EFL Undergraduates’ Perceptions of Blended Speaking Instruction

Tzu-Hua Bailey Chen

Abstract

Blended learning has gained momentum in English teaching in recent years, yet research on its application to EFL speaking instruction is scarce. The present study reports on EFL students’ perceptions of the blended learning instructional approach, integrating an asynchronous computer-mediated voice forum into an English conversation course at the tertiary level. Twenty-three undergraduates minoring in English from various disciplines of a university in northern Taiwan were asked to complete in-class speaking exercises and eight after-class speaking tasks on a bi-weekly basis. They received feedback from their course instructor in the classroom. Data were gathered from an open-ended questionnaire, a blended learning satisfaction questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews. Findings indicate that the students generally held a favorable attitude toward the blended learning experience. In particular, they perceived their overall oral proficiency gains and language gains in pronunciation and lexical accuracy. The students also appreciated blended speaking instruction for reinforcing their learning with after-class speaking tasks and connecting to the knowledge they had learned in the class with relevant after-class oral recorded tasks. Additionally, the affordances of the voice forum, participating students’ attitudes towards language learning, and the role of the teacher are the characteristics of this supportive blended English learning environment. Suggestions regarding future implementation of the blended learning course are also discussed.

Key Words: blended learning, computer-mediated communication, speaking skills

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INTRODUCTION

Currently in Taiwan, English conversational skills seem to be the most desirable language proficiency that undergraduates hope to improve. It is considered the hardest English language skill to master (C.-K. Liu, 2013; Tang, 2010). Although Taiwanese EFL undergraduate learners are eager to enhance their English speaking skills and prefer oral training, speaking instruction is often constrained by many factors, such as context and educational policy. In the EFL context such as in Taiwan, second language (L2) learners generally lack enough input and output in English speaking (Cheng, Chen, & Shih, 2007; Tang, 2010). English speaking courses offered by local universities normally suffer from large class size and limited class hours (Cheng et al., 2007). Given that the lack of speaking opportunities is one of the major problems in English speaking instruction at the tertiary level in Taiwan, it is crucial to provide more speaking opportunities and extend Taiwanese undergraduates’ in-class learning in English speaking beyond the classroom (Chen, 2011; Huang, 2015). Blended learning instructional approach has the potential to resolve the problem in this regard.

With the advent of computer technologies, educators from various disciplines have started to adopt the blended learning instructional approach that combines both traditional face to face classroom instruction and online learning components in their course design (Bekele & Menchaca, 2008; Cheung & Hew, 2011; Gedik, Kiraz, & Ozden, 2013; Kupetz & Ziegenmeyer, 2005; Lou, Chen, Tsai, Tseng, & Shih, 2012). This strand of research has generally revealed that the blended learning instructional approach exhibits more advantages to purely face-to-face classroom instruction because it attempts to bridge the gap between teacher-fronted teaching and learner-centered online learning, making learning more effective and motivating. These studies have also reported the educational value of the approach in relation to enhancing class participation, increasing flexibility, encouraging initiatives in learning, and offering support to the integration of declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge. Most importantly, the approach aligns in-class learning with after-class web-based learning.

In recent years, the blended learning approach has gained momentum in the field of English language education. Most existing research has positively reported on English language learners’ perceptions and/or development of reading skills (Yang, 2012), writing skills (M.-H. Liu, 2013; Shih, 2011), vocabulary gains (Al Zumor, Al Refaa, Bader Eddin, & Al-Rahman, 2013; Hsieh, 2012), and overall
English proficiency (Lee & Liao, 2009). However, research on blending in-class speaking instruction with after-class web-based learning is still lacking. In fact, the approach has great potential to solve the current predicament of teaching English speaking skills in Taiwan by providing learners more speaking opportunities and extending their learning experiences outside the classroom.

In order to tailor a blended language learning course, Neumeier (2005) suggested that the incorporation of computer-mediated communication (CMC) medium for after-class online learning reinforcement might reduce the transactional distance experienced by L2 learners. With regard to blended speaking course design, voice-based CMC tools, a type of CMC medium, are particularly suitable for developing language learners’ speaking skills, but thus far, the existing literature has mainly focused on its adoption in the online English learning contexts (Hsu, Wang, & Comac, 2008; Huang, 2015; Hung, 2011; Sun, 2009, 2012). Few studies have probed the use of voice-based CMC tools in blended English speaking course.

To bridge the gap in the blended speaking instruction research, the present study explored Taiwanese EFL undergraduates’ perceived strengths, weaknesses, and speaking gains after the blended speaking instruction, integrating asynchronous computer-mediated voice forum, a type of voice-based CMC. Additionally, the current study examined the supportive features of the blended English learning environment and probed the learners’ suggestions for future implementation of the blended course.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Voice-Based CMC for English Speaking Instruction

CMC is currently one of the most popular media for teaching and learning English speaking skills (Bueno-Alastuey & López Pérez, 2014; Ko, 2012; Yanguas, 2010). CMC can be categorized into synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (delayed) modes. Existing studies on synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC) and asynchronous computer-mediated communication (ACMC) have mostly focused on text-based communication (e.g., Blake, 2000; Greenfield, 2003). Currently, the focus of CMC has been directed toward exploring various types of asynchronous voice-based CMC on L2 speaking development, including podcasts (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007), video blogs (Hung, 2011; Shih, 2010), and voice blogs (Hsu et al., 2008; Huang, 2015; Sun, 2009, 2012).
Podcasts are a voice-based ACMC tool whose name stems from a combination of iPod and broadcast (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). A podcast can be distributed on the Internet via RSS (Really Simple Syndication) and can be subscribed to by listeners. It provides individuals an avenue by which to display and share their creativity (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). Ducate and Lomicka (2009) explored podcasts in pronunciation training in an intermediate German class. It was found that the German learners tended to notice their pronunciation errors and monitor their phonological progress, although their pronunciation did not significantly improve after the intervention. Additionally, these learners enjoyed exercising their creativity when producing impromptu podcasts.

