

LEARNING ENGLISH THROUGH BLENDED TASK-SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES: INSIGHTS FROM FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

HỌC TIẾNG ANH THÔNG QUA CÁC HOẠT ĐỘNG HỖ TRỢ THEO NHIỆM VỤ TRONG MÔ HÌNH HỌC TẬP KẾT HỢP: QUAN ĐIỂM CỦA SINH VIÊN NĂM NHẤT

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.57001/huiv5804.2025.429>

ABSTRACT

This paper reports the perceptions of the first-year English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) students and teachers at Hanoi University of Industry (HaUI) towards blended task-supported speaking activities, especially challenges faced during online preparation. The findings were obtained from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions carried out with 24 students and 8 teachers. Respondents highly appreciate task-supported speaking, whereby the blended learning model enabled engagement to build confidence offering meaningful opportunity for communicative practice. However, several barriers limit its overall effectiveness. Such problems included heavy workload among students, technical problems, and unclear online instructions which made them less ready for classroom tasks. Teachers likewise highlighted uneven levels of online preparation, time constraints for providing scaffolding support. Despite these issues, both groups proposed improvements such as stronger alignment between online input and in-class tasks, more focused online modules, and clearer pre-task guidance. Overall, the study offers insights into optimizing blended Task-supported Language Teaching (TSLT) practices in Vietnamese EOP contexts and provides implications for teaching and learner support.

Keywords: *Blended learning, task-supported language teaching, English for occupational purposes, perceptions, speaking tasks.*

TÓM TẮT

Bài báo trình bày kết quả nghiên cứu cách sinh viên năm nhất học chương trình Tiếng Anh theo định hướng nghề nghiệp và giáo viên tại Trường Đại học Công nghiệp Hà Nội nhìn nhận các hoạt động nói có hỗ trợ nhiệm vụ trong mô hình học tập kết hợp, đồng thời tập trung vào những thách thức phát sinh trong quá trình chuẩn bị bài học trực tuyến. Dựa trên phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc và thảo luận nhóm với 24 sinh viên và 8 giáo viên, kết quả cho thấy nhìn chung sinh viên và giáo viên có thái độ tích cực đối với các hoạt động nói theo nhiệm vụ. Sinh viên và giáo viên đều cho rằng hình thức học tập kết hợp giúp tăng mức độ tương tác, xây dựng sự tự tin và tạo cơ hội thực hành giao tiếp. Tuy nhiên, một số trở ngại hạn chế tính hiệu quả chung của mô hình học tập kết hợp. Sinh viên cho rằng tình trạng học tập quá tải, khó khăn về kỹ thuật và hướng dẫn trực tuyến chưa rõ ràng làm giảm mức độ sẵn sàng khi tham gia nhiệm vụ học tập trên lớp. Giáo viên cũng nhấn mạnh sự chênh lệch về mức độ chuẩn bị nội dung các bài học trực tuyến và thời gian hướng dẫn hạn chế trong hoạt động giao tiếp. Mặc dù cả hai nhóm đều đề xuất các cải tiến như tăng cường sự liên kết giữa nội dung trực tuyến và nhiệm vụ trên lớp, tinh giản học liệu trực tuyến và cung cấp hướng dẫn tiến nhiệm vụ rõ ràng hơn. Nhìn chung, nghiên cứu mang lại những gợi ý quan trọng nhằm tối ưu hóa mô hình “Dạy học ngôn ngữ có hỗ trợ nhiệm vụ” trong môi trường học tập kết hợp theo định hướng nghề nghiệp tại Việt Nam và đưa ra gợi ý cho việc giảng dạy và hỗ trợ người học.

Từ khóa: *Học tập kết hợp, dạy học ngôn ngữ có hỗ trợ nhiệm vụ, Tiếng Anh theo định hướng nghề nghiệp, nhận thức, nhiệm vụ nói.*

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Received: 29/9/2025

Revised: 15/12/2025

Accepted: 30/12/2025

1. INTRODUCTION

Vietnamese higher education has increasingly prioritized the English skills of non-English majors, particularly as universities want to supply the labor market in internationalized industries [1, 2]. English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) programs are therefore designed strategically to satisfy workforce requirements by providing employees opportunities for practice related to communication tasks they may need in real life. Blended learning, which combines digital modules with traditional face-to-face (F2F) instruction, has shown potential to enhance learner autonomy, increase exposure to English input, and promote communication-focused activities in university contexts [3, 4].

