and post-pandemic periods. This will help understand the long-term effects of the pandemic on language learning and identify any lasting challenges or strategy changes. Hence, this study explores students’ experiences in developing English speaking proficiency during and after the pandemic. It aims to analyze the implications of the generated themes and consider the research output in light of these implications. The findings of this study have the potential to contribute to achieving Quality

Education (SDG 4) and Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10) by providing insights into how the pandemic has impacted students' experiences and the changes needed to develop their English-speaking proficiency. The data gathered can identify areas requiring more support and highlight structural inequalities that contribute to disparities in language proficiency, leading to targeted policies for reducing inequality and improving education quality. The study addresses the research gap by comparing and identifying changes in students' English-speaking proficiency pre- and post-pandemic, utilizing social constructivism and self-regulation theories to understand the pandemic's impact on language development.

Research Objectives

1. explore the students' experiences before and after pandemic in regards to their English language proficiency.
2. generate themes from the experiences of the informants.
3. discuss implication on the generated themes.

Method

Research design

This study utilized a qualitative method, specifically phenomenological approach to understand human experiences and perceptions on the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic in the development of English-speaking proficiency. According to Turner (2017), interpretative phenomenological method has an idiographic focus, which means it prioritizes understanding the unique experiences and meanings of an individual in a specific context. Rather than seeking to generalize findings to a larger population, IPA aims to provide in-depth insights into how a particular person, within their own unique circumstances, makes sense of a given situation. In this scenario, the researcher also employs thematic analysis since they are attempting to find out the main themes from the participants responses.

Informants and Sampling technique

The informants of this study were students enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences at Cebu Technological University - Tuburan Campus. A total of 10 informants were selected to be interviewed, with the aim of understanding their experiences in improving their English skills before and after the pandemic. The number of informants was determined through intensive planning and suggestions to strengthen the data collection and credibility of the present study. The selection and determination of the sampling size for this study were based on the purposive sampling technique. The purposively selected informants of this study were 10 students enrolled

in the College of Arts and Sciences at Cebu Technological University – Tuburan Campus and are willing to take part in the interview.

Instrument and data collection and analysis

The research instrument utilized was a semi-structured interview guide, validated by experts. The interviews were designed to gather in-depth insights from the ten (10) participants, who were students of the College of Arts and Sciences at Cebu Technological University – Tuburan Campus. The interview guide consisted of a series of open-ended questions and prompts, allowing for flexibility and exploration of the participants' perspectives. The interviews were audio-recorded to ensure the accurate capture of the participants' responses. Later, the audio recordings were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) to generate themes and draw implications.

Results and Discussion

The experiences of students in developing their English-speaking proficiency through a meticulous and comprehensive collection, transcription, and coding of data from the informants' interview responses. Several key themes were identified as being of utmost significance. Furthermore, recognizing the importance of considering the informants' subjective perspectives and self-knowledge, the researchers ensured a contextual analysis by summarizing and analyzing the informants' lived experiences.

Table 1. Developing English Proficiency during the pre-pandemic

Theme 1	Language Instruction and Audiovisual Methods
Theme 2	Enhancing English communication and proficiency with confidence
Theme 3	Enhancing English elocution through diverse communicative experiences
Theme 4	Self-led Study and Deliberate Teaching Practice Online.
Theme 5	“Improving English language acquisition through self-reflective digital resource use.”

Language Instruction and Audiovisual Methods

The various ways in which informants can develop their English-speaking proficiency are evident from the responses they gave before the outbreak. Through language instructions and audiovisuals, they were able to improve their proficiency effectively.

This is confirmed by Informant 3, who said that

‘I improved my ability to speak English during the pre-pandemic time when I read news items and listened to podcasts with English subtitles.’

It is crucial for one to learn a new language through language instruction, as it is one of the fundamental aspects of acquiring conversational fluency in English. This is because learners are given an opportunity to practice their language skills and have a grasp of the basic elements of the language through instructions on how to speak it. Language learning can also be done using audiovisual aids such as video and movies. These assist in making the learners become familiar with spoken language, as well as observe and imitate pronunciation and intonation from native speakers.