Over the past few years, blogs have enjoyed growing popularity among language teaching and learning community (Sun & Chang, 2012). Characterized by strong personal editorship and archival features, blogs encourage self-expression (Sun & Chang, 2012). A number of empirical attempts have been made to look at the pedagogical value of two types of voiced-based blogs, video blogs, and voice blogs in promoting online English language learning. Most studies have generally yielded positive results in developing English learners’ speaking and their perceptions of the video/voice blog projects. However, discrepancies in the results of the existing video/voice blog literature were also identified. One of the major causes for differences in the results may be due to the nature and functionalities of the voice-based CMC that are under investigation (Hsu et al., 2008; Huang, 2015; Hung, 2011; Sun, 2009, 2012).

Hung (2011) explored 17 Taiwanese English majors’ perceptions of video blogging, and obtained positive responses from the participating students. Students viewed the visual representation of the video blogs and its feasibility (i.e., no time constraints for users) as the advantages, while technical difficulties, affective interferences, and failure to link to real-life communication were perceived to be the drawbacks of the video blogging experience.

Using voice blogs without visual image presentations like video blogs, Sun (2009) found that the participants, 46 undergraduate EFL learners, regarded voice blogging as a way of learning communication skills, self-presentation, information exchange, and a novel way of social networking. In a follow-up study, Sun (2012) probed into these EFL undergraduates’ perceived and actual gains in speaking skills in terms of pronunciation, language complexity, accuracy, and fluency. The results revealed that students made no significant progress in their English speaking skills, though they perceived speaking skill gains through voice blogging. Sun speculated that the authentic nature of
voice blogging might encourage students to focus on meaning, rather than on accuracy, indicating the importance of taking into account the nature of voice-based CMC under implementation when evaluating technology integration into a course. In Hsu et al.’s (2008) research, learners’ perceived benefits of voice blogging included improvement in English speaking and listening skills through listening to the assigned materials and teacher feedback. Combining web-based readings and voice blogging, Huang’s (2015) study showed that students felt that producing voice blog entries facilitated their English language learning, promoted social networking, and assisted knowledge construction.

In comparison to the functionalities of voice blogs and podcast, Huann and Thong (2006), in their position paper, pointed out that voice blogs are a great deal more interactive than podcasts since they encourage more feedback from the audience on the online platform. However, although voice blogs allow their users to engage in expression-oriented activities and individual creation, voice forums promote collective endeavors from their creators, induce idea exchanges, and facilitate cooperative learning (Miyazoe & Anderson, 2010). In addition, the voice forum provides oral exchange supported by threaded discussions organized around specific topics (Huang, 2015; Sun & Chang, 2012). The pedagogical value of asynchronous computer-mediated voice forums in English speaking instruction has yet to be empirically ascertained.

Taken together, most of the findings from the aforementioned research have demonstrated various asynchronous voice-based CMC tools, including podcasts, video blogs, and voice blogs as effective and beneficial media for L2 speaking development in the online learning environment from learners’ perspectives. On the other hand, discrepancies in the findings of the reviewed research may result from the nature and functionalities of different voice-based CMC media, thereby underlining the importance of taking the nature and functionalities of the medium into account in voice-based CMC research. Based on the previously discussed literature review, what has yet to be examined is the pedagogical value of the voice forum, a relatively new asynchronous CMC medium and the perceived learning benefits and speaking gains of its integration into traditional English speaking instruction through the use of the blended learning instructional approach. In the next section, the researcher introduces the theoretical foundations and learning cycle of the blended learning instructional approach. A study on using video blog in the blended environment is discussed as well.
Integrating Voice-Based CMC: A Blended Learning Approach

Unlike existing voice-based CMC studies conducted in an online learning context, the blended learning approach features a continuous, iterative learning cycle in which after-class learning and in-class instruction are aligned (Bekele & Menchaca, 2008; Cheung & Hew, 2011; Hadjerrouit, 2008; Kupetz & Ziegenmeyer, 2005; Lou et al., 2012). In other words, the existing studies situated in the online learning formats treated in-class and after-class learning of English speaking skills as two separate instructional activities, whereas blended learning researchers/instructors seek to provide seamless EFL learning opportunities that bridge in-class learning and after-class learning.

The blended learning approach is a combination of learning theories, including cognitive learning theory, constructivist learning theory, and socially situated learning theory (Hadjerrouit, 2008). Corresponding to these three learning theories is Mayes and Fowler’s (1999) blended learning cycle, which consists of three stages—conceptualization, construction, and dialogue. The conceptualization phase features the process of interaction between learners’ and teacher’s knowledge, which is associated with cognitive learning theory, as this phase focuses on concepts and their relationships. The construction phase, aiming at knowledge construction, is related to constructivist learning theory. The dialogue phase is characterized by sharing, discussions, and collaboration, which is grounded in socially situated learning theory and generally takes place beyond the classroom walls in the online learning format.

Neumeier (2005) pointed out that to minimize the possible impacts of the geographical distance on online L2 learning of the blended learning course design, educators are advised to apply transactional distance theory (TDT). Developed by Moore and Kearsley (1996), transactional distance is defined as the “[...] physical distance that leads to a communication gap, a psychological space of potential misunderstandings between the behavior of instructors and those of the learners...” (p. 200). Communication tools that can facilitate collaborative work may reduce the distance experienced by the learners. This suggests that in the online learning component of a blended L2 course where learners cannot have face to face interaction, the integration of CMC medium outside the classroom for after-class learning reinforcement has the potential to reduce transactional distance.

