



UNIVERSITY *of*
RWANDA

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

**APPLYING BLENDED LEARNING IN TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE
SPEAKING SKILLS AMONG YEAR 3 UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS:
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF RWANDA**

BY:

CHRISTINE INGABIRE

Student ID: 220019041

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the **Award of the Degree of Master of Education in English Education**, School of Education, College of Education at the University of Rwanda

October 2024

DECLARATION

I, Christine INGABIRE, hereby declare that the present work is the result of my research efforts with academic supervision. This thesis is original and has never been presented at the University of Rwanda or elsewhere for a similar or any academic award. For other researchers', scholars' and people's ideas quotes and references were resorted to.

Student:

Christine INGABIRE




Signature..... Date: 31/07/2024

Declaration by the Supervisor

This Thesis has been submitted with my approval.

Supervisor:

Assoc. Prof. Epimaque NIYIBIZI

Signature:  Date: ...1st August 2024.....

DEDICATION

The Almighty God

My Late Father

My Mother

My husband Mr. Lambert HAVUGINTWARI

My Daughter Orlane HAVUGINTWARI ISINE

My Son Orlando HAVUGINTWARI ISHIMWE

My Brothers; Jacques and J. Pierre

My Sisters; Blandine and late sister Francine

My in-laws

I dedicate this work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the following people and organizations for their contributions to the accomplishment of this research. This effort would not have been possible without their help:

First, the Almighty God. Thank you for giving me the strength, talents, tools, and unique people that helped me finish this task. You provided me the confidence to write my thesis;

Second, I would like to thank the University of Rwanda (UR) for providing the tools I needed for my training and for allowing me to do this research. Special thanks also go to all people who helped me, on the field, to obtain the information. Those people include Lecturers and Students of the University of Rwanda, Gikondo and Nyarugenge Campuses who allowed me to enter their private and academic life;

Third, PEA 3 Project which awarded me with the scholarship to conduct field work. This was also an opportunity for me to learn how research is done because I was part of a team of very experienced researchers from the University College London, the University of Johannesburg and the University of Rwanda. I thank you all for the opportunity and the experience gained.

Fourth, my Supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Epimaque NIYIBIZI, for your assistance, guidance and encouragement throughout this study. Thank you for the time that you dedicated to this research. Without your constructive comments and inputs, it would not have been possible. Your tireless guidance and support are greatly appreciated;

Fifth, my husband Mr. Lambert HAVUGINTWARI, my daughter Orlane HAVUGINTWARI ISINE and my son Orlando HAVUGINTWARI ISHIMWE for their patience during my absence working on this research. Your love has been a constant source of comfort and strength. Your unwavering belief in me has fuelled my determination to bring this thesis to life;

Finally, I am thanking my parents, sisters, brothers, cousins, in-laws, friends, and former classmates for their love, support, and encouragement. I shall be eternally grateful for everything you gave up to have this task performed!

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted within the framework of investigating the extent to which applying Blended Learning in teaching English Language can improve speaking skills and opportunities and challenges confronted by year 3 Undergraduate students in order to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The motivation to pursue this research was that the researcher experienced a situation where Masters students were unable to take a module using Blended Learning and that made the researcher suspect that teaching using Blended Learning is a problem. The study was guided by the CABLS (Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System) framework. The research was carried out on a population of 201 students and 4 English Language Lecturers with a sample size of 134 students and 4 Lecturers. Questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations were used to collect data. The researcher used mixed method research design. The key findings include the one that 94.8% of respondents confirmed that they use Blended Learning to study English especially speaking skills. The second one is that learners enjoy using Blended Learning when studying English Language speaking skills. 86.6% and 9.7 have stated that it has helped them improve their English Language speaking skills. Thirdly, there are opportunities and challenges confronted by the learners when using Blended learning to study English language. Some of the important opportunities is that Blended Learning is seen as an accelerator for teaching English speaking skills, a prompter for ubiquitous learning and it also promotes active engagement of students. Challenges identified include that learners have limited skills in manipulating Blended Learning technological gadgets, unavailability and inaccessibility of technological tools, learners' reluctance to embrace Blended Learning due to environments and cultural belief and teacher/learner demand on time. Considering the findings, the study recommended the University of Rwanda to adopt Blended Learning in all modules, explore increasing the amount of ICT facilities/computer laboratories accessible on campus and also provide continuous proper training to lecturers and students on different computer skills and the emerging technologies. Secondly, the Ministry of Education should establish policies to support implementation of Blended Learning in Higher Learning Institutions and make sure they are properly implemented.

Table of Contents

DECLARATION	Error! Bookmark not defined.
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
ABBREVIATIONS	x
LIST OF APPENDICES	xi
LIST OF TABLES	xii
CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Background to the study	1
1.2. Statement of the problem.....	2
1.3. Objectives of the Study.....	5
1.3.1. General Objective	5
1.3.2. Specific Objectives	5
1.4. Research questions	5
1.5. The Scope of the study	6
1.6. Geographical Scope	6
1.7. Time frame	6
1.8. Significance of the Study.....	6
1.9. Organisation of the study.....	7
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	9
2.1. Theoretical framework on blended learning.....	9
2.2. Blended Learning models	13
2.3. Blended Learning in language teaching	15
2.4. Components of the Blended Learning model	17

2.4.1. Learning environment component	17
2.4.2. Media component.....	17
2.4.3. Instructional component.....	17
2.5. Technology in language teaching and learning	17
2.8. Blended Learning vis-a-vis English Language speaking skills	23
2.9. Challenges facing Blended Learning.....	24
2.9.1. Challenge 1: Learners’ reluctance to embrace Blended Learning due to environments and cultural belief	25
2.9.2. Challenge 2: Learners’ limited skills in manipulating Blended Learning technological gadgets	26
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	28
3.1. Research Design	28
3.2. Study population and sample size	29
3.2.1. Study Population.....	29
3.2.3. Sample size and sample selection	30
3.3. Data collection methods and research instruments.....	32
3.3.1. Interview	32
3.3.2. Questionnaire	33
3.3.3. Classroom observation.....	33
3.4. Area of the Study	33
3.5. Piloting stage	34
3.6. Data presentation, analysis, interpretation, and discussions.....	34
3.7. Validity and reliability of the study	34
3.8. Ethical considerations.....	35
4.2. Presentation of findings.....	39

4.2.1. Finding 1: Use of blended learning in year 3 programs	40
4.2.2. Finding 2: Learners' appreciation on Blended Learning use in teaching English Language speaking skills.....	41
4.2.3. Finding 3 : Learners' perceptions on Blended Learning effectiveness in teaching English Language speaking skills.....	44
4.2.4. Finding 4: The effectiveness of Blended Learning in teaching English Language speaking skills vis-a-vis English Language Proficiency	45
4.2.5. Finding 5: The opportunities and challenges of using Blended Learning in teaching and learning English Language speaking skills	47
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	62
APPENDICES	77

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: CABLS Framework

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

Figure 3: Characteristics of respondents according to their gender

Figure 4: Use of blended learning in year 3 programs

Figure 5: Learners' appreciation on Blended Learning use in teaching English Language speaking skills

Figure 6: Learners' perceptions on Blended Learning effectiveness in teaching English Language speaking skills

Figure 7: The opportunities and challenges of applying Blended Learning in teaching and learning English Language speaking skills for year 3 students at the UR

ABBREVIATIONS

CABLS: Complex Adaptive Blended Learning Systems

CASS: College of Arts and Social Sciences

CLE: Centre for Language Enhancement

HLIs: Higher learning institutions

ICT: Information, Communication and Technology

UK: United Kingdom

UR: University of Rwanda

VVOB: Flemish Association for Cooperation (Education for development)

LIST OF APPENDICES

- Research Consent form
- Interview guide for lecturers
- Questionnaire for students
- Classroom observation checklist

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Distribution of respondents

Table 2: Distribution of the sample

Table 3. Characteristics of respondents according to their age

Table 4. Characteristics of respondents according to their programs of study

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The chapter provides context for the research, the problem statement, the study's aims, research questions, the significance of the study, and the methodology used.