Hanoi University of Industry (HaUI) has been a leading institution in implementing blended English programs with the EOP curriculum launched in 2015. In the EOP program at HaUI, Vocabulary, Grammar, Pronunciation, Reading, and Listening tasks provide knowledge through an online platform as foundational knowledge whereas communicative task-supported speaking activities are practiced in F2F classes. This reflects global trends that recommend integrating meaningful communication and active learning between hybrid environments [5]. For non-English majors preparing for future work involving international collaboration, the development of speaking competence is significant, aligning with recent research finding that workplace-oriented English instruction increases employability and confidence [6].

Within this structure, HaUI adopts Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) for organizing speaking activities in face-to-face classes. TSLT enables teachers to assist communicative tasks with necessary linguistic scaffolding, making it suitable for first-year students who often require guided practice. Studies in Vietnam and other countries confirm that task-based or task-supported speaking activities enhance students' fluency, confidence, and interactional [7, 8].

Despite these benefits, several challenges need to be addressed when implementing the task-supported or blended approach. Research [9] noted that teachers have highlighted concerns regarding uneven student preparation, insufficient time for task performance, and difficulty in aligning the online and in-class components. Meanwhile, students may face problems with self-regulation, not understanding online contents, and not being able to use vocabulary and grammar learned online for communicative tasks in class. These challenges

suggest that the success of blended learning and task-supported speaking would have to emphasize equally important considerations relating to curriculum design, learners' readiness and teachers' pedagogy.

Though studies have analyzed TBLT or blended learning in Vietnam, very few have discussed how these two components function together in an EOP context. Moreover, existing research highlights either student perceptions or teacher perceptions, rather than exploring both perspectives within the same program. Thus, understanding the interaction between online preparation and face-to-face speaking tasks is crucial with varying levels of motivation, confidence, and prior learning among first-year students.

For these reasons, this study aims to explore perceptions of first-year EOP students and teachers at HaUI on the role and effectiveness of task-supported speaking activities, the challenges students face in preparing online lessons and participating in classroom tasks. Rather than measuring the learning outcome quantitatively, this study focuses on eliciting the perceptions of first-year students and teachers, lighting on how blended TSLT practices work when applied in real instructional settings.

The study is carried out to address three following research questions:

- How do students and teachers perceive the role and effectiveness of task-supported speaking activities in F2F classes?
- What challenges do students experience when preparing online lessons and participating in task-supported speaking activities?
- What improvements are recommended to enhance the effectiveness of a blended EOP speaking course?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Blended Learning in Higher Education

Blended learning has become a dominant instructional model in tertiary education due to its capacity to merge the strengths of online and F2F instruction. Defined as the purposeful integration of digital learning with traditional in-class teaching, blended learning aims to optimize flexibility, learner engagement, and the overall quality of learning outcomes [10, 11]. This model is increasingly recognized as a response to the demands of the expansion of higher education, digital transformation, and the evolving expectations of learners in the 21st-century knowledge economy.

In language education, the adoption of blended and flipped models has accelerated because they allow teachers to shift receptive, input-based learning such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation to online environments, thereby freeing classroom time for communicative, interactive, and task-based activities [12]. This reallocation of instructional time aligns with communicative language teaching (CLT) principles, which emphasize meaningful language use and active learner participation. Research in Asian EFL contexts further demonstrates that blended learning can enhance learners' autonomy and metacognitive awareness by encouraging independent preparation before class [13, 14]. Learners who consistently engage with online materials tend to demonstrate improved readiness for in-class speaking tasks, stronger vocabulary retention, and higher levels of self-efficacy.