Studies have shown that language instruction and audiovisual methods can be effective for developing English speaking proficiency. Supiyati (2011) asserted that the utilization of audio-visual aids stands out as a pivotal strategy in fostering the enhancement of students' oral proficiency, which found that this approach yielded many positive outcomes in students' speaking skills. Moreover, a study by Thaseem and Kareema (2017) examined the effectiveness of audiovisual methods for teaching English in the language learning classrooms at South Eastern University of Sri Lanka and revealed that using audio-visual aids was a motivational tool that improved students' interest in learning English. The students actively participated with enthusiasm and energy in the classroom, where multimedia audio-visual aids were used. Similarly, a more recent study by Kathirvel and Hashim (2020) found that audiovisual methods, such as videos and movies, were effective for teaching speaking English to ESL learners.

Overall, language instruction and audiovisual methods are effective for developing English speaking proficiency. The responses given by the informant demonstrate the effectiveness of these methods for developing English speaking proficiency prior to the pandemic.

Enhancing English communication and proficiency with confidence

It is clear from the informants' pandemic responses that social interaction played a significant role in fostering their development of communicative proficiency and self-assurance in their use of the English language. The informants could not have learned English to the extent that they have if they had not had regular and meaningful interactions with both native and non-native English speakers. In addition to giving them a chance to practice speaking English social interaction also made them more at ease using it in a range of contexts.

Informant 10 articulated it well when she said

“Pre-pandemic, social interaction had a huge impact on my English-speaking proficiency. I was able to practice speaking with native and non-native English speakers, which helped me to become more confident in speaking English. “

Furthermore, the informants may gain an appreciation of the finer points of the English language that come with experience through social interaction. A study conducted by Lightbown & Spada (2006), communication combines interpersonal and societal variables, their relative importance is equivalent. Individuals are said to “get command of and remodel particular mental mechanisms during meditation when information is absorbed during social interaction,” precisely. Similarly, Luk and Lin (2007) found that language classroom interactions are crucial because they allow learners to participate in social activities that help them improve their interpersonal abilities as well as their self-confidence and sense of self-esteem as proficient linguistic communicators. Another study by Shawaqfeh et al. (2023) argued that conversation plays a huge role in the acquisition of English as a foreign language and still a fundamental strategy regularly used to accentuate understanding inside English language teaching (ELT) classrooms. The study also found that contact, particularly in the classroom, helps identify the actual difficulties that students face when learning a second language.

Hence, through this main theme Enhancing English communication and proficiency with confidence”, it is evident that social interaction prior to the pandemic had a profound effect on language acquisition and proficiency.

Enhancing English elocution through diverse communicative experiences.

The informant’s response indicates that social context is a significant factor in the development of English-speaking proficiency and that prior to the pandemic there were numerous opportunities for people to improve their English-speaking abilities in social contexts. Students and adults alike were able to improve their verbal communication comprehension and pronunciation skills through interactions with classmates’ peers and native English speakers in both formal and informal settings.

The social context had a significant influence on my ability to speak English prior to the pandemic as informant 1 succinctly stated.

“Before the pandemic, the social context had a profound impact on my English-speaking skills. By engaging with individuals in various social settings, such as classes or clubs, I had the chance to practice my English-speaking skills and acquaint myself with different dialects and accents. Additionally, I was able to learn new vocabulary words and expressions that I would not have encountered otherwise.”

The cultivation of language proficiency is intricately intertwined with the dynamics of interaction and the cultivation of social relationships (Dewey, Belnap, & Hillstrom, 2013). As posited by De Wilde et al. (2020), informal learning is characterized as the acquisition of knowledge that emerges from routine daily experiences. Language acquisition, particularly in the context of English, can also occur informally through regular interactions with individuals conversing in the target language. While language proficiency is typically attained through structured formal instruction

within English as a second language classrooms, the study underscores the significance of supplementary informal learning avenues, such as social engagements, in augmenting language skills. (Yulia et al., 2023).