1.1. Background to the study

Rwanda started using English as an official language in 1996 after the Genocide against Tutsi (MINEDUC, 2018). Later, in 2008, English has been used as the medium of instruction to accommodate students who had previously learned in English, French and Kinyarwanda. At the time the Government of Rwanda came to declare English, along with Kinyarwanda and French, an official language (Tabaro, 2015).

English is taught at all levels of education in Rwanda, using all techniques of instruction. In this modern era, language teaching needs to be supported by ICT in order to improve its relevance on the international market. Unfortunately, not all teachers and students are familiar enough with computers to study and teach utilizing the Blended Learning mode of instruction. This is supported by Ghavifekr et al. (2016) who argued that limited skills on computer are a problem for teachers and students when it comes to an online teaching and learning. According to Mugiraneza (2021), many teachers experience difficulties in ensuring English as the language of teaching and integrating ICT into their job.

According to Pavalam, Jawahar, &Akorli (2010), the Rwandan government regards ICT as a crucial instrument for rebuilding the country's economy, with education having a precarious role in producing the requisite human resources. A number of initiatives have been launched since 2000 with the goal of bringing computers into classrooms and incorporating ICT into the curriculum. It is argued, however, that Rwanda's ICT sector still has issues. According to the Rwanda ICT Sector Profile, despite the fact that ICT is perceived as a critical priority for increasing the significance of education, there is a major shortage of lecturers who have been educated to use ICT (MINICT, 2019).

The Rwandan education system aims to advance equitable and high-quality learning, which includes the use of technology in education (Mugiraneza, 2021). A significant goal is to improve

teachers' competency in using digital devices for pedagogical reasons (Haelermans, Aarts, Cabus, Kirezi, Muramutse, & Peeraer, 2021). Their paper describes the Rwandan government's attempts for integrating technology into education, as well as some obstacles to advancement. The highlighted challenges include lack of computer skills, poor internet connectivity, learners who do not own technological devices, etc.

In East Africa, Blended Learning is used especially in universities. Warne (2021) highlighted some of its constraints, in East Africa, which include teachers' resistance to technology, limited/lack of IT infrastructure for both students and staff, and lack of consistency in the application of academic credits to Blended Learning courses. The desired situation would be that teachers and students are able to effectively manipulate computers, full internet coverage, no electricity cuts from time to time and learners have technological devices to be able to learn using Blended Learning or any other emerging technologies.

In Rwandan context, MINEDUC (2018) emphasizes the country's effort to promote education system using English as a medium of instruction. Despite the Government's effort, challenges of speaking English in HLIs still persist. Despite the challenges in the area of technology, the UR introduced a Blended Learning mode and after that the ICT National Policy was approved in April 2016 (Twagilimana et al., 2018). However, as mentioned by Nsengimana et al. (2021), despite the fact that the UR implemented a Blended Learning mode in 2015, at the time not all lecturers and students were able to use technology that is required for Blended Learning.

1.2. Statement of the problem

The gap identified in the existing literature is based on Mayadas, Bourne, & Bacsich's argument (2009) that many people now have improved access to education due to the introduction of digitalization in learning, and many more will try to have it in the coming years. The scholar also highlighted that some students are not able to manipulate online platforms due to lack of computer skills. This results in students' poor performance. The language areas that have poor performance are speaking skills, writing skills, vocabulary acquisition and reading skills. In addition to that, Barbour (2012) remarked that while teachers are progressively being expected to produce new online courses and adapt their existing traditional courses for Blended Learning mode of delivery, sufficient training

and preparation to handle the challenges of teaching online is critical and would adequately benefit their students.

In Rwanda, in higher education, there is an issue on English language speaking skills. The educational curriculum used in Rwandan schools' states that English language teaching was adopted to help students acquire it and equip them with the abilities to use it in communication locally, regionally and globally (REB, 2015). Unfortunately, research reveals that they cannot make a correct sentence when expressing their thoughts; and when they try to do so, they speak incorrectly with the influence of their mother tongue that is Kinyarwanda (Tabaro& Twahirwa, 2018; Habyalimana and Ferreira, 2015).

Blended Learning has addressed many challenges related to teaching and learning English across countries. Using a pedagogy tailored to the interests of today's digital native learners who fit into the virtual world is beneficial for success, since using technology is helpful for 21st century students. This is one of the reasons why we want ICT to empower both instructors and students to make instruction student-centered rather than teacher-centered (Trucano, 2005). Today's language learners can connect globally, freely access available resources, and self-manage their learning processes and thanks to networked learning (Kannan & Munday, 2018). This can impact positively on the performance of language students as they access the global network. As far as learning is concerned, inclusion of Blended Learning has many benefits in teaching and one of them is that, it allows learning from anywhere and at any time as it has an online portion.

English is increasingly used as the language of communication on the internet as a result of the rapid advancement of technology worldwide (Mohammed, 2018). It is vital to recognize the opportunities that modern technology gives for individuals studying English Language at a time when it sometimes seems to take most of the people's time, whether it is being used for business, recreation, or shopping. According to Muianga, Byungura, Hansson, Colombage & Mutimucuo (2016), at the University of Rwanda, some teachers adopted Blended Learning. They use online groups and forums for different assignments and learners can easily work together and cooperate to do the assignments under the facilitation of teachers. Electronic educational technology

enables learning programs and courses to be tailored to the requirements, preferences, and skills of specific learners, which has a favorable impact on their performance and academic success.

In consideration of the above benefits of Blended Learning, the researcher wanted to find out if it is the case for the students who are doing English Language at the University of Rwanda. The motive which prompted the researcher to carry out the study is the experience during Covid specifically in Year 2 of Cohort 1 of the Master of Education in English Education from November to December 2020 in the module of “Integration of ICT in language teaching”. The mentioned module was done using Blended Learning initially because of Covid-19 pandemic as the lecturer could not meet students face to face all the time but also because the module could be taught and learnt effectively using both face to face and online forms of instruction. Based on the experience, the researcher assumed that some colleagues missed some lectures and even failed and had to repeat the module because they did not have skills on how to access the online platforms that were used. So, the researcher suspected that learning using Blended Learning is a problem. Thus, seen that English is a medium of instruction at the University of Rwanda, the researcher felt an interest to conduct this study with an aim to know the impact that limited skills on computer can have on English language teaching which can influence the whole learning at the university in general.

This study, therefore, gathered teachers and students’ perceptions on the extent to which applying blended learning can improve speaking skills and opportunities and challenges confronted by Year 3 Undergraduate students and helped find solutions on how English Language speaking proficiency can be achieved. The study also enabled the researcher to suggest ways of improving the use of Blended Learning to impact positively on students’ performance in English Language speaking skills.