In Vietnam, several studies highlight the potential of blended English instruction to support student-centered learning. Dinh et al. [15] found that university students appreciated the flexibility of online modules but still valued face-to-face sessions for practicing communicative skills. However, they also noted challenges such as inconsistent preparation, varying digital literacy among students, and a lack of explicit links between online content and classroom activities. Similar findings were reported by Li [16], who observed that students often viewed online tasks as "isolated requirements," which subsequently weakened their participation in in-class communicative activities. International research further confirms that blended learning is most effective when learners' independent preparation flows directly into live, meaning-focused classroom activities. For example, Jiang et al. [17] showed that blended EFL courses in Asia improved students' listening and speaking development when online modules provided the linguistic foundation needed for offline communicative tasks. These findings strongly align with HaUI's EOP structure, which relies on online preparation to support face-to-face task performance.

Despite these benefits, several challenges persist. Studies highlight that many first-year university students struggle with self-regulation and time management when learning online, resulting in uneven preparation and reduced performance during classroom activities [18]. Digital readiness including technological skills, access to stable internet, and familiarity with learning management systems also influences learners' ability to

benefit from blended models. In contexts like Vietnam, where students are transitioning from teacher-centered high school environments to more autonomous university settings, variability in digital competence can significantly affect learning outcomes. These challenges underscore the importance of supportive blended course design, clear instructions, and scaffolding that guide learners through online preparation and in-class application.

2.2. English for Occupational Purposes (EOP)

English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) is a branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) that equips learners with the communicative skills required for professional contexts. In countries experiencing rapid globalization such as Vietnam, proficiency in occupational English is increasingly essential for accessing competitive job markets, participating in international collaborations, and meeting employer expectations [19]. As industries across manufacturing, engineering, tourism, and information technology expand their international partnerships, universities must prepare graduates to communicate effectively in professional settings.

Research shows that EOP learners often face difficulties due to limited exposure to workplace communication during secondary education, where English instruction is largely test-oriented and grammar-focused [20]. Consequently, first-year university students frequently lack familiarity with domain-specific vocabulary, functional language, and pragmatic skills such as giving instructions, requesting clarification, participating in meetings, or handling customer interactions. These gaps can hinder learners' ability to transition smoothly into workplace-oriented EFL classrooms.

Scholars emphasize that effective EOP instruction should be contextualized, authentic, and aligned with real-world communication demands [21]. Scaffolding plays a crucial role in supporting learners with low or mixed proficiency. This approach includes pre-teaching key vocabulary, modeling professional discourse, providing structured speaking frames, and integrating tasks that simulate workplace scenarios. In blended EOP programs, online learning platforms are especially useful for allowing learners to build foundational knowledge before participating in interactive, scenario-based tasks in the classroom. This combination ensures that learners can engage more confidently in occupational

communication tasks, thereby strengthening both linguistic competence and employability skills.

2.3. Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT)

Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) has gained prominence as a pedagogical approach that incorporates communicative tasks within a structured instructional sequence. Unlike Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which prioritizes task performance as the central mode of learning, TSLT allows for explicit instruction, guided practice, and linguistic scaffolding prior to task completion [22]. This distinction makes TSLT particularly suitable for lower-proficiency or mixed-ability learners, common in first-year EOP programs, because it balances communicative practice with focused language support.

Research identifies a range of task types commonly used in TSLT classrooms, including role-plays, information-gap activities, problem-solving tasks, storytelling, and mini-presentations. These tasks are designed to promote negotiation of meaning, interactional competence, and the integration of linguistic knowledge with communicative performance. Recent studies show that TSLT increases learners' speaking fluency, accuracy, and confidence by providing supportive pre-task activities followed by opportunities for meaningful communication [23, 24]. In blended or flipped classrooms, tasks become even more effective when students first learn key vocabulary and structures online and then apply them during in-class activities.

Furthermore, online pre-task preparation enhances the quality of learners' performance during communicative tasks. Research [25] found that students who completed digital pre-task input demonstrated higher fluency, more accurate vocabulary use, and greater task engagement than those who received instruction only through F2F lessons. This suggests that integrating TSLT into blended learning environments creates a complementary relationship in which online preparation reinforces linguistic input while classroom tasks promote communicative use. Such alignment is essential in EOP settings where learners must connect theoretical knowledge with practical communication demands.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to understand the perceptions and challenges faced by students and teachers within a real educational

environment. Rather than testing hypotheses or measuring variables statistically, the study seeks to provide rich descriptions of blended EOP learning and teaching. Using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), the research aims to gain insights into online preparation, classroom task participation, perceived effectiveness, and barriers to learning.