According to De Wilde et al. (2020) informal learning as learning that arises from everyday activities. Language can also be learned informally through daily interactions with people speaking in the target language, in this case, English. Language proficiency is normally gained through formal instructions in the English as a second language classroom. However, besides the classroom, language can also be learned in a natural setting, for example, through social interactions. This study examines social interaction as an alternative approach to improving English language proficiency (Yulia et al., 2023).

In summary social context is critical to the development of English-speaking ability prior to the pandemic. This includes learning English at home attending events and classes and having access to various environments and interactions with native speakers. Through these exercises informants gain access to a range of tools and techniques while also developing their speaking confidence and proficiency. Informants can improve their English-speaking abilities given the correct setting and materials.

Self-led Study and Deliberate Teaching Practice Online

According to the findings of the thematic analysis informants had predetermined their objectives to increase their fluency in English through a range of activities prior to the pandemic. Reading news articles, watching English-language films, taking language lessons, reading books with subtitles in English, listening to podcasts, and taking tutoring sessions were some of these activities. By participating in self-directed study and purposeful online teaching practices it is evident that the informants were making a determined effort to increase their English proficiency. The informants looked for materials like news articles podcasts and English-language films to aid them in their quest to become more fluent speakers of the language. In order to improve their comprehension of English they also used educational materials and language classes. As they looked for different resources to aid in their understanding and practice of English it seems that the informants were actively participating in their own education.

Like informant 2 did when she said

“Before the pandemic, I set goals for myself in order to improve my English-speaking proficiency by setting daily goals and weekly goals, such as reading a certain number of pages in an English book or watching an English movie on YouTube.”

The intrinsic characteristics of mobile technology, including its inherent portability, individualized nature, capacity for social connectivity, and nuanced contextual adaptability, have been intricately interwoven into the fabric of spoken language acquisition (Chinnery, 2006). In the

realm of portability, learners adeptly harness mobile technology to ensure seamless and ubiquitous access to a wealth of language learning resources and immersive practice opportunities, facilitated by cutting-edge applications such as Google and YouTube, underpinned by the unparalleled convenience afforded by the handheld nature of mobile devices (Sung et al., 2015).

Learners deftly wield mobile technology as a sophisticated instrument for cultivating proficiency in foreign languages through a self-directed and extracurricular approach, transcending the conventional constraints of traditional educational settings (Lai et al. 2022).

In conclusion research on self-learning techniques and self-study exercises validated the informant's pre-pandemic aspirations to increase their English-speaking ability. Their actions demonstrated that they were participating in online self-directed learning and intentional teaching practices which may have been helpful in achieving their objectives.

Improving English language acquisition through self-reflective digital resource use

The thematic analysis findings imply that the informant's fluency in English was acquired prior to the pandemic by means of self-reflection and digital resources. By taking notes on areas, they needed improvement helped them to identify their strengths and weaknesses in English speaking proficiency. By doing this, they were able to focus on areas that needed improvement and develop a plan for addressing these areas.

Informant 2 said

"Before the pandemic, I monitored and evaluated my progress in developing my English-speaking proficiency by taking a note of the areas where I felt I needed improvement and by asking for feedback from native English speakers."

Parveen (2016) elucidated that within the realm of education, a diverse array of contemporary technological tools has been integrated to facilitate the acquisition of spoken language skills among learners. These tools encompass language laboratories, video resources, satellite communication, internet platforms, blogs, digital dictionaries, and a myriad of other innovative resources. Self-reflection facilitated task completion across various forms of reflection. This was evident through students' ability to identify and rectify errors in their speech, as well as their improved understanding of reflection in the context of monologue delivery (Frolikova & Simonyan, 2021).

Informant 9 said,

"Pre pandemic, I monitored and evaluated my progress in developing my English-speaking proficiency by listening to English podcasts, and engaging in conversations with friends who are willing to develop their English-speaking skills."

According to the latest research conducted by Al-Hawamleh et al. (2022) the utilization of digital tools and technologies in language acquisition is posited to significantly bolster speaking proficiency. Digital tools provide learners with access to authentic audio and video materials, interactive speaking exercises, and virtual conversation partners, allowing for immersive and engaging speaking practice.

The combination of digital resources and self-reflection enabled them to make great strides in their language acquisition before the pandemic, and it's likely that these strategies will continue to be beneficial even after the pandemic has ended.