Although there is information available on Blended Learning in Rwanda, there are very few studies carried out on Blended Learning in teaching English Language and more specifically none has tackled speaking skills. This study will talk about applying Blended Learning in teaching English Language speaking skills among Year 3 Undergraduate Students of the UR: Opportunities and Challenges which has not so far been researched to.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

This research was carried out to achieve one general objective and a number of specific objectives.

1.3.1. General Objective

The purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which applying Blended Learning in teaching English can improve speaking skills and opportunities and challenges confronted by year 3 Undergraduate students in order to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

To realise the general objective, the following specific objectives underlie this research:

- (1) To investigate the extent to which Blended Learning has promoted English Speaking Skills among year 3 students at the University of Rwanda.
- (2) To explore opportunities offered by Blended Learning in teaching English speaking skills.
- (3) To highlight challenges related to English Speaking Skills that were prompted by Blended Learning.

1.4. Research questions

To achieve its objectives, the current research will address the following questions.

- (1) To what extent has Blended Learning promoted English Language speaking skills among year 3 Undergraduate students at the University of Rwanda?
- (2) What are the opportunities offered by Blended Learning in teaching English speaking skills?
- (3) What are the challenges related to English Speaking Skills that were prompted by Blended Learning?

1.5. The Scope of the study

The study focuses on the benefits of using a Blended Learning program to teach English Language speaking skills and how the situation can lead to reaching English Language speaking competency at the University of Rwanda.

The study was done at the module/course level. According to Halverson et al. (2017), course level blending is all about a course with separate face to face and computer-mediated activities. The activities at course level blends involve teachers and their students as stakeholders. This involved teachers of English module taught in 3rd Years and their students at the University of Rwanda.

1.6. Geographical Scope

The study covered the sample that was selected from students of 3rd years and their teachers at Gikondo and Nyarugenge Campuses. The English module that was taken into consideration is English for Academic Purposes (EAP) offered by the Centre for Language Enhancement, College of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Rwanda. The University of Rwanda has 9 campuses and the module is offered in all campuses.

1.7. Time frame

The time scope of the study covers two years, 2021 and 2022. This time interval was chosen because the researcher expects to circulate a questionnaire for students and interview teachers who surely used Blended Learning because of Covid-19. During Covid-19, lecturers were encouraged to teach using online mode or Blended Learning as sometimes they could not physically meet their students.

1.8. Significance of the Study

This research will benefit all students, teachers and even everybody at the University of Rwanda as far as teaching English Language is concerned. This is because students and teachers will know the opportunities that they can gain from using Blended Learning and the University of Rwanda will know the challenges that teachers and students encounter when using it and try to find solutions. When solutions will be implemented, students and teachers will be able to use

technology and implement Blended Learning more effectively which may have several advantages over traditional teaching.

The outcomes will add to the current body of knowledge about the usage of Blended Learning program in higher education, allowing teachers and students at the University of Rwanda and other higher learning institutions to use it, resulting in our country's successful and sustainable development.

1.9. Organisation of the study

This research was divided into five chapters:

The chapter I involved the background, the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, hypotheses, scope of the study, its significance as well as its organization.

The chapter II presented the theoretical framework, defining the key terms used all along the thesis writing.

The chapter III talked about the Methodology. Starting from the Research Design, it goes on outlining the methods and techniques of data collection, explaining the entire journey towards the results, respondents sample selection, data collection, data coding, and data analysis techniques.

The chapter IV presented and discussed the study's findings. Here gathered findings about the study were presented and interpreted. It continued with the related challenges and suggested a way forward to surmount those challenges.

The chapter V and the last one gave the general conclusions and suggested some recommendations which may help as a baseline for both further academic studies as well as steppingstones for governmental and administrative institutions.

To sum up, this chapter provided context for the research, the problem statement, the study's objectives, research questions, the scope of the study, the significance of the study as well as its organization.

The present research is divided into five main parts as detailed above. The first chapter is the general introduction that includes a background to the study. The second chapter contains a

review of previous works done in relation to the topic. The third chapter is devoted to highlight the methodology used. Then, I will present, analyze, and discuss the collected data in chapter four. Finally, the study will draw conclusion and suggest recommendations basing on the finding in the fifth chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to review literature related to the topic under consideration. It starts with a theoretical framework that depicts major potential hypotheses that guided the researcher to attain the study's aims. The literature analysis also includes an empirical review that shows findings from several writers regarding the importance of Blended Learning in English teaching.

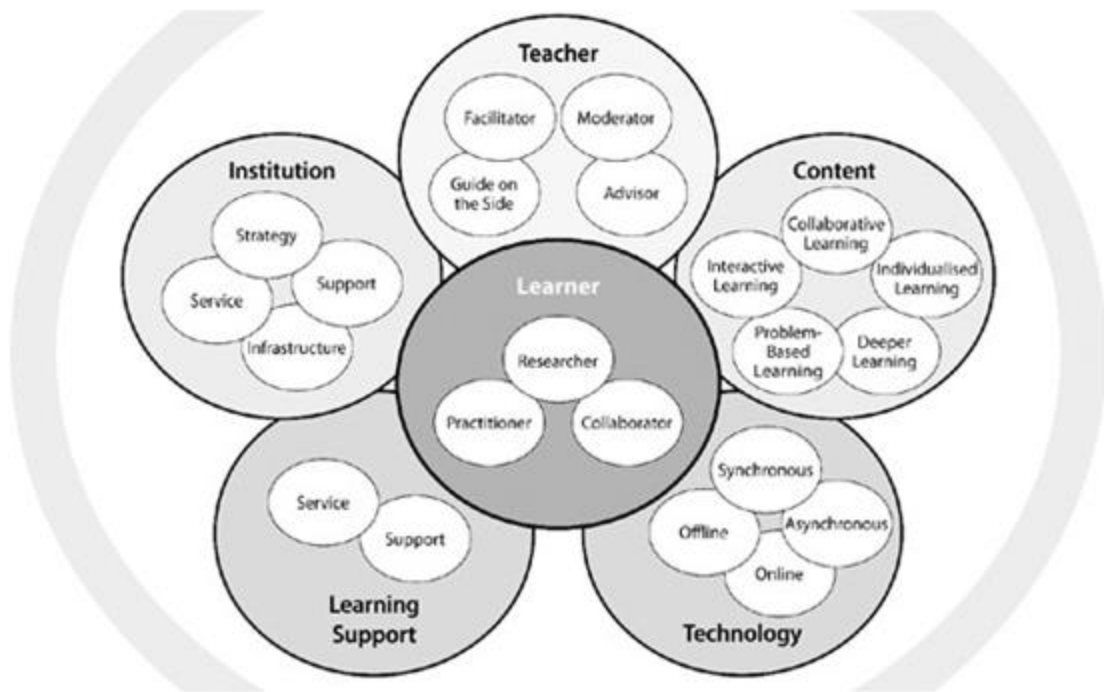
2.1. Theoretical framework on blended learning

This study is guided by the CABLS (Complex Adaptive Blended Learning Systems) framework to be able to investigate opportunities and challenges confronted in using Blended Learning to promote English Language speaking skills among year 3 Undergraduate students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Interview, questionnaire and classroom observations were conducted with the learners and teachers. To better understand stakeholder connections within the CABLS framework, themes were identified using a thematic analysis. The study's findings aimed to offer all stakeholders with a better knowledge of the CABLS framework's complex interdependent relationships in order to improve a collaborative approach to Blended Learning.