To date, the use of voice-based CMC in blended learning environment has received little attention. Shih’s (2010) design of a
blended learning course integrating video blogs, a type of voice-based ACMC, is the first empirical endeavor of this kind, broadly fitting the theoretical foundations of blended learning and Mayes and Fowler’s (1999) learning cycle. In Shih’s study, video-based blogs were combined with in-class speaking instruction to develop English public speaking skills of 44 Taiwanese college seniors majoring in English. The course was divided into four phases, including traditional face-to-face classroom teaching, video construction, giving peer comments on the constructed video clips, uploading revised video clips, face-to-face discussions with the instructor about the video clips, and in-class presentations and lectures. Each phase lasted several weeks, and the course design fit one blended learning cycle as a whole. The blended learning approach was perceived by the students as an interesting, flexible approach. It also promoted cooperative learning and improved students’ public speaking skills. Notwithstanding the seemingly encouraging responses from the participants, Shih’s study focuses mainly on how video blogs can assist the course participants’ English public speaking and their attitudes towards the video-blog projects.

The studies reviewed above have indicated the potential of asynchronous voice-based CMC tools for English speaking instruction. Nevertheless, they were conducted in the online learning environment (Hsu et al., 2008; Huang, 2015; Hung, 2011; Sun, 2009, 2012). Given the benefits of the blended learning format in education and limited research on the application of voice-based CMC in English education, a systematic empirical investigation of incorporating asynchronous CMC tool into blended English speaking instruction seems warranted.

Drawing on the theoretical framework of the blended learning model, the present study aimed to provide a pedagogical foundation for the premise that voice forum, a type of the voice-based CMC tools, can constitute an integral part of the blended speaking course. Specifically, the study examined Taiwanese EFL learners’ perceptions on the blended speaking instruction that integrated an asynchronous computer-mediated voice forum. The following research questions guided the present study:

1. What are EFL undergraduates’ overall perceptions on the strengths and weaknesses of a blended speaking course design, speaking gains, and integrating an asynchronous voice forum into a blended speaking course?

2. How is the learning of English speaking skills supported through incorporating an asynchronous voice forum into such a blended learning environment?
(3) What are EFL undergraduates’ suggestions for improvement of the blended speaking instruction?

**METHODOLOGY**

**Participants**

A total of 23 students who were non-English majors and enrolled in an English conversation course offered to English minors in the spring of 2012 at a university in northern Taiwan participated in this study. The class was made up of 16 female and 7 male students. Aged between 20 and 25, they have received an average of 12.20 years ($SD = 3.578$) of English instruction prior to their participation in the research study. With regard to the frequency of computer use, student participants spent, on average, 27.35 hours ($SD = 17.061$) on a weekly basis. They started to learn how to use computers when they were elementary school students.

**Teaching Procedures**

The objective of this conversation course is to improve EFL undergraduates’ English conversation skills and their intercultural competence. The study applied the theoretical foundations of blended learning approach (Hadjerrouit, 2008) and Mayes and Fowler’s (1999) iterative learning cycle to design the blended course for English minors from various disciplines. In addition to the in-class pedagogical tasks, students were introduced to *Voxopop*, the asynchronous computer-mediated voice forum, in class by the instructor starting from the first week of the semester. From the second week onwards, they were asked to record two speaking tasks pertaining to topics of intercultural communication every two weeks individually. The topics were orally recorded by the instructor beforehand. A total of eight speaking tasks were given during the semester, which was worth 20 percent of the final grade of this course.

The four-stage blended learning cycle of this English speaking course was as follows: In the first stage, the course instructor introduced the topic, grammar, vocabulary items, and pronunciation necessary to the completion of the pedagogical tasks in the classroom. At the second stage, students practiced their speaking in pairs through pedagogical tasks carried out in the classroom. Both fluency and accuracy were the emphases placed on in-class speaking tasks. The third stage featured the students’ use of asynchronous computer-mediated voice forum, *Voxopop*, in order to finish the speaking assignment outside the
classroom. The online portion of the task served as consolidation of the classroom instruction and tasks. The students were also encouraged to listen to their peers’ voice recordings as a way of learning at home. In the last stage, the course instructor offered feedback on the students’ voice recordings, which was presented in the form of Power Point slides and teacher’s lectures. A sample weekly course unit is included in Appendix A.

Instruments

**A Voxopop blended learning satisfaction questionnaire.** The original questionnaire was adapted from Shih’s (2010) and Hung’s (2011) study on EFL students’ perceptions of video blogs and EFL learning. In order to survey students’ perception on blended speaking instruction, results from previous educational research on blended learning served as a reference for questionnaire statement writing in the present study. Two professors in a related field also helped validate the content of the questionnaire. With their feedback, the questionnaire was revised and translated into Chinese so that participants’ English knowledge would have no impact on their responses to each survey item. Moreover, it was piloted with a small sample of five students to check potential errors during translation before it was administered to the participating students (Brown, 2009; Nunan, 2001). The Cronbach’s alpha of the revised questionnaire was 0.86, indicating the relatively high reliability of the instrument. The Voxopop Blended Learning Satisfaction Questionnaire contained two sections. The first section included 14 open-response items in relation to students’ background information and preferences for online voice forum, such as age, gender, major, years of learning English, and frequency of doing online speaking assignments, the learning activities they engaged in online using Voxopop, etc. The second part, consisting of 16 closed-response statements, probed into students’ perspectives of the blended learning experience. The five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was employed to elicit participants’ degree of agreement with the statements. The questionnaire items are discussed separately by themes in the results and discussion section.

**An open-ended questionnaire.** The questionnaire encompassed three open-ended questions that explored the participating students’ views of the strengths and weaknesses of the blended speaking instruction as well as of their speaking skill gains. This was distributed to the course participants before Voxopop Blended Learning Satisfaction Questionnaire to avoid any guiding effect of the closed-ended statements on course participants’ responses to the open-ended questions.
Semi-structured interview question sheet. Semi-structured interviews with individual students were conducted in order to obtain more in-depth information on students’ opinions about the blended conversation course. Five questions were designed to probe into learners’ perceptions on how the blended learning course supported their learning, features of the blended learning environment, the challenges they encountered in the blended learning voice-forum project, and their suggestions for future blended speaking course implementation (see Appendix B).