3.2. Research Context

The research was carried out at HaUI, which provides an extensive EOP program lasting for 6 semesters (30 credits). The program has both online and face-to-face (F2F) components, delivered through the online learning platform *eop.edu.vn*, and in-person classes. The online modules include Vocabulary, Grammar, Reading and Listening, Writing, Pronunciation, and Pre-speaking activities. Students are required to complete online tasks prior to each of the F2F sessions. The F2F classes focus on communicative practice, especially task-supported speaking activities. Typical F2F lessons begin with a warm-up and a review of the previous lesson, and then followed by guided practice, task performance, and a post-task feedback segment. The blended model of the program is designed to optimize students' practical interaction and communication skills during classroom activities.

3.3. Participants

A total of 32 participants took part in the study. 24 first-year students from different majors such as engineering, information technology, business administration, tourism, and garment technology, represent different levels of the English proficiency and online learning habits. 8 EOP teachers represent different years of teaching experience and knowledge of blended learning pedagogy. Three focus groups, each consisting of five students, were conducted to further enrich the qualitative data by providing opportunities for collective reflection and comparison of experiences.

3.4. Research instruments

Two qualitative instruments, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, were employed to collect data for this study. Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data collection tool and were conducted with 24 first-year students and 8 EOP teachers to explore their perceptions, experiences, and challenges related to the blended learning model and task-supported speaking activities. The student interviews focused on

their engagement in online modules, their preparation for tasks, and their attitudes towards speaking activities in the classroom. The interviews with the teachers examined perceptions of the task effectiveness, the level of students' readiness, and the challenges in coordinating online and classroom activities. All interviews, conducted in Vietnamese to ensure clarity and comfort, were approximately 25 - 35 minutes long, and participants were audible during the interviews.

Based on preliminary analysis of the interview data, we arranged three student focus groups and one teacher focus group. Participants were able to contrast their experiences and determine common issues, as well as discuss how online preparation influenced task performance. Each session lasted 45 to 60 minutes and was held in Vietnamese to allow for more comfortable discussion. All recordings were transcribed, then combined with the interviews to strengthen triangulation and enrich the understanding of the role of blended learning and task-supported speaking activities in the EOP environment of HaUI.

3.5. Data analysis

All interview and focus group data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis with an inductive coding approach. The transcripts were read repeatedly to identify recurring ideas, which were coded and grouped into broader themes reflecting participants' perceptions and experiences. Data from interviews and focus groups were compared to triangulate findings and enhance the credibility of the analysis. Representative excerpts were selected to illustrate key themes in the Findings section.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Perceptions of Task-Supported Speaking Activities

4.1.1. Student Perceptions

Most students expressed positive attitudes toward task-supported speaking activities, saying that they were "engaging", "motivating" and "helpful for real communication." They perceived that tasks provide opportunities to practice speaking in a natural and interactive way. I used to mostly learn grammar and write sentences. A student shared: *"Before university, I mostly learned grammar and wrote sentences. Here, tasks help me actually speak. Even if I make mistakes, I'm still speaking more than before."* (S3).

Many students shared the feeling that doing the online modules made them feel prepared: *"When I finish*

the vocabulary online, I can use it in the speaking task. So, the task becomes easier. I feel more confident." (S12). However, this was not universal. Some students admitted that their level of online preparation determined how well they could participate. A student reflection, shared by many, captured this tension: *"If I only skim the online lesson, during the task I have nothing to say. I look at my partner, and we both wait for the other to speak first."* (FGD-S2)

These findings corroborate what [4] found that students are more fluent and involved when pre-task preparations have been made adequately. Relatedly, [23] noted that active participation in task performance depends largely on how much students know about topic vocabulary and communicative functions.

Several participants reported that task-supported speaking activities encouraged interaction and reduced the fear of judgment. One focus group member explained: *"When we work in pairs or small groups, I feel more relaxed. It's easier to try speaking because I'm not in front of the whole class."* Students also indicated that tasks take people out of their comfort zones. That makes them feel like they are gaining something: *"At the beginning of the semester, even simple tasks were difficult for me. Now I can talk for a longer time, and I can respond faster. The tasks really help us to practise."* (S19). This increase in confidence validates the findings of [8], who found that structured tasks in blended courses reduce speaking anxiety and encourage risk-taking in communication.