Sinclair (2007) argued that a theoretical framework helps researchers comprehend sustaining factors to the problem they are inquiring and, based on the research results, they can translate these factors into tangible practices. This research project is guided by the CABLS (Complex Adaptive BL System) Theory introduced by Yuping Wang, Xibin Han and Juan Yang (Wang et al., 2015) as it contributes to education field and precisely it fits well in the use and effective application of BL in teaching.

As cited by Zhang et al (2022), Graham et al. (2013) stated that the framework can be used at any level of education and my study looked into BL use in teaching of English to year 3 students at the University of Rwanda and the confronted opportunities and challenges. The CABLS theory consists of six components, with the learner at the centre of the model (Cleveland-Innes, 2018).

Figure 1: CABLS Framework (the CABLS Theory by Wang et al. (2015))



Source: Cleveland-Innes, 2018 p. 215

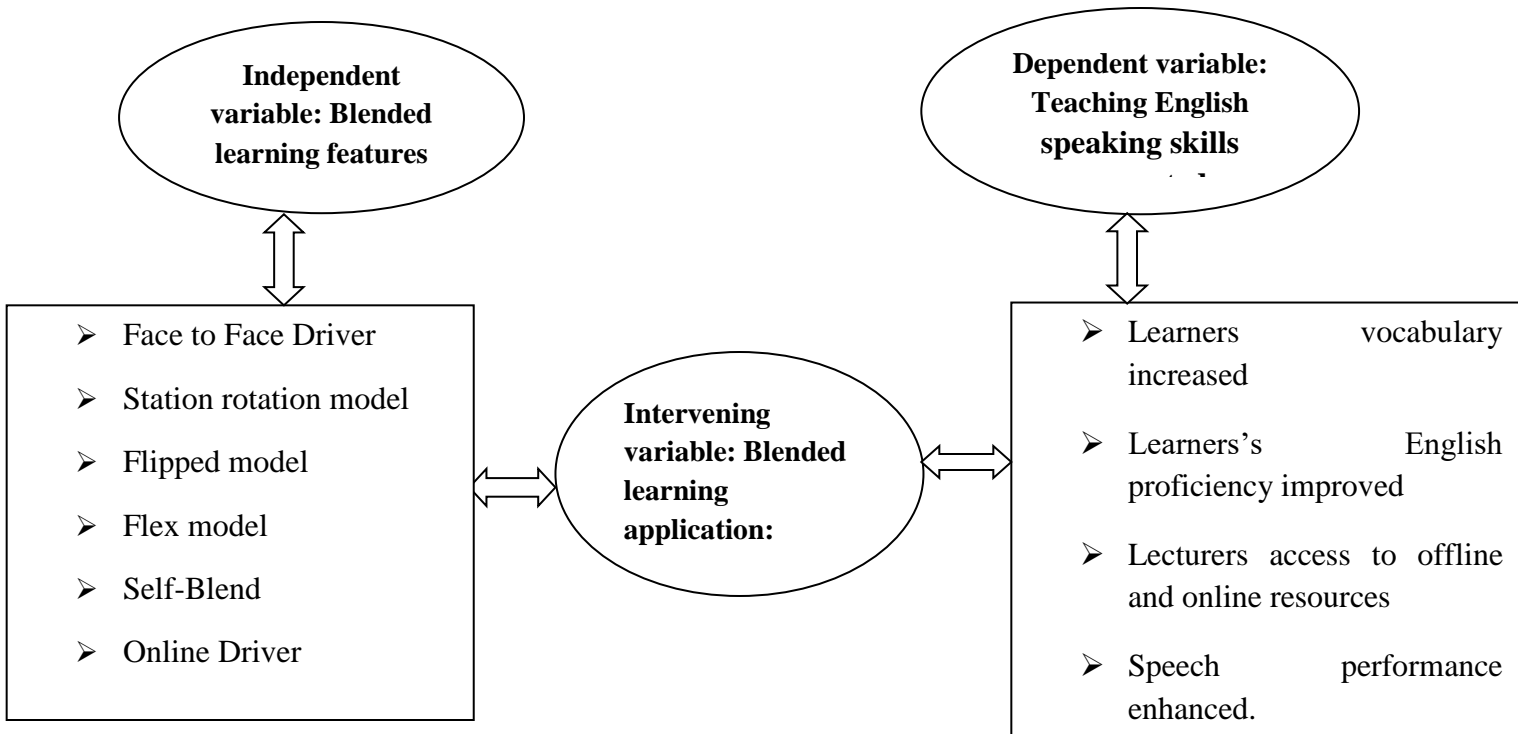
According to Cleveland-Innes (2018) and Wang et al. (2015), the CABLS framework enables a profound, more specific understanding of the energetic and adaptive nature of Blended Learning. It enables the new user to reflect important cooperating elements while developing and delivering a Blended Learning course.

The study interest mostly focuses on the relationship between teachers, learners, technology and learner support. The learner is central to the model. The framework allowed to confirm whether Blended Learning helps in teaching English Language speaking skills among year 3 Undergraduate students of the University of Rwanda, explore the opportunities and challenges of using BL in teaching English Language speaking skills and finally tackle the effectiveness of Blended Learning vis-à-vis English Language proficiency. It also helped highlight the role of learners, teachers and technology and how it changes, or adapts as they engage with Blended Learning to improve English language speaking skills. According to Cleveland-Innes (2018),

technology for learning requires new responsibilities for students and teachers, as well as new methods of retrieving and interacting with knowledge. Cleveland-Innes (2018) went on to add that, technology, in this theoretical framework, must be considered as a component of a blended learning system in which all parts cooperate with one another.

Another element that is to be taken into account is learner support. Here a teacher supports, encourages and monitors learners in order to have a successful delivery of modules. This includes assisting them in mastering the content and becoming competent, which must be part of their education. This is part of the framework to make sure learners are competent as required at their levels. According to Yorke (2004), the CABLS framework encourages learners to support each other in order to reduce reliance on teachers. However, some students have limited time to help one another in person, but online, they may discover more possibilities to support one another intellectually and socially.

Figure 2: Conceptual framework



Source: Researcher, 2023

The diagram illustrates a number of variables and the relationships and connections between them in the conceptual framework. It shows how the components of blended learning and how it influences the teaching of English Language speaking skills, and how both opportunities arise from this implementation, specifically among Year 3 Undergraduate students.

Blended Learning is positioned at the top to indicate that it is the central methodology or approach being studied. English Language Speaking Skills is directly below Blended Learning indicating that it is the outcome variable affected by the implementation of blended learning. Opportunities and Challenges are on the side of English Speaking Skills, representing the potential positive outcomes and difficulties associated with blended learning in teaching English speaking skills. Year 3 Undergraduate Students is below Opportunities and Challenges, showing that they are the target group or population being studied.