Table 2. Developing English Proficiency during Post-Pandemic

Theme 1	Virtual Education and Digital Media Resources
Theme 2	Heightening and Deteriorating Spoken English Proficiency Amidst Social Distancing
Theme 3	Enhancing online speaking skills due to reduced physical social interaction.
Theme 4	Varieties of language-learning activities'
Theme 5	Blended Learning Approach

Virtual Education and Digital Media Resources

Thematic analysis results show that digital media resources and virtual education have emerged as important learning platforms for individuals who want to improve their English-speaking abilities. According to the informants accounts the pandemic physically isolated them which restricted their access to conventional language learning materials. Nonetheless peer interaction was made possible through digital resources and web-based learning programs which made it possible to engage in crucial language practice and discourse that would not have been possible under the current conditions.

" After the pandemic I have been able to continue learning English through online classes and virtual conversations with of course SA aka mga classmates and teachers" as informant 2 aptly put it.

The informants found flexible and convenient options for learning English speaking proficiency through digital media and virtual education. Virtual language exchange programs, language learning applications, and online courses have been identified as instrumental resources for enhancing English speaking proficiency in the face of physical isolation, underscoring their pivotal role in mitigating the challenges posed by such circumstances. These resources allowed the informants to learn at their own pace, practice speaking with peers worldwide, and enhance their language proficiency. Digital media, like English films, TV series, and podcasts, exposed them to different accents and helped with pronunciation and comprehension. Listening to English podcasts and watching films and TV shows also expanded their vocabulary and expressions.

Recent reviews of literature have proven to demonstrate that successful English language acquisition relies on access to quality educational resources. The significance of virtual education and digital media resources as linguistic aid. Digital materials are seen to offer “guidance, challenge and individual support for language learning” (Sosas, 2021). Likewise, Hidayat et al. (2022) conveyed the important role digital content plays in the success of English language learning. The study highlights that “language learning strategies that are student-produced...can be very effective in blended learning, particularly when the students obtain new content online, with the help of the tutor and other students”. Finally, a study by Toleuzhan et al. (2023) also points to the importance of digital resources. The study finds that “digital resources play a unique role in the language learning classroom, not only offering students the ability to expand learning opportunities beyond the traditional boundaries of the textbook, but also the ability to develop additional digital literacy skills through language learning experiences”.

In conclusion, recent reviews of literature suggest that virtual education and digital media resources can offer key support and guidance in the process of learning a new language, and are thus invaluable aids in a person’s efforts to develop their English-speaking proficiency.

Heightening and Deteriorating Spoken English Proficiency Amidst Social Distancing.

Reducing social interaction has clearly had a negative impact on English speaking proficiency since the pandemic, according to the findings of the thematic analysis. However, despite this, most of the informants have heightened their English-speaking proficiency. People have turned to virtual methods to maintain their language development and communication because it has become harder to have face-to-face conversations.

Informant 7 expressed

"Then post-pandemic period, which caused a shift toward virtual communication. However, it still aids in my language development because it enables me to keep speaking English while interacting virtually."

Technology is assisting students in the process of learning the English language through online platforms. Several researchers have attested that a growing number of students now prefer the online mode of learning over the traditional physical classroom setting due to the convenience it offers in terms of learning and developing speaking skills (Sari & Wahyudin, 2019).

However, Informant 5 said, *"Pero after sa pandemic, nag-decrease siya kay wala akong chance nga ma-practice ang akong English."*

An eminent obstacle linked to virtual education pertains to the deficiency of meaningful interaction with instructors and classmates (Lestiyawati & Widyanoro, 2020; Ariyanti, 2020). Establishing robust two-way communication, crucial for learners, can be notably challenging within virtual

environments. Furthermore, learners often feel demotivated to learn in such circumstances due to the constant reliance on computer-mediated interactions (Taquero, 2020). As a result, learners may encounter limited avenues for enhancing their English-speaking skills, potentially resulting in a decline post-pandemic. Within the realm of English language speaking acquisition, learners' involvement is intricately shaped by a myriad of psychological variables (Sison & Bautista, 2021).