Online voice recorded speaking tasks. Voxopop (http://www. voxopop.com/) is a free website that comprised many talk groups. Depending on group administrator-user’s preferences, talk groups can be established in public, restricted, or entirely private setting. In the study, the course instructor set up a talk group that was open to the general public. In addition to recording voice-based tasks, students could listen to their peers’ voice postings organized around a specific topic by clicking on the button of each course participant’s voice recording (see Figures 1 & 2). Figure 3 displays the interface of the online voice recorder. Users can redo their voice recording provided that they are not satisfied with their recorded work. After finishing their work, they need to click on “Save Message” button to upload their recording publicly in the voice forum.

Figure 1
A Screenshot of the Talk Group Created for This Course
Figure 2
A Screenshot of an Online Voice Recorded Speaking Task

Figure 3
A Screenshot of the Interface of Voice Recording
Data Collection Procedures and Analysis

The participating students completed the open-ended questionnaires first and then, the Voxpop Blended Learning Satisfaction Questionnaire. Among the 23 students, 20 submitted their completed questionnaires. The researcher computed the responses of 16 close-ended items of the blended learning satisfaction questionnaire data employing SPSS 19.0, and drew upon descriptive statistics for a quantitative data analysis. The open-ended questionnaire data were analyzed by using qualitative methods.

There was a question at the end of blended learning satisfaction questionnaire asking students’ willingness to participate in semi-structured interviews. Students who were willing to be interviewed provided their e-mail address. After reviewing the quantitative questionnaire data, four males and six females were selected for individual interviews during the last week of class. The selection criterion, according to the purposive sampling strategy (Cohen & Manion, 1985), was based upon students’ gender, major, age, as well as their responses in the close-ended items of the questionnaire survey. As the present study used a mixed-method research design, interview data collected after questionnaires may help explain the quantitative results and gain a more in-depth understanding of the research topic under investigation (Ivankova & Creswell, 2009). The chosen interviewees took diverse stances on the blended learning experience under investigation. Five of the interviewees either strongly agreed or agreed to all the close-ended questionnaire statements. Four of the interviewees held a neutral attitude towards the blended learning course. One interviewee viewed the blended learning course rather negatively. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the interviewees.

Member checking was used during the interview process to confirm the interpretation made by the researcher and to enhance trustworthiness (Rallis & Rossman, 2009). The interview data were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. As the participants were encouraged to verbalize their thoughts in their more proficient language (i.e., Chinese), the transcription also involved translation from Chinese to English. The interview data and the open-ended questionnaire data examination entails five steps (Ryan & Bernard, 2000): (1) carefully reading through the responses to generate codes, (2) labeling all the responses with the generated codes, (3) looking for similarities and differences between the codes and combining the relevant codes into several emerging themes, (4) rereading the responses and conducting relabeling if needed, and (5) interpreting the themes. The researcher
and a graduate student in TESOL coded the data independently. Any discrepancies in coding were resolved through discussions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students’ Perceptions of Blended Learning

The first research question asks EFL undergraduates’ overall perceptions of the blended speaking course design, speaking gains, and the incorporation of an asynchronous computer-mediated voice forum into the English conversation course. Participating students’ responses to an open-ended questionnaire that contained three open-ended questions and a blended learning satisfaction questionnaire with 16 closed-response statements were collected and analyzed.

Perceived speaking gains after blended speaking instruction.

Table 1 below shows the frequency and the percentage of the students’ perceived speaking skill gains in various domains. Most of the students (N = 18, 90%) thought that the blended speaking instruction helped them develop their overall speaking proficiency. They also perceived speaking gains in pronunciation (N = 14, 70%), vocabulary accuracy (N = 13, 65%), and grammatical accuracy (N = 12, 60%) after this instruction.

The findings substantiated through the analysis of the individual interviews with the students showed that most students perceived speaking gains in these areas because of the blended course design, the affordances of the asynchronous voice forum, and the nature of the voice recorded speaking tasks. The course objectives aimed to foster the EFL undergraduates’ speaking skills, particularly pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. As these skills were core learning elements in the face-to-face instruction, it was not surprising that the students rated their improvement in these language areas relatively high. Additionally, since the students could not see their own facial expressions while they were doing voice recording (as opposed to video recording), they paid more attention to their voice and the contents of their oral recordings more. Before they made their oral recordings, most of them would listen to other students’ work and learned expressions which they found useful. This is an evidence of how learning activities were mediated by the threaded discussions, one of the affordances of the voice forum. The students also wrote scripts for their recording in which they tried to use what they had learned from the course, mostly grammar and vocabulary, prior to each voice recorded task. The nature of such individual voice recorded tasks may lend support to students’ perceived speaking gains.
gains in lexical and grammatical accuracy. The findings corroborate the existing literature (Ducate & Lomicka, 2009; Hsu et al., 2008; Huann & Thong, 2006; Sun, 2012) that the use of different voice-based CMC may contribute to different learning experiences and learners’ perception of language skill gains. The finding also echoes the argument made in the present study: the functionalities of the chosen computer medium may have an impact on learners’ learning experiences.

Perceived strengths of the blended speaking instruction. Participating students’ perception on the strengths of the speaking instruction presented in a blended learning format can be seen in Table 2. 75% of the participants (N = 15) felt that such kind of instruction facilitated their English learning through after-class speaking practices in the forms of online voice recordings. Most of them (N = 14, 70%) also agreed that blended learning consolidated knowledge they learned in the class with after-class speaking practices on contents similar to what they were taught in the class. The findings are encouraging given that existing blended learning literature in L2 teaching often reveals the lack of connection between CALL tasks and face-to-face tasks (Carrió Pastor, 2009; Chenoweth, Ushida, & Murday, 2006). The present study takes a step further to solve the problems commonly found in the existing studies, and the students seem to appreciate this blended speaking course design. The findings further indicated that tailoring a blended English course based on Hadjerrouit’s (2008) blended learning theories and Mayes and Fowler’s (1999) three-stage blended learning cycle, conceptualization, construction, dialogue, is well-received among the Taiwanese EFL learners.