2.2. Blended Learning models

Blended Learning employs different models as highlighted in the following chart and it prompted different models:

Blended Learning chart

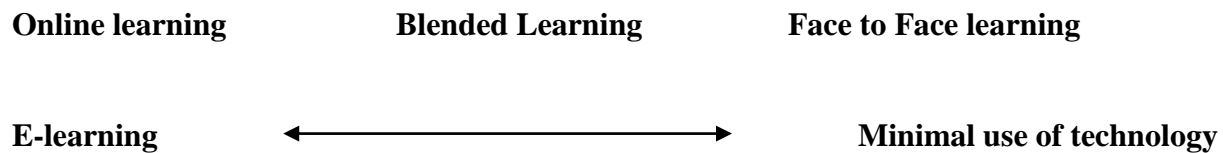


Figure 2: Source, Ayob (2020, p. 321)

Educators have discovered that traditional teaching methods struggle to satisfy all of the unique needs of pupils in the twenty-first century. Fortunately, Blended Learning is now possible due to the fast advancement of ICT, which has opened up opportunities for change (Zhang et al., 2022). Blended Learning, according to Akkoyunlu & Soyly (2006), is a mixture of multiple models of online and offline education, teaching methods, learning materials, and various forms of technology. To facilitate learning, Blended Learning employs a number of models. The approaches range in terms of teacher roles, administrative requirements, and instructional emphasis, and all Blended Learning models allow for some implementation flexibility. According to Horn and Staker, (2012), there are 6 models:

Model 1: Face to Face Driver

Face to Face driver category programs use traditional teaching to provide the majority of their curriculum. The teacher, in this case, uses online learning to augment or remediate, regularly in the rear of the physical classroom or in an online class.

Model 2: Station rotation model

A basic concept that permits teachers to spend more time with learners is station rotation. A rotation model is one in which learners alternate between learning locations in or out of the classroom (Ayob, 2020). Its features are explained by researchers. Ayob (2020) continued saying

that, a rotating model of Blended Learning is one in which a classroom is separated into multiple classes and students rotate between them. Secondly, it enables the instructor to establish the schedule of the rotation and sit at one station to provide instructions. Even though each station has the same learning aim, the activities at each station are distinct. Another feature is that the tasks at the various stations can be completed by students or by students with the instructor. The final point is that at least one station uses an online mode. Nurkamto (2019) argued that the station rotational model was chosen because it allows students to learn independently, and in the twenty-first century, students should be encouraged to be independent learners.

Model 3: Flipped model

This is a teaching pattern where the instructor distributes information for individual learning from home, and the material is reinforced in the physical classroom (Kuzmina et al. 2021). Kuzmina et al (2021) went on to say that this is the most commonly employed model of BL. According to Lee (2000), class activities are devoted to theoretical section analysis and student enquiries when performing homework (25-30% of the time). Students also tackle practical problems and conduct research in the classroom, under the guidance of an educator. Following the classroom instruction, practical exercises and assessments are conducted in order to grasp and consolidate the information covered (Yu, 2018).

Model 4: Flex model

The majority of the content is delivered online. Teachers deliver on-site assistance as needed and in a flexible manner through in-person tutoring and small group sessions. This concept is applicable to many mixed dropout-recovery and credit-recovery programs.

Model 5: Self-Blend

The self-blend approach, includes taking one or more classes online to augment their normal school's curriculum. Online learning is always distant, as opposed to the online-lab approach, whereas traditional learning takes place in a regular classroom. All additional online schools that provide individual students with a la carte courses support self-blending.

Model 6: Online Driver

In the online-driver paradigm, all content is presented via an online platform. For the most part, students work from home. Check-ins in person are sometimes optional and sometimes obligatory. Some of these programs also have physical components, such as extracurricular activities.

2.3. Blended Learning in language teaching

What exactly is Blended Learning? Bryan et al. (2016), highlighted that the origins of Blended Learning predate the development of contemporary technology. Its roots are in distance learning. Bryan et al. (2016) finds the phrase "Blended Learning" being used as early as 1999 in the sphere of private sector training, which saw the introduction of digital technologies. The new technology offered the ability to individualize learning by permitting learners to choose their own pace and path through the content/material as well as to bridge time and location (via recording). According to Shaykina (2015), the term Blended Learning originated in the year 2000 and was usually associated at the time with complementing traditional classroom learning with e-learning accomplishments. But it now implies much more than that. It contains frameworks that combine various traditional and online learning approaches to effectively and efficiently address quality issues and satisfy disciplinary purposes. Blended Learning, as defined by Akkoyunlu et al. (2008), combines traditional physical classrooms with components of virtual education (Finn & Bucci, 2004). According to Albiladi and Alshareef (2019), BL occurs when

traditional F2F training is coupled with computer-assisted education, as defined by Bonk and Graham (2012).

Blended Learning is described by Graham (2006) as learning methods that incorporate both in-person instruction and computer-mediated training. Garrison and Kanuka (2004) define it as the considered integration of in-person and online learning practices in the classroom. Finally, Allen and Seaman (2010) define a BL program as any program that mixes online and traditional modes of teaching. An important number of the curriculum is delivered online. Online conversations are employed, and there are fewer Face to Face sessions. Considering these three definitions, we can see that Face to Face and online teaching are essential constituents of Blended Learning.

According to Garrison et al. (2008), Blended Learning develops from a knowledge of the relative strong points of Face to Face and online learning, opening up a wide range of options for redesign that go beyond boosting the typical classroom lecture. Garrison et al. (2008) continued to say that Blended Learning is utilized to involve students in their learning in order to attain higher order learning outcomes, which are critical in higher education.

As it has been stated above Blended Learning has many benefits and some universities prefer using it rather than F2F. This is supported in a statement cited by Lim et al. (2009), Blended techniques of learning, enhanced pedagogy, according to Graham (2006) enhanced access to knowledge, encouraged social participation, allows more teacher presence, reduced costs, and simplified adjustments. According to Chung and Davis (1995), blended instruction gives students more flexibility over their learning pace, instructional flow, resource variety, and time management.

According to Riel et al. (2016), Blended Learning settings give learners online and in-person venues to connect, interact, and work on critical projects. According to Albiladi and Alshareef (2019), BL's expanded learning opportunities allow learners to participate both within and outside the classroom. BL, according to Senffner and Kepler (2015), is successful method of

teaching. To put it another way, the online component of Blended Learning allows students to learn whenever and wherever they want, independent of schedules or partners.

2.4. Components of the Blended Learning model

2.4.1. Learning environment component

Learning environments are classified into two types: synchronous and asynchronous. Each learning setting has a set of advantages and disadvantages. According to Holden and Westfall (2006), the objective of Blended Learning is to maximize the utilization of resources in order to achieve the instructional goal and learning objectives by leveraging the unique beneficial features of each environment.

2.4.2. Media component

Media component of Blended Learning model alludes to equipment that only distributes content. Some instructional media may help asynchronous or synchronous learning contexts more than others. Although the targeted content may not change depending on the transmission method, how the information is created may alter to take advantage of the unique properties of the chosen media. However, learning outcomes were unaffected by the choice of the most appropriate media; rather, it was the instructional tactics that were used (Holden & Westfall, 2006).

2.4.3. Instructional component

This component is employed to choose the optimal techniques to support learning goals. These approaches, which are consequences of learning aims, ensure learning goals are achieved and enable learning transfer. When developing Blended Learning, it is critical to maintain instructional quality. Learning goals should not be compromised while developing a Blended Learning solution (Holden and Westfall, 2006).