Altogether, the evidence from relevant literature and the results of thematic analysis suggests that physical contact for language learning is key. The impact of the pandemic on social interaction has created an unforeseen challenge of heightening spoken English proficiency, resulting in a deterioration of practice opportunities and a decline in synchronous communication. Despite these obstacles, individuals have found ways to keep up with their proficiency and have been successful in sustaining and improving their English language capabilities through virtual conversations.

Enhancing online speaking skills due to reduced physical social interaction.

It is clear from the thematic analysis results that the pandemic has had a wide-ranging impact on English-language communication. The accounts of the informants imply that the social context has been restricted to online video conferencing, messaging applications, and other virtual platforms. Despite the current situation, these platforms enable the practice and enhancement of English-speaking proficiency; however, they do not offer the same level of mastery as face-to-face interactions in physical settings. Reduced social interaction has consequently led to a decrease in English-speaking ability. The informants' need to rely on online communication channels to stay in touch with one another and do business has been brought on by the epidemic.

Informant 1 said,

“Post-pandemic, the social context has had a different effect on my English-speaking skills. With the majority of classes and clubs being held online, I have had to rely on my own devices to practice my English-speaking skills. Despite the challenges, I have still been able to interact with people from around the world through virtual platforms and learn more about different cultures and language styles.”

In an exhaustive inquiry undertaken by Cakrawati (2017), learners have elucidated the significant role of e-learning platforms in refining their language proficiency and enriching their English lexicon while actively participating in the pursuit of English language proficiency. Ying et al. (2021), suggested that virtual language clubs can serve as an effective platform for English language learning during the pandemic. Finally, online English clubs have shown varying effectiveness in improving language skills compared to onsite clubs. Studies have highlighted positive perceptions towards online learning in English language teaching, with online learners performing slightly better than traditional learners in proficiency tests (Hung & Bao (2023).

In summary virtual platforms appear to be a valuable resource for language learners in the event of a pandemic as they can support the maintenance of current English proficiency levels and offer

avenues for further development. However, novices might find it more challenging to reach the same level of proficiency as more experienced students due to the limitations of online instruction. In order to improve their English language proficiency language learners should thus make the most of any chance they get to interact with native speakers such as online language clubs.

Varieties of language-learning activities

The thematic analysis findings make it abundantly evident that consistent and varied language-learning exercises are required to increase one's ability to speak English after the pandemic. According to the informants accounts a consistent and varied program of activities can support the ultimate objective of mastering oral fluency. The informants took part in a range of language-learning activities such as enrolling in an English language course reading and cataloging new words and using digital resources like online courses and language learning applications.

Informant 9 said *"After the pandemic, I continued to set goals for myself to improve my English-speaking proficiency by using online resources such as language learning apps and online courses."*

Recent research has supported the idea of having a variety of language-learning activities. Interactive Language Learning Activities (ILLA) have gained extensive traction in contemporary language teaching methodologies owing to their efficacy in enhancing learners' proficiency in spoken English. The enhancement of speaking skills is crucial, and interactive learning activities play a significant role in achieving this goal. These activities provide learners with valuable opportunities for improvement (Gocer, 2017). Furthermore, interactive language learning activities foster an environment that stimulates learners to articulate their thoughts and ideas through diverse modalities. They not only learn from their teachers but also engage with their peers, thereby enhancing their language acquisition process and fostering the development of logical thinking (Türkben, 2019). In addition, according to Omar et al. (2020) that interactive language learning activities serve as a catalyst for inspiring learners to engage in English language communication. Moreover, Yahaya et al. (2021) found that students prefer that teachers use myriad and recent methods and approaches in teaching speaking. By creating a positive learning environment, these interactive activities cultivate motivation among learners, prompting active participation in educational tasks and ultimately contributing to the enhancement of their English-speaking proficiency.

In summary, these studies strongly support the idea that engaging in diverse language-learning activities is the key to successful improvement in English proficiency. Thus, the informant's response is consistent with these findings.

Blended Learning Approach

The thematic analysis results indicate that the informants employed a blended learning strategy to track and assess their post-pandemic development of English-speaking proficiency. This involved using online resources like recorded conversations and seeking feedback from talented classmates. The blended learning approach allowed them to adapt to the new learning environment and make progress in their language skills.