The blended speaking instructional approach also provided more opportunities for learner-centered learning (N = 12, 60%) and encourage

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<th>Table 1</th>
<th>EFL Learners’ Perceived Speaking Gains</th>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived Speaking Gains</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall oral proficiency</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lexical accuracy</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grammatical accuracy</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Idea organization</td>
<td>8</td>
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</table>

*Note. N = 20. Since respondents were allowed to choose more than one answer, the total frequency exceeds 20 and the percentage is more than 100.*
learners to take initiatives in learning \((N = 11, 55\%)\). These findings are in line with the existing literature on the merits of blended learning in education or language teaching (Bekele & Menchaca, 2008; Cheung & Hew, 2011; Gedik et al., 2013; Kupetz & Ziegenmeyer, 2005; Lou et al., 2012).

**Perceived weaknesses of the blended speaking instruction.** Four weaknesses of such blended speaking instruction were identified in Table 3 below. The participating students viewed a lack of interaction with other classmates and their teacher on the voice forum as the greatest drawback of the blended learning instruction \((N = 8, 40\%)\). The other shortcomings of such learning format included failure to receive immediate and individualized feedback \((N = 6, 30\%)\), technical problems during after-class online oral postings \((N = 4, 20\%)\), topic selection of the teaching contents and oral recordings \((N = 2, 10\%)\). Despite the weaknesses, students perceived the blended learning experiences relatively positively, as can been seen from the difference in numbers between Table 2 and Table 3. The explanation to these issues and some possible solutions are proposed together with the challenges identified in the later part of the discussion.

**Attitudes toward blended learning using the asynchronous voice forum.** As shown in Table 4, the students displayed high levels of agreement in terms of integrating Voxpop into traditional face-to-face instruction \((M = 3.65-4.25)\). It was worth noting that the students

<table>
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<th>EFL Learners’ Perceived Strengths of the Blended Speaking Instruction</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strength</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Reinforce learning through after-class reinforcement</td>
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<td>2. Connect in-class learning with after-class learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Provide more learner-centered learning activities</td>
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<td>4. Encourage active learning on the part of learners</td>
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<td>5. Enhance motivation through peer interaction and from teacher comments</td>
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</table>

*Note. N = 20. Since respondents were allowed to choose more than one answer, the total frequency exceeds 20 and the percentage is more than 100.*
benefitted from the anxiety-reducing effects of asynchronous speaking environment constructed by the voice forum, as evidenced by the mean scores \( (M = 4.25, SD = 0.786) \). Contrary to face-to-face interaction, the students do not need to face the public in the online voice forum. The online learning component is conducive to the reduction of communication anxiety which might otherwise preclude the students’ English speaking development. Notwithstanding, existing blended learning literature has cautioned that the online component may hinder speaking skills due to lack of social presence (Gleason, 2013), which confirmed the open-ended questionnaire results of the present study. Based on the findings, there appears to be a trade-off between anxiety level and interaction in the asynchronous CMC environment.

Additionally, the students felt more comfortable in developing their speaking skills in a blended learning environment, compared with learning without technology integration \( (M = 4.15, SD = 0.875) \). A higher number of the participants thought using blended learning instructional approach to teach English conversation made their learning easier \( (M = 3.95, SD = 0.759) \), and they wanted to continue learning English speaking skills in a blended learning environment \( (M = 4.00, SD = 0.649) \). Such positive responses may result from the extended opportunities for English speaking provided by the blended learning environment. The more opportunities students have to practice their speaking skills, the more confident and motivated they may be. Another reason that accounts for the students’ preference for the blended learning instructional approach maybe that online learning balances

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**Table 3**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>EFL Learners’ Perceived Weaknesses of the Blended Speaking Instruction</th>
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<tr>
<td>Weakness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of discussions and interaction with peers or the instructor on the voice forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Failure to offering immediate, individualized feedback</td>
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<td>Technical problems that occurred during oral recordings</td>
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<td>Topic selection of the in-class discussions and after-class oral recordings in terms of difficulty level</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 20. Since respondents were allowed to choose more than one answer, the total frequency exceeds 20 and the percentage is more than 100.*
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>SD (%)</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Combining a voice forum with face-to-face teaching enhances my motivation to learn speaking skills.</td>
<td>5 (25)</td>
<td>7 (35)</td>
<td>6 (30)</td>
<td>2 (10)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>0.967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Integrating the voice forum into the course makes my learning of speaking skills much easier than learning only in a face-to-face way.</td>
<td>5 (25)</td>
<td>9 (45)</td>
<td>6 (30)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>0.759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I hope the instructor can continue to combine the voice forum with traditional face-to-face teaching to teach English conversation.</td>
<td>4 (20)</td>
<td>12 (60)</td>
<td>4 (20)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I feel free to express my thoughts more easily in the blended learning environment than in the traditional classroom.</td>
<td>8 (40)</td>
<td>8 (40)</td>
<td>3 (15)</td>
<td>1 (5)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>0.875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I lower my anxiety level when expressing my ideas in the blended learning environment, compared with speaking in the traditional classroom.</td>
<td>8 (40)</td>
<td>7 (35)</td>
<td>5 (25)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>0.786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. If a large amount of time were devoted, I would learn English speaking skills more efficiently than face-to-face way of teaching.</td>
<td>4 (20)</td>
<td>10 (50)</td>
<td>5 (25)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (5)</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>0.951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I have changed my attitude toward learning speaking skills due to this blended learning course.</td>
<td>3 (15)</td>
<td>8 (40)</td>
<td>8 (40)</td>
<td>1 (5)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.813</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 20. SA = strongly agree; A = agree; N = neutral; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree; M = mean; SD = standard deviation.
traditional face-to-face instruction, in which certain students may dominate the class. The integration of voice-based asynchronous CMC into after-class speaking assignment in this study provides shy students more opportunities to participate in an online learning format than in a face-to-face format (Kern, 1995; Warschauer, 1997).