2.5. Technology in language teaching and learning

Over the last few decades, many individuals have brought and installed technology in their homes, and its effect has infused many aspects of our lives, including learning environments. Many people see such diffusion as the future of language training, which will be driven by fresh breakthroughs in computer, internet, and mobile technology. Nonetheless, even with low-tech

solutions, how we integrate technology into our teaching impact significantly on the success or failure of a technologically driven classroom (Davis, 2006).

Over the last few decades, debates have raged concerning the pedagogical use of computers in the classroom. On the one hand, computer and software businesses, as well as studies such as the ones mentioned above, frequently provide proof that technology is effective in language training, claiming that student enthusiasm increases and they participate more in learning. Many scholars, on the other hand, have argued that, while technology has advanced, teachers' use of it is often outdated and confined to simple writing tasks and internet searches (Cuban, 2001). Some have stated that this is due to teachers' inadequate understanding of the function of technology in language instruction. Garrett (1991) indicated that "a computer use does not represent a method," but rather a "tool that requires various methods, techniques, and teaching philosophies to be used to successfully teach."

Literature is full of examples of how technology can be used to enhance instruction. Yusuf (2005), for example, noted that technology has influenced teaching, learning, and research. His results propose that technology has the potential to help motivate and involve learners, connect academic learning to real-world applications, build economic viability for the future workforce, reinforce teaching, and support educational reform. Technology, according to Paul (2002), benefits teachers in a variety of ways because it improves the quality of education in the classroom and leads to advanced academic accomplishment. It assists teachers in carrying out their responsibilities effectively and efficiently in this way.

Many developing-country universities have ICT infrastructure, such as smart-classrooms and mobile technology to pique students' interest, arouse curiosity, and develop interest in e-learning and BL. According to Eng (2005), technology has a significantly higher beneficial effect on classroom learning since ICT is one of the most critical elements in students' achievement. However, for ICT to be effective, everyone in the ecosystem, including the school management, instructors, parents, and learners, must work together. According to Hennessy (2010), teachers must include ICT into their topic teaching and learning pedagogical approaches. Learners, as

digital natives, parents, and peers, will support teachers in jointly learning and that leads to increased academic accomplishment and a deep connection. According to Jung (2005), when teachers have a good attitude about ICT, it can be the most effective tool for extending students' knowledge since it stimulates the learner's understanding.

2.6. The opportunities of applying Blended Learning in teaching and learning English Language speaking skills

Blended Learning environment, which mixes aspects of traditional teaching and distance teaching/learning, is viewed as a methodology to integrate the best of both modalities (Fahlvik, 2014). This implies that combining the two modes improves the learning experience, and that a Blended Learning approach that recognizes and retains the qualities of traditional learning and distance learning can result in richer and more intense experiences than either traditional mode of teaching or distance learning alone. In other words, careful blending can result in a good learning experience.

According to Soliman (2016), the flipped classroom, a type of Blended Learning, began in 2015 in Egypt at the British University when the management of their English Department suggested using the new mode of teaching to improve learning. It is one of the best methods for teaching English to non-native speakers of English because, it allows students to study course content when they are at home and then absorb the content at a deeper level inside the classroom because, technologies help teachers to revisit their materials or content." This means that, BL reverses the typical lecture and Face to Face style classroom by allowing students to learn course information in the classroom and at home.

An additional benefit is that it gives learners opportunities to familiarize with digital technology and prepares them for its use at the university and life in the twenty-first century (Banditvilai, 2016). Banditvilai added that Blended Learning is a good notion that may be employed to effectively attain learning outcomes. My view is that this helps learners to practice English outside the classroom and expand their knowledge at any time and from any location as long as they have access to technology.

Fahlvik, (2014) talked about the teacher's and students' role in his book. He highlighted that students need to understand content and also be allowed enough time to reflect on what they learn. However, this demands more work on the side of teachers particularly as they are faced with a challenge of bigger class sizes and a diverse population of students. Teachers need to do more, and in order to meet students' expectations, they are turning to technology, which incorporates Blended Learning. The author considers blended learning as a solution to bigger class size. My experience is that it is not easy to manage a big size class in an online classroom. Some students can participate but it is not easy to reach every student and get them speak.

According to Ibrahim and Yusoff (2013), the Blended Learning model allows learners to exercise speaking at home through its online component. The authors also said that Blended Learning is suitable for teaching language skills, especially speaking and grammar lessons. Students are encouraged to take charge of their academics to improve their speaking skills. Yang, Chuang, Li, and Tseng (2013) used Moodle, a computer-generated learning environment, to assess the usefulness of combining communication technologies into customised English listening and speaking training. According to the findings, students who took part in the research significantly improved their English speaking and listening skills. According to the literature, using Blended Learning can improve speaking skills. Considering the benefits of Blended Learning in language teaching mentioned by other scholars, it is evident that it can impact positively on English proficiency of students.

According to Ginaya et al. (2018), Kirkgoz (2011) did research to explore designing and teaching a speaking lesson for year 1 learner teachers of English in Turkey through task-based learning coupled with technology. The study analysis discovered that learners' spoken language skills increased substantially, and they were pleased with the use of technology in the session.

Blended Learning has grown into a widespread trend in education. Face to Face interaction improves the function of technology in Blended Learning by incorporating aspects of teaching and learning. Tawil (2018) considers classroom contact to be necessary for good public speaking. Acceptance of online learning alone may inhibit children from acquiring emerging

skills such as public speaking. According to SiewEnga and Muuk (2015), traditional teaching interactions can help improve online learning by creating a setting that stimulates commitment and increases language speaking skills. The main purpose of English language teaching and learning, according to Aborisade (2013), is to enhance learners' linguistic abilities they need in real-life circumstances. As a result, speech is one of the most important forms of self-expression, and it is best developed in the face to face interaction. The three authors talk about the importance of face to face interaction in teaching speaking skills. They confirmed that face to face classes are necessary to develop speaking skills. This is right as when you are conducting a physical class, you are able to involve students actively and monitor them.

Blended Learning gives an opportunity for a lifelong learning. According to Blicke et al (2012) and Badescu and Saisana (2009), lifelong learning focuses on an individual's capability growth and capacity to learn. This signifies a shift away from traditional education and toward a field of classic and modern learning methods that are more process-driven and outcome-driven, with a modular framework, and with learning shifting to the persons who are students themselves. According to Evseeva (2015), lifelong education transition to lifelong learning is characterized as a constant and self-driven search for information for different proficient reasons. Consequently, Blended Learning necessitated the development of a new mode of teaching to shift the instructor's role from knowledge dissemination to coaching and assisting or enabling learners. In Blended Learning the teacher's role is not only teaching but also facilitating students to be able to attend class and also participate actively. There are different skills that the teachers need to have to be able to facilitate especially when it comes to the online learning which is part of Blended Learning.

2.7. Effectiveness of Blended Learning in language teaching

According to Sharma (2018), teaching is communication of knowledge to learners. This means that the teacher educates students and assists them in developing the abilities required for a given subject. He went on to suggest that good teaching engages students by addressing their concerns, making learning an active, relevant, and understandable experience. Successful teaching leads to successful learning for students.