4.1.2. Teacher Perceptions

Teachers shared the view that task-supported activities are good for the development of communicative competence and for drawing a diagnosis of students' strengths and weaknesses. One teacher remarked: *"Tasks reveal a lot. I can see who really understands the online content and who just clicks through the lessons."* (T1). One teacher emphasized how assignments made the speaking classes more dynamic: *"When students are doing tasks, the classroom atmosphere changes. They talk more, laugh more, and even shy students try to participate."* (T5)

Teachers also commented that tasks allowed them to observe students' real-time language use: *"A test can show grammar, but tasks show how they communicate. It's different. In tasks, they must listen, respond, and negotiate meaning."* (FGD-T1)

These perceptions support the argument made by [22] that task-supported instruction enhances

interactional competence by creating authentic communicative demands. However, teachers also expressed concerns about uneven online preparation. One teacher described: *"Some students come prepared, but some don't. That makes the task unbalanced. One student talks a lot, and the other just smiles or uses Vietnamese."*

They further stated that tasks enabled them to observe the students' language use in real-time: *"A test can show grammar, but tasks show how they communicate. It's different. In tasks, they must listen, respond, and negotiate meaning."* (FGD-T3)

These perceptions support [22], who argued that task-supported instruction enhances interactional competence by creating authentic communicative demands. Nevertheless, the teachers in the study share their concerns about the uneven online preparation. As one of the teachers narrates, *"Some students come prepared, but some don't. That makes the task unbalanced. One student talks a lot, and the other just smiles or uses Vietnamese."* (FGD-T5)

These findings are in line with what was observed by [4], who noted that ineffectiveness in online preparation reduces the influence of face-to-face communicative tasks within blended learning contexts.

4.2. Challenges in Online Preparation and Task Performance

4.2.1. Student Challenges

Students reported several challenges that hindered both their online preparation and performance in class. The major concern was the heavy workload and time pressure of online modules that run concurrently with deadlines from other courses. As one student explained: *"Sometimes I have three or four subjects with deadlines. I only have time to finish the online tasks quickly, not to study deeply."* (S6). Due to this pressure, most students treated online preparation as a checklist rather than making it a learning process by skimming videos and guessing answers; some relied on peers just to complete tasks on time. Students also complained about difficult vocabulary and grammar. There were long lists of unfamiliar or academic words in online lessons as one student noted, *"There are long word lists, and some words are too academic. I memorize them for the quiz but forget them during the task."* (FGD-S1). This results in short-term memorization for quizzes and not meaningful retention or use in communication.

Another problem was unclear instructions in online tasks. Brief or ambiguous instructions particularly in the reading and pronunciation modules caused uncertainty about how to do the tasks: *"Some instructions are short and I don't really understand what to do. Then I just guess and submit."* (S9). This kind of confusion often leads to less active attempts, hence passive engagement. Nearly all students also reported technical problems such as slow internet, login errors, frozen screens, and long loading times especially those who were in the dormitories. One student shared: *"In the evening, the Wi-Fi is very slow. Sometimes I spend ten minutes waiting for the video to load."* (S13). Such problems have been found by [9] to technologically constrain engagement in blended EFL learning.

In class, most students could not well transfer the online learnings to speaking activities because they were anxious, fearing mistakes, or could not create ideas. One commented: *"I know the vocabulary but when I speak, I get nervous. I forget the words or mix them up."* (S20). Also, unfamiliar topics also made idea generation difficult. These challenges prove how academic workload, linguistic difficulty, technology issues, and affective factors hinder students from maximizing the benefits from the blended learning approach. Parallel study [7] noted that anxiety and cognitive overload have always been constraints to learners' spontaneous oral performance

4.2.2. Teacher Challenges

Teachers reported several challenges in the implementation of blended learning tasks. Their major concern about uneven levels of student preparation. This pattern was earlier noted in studies on blended and flipped classrooms [10, 12]. Teachers confirmed that students completed online modules either fully or superficially. Others skipped parts and some did not complete at all. As one teacher commented: *"When only half of the students prepare properly, it becomes hard to run a communicative activity. The well-prepared students move ahead quickly, but the others stay silent or wait for help."* (T4)