**Views on the use of the voice forum for developing speaking skills.** Table 5 presents the descriptive statistical results that demonstrate the EFL college learners’ positive perceptions of Voxopop as an effective instructional medium for blended learning ($M = 3.65-4.10$). The students appreciated the usefulness of the asynchronous computer-mediated voice forum in assisting their learning of English speaking skills ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.553$).

**Perceived benefits and effectiveness of using the asynchronous voice forum.** The results of these EFL learners’ perceived effectiveness of the utilization of Voxopop is presented in Table 6. The participants appreciated using the voice forum to complete the speaking tasks because they could monitor their speaking progress ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.671$), gain a deeper understanding of the errors they made in recording the tasks, increase self-awareness of their advantages and drawbacks in English speaking ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.616$), and reflect on their errors in speaking ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.759$). Nevertheless, they seemed to show less agreement with the statement that using the voice forum will boost their self-confidence in speaking English ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 0.933$).

**Characteristics of the Blended Learning Environment**

The second research question explores features of the blended learning environment that are conducive to EFL undergraduates’ speaking skill development. An analysis of the interview data yielded nine features, which are subsumed under three major categories: affordances of the voice forum, participating students’ attitudes towards English learning, and the role of a teacher.

The students especially appreciated the additional chances for speaking practice provided by the integration of the online voice forum. Due to the nature of online voice forum, the students could redo the task again if they were not satisfied with their performance. The process of recording and redoing tasks facilitated self-monitoring on the part of these learners. The findings, however, are somewhat different from Al Zumor et al.’s (2013) study in which students perceived a blended learning environment as a place that supported the use of metacognitive strategies and social strategies. The explanations for such discrepancies may be that in Al Zumor et al.’s study, a Learning Management System (LMS), Blackboard, was used. Because LMS features various accesses
### Table 5
**Reflections on the Use of the Voice Forum for Speaking Skill Development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. It is interesting to learn speaking skills through <em>Voxopop</em>.</td>
<td>2 (10)</td>
<td>9 (45)</td>
<td>9 (45)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. <em>Voxopop</em> is a good voice forum that helps me develop my</td>
<td>4 (20)</td>
<td>14 (70)</td>
<td>2 (10)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaking skills.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. In general, I am satisfied with the learning experience on</td>
<td>4 (20)</td>
<td>9 (45)</td>
<td>7 (35)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>0.745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Voxopop</em>.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 20. SA = strongly agree; A = agree; N = neutral; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree; M = mean; SD = standard deviation.*
Table 6
EFL Learners’ Perceived Learning Benefits and Effectiveness of Using the Asynchronous Voice Forum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>SD (%)</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. I can monitor my learning progress in English speaking by using Voxopop.</td>
<td>6 (30)</td>
<td>10 (50)</td>
<td>4 (20)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>0.671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Using Voxopop raises my awareness of my strengths and weaknesses of English speaking.</td>
<td>6 (30)</td>
<td>13 (65)</td>
<td>1 (5)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>0.616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Using Voxopop to record the speaking tasks makes me reflect upon the errors I made.</td>
<td>5 (25)</td>
<td>12 (60)</td>
<td>2 (10)</td>
<td>1 (5)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I feel more confident of my speaking ability due to engaging in online speaking tasks.</td>
<td>3 (15)</td>
<td>6 (30)</td>
<td>9 (45)</td>
<td>1 (5)</td>
<td>1 (5)</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. My anxiety of speaking in English has been reduced due to engaging in online speaking tasks.</td>
<td>5 (25)</td>
<td>8 (40)</td>
<td>6 (30)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (5)</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Using Voxopop improves my speaking skills.</td>
<td>3 (15)</td>
<td>10 (50)</td>
<td>7 (35)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>0.696</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 20. SA = strongly agree; A = agree; N = neutral; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree; M = mean; SD = standard deviation.*
to communication and interaction among the course takers and the teacher, students are more likely to employ social strategies. As far as the present study was concerned, learners’ preparation for a series of audio recorded tasks in the asynchronous voice forum led to their employment of cognitive strategies.

Moreover, students learned how to better formulate and organize their thoughts through listening to their peers’ audio postings. For instance, Mary, one of the participating students, reflected, “Whenever I didn’t know how to answer a specific question, I would listen to other classmates’ recordings to get some ideas first. I tried to learn speaking and listening skills from my peers’ use of good expressions, vocabulary items, or phrases in their recordings.” In the class, they received the instructor’s general comments on the audio recordings presented via Power Point slides. Receiving feedback from the teacher is also a way of learning. It was also found that there was a high efficiency of recording and a reduced anxiety level when using the asynchronous forum. These were conducive to the students’ learning of English speaking. Additionally, learning on the voice forum functions as a complement to traditional classroom instruction, ensuring learners to learn without time constraints. The above findings corroborate previous studies reporting on the optimal learning environments created with the integration of technology in foreign language learning (Hung, 2011; Kirkgoz, 2011; Shih, 2010; Tian & Yang, 2008).