Regarding the effectiveness of Blended Learning, several research studies have highlighted that Blended Learning is useful in increasing language abilities of students. Their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills can be improved when mixed learning is used in place of traditional mode of teaching or entirely online modes. Ghazizadeh and Fatemipour (2017) studied the Blended Learning impact on reading skills of learners of English language. The study aimed to see if Blended Learning could assist sixty intermediate-level EFL learners in improving their reading proficiency. The respondents were separated into two groups: those who received Blended Learning training on reading skills and those who employed traditional mode. The level of reading ability in both groups was measured before and after treatment. The findings revealed that Blended Learning use had a substantial helpful influence on EFL learners' reading proficiency. Ghazizadeh and Fatemipour (2017) established, in other words, that using Blended Learning on learners of language enhances their reading skills. Blended Learning, according to the study's findings, accelerates learning process and can be effectively utilized in English reading lessons.

According to AlKhaleel (2019), the findings of his study at the University of Tabuk indicated that using Blended Learning to learn English is quite useful. According to the study, 84% of respondents said their language competence skills improved significantly when compared to traditional teaching techniques. This suggests that Blended Learning enabled students to be more confident in their use of English. According to the conclusions of this study, adopting Blended Learning to learn English is very beneficial and successful. It seems Blended Learning is beneficial when it comes to teaching speaking skills but this study did not show the way it can be

beneficial and the portion which contributes much. I mean, is it the face to face mode which contributes to its success or it is the online portion?

2.8. Blended Learning vis-a-vis English Language speaking skills

Using a pedagogy tailored to the interests of today's digital native learners who fit into the virtual world is crucial for success, since embracing digital learning is what will help 21st century students. This is one of the reasons why we want ICT to empower both instructors and students to make instruction student-centered rather than teacher-centered (Trucano, 2005). Furthermore, graduate quality must be enhanced since they must be able to critically examine information and conduct research, which can only be performed via the use of technology. Evseeva (2015) describes lifelong education transition to lifelong learning, which is defined as a constant and self-motivated search for information for different career reasons. As a result, Blended Learning necessitated the development of a new teaching pedagogy that shifted the teacher's role from knowledge dissemination to coaching and assisting or enabling learners.

According to Soliman (2016), the flipped classroom, a type of BL, began in 2015 in Egypt at the British University when the management of the English Department suggested using the new pedagogy to improve learning. It is one of the best methods for teaching English to non-native speakers of English because it allows students to familiarize with course at home and then dive into the content deeply when in the classroom, because technologies facilitate teachers to qualitatively revisit the teaching and learning dynamic." This means that Blended Learning reverses the typical lecture and face to face style classroom by allowing students to learn course information from anywhere.

According to Ibrahim and Yusoff (2013), Blended Learning model allows students to exercise speaking at home through its online component. They also stated that Blended Learning is suitable for teaching language skills, specifically speaking and grammar classes. Students are encouraged to take charge of their academics, including speaking and writing, and to improve their language skills. Yang et al. (2013) used Moodle, a computer-generated learning environment, to assess the usefulness of introducing ICT into customised English listening and speaking training. According to the study findings, students significantly improved their English

speaking and listening skills. As indicated by the aforementioned literature, employing BL can just improve speaking skills.

Face to face interaction enhances the role of technology in Blended Learning by incorporating aspects of teaching and learning. Online learning typically concentrates on some learning abilities and does not expose students to all of the language skills necessary in daily life. Similarly, Tawil (2018) considers classroom contact to be necessary for good public speaking. Acceptance of online learning alone may inhibit children from acquiring emerging skills such as public speaking. According to SiewEnga and Muuk (2015), traditional teaching can help improve online learning by creating a setting that stimulates commitment and enhances speaking skills of the target language. The main purpose of English language teaching is to offer students the language abilities they need in real-life circumstances (Aborisade, 2013). As a result, speech is one of the most important forms of self-expression, and it is best developed in the face to face interaction.

There is a lot that can be said about infusing ICT into more traditional learning processes. When it comes to making change, it requires some strategies to make sure all people can use and benefit from it. Even though Blended Learning has been introduced in Rwandan public and private HLIs, little is known regarding its utilization by students in their learning activities (Ndayisenga et al, 2022). Ndayisenga et al. (2022) went on to note that many students, including those in the Nursing and Midwifery programs at the University of Rwanda, have expressed satisfaction with the Blended Learning form of instruction. It helps the teacher reach students online, it fosters ownership of studies by students and it cuts on travel costs to physical classrooms.

2.9. Challenges facing Blended Learning

Numerous studies have proven the usefulness of BL, demonstrating how technological advancements have revolutionized teaching and learning. This efficacy is closely tied to the quality of learners' experiences, which Wend (2006) defines as the diversity of experiences within universities concerned where students witness and participate, thereby influencing their learning experiences. According to Alebaikan et al. (2010) and Lionarakis (2003), some

important elements must be managed to provide learners with quality experiences, and these elements include technology, instructor, course structure, assignments, technical support, student engagement, and learning flexibility.

According to Alebaikan et al. (2010), a review of Sharpe et al. (2006)'s UK undergraduate experience with BL indicated that some universities in UK used BL to make flexible course provision and improve learners' campus experiences. Many colleges support Blended Learning as an approach, specifically to ensure learners can study whenever and wherever they are. Furthermore, some universities began the implementation of Blended Learning to respond to practical encountered problems by teachers and students, such as poor contact of staff to student, big size classes, and discrepancy in the quality of feedback on test and assignment marking between teachers. So, it is of great importance to use technology as it can help solve all the issues highlighted above. Blended Learning can help teach without having a physical class and when it comes to feedback to students, technology can make it easy. But I am not sure if it can solve the issue of big size classes as it is not easy to manage them online.

The main problems of Blended Learning can be put into three categories: BL environments and culture; students' and instructors' technical skill level; and time demand (Graham, 2006).

2.9.1. Challenge 1: Learners' reluctance to embrace Blended Learning due to environments and cultural belief

According to Alebaikan et al. (2010), one of the primary problems in Blended Learning introduction at universities in Saudi is culture and BL settings. More specifically, the challenges that occur are related to a measure of: the students' self-discipline, organizational and management assistance; student response (Graham, 2006); and society values and norms. Some teachers, according to Sait et al. (2008), are averse to new electronic educational practices as it replaces face to face instruction. This illustrates that there are conservative people in society who consider technology as a threat to societal values, and Sait et al. (2008) went on to explain that teachers in science professions see technology as a valuable tool for professional development because they are constantly exposed to it. According to Alebaikan et al. (2010), faculty perceptions of the internet's potential influenced their attitudes toward BL.

2.9.2. Challenge 2: Learners' limited skills in manipulating Blended Learning technological gadgets

There is an overwhelming evidence that, when used effectively for certain goals in specific situations, ICT may be a beneficial tool for improving teaching and learning. Still, it is widely recognized that its implementation in education has no effect on educational quality or teacher attainment of pedagogical and technical abilities, which is critical in this context (Hennessy et al. 2010). This indicates that there is a need to prioritize teacher development and identify ways to increase student computer abilities as the key to effectively implementing policies and curriculum, as well as to implement Blended Learning and improve teaching and learning in order to raise educational standards. The study will help know if students and teachers of the University of Rwanda encounter the issue of lack of computer skills and if that impacts negatively on the use of Blended Learning.