Informant 2 said *“After the pandemic, I have continued to do the same by recording and listening to conversations in English, and by asking for feedback from my classmates a naay talent SA English”*.

This method is based on the idea of fusing more modern adaptable learning resources with more traditional teaching techniques like peer engagement and reflection multimedia exposure to English and online resources. The informants benefit from the flexibility and convenience of these resources, allowing them to study at their own pace. Peer engagement and self-reflection play a crucial role, enabling the informants to practice speaking English with peers, receive feedback, and evaluate their progress. Exposure to multimedia English, like films, TV series, and podcasts, enhances their pronunciation and comprehension skills while expanding their vocabulary.

A plethora of research studies (Adas & Bakir, 2013; Grgurovic, 2011; Ghazizadeh & Fatemipour, 2017) have underscored the efficacy of blended learning in advancing the language skills of learners. This approach, surpassing conventional face-to-face or entirely online methods, has demonstrated the capacity to significantly enhance learners' speaking, listening, reading, and writing competencies. Recent research has also shown that blended learning approaches are effective in language learning, particularly in terms of developing fluency and proficiency (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019). For example, one study found that students who used a blended learning approach to study English made significant progress in terms of fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation

Hence, the informant's approach of adopting a blended learning approach to monitor and evaluate their progress in developing English speaking proficiency after the pandemic is likely to be effective. This approach consists of a combination of peer engagement and reflection, self-recorded audio, exploiting online resources and the use of internet-based educational materials, embracing corrections, and regular engagement in multimedia English exposure and online assessments.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on a thorough analysis of the findings, it is evident that adapting language learning methods to changing circumstances is paramount. Embracing innovative technologies is essential for enhancing learning experiences, and the incorporation of the “Blended Learning” approach is key to fostering immersive Learning environments. The rapid evolution of technology has revolutionized the way we acquire knowledge and skills, making it crucial for educators to stay

abreast of these advancements. By integrating digital tools and platforms into language learning curricula, students can engage with the material in a more interactive and dynamic manner, leading to improved retention and comprehension. Additionally, the flexibility offered by online resources allows learners to customize their learning paths according to their individual needs and preferences, promoting a more personalized and effective learning experience. In today's fast-paced world, where communication knows no boundaries, embracing a blended learning approach not only enhances language proficiency but also cultivates essential digital literacy skills that are indispensable in the modern era.

References

- Adas, D., & Bakir, A. (2013). Writing Difficulties and New Solutions: Blended Learning as an Approach to Improve Writing Abilities. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3, 254-266.
- Akhter, T. (2020). Problems and Challenges Faced by EFL Students of Saudi Arabia during COVID-19 Pandemic. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 12, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v12n5.rioc1s23n5>
- Albiladi, W. S., & Alshareef, K. K. (2019). Blended learning in English teaching and learning: A review of the current literature. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 10(2), 232-238. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1002.03>
- Al-Hawamleh, M. S., Alazemi, A. F., & Al-Jamal, D. A. H. (2022). Digital portfolio and self-regulation in speaking tasks. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, 7(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-022-00141-w>
- Ariyanti, A. (2020). EFL Students' Challenges towards Home Learning Policy during COVID-19 Outbreak. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 5(1), 167-175.
- Cabigon, M. (2015). State of English in the Philippines: Should we be concerned? British Council, Philippines. <https://www.britishcouncil.ph/teach/state-english-philippines-should-we-be-concerned-2>
- Cakrawati, L. M. (2017). Students' Perception on the Use of Online Learning Platforms in EFL Classroom. *English Language Teaching and Technology Journal*, 1(1), 22-30.
- Chinnery, G. M. (2006). Going to the MALL: Mobile assisted language learning. *Language Learning & Technology*, 10(1), 9-16. <http://llt.msu.edu/vol10num1/emerging/>
- Dewey, D. P., Belnap, R. K., & Hillstrom, R. (2013). Social network development, language use, and language acquisition during study abroad: Arabic language learners' perspectives. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 22(1), 84-110. <https://doi.org/10.36366/frontiers.v22i1.320>
- De Wilde, V., Brysbaert, M., & Eyckmans, J. (2020). Learning English through out-of-school contexts: Are different types of inputs important?. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 23(1), 171-185. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728918001062>
- Frolikova, E. Y., & Simonyan, T. A. (2021). Results of experimental teaching of self-reflection while speaking. *Proceedings TSNI-2021*, 0298-0309. <https://doi.org/10.3897/ap.e4.e0298>