This was corroborated by another teacher in the focus group discussion: *"In group work, the prepared students take the lead, but the unprepared ones don't contribute. It creates an imbalance and slows down the whole task."* (FGD-T2). Such uneven preparation led to a lot of interventions from the teachers or adjustment of the level of task difficulty during the lesson. Teachers also emphasized the limited time for scaffolding particularly

when online content carried complex grammatical or pronunciation elements. This is supported by [9], who noted that blended instruction creates its own time constraints.

Several teachers indicated that since most of the class period would be devoted to communicative tasks, there would not be sufficient time to review the online materials or address student confusion. One noted: *"Students come with many questions from the online lessons, but I can't go through all of them. The lesson time is fixed, and we have to move to the main task."* (T2). Another teacher added: *"I want to model the pronunciation more before they speak, but there isn't enough time. If I spend too long on scaffolding, we won't finish the activity."* (FGD-T1). This has made teachers feel that students perform communicative tasks without adequate linguistic or procedural preparation.

Overall, teachers' perspectives underscore how varied readiness and insufficient time for scaffolding hinder their ability to assist students effectively in blended learning environments. These practical concerns echo problems extensively recorded in blended EFL studies [3, 4, 15], highlighting the necessity for better alignment between online preparation and in-class communicative tasks.

4.3. Suggested Improvements

4.3.1. Student Recommendations

Students provided some practical suggestions to improve the blended EOP model, making online learning manageable. One of the most frequent recommendations regarding the length and focus of online lessons particularly vocabulary modules.

Many students thought that the word lists were too long. As one student explained: *"If the vocabulary list is shorter, it will be easier to remember and use in class."* (S14). Another student added that long lists lead to surface memorization: *"When there are too many words, I just try to remember them for the quiz. But in class, I forget most of them."* (FGD-S1). These comments indicate a desire for targeted input, where vocabulary is more purposeful and directly prepares students for communicative performance.

The students stated that more examples, model dialogues, or sample videos were needed to show how the target language is used in real contexts. Many students indicated that they knew the meaning of individual vocabulary items but did not know how to put

them together naturally when speaking. One noted: *"When I see a sample dialogue, I understand how to use the words. Without examples, I'm not sure how to speak."* (FGD-S3). This supports broader findings within EOP pedagogy that model texts enhance learners' understanding of genre expectations and functional language [21].

Students have also expressed the desire for collaborative elements in online learning since online tasks tend to be isolating from group-based activities in class. As one student suggested: *"Maybe sometimes the online part can be done in pairs, like a simple video role play. Then we feel more connected to the in-class task."* (S11). Students explained that such short partner recordings or peer-review notes as collaborative online tasks could motivate participation and even preparation quality. This follows [8] argument that peer collaboration supported by scaffolded models enhances learner readiness in blended speaking classes.

4.3.2. Teacher Recommendations

The teachers have also made a series of refinements to add up the coherence and effectiveness for the proposed blended EOP course. Teachers recommended an improved the Learning Management System (LMS) to monitor more effectively, with better tools for accountability. Some teachers requested clearer completion analytics, automated reminders, and notification tools. One teacher stated: *"If the platform could show who hasn't completed the online lesson, we can remind them early."* (T5). Others suggested timely progress reminders or summary dashboards so that struggling students can be identified before class. Moreover, teachers also called for more in-class scaffolding including brief ones to bridge the gap between online preparation and speaking performance. Many students valued the short warm-up tasks and guided practice or mini-modelling activities. One teacher explained: *"Even five minutes of modelling helps. If students hear the structure first, they perform much better."* (T9). Another added: *"A quick rehearsal before the main task reduces anxiety and gives them a clearer idea of what to say."* (FGD-T3). These perspectives correspond with the argument of [8] on the role of pre-task support such as modelling, guided planning, or controlled practice on the development of students' fluency and accuracy in task-supported speaking lessons.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The study's findings indicate that the blended EOP model that incorporates task-supported speaking

activities significantly boosts first-year students' communication skills. The combination of online materials and in-class communicative activities results in better preparation, increased confidence, and more focused language use during the class. The blended learning model enables students to engage with important vocabulary and materials related to the topic before class, leading to better engagement in the speaking activities.