Alebaikan et al. (2010) confirmed that students' and instructors' technical skill level may be another key challenge for them to implement Blended Learning as they are not familiar with online learning. Furthermore, Sait et al. (2003) observed that teachers with inadequate internet access are reluctant to incorporate technology into their classroom instruction. To overcome the problem, Sait et al. (2003) advised that support services, and a helpdesk be provided for learners and teachers. This kind of organizational support encourages teachers to use Blended Learning. The teacher's comfort level with new technology influences his or her delivery style, which is also vital in finding the ideal mix.

2.9.3. Challenge 3: Teacher/learner demand on time

Instructors/teachers that use Blended Learning courses will need to spend more time generating digital content and administering the online learning component. According to Alebaikan and Troudi (2010), due to the redesign of the course, converting traditional courses to blended courses requires more time on the side of the teacher than creating old-style course materials. Furthermore, in Blended Learning contexts, teachers and students frequently spend more time acquiring new skills and communicating with one another. Teachers' schedules will need to be adjusted to have more time for more interaction with learners, who demand more regular feedback in online settings than in traditional teaching settings (Graham et al., 2013).

2.9.4. Challenge 4: Unavailability and inaccessibility of technological tools

The accessibility and availability of ICT resources is critical to the effective introduction of technology into schools, and if technology is not accessible by the teacher and student, as it is in many educational settings, it will not be used (Hennessy et al. 2010). This means that Blended Learning is not possible as it includes an online component. The study will investigate if students and Lecturers of the University have this issue and come up with some recommendations.

Kumar et al. (2021) stated that e-learning platforms play significant roles in recent times as technology is part of education. In this case, learners use mobile and other digital devices to personalize the course contents, self-pace the learning, and find the appropriate study materials from anywhere at any time, and lecture notes. With the comfort and requirements of learning when face to face is combined with e-learning, the mentioned platforms help accommodate everyone's needs (teacher and student). Blended Learning contributes to the performance of students and this is part of what the study talked about.

This chapter focused on literature related to the use of Blended Learning in teaching English Language. I reviewed research done in the field of technology and teaching English and more precisely speaking skills. It also presented the theoretical framework used in the present thesis on the use of Blended Learning in teaching English language speaking skills. Overall, a CABLS theory was instigated in this study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains and justifies the methodology that was used to meet the objectives of the study. It illustrates how data were collected and analyzed. This part provides scientific methods that was used during the study and explains the research design, the population under study and the sample size.

Data collection tools such as interview, questionnaire and classroom observation, in this study, was used. The other part further narrates data analysis which is composed of qualitative data analyses methods.

3.1. Research Design

The research design is created with the study's goal in mind. As a result, the study took a mixed method approach to gain in-depth thoughts and experiences from the respondents. To obtain information, mixed method approaches typically employed closed-ended questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations. To triangulate the data, the researcher collects information using several methods to increase the dependability and reliability of the data and their interpretation (Zohrabi, 2013). As part of the mixed methods design, the interviews, questionnaires and classroom observations were used to capture teachers and student's opinions on opportunities and challenges of using BL to promote English Language speaking skills among year 3 Undergraduate students of the University of Rwanda and to elicit comprehensive information.

The study employed a triangulation research strategy, which tries to gather complementary but varied data, which may be merged for analysis and interpretation (Almalki, 2016). The merits of this model, according to Almalki (2016), are based on its sensitivity. It makes natural sense to collect data from various sources using different ways that work together to have an efficient design. This study employed mixed techniques in nature in order to acquire trustworthy and representative study results as well as effective analysis within the constrained time frame.

The qualitative data for the study was gathered using interview with English Language lecturers who teach year 3 students in order to investigate on the opportunities and challenges when they apply Blended Learning in their teaching of speaking skills. A student questionnaire was

employed to collect quantitative data, which was administered electronically. Classroom observations were also used to acquire data that interviews and questionnaires could not provide. Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches is a mixed methods strategy and it allows researchers to investigate educational challenges using numbers and words, to the benefit of the society as a whole (Almalki, 2016).

3.1.1. The qualitative Method

This method emphasises on meanings and processes that cannot be put in numbers, intensity, amount, or frequency. It allows for an in-depth information of the phenomenon in its context (Ghanatabadi, 2005). Qualitative researchers place importance on the investigation of causal connections among variables. There should be enough theoretical grounding for a phenomenon to develop precise hypotheses, research questions, or operational definitions (Sullivan, 2001). In these circumstances, qualitative research is preferable as it is more fact-finding.

3.1.2. The quantitative method

According to Rovai (2014), quantitative research is a logical method of study. This is where observations can be made and hypotheses about the relationships between variables can be tested and repeated. This approach to study is distinguished by the use of mathematically based methodologies for data collecting and analysis. According to Malhotra and Birks (2003), quantitative research is used to develop prototypes that envisage whether or not someone would have a specific opinion or behave in a precise way based on an observable trait. To quantify data, quantitative research approaches employed SPSS and Excel statistical analysis. After weighing two research methodologies, a quantitative strategy was selected.

3.2. Study population and sample size

3.2.1. Study Population

This study concerns students and lecturers who are involved in teaching English in year 3 of 4 programmes from Gikondo Campus and Nyarugenge Campus of the UR. Those programmes are BSc in Applied Mathematics, BSc in Civil Engineering, BSc in Economics and BSc in Business Information Technology. The first target population of this study is students who are in Year 3 in

the 4 programmes. The second target population is lecturers who are assigned to English module in year 3 which is offered by the Centre for Language Enhancement.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents

Category of respondents	Population
Students	
BSc in Applied Mathematics	30
BSc in Civil Engineering	45
BSc in Economics	70
BSc in Business Information Technology	56
Sub-total	201
Lecturers	4 (2 from Gikondo Campus and 2 from Nyarugenge Campus)
TOTAL	205

Source: The Campus Registrars' offices, Academic Year 2021-2022

3.2.3. Sample size and sample selection

According to Gupta (2001), “a sample is any group of measurements carefully chosen from a population for analysis.” According to Grinnell and William (1990), before we can choose a sample size, we must first decide how many people will participate in our study. A sample size is also determined by how homogeneous our population is in terms of the variable being studied.

Purposive sampling is the careful selection of an informant based on the traits the informant possesses, according to Tongco (2007) and Bernard et al. (1986). It is different from random technique and it does not necessitate any underlying notions or a set number of informants. Simply said, the researcher defines what information is required and then searches out individuals who can and are willing to provide the information.

As far as this study is concerned, respondents who can give me information that is needed were chosen. For the first category of respondents who are students, I randomly took some of them.

For the second population who are teachers, I took all the teachers who teach English module in Year 3 of the 4 mentioned programmes.

3.2.3.1. Sample size 1. Students

Since the population of this study did not have inconsistencies, the research used a confidence level of 95% and marginal errors of 5%. The students' population is 201 and as per the statistics calculations, we must choose a sample size of 134 students.

Yamane (1967) established the formula of selecting the sample that reads as follows:

$$n = N/(1+N(Ne)^2)$$

The formula of Taro Yamane is presented as follows:

Where:

n= sample size required

N = represent the number of total population

e = represents marginal error (%)

The numbers in the formula:

$$N=201/(1+201(0.05)^2)=134$$

3.2.3.2. Sample size 2. Lecturers

Since the population is small, all the Lecturers targeted for the study will be interviewed in order to gather more reliable information. Therefore