- General, A. (2024, March 15). The pandemic's impact on education: A closer look at declining English proficiency. *Appsgeyser Blog*. <https://appsgeyser.com/blog/the-pandemics-impact-on-education-a-closer-look-at-declining-english-proficiency/>
- Ghazizadeh, T., & Fatemipour, H. (2017). The effect of blended learning on EFL learners' reading proficiency. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 8(3), 606-614. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0803.21>
- Gocer, T. (2017). *Turkish Special Teaching Methods* (2nd ed.). Ankara: Pegem Academy Publishing.
- Grgurovic, M. (2011). Blended learning in an ESL class: A case study. *Calico Journal*, 29(1), 100-117.
- Hidayat, D. N., Lee, J. Y., Mason, J., & Khaerudin, T. (2022). Digital technology supporting English learning among Indonesian university students. *Research and Practice in Technology Enhanced Learning*, 17(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41039-022-00198-8>
- Hung, L. N. Q., & Bao, T. L. Q. (2023). Comparing the effectiveness of online and onsite learning in English proficiency classes: Learners' perspectives. *Journal of Education and E-Learning Research*, 10(2), 201–208. <https://doi.org/10.20448/jeelr.v10i2.4541>.
- Kachra R., Brown A. (2020). The new normal: Medical education during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. *Canadian Medical Education Journal*, 11(6), e167–e169. <https://doi.org/10.36834/cmej.70317>
- Kathirvel, K. & Hashim, H. (2020) The Use of Audio-Visual Materials as Strategies to Enhance Speaking Skills among ESL Young Learners. *Creative Education*, 11, 2599-2608. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2020.1112192>
- Lai, Y., Saab, N., & Admiraal, W. (2022). University students' use of mobile technology in self-directed language learning: Using the integrative model of behavior prediction. *Computers & Education*, 179, 104413. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2021.104413>
- Lestiyanawati, R., & Widyanoro, A. (2020). Strategies and Problems Face by Indonesian Teachers in Conducting E-Learning System during COVID-19 Outbreak. *Journal of Culture, Literature, Linguistics and English Teaching*, 2, 71-82.
- Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2006). *How Languages Are Learned* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University.
- Luk, J.C.M., & Lin, A.M.Y. (2007). *Classroom Interactions as Cross-Cultural Encounters: Native Speakers in EFL. Lessons* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315095646>
- Mariñas, J. (2023). Why Philippines for business? Cloud Employee. <https://skills.cloudemployee.co.uk/blog/it-outsourcing/why-philippines-for-business>
- Nur Agung, A. S., and Surtikanti, M. W., and Ca Quinones, O. P. (2020). Students' perception of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic: a case study on the English students of STKIP Pamane Talino. *Soshum J. Sosial Humaniora* 10, 225–235. <https://doi.org/10.31940/soshum.v10i2.1316>
- Omar, S. F., Nawi, H. S. A., Tengku Shahdan, T. S., Mee Mee, R. W., Pek, L. S., & Che Yob, F. S. (2020). Interactive language learning activities for learners' communicative ability. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, 9(4), 1010-1016. <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v9i4.20605>