In addition to the affordance of the asynchronous computer-mediated voice forum, the students also took active attitudes towards English learning. They took responsibility for their English learning by utilizing metacognitive strategies to monitor progress and errors they made as well as plan their learning and by exercising learner autonomy:

Doing the online speaking task enables me to reflect upon the errors I made as I would listen to my recordings repeatedly. Sometimes I was quite surprised to learn my strange pronunciation. (John)

Before recording the online speaking tasks, I could draft your [my] answers and check the vocabulary words and grammatical patterns I intended to use, which helped me minimize my speaking errors. In so doing, you [I] improved your [my] grammar and lexical knowledge. (Rita)

After finishing my own recording, I would listen to others’ recordings. When I heard the expressions I had never learned before, I would jot them down and look up these expressions in the dictionary. I will set learning goals to memorize the vocabulary words on my own and try to use the words wherever possible. And I will check whether I reach the vocabulary learning goal I set. (Heidi)
As can be seen from the above excerpts, John pointed out that the online speaking tasks allowed him to reflect on his mispronunciation. Rita’s comment showed that task planning exhibited additional linguistic benefits. Through drafting their audio postings, the students could learn new vocabulary and grammatical structures about the topics. The script preparation process guided them to become more aware of their language use and their progress in English speaking. All the students in the blended learning satisfaction questionnaire acknowledged that they did plan the contents of their postings every time. Only three students did not do a Web search to enrich their postings prior to their audio recordings. As noted by Heidi, in the online learning component of the blended course design, the students exercised their autonomy by actively listening to their peers’ postings, by setting their goals to memorize some expressions and use them in the future, and by evaluating the goals they set. Heidi’s reflections showed that learner empowerment and learner reflection, two important pedagogical principles of learner autonomy (Little, 2004), could be manifested during the voice recording task completion. Her account further indicated that blended learning can help support learner autonomy, one of the conditions of the “optimal” language learning environment proposed by Egbert, Hanson-Smith, and Chao (2007).

As well as the affordances of the online voice forum and learners’ attitudes to their own English learning, the role of a teacher in blended speaking instruction was noted:

We learned our common drawbacks and advantages when the instructor offered feedback on our latest voice recordings in the form of power point slides in class. (Andy)

In every class meeting, the course instructor would teach us a topic pertaining to intercultural communication. We learn how to properly express our opinions on the topic through teacher lectures in which we would be taught some relevant vocabulary words, grammar, and pronunciation. Video watching and listening to relevant passages are parts of in-class teaching. (Betty)

Andy commented on the role of a teacher as a facilitator who gave feedback to students’ oral performance in the blended speaking instruction. The role of a teacher as a knowledge transmitter who taught students vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation related to intercultural communication was reported by Betty. Unlike traditional classroom teaching, the role of a teacher in a blended learning setting is
more diverse and may be influenced by the chosen pattern of interaction and the use of technology. The switch from one role to another can be immediate and dynamic (Neumeier, 2005). The excerpts above echo Neumeier’s contention by revealing that the teacher’s degree of interaction with her students and the use of computer technologies could contribute to a swift shift in the role of a teacher from a facilitator to a knowledge transmitter. However, contrary to the teacher’s role reported in Yang’s (2014) blended writing instruction research, one in which the teachers’ role shifted from dominators to facilitators, the present study revealed that some features of a traditional teacher’s role remained unchanged in this blended learning environment. A possible explanation is that face-to-face classroom teaching component remains a central part to blended language teaching (Marsh, 2012), so the teacher’s role that is commonly seen in a traditional face-to-face teaching was still identified in this study.

Overall, the above findings suggest that the affordances of the medium, learners’ attitudes about their language learning as manifested in their abilities to apply metacognitive and cognitive strategies and exercise learner autonomy, and teacher’s roles as a facilitator and a knowledge transmitter, constitutes the supportive blended learning environment for EFL speaking skill development.

**Suggestions for Improvement of the Blended Speaking Course**

The third research question looks at EFL undergraduates’ suggestions for implementing blended speaking instruction in the future. Findings from individual interviews with the course participants demonstrated that most of them were quite satisfied with the way the online voice forum was integrated into the course and had no suggestions for improving the blended learning experience, while some provided constructive advice about the ways to maximize the learning effectiveness of the blended speaking course.

The participating students were eager to receive individualized feedback on their audio postings from the instructor, as revealed in the excerpt below:

Because she [the teacher] gave general feedback for the whole class during class hours, she couldn’t get into detailed comments as far as individual work was concerned. If time permits and if the asynchronous voice forum has the function for oral or written comments, it would be better to give immediate feedback to every student. (Rita)
As illustrated in the excerpt, the course instructor failed to offer individualized feedback to the students due to time constraints and the limitation of the asynchronous computer-mediated voice forum, which does not have a comment function for either teacher or learner to give feedback to others’ audio postings. To create a blended learning experience, the course instructor provided general feedback to the course takers in the class instead. However, the instructor can start another discussion topic on the voice forum and offer individualized feedback to his/her students under that discussion topic so as to overcome the drawbacks. Peer feedback has been empirically proven to facilitate learning between peers (e.g., White, 2009) and can be employed if peer reviewing training is given. In sum, the above suggestions are provided to minimize the possible impact of transactional distance on L2 learning. Simply asking students to listen to other classmates’ voice postings could not effectively shorten the transactional distance between one another. More effective use of the CMC tool (i.e., giving timely peer or teacher feedback on students’ work) in after-class learning reinforcement is warranted, as it might better facilitate the dialogue between student and student/teacher, based on Mayes and Fowler’s (1999) blended learning cycle.

The participating students also wished that the course instructor had recorded a sample response for every speaking task before they were asked to produce their own. Steve commented, “If time permits, I hope the instructor could offer a sample answer based on the assigned topics so that we might learn more from completing the voice recordings.” Although it might be helpful to provide speaking sample to the course takers, teachers may not necessarily need to provide sample task every time before learners record their own speaking, as it might inhibit learners’ creativity and active thinking. When teaching intermediate EFL learners, instructors may offer some pre-task instructions to guide students toward the completion of the assigned task. Providing sufficient language scaffolding should be valued, as the ultimate goal of scaffolding is to assist learners in completing the task and reduce learners’ confusion and tension (Hartman, 2002; McKenzie, 2000). As far as advanced EFL learners are concerned, teachers may consider raising their awareness of utilizing cognitive strategies (e.g., taking notes and summarizing) as well as metacognitive strategies (e.g., arranging and planning one’s learning like setting goals and self-monitoring one’s learning) in such a blended learning format.