The study also identifies certain challenges that affect the overall effectiveness of the blended learning programmes. These include the concern of having heavy workload, having some technical problems, and the uneven levels of student preparation, which lower the gains obtained from learning primary content before class. These factors also influence the performance of the students' in-class activities, as the uneven preparedness reduces the chances for active engagement and the development of fluency. These persistent challenges also point out the necessity for improved instructional design, web learning, and digital readiness, and more realistic expectations surrounding online learning.

Overall, the findings stress the importance of ensuring alignment between the materials accessed digitally in advance and the activities conducted in the classroom in order for the digital materials to have a meaningful impact on the fulfil the communicative purposes. In addition, they also indicate the value of providing scaffolded support including focused instruction, structured guidance, and immediate feedback to enable the learners to utilize effectively, both the online and in-class components of the blended learning model.

The study provides a number of practical implications for teachers and students who are aiming to improve the implementation of blended EOP education.

Teachers are advised to add some pedagogical supports and how to prepare students for task-supported speaking activities. Pre-task activities such as modelling videos, sample dialogues, or brief demonstrations can help students visualize how functional expressions and phrases are used within a real exchange. Clear instructions and structured task pathways are critical so that students gain an understanding of the purpose, steps, and expected outcomes of each activity. Students use post task comments or brief audio feedback to reflect on their performance and identify areas for improvement. All these techniques can reduce performance anxiety and foster better task preparation in students.

Students often require support to help them develop the skills needed for a blended learning environment. Improving self-regulation skills on aspects such as time management, active participation on the LMS, and goal setting helps students to maximize the use of the online activities, as well as the classroom sessions. The use of collaborative strategies like peer reviews, online pair tasks, can boost engagement and responsibility. With appropriate guidance, students can become more autonomous and active participants, making more effective use of the blended EOP model.

APPENDIX

Appendix A. Semi-structured Interview Questions

A1. Student Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. How do you feel about task-supported speaking activities in face-to-face EOP classes?
2. How does the online preparation (e.g., vocabulary, videos, pronunciation tasks) affect your ability to participate in speaking tasks?
3. What difficulties do you experience when completing the online tasks (e.g., workload, difficulty level, instructions, or technical issues)?
4. To what extent are you able to use the vocabulary and language learned online during in-class speaking tasks? Why or why not?
5. What challenges do you face when performing speaking tasks in class? (e.g. anxiety, idea generation, interaction with peers)?
6. What changes or improvements would you suggest to make the online preparation and speaking activities more effective?

A2. Teacher Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. How do you perceive the role of task-supported speaking activities in developing students' communicative competence in the EOP course?
2. What differences do you observe between students who complete the online preparation thoroughly and those who do not?
3. What challenges do you encounter when managing uneven levels of student readiness during in-class speaking tasks?
4. How do online tasks influence students' in-class speaking performance?

5. What constraints do you face in providing in-class scaffolding (e.g., modelling, guided practice) within the allotted lesson time?

6. From your teaching perspective, what improvements would you recommend to better align online preparation, LMS monitoring, and in-class speaking activities?

Appendix B. Focus Group Discussion Guide

B1. Student Focus Group Discussion Questions

1. As a group, how do you feel about task-supported speaking activities in the blended EOP course?

2. What factors help or hinder participation in task-supported speaking activities?

3. In what ways does online task completion influence pair or group work in class?

4. What common difficulties do students face when transferring online learning to in-class speaking activities?

5. What suggestions would you make to improve the effectiveness of the blended EOP speaking course?

B2. Teacher Focus Group Discussion Questions

1. From your shared experience, how do students generally respond to task-supported speaking activities in the blended EOP course?

2. How does uneven student preparation influence group interaction, task flow, and learning outcomes in class?

3. What limitations do you face in providing adequate in-class scaffolding within the available lesson time?

4. What common issues do teachers face when supporting students during speaking tasks?

5. What improvements could be made to enhance the effectiveness of the blended EOP speaking course?

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