- Parveen, B. W. (2016). Use of technology in improving speaking skills. *Journal of English Language and Literature (JOELL)*, 3(2), 121-124.
- Pier, L., Christian, M., Tymeson, H., & Meyer, R. H. (2021, June). *COVID-19 impacts on student learning: Evidence from interim assessments in California* [Report]. Policy Analysis for California Education.
<https://edpolicyinca.org/publications/covid-19-impacts-student-learning>
- Reed, S., Hurtt, A., Hibel, J., & Garrett, D. (2022). Serving English learners during the COVID-19 pandemic [Report]. Policy Analysis for California Education.
<https://edpolicyinca.org/publications/serving-english-learners-during-covid-19-pandemic>
- Sari, F. M., & Wahyudin, A. Y. (2019). Blended-Learning: The responses from non-English students in the Indonesian tertiary context. *Teknosastik*, 17(1), 23-28.
<https://doi.org/10.33365/ts.v17i1.204>.
- Shawaqfeh, A. T., Jameel, A. S., Al-adwan, L. A. Y., & Khasawneh, M. A. S. (2023). Interaction as a Mechanism to Enhance English Language Proficiency in the Classroom. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 15(1), 229-234. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1501.25>
- Sison, M. O., & Bautista, S. C. (2021). Technical Capability, Instructional Strategies and Learners' Engagement in Online Learning Instruction: Basis for Framework Development. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 10(2), 261-287.
- Sosas, R. V. (2021). Technology in teaching speaking and its effects on students learning English. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(2), 958-970. <https://doi.org/10.52462/jlls.66>.
- Sung, Y.-T., Chang, K.-E., & Yang, J.-M. (2015). How effective are mobile devices for language learning? A meta-analysis. *Educational Research Review*, 16, 68-84.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2015.09.001>
- Supiyati, D. Y. A. H. (2011). Improving Students' Speaking Skills by Using Audio-Visual Aids in Class IA RSBI SD N Cemara Dua No. 13 Surakarta in 2009/2010 Academic Year. Unpublished Undergraduate Thesis, Surakarta: Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Sebelas Maret University.
- Toquero, C. M. (2020). Challenges and Opportunities for Higher Education amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Philippine Context. *Pedagogical Research*, 5(4), 1-5.
<https://doi.org/10.29333/pr/7947>
- Thaseem, W., & Kareema, M. I. F. (2017). Implication of Multimedia Audio-Visual Aids in the English Language Classroom. 7th International Symposium 2017, 7-8 December 2017.
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322499103>
- Toleuzhan, A., Sarzhanova, G., Romanenko, S., Utebayeva, E., & Karbozova, G. (2023). The educational use of YouTube videos in communication fluency development in English: Digital learning and oral skills in secondary education. *International Journal of Education in Mathematics, Science, and Technology (IJEMST)*, 11(1), 198-221.
<https://doi.org/10.46328/ijemst.2983>
- Türkben, T. (2019). The effects of interactive teaching strategies on speaking skills of students learning Turkish as a second language. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 15(3), 1011-1031.

- Turner, D. (2017, September 24). *What is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)?*. Quirkos. September 12, 2025. <https://www.quirkos.com/blog/post/intro-interpretative-phenomenological-analysis-summary/>
- Verawardina, U., Asnur, L., Lubis, A. L., Hendriyani, Y., Ramadhani, D., Dewi, I. P., Darni, R., Betri, T. J., Susanti, W., & Sriwahyuni, T. (2020). Reviewing Online Learning Facing the COVID-19 Outbreak. *Journal of Talent Development and Excellence*, 12, 385-392.
- Rose Suzila, Y., Noor Alhusna, M. & Mazura @ Mastura, M. (2021). ESL Learners' Obstacles in Learning Speaking Skills. *The English Teacher*, 50(3), 173-181. <https://doi.org/10.52696/WYZY7207>
- Yen, E. and Mohamad, M. (2020) Utilising E-Learning to Assist Primary School ESL Pupils in Learning to Spell during COVID-19 Pandemic: A Literature Review. *Creative Education*, 11, 1223-1230. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2020.118091>
- Ying, Y., Siang, W. & Mohamad, M. (2021) The Challenges of Learning English Skills and the Integration of Social Media and Video Conferencing Tools to Help ESL Learners Coping with the Challenges during COVID-19 Pandemic: A Literature Review. *Creative Education*, 12, 1503-1516. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2021.127115>.
- Yulia, A., Joshi, R. M., Husin, N. A., & Rahim, S. A. (2023). Enhancing English proficiency through social circle and vocabulary among Malaysian adult learners. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 10(1), 322-336. <https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v10i1.25740>