Selecting interesting, authentic topics for the students to complete their voice assignments and for in-class speaking activities seemed to be critical to the success of the blended learning format, as reported by Emma:
I think students would be more into doing the tasks if the topics could be more related to our daily lives, like recently the instructor asked us to share our thoughts on the ways men and women use to show their emotions. I think the topic was much easier, unlike topics of intercultural communication, which was hard to distinguish. Though I wanted to know more about cultural influences on people’s thinking patterns and behaviors, it posed greater challenges to me in that I found it hard to express the concepts in my words. (Emma)

English teachers are, therefore, advised to choose more interesting, real-life tasks based upon constructivist principles that view learning as an active and engaged process of knowledge construction and collaboration with other students (Yen, 2006, 2007). Teachers may also assign tasks with a variety of topics for students to work on (Hsu et al., 2008) or allow students to decide topics on their own.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Notwithstanding the participating students’ encouraging responses, a few limitations and directions for further empirical investigations are noted. First of all, this study did not have a control group that compared the learners’ own perceptions of traditional face-to-face speaking instruction with blended speaking instruction. It might be worthwhile to compare teacher-perceived effectiveness of the course with that of learners, too. Second, the study only looked at L2 learners’ perceived learning effects of the blended speaking instruction through self-reported data. Future studies could examine learners’ actual speaking gains after the instruction with pretest and posttest, in order to see whether learners’ perceptions are consistent with learning effectiveness. Since the aim of this course was to develop EFL learners’ speaking skills while enhancing their knowledge of intercultural communication, course participants’ perceived gains in intercultural communication knowledge can be investigated as well. Third, this study failed to effectively minimize the transactional distance between the learners in the online component. Merely encouraging learners to listen to their peers’ audio postings and share their postings via the voice forum was not going to facilitate the blend. Thus, a possible avenue for future research is to include various collaborative activities in the online component of the blended language course, and explore the effectiveness of the course from L2 learners and teachers’ point of view and through a pretest-posttest design. Finally, given the limitations of the asynchronous computer-mediated voice forum identified in
the present study, future studies might consider the investigation of combining the ACMC tool with SCMC tools to provide a more beneficial, real-life way of bridging in-class speaking instruction with after-class speaking reinforcement. These inquiries might provide English teachers with insights into optimal blended learning course design and implementation.

CONCLUSION

Adopting the blended learning instructional approach, this exploratory study contributed to our understanding of EFL learners’ perceptions of a blended speaking course. It further pointed out that the asynchronous computer-mediated voice forum could be a helpful pedagogical tool in the blended English speaking instruction, as long as the teacher strives to shorten the transactional distance of the online learning component by making a judicious adaption to the use of the voice forum.

To create a supportive blended learning environment, L2 educators are advised to be selective as to which CMC tool(s) should be utilized in the instruction, since the nature of the chosen communication medium might impact learners’ learning experiences and perceived language gains. Although the success of blending voice forum with face-to-face instruction was substantiated, L2 practitioners and researchers might consider using the mix of other modalities (e.g., adding texts, video, or images) as pedagogical texts to enrich their blended lessons and accommodate learners with different learning styles (e.g., visual learners, auditory learners, and balanced learners). They are also advised to set up collaborative online learning activities (e.g., project-based learning activities, peer review, any tasks that involve student-student/teacher discussion) to encourage learner participation and interaction. By so doing, the transactional distance may be effectively minimized and learners might benefit more from the “blend.”

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## APPENDIX A

### A Sample Weekly Course Unit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Culture &amp; Communication</th>
<th>Learning Elements:</th>
<th>Learning Activities:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012-03-14</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Thinking about being “normal”</td>
<td>(1) Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2) On body language and non-verbal communication</td>
<td>(2) 3 Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Verbal culture vs. non-verbal culture</td>
<td>Exercises (on being “normal,” on verbal vs. non-verbal cultures, on turn-taking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(4) How every culture deals with confrontation</td>
<td>(3) Brief Presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Conversational Skills:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>(4) Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Grammar: present perfect passive sentences</td>
<td>Assignment(s):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Vocabulary: perspective / extraordinary / confrontation</td>
<td>Voxopop Recording:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Pronunciation: connected speech-consonant to vowel and vowel to vowel links</td>
<td>(1) Your opinion on verbal and non-verbal cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2) How do you deal with confrontation: verbally or non-verbally?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

1. How does this blended learning course support your learning of English speaking skills?
2. What are the characteristics of the blended learning format?
3. How does the use of Voxpop, the asynchronous voice forum, support your learning beyond the walls of the classroom?
4. What are the challenges you faced in the blended speaking course?
5. What are your suggestions for future blended speaking instruction?
臺灣大學生對混合式英語口語教學的看法

摘要
混合式學習近年來風行英語教學界，但有關此教學法運用於口語課程教學的研究卻很稀少。本研究探討英語為外語的大學生對於混合式學習教學法融入非同步以電腦為媒介的有聲討論版於課後口說任務的看法、此混合式學習環境的特徵、以及對未來運用混合式學習教學法於英語口語課程設計的建議。23 位英文輔系的北臺灣大學生參與課堂內口說練習與雙週課外共 8 個口說任務，老師於課堂中提供回饋。研究資料包含混合式學習滿意度問卷、開放式問卷和個別訪談。研究結果顯示，學生大致上對混合式學習教學法抱持正面的態度。學生認為混合式口語教學有助於整體英語口語能力的提升，英語發音和用字的精準度也有所改善。本研究也發現三個此混合式學習環境的特徵，並針對學生對未來混合式口語課程設計的建議做討論。

關鍵詞：混合式學習 以電腦為媒介的溝通 口語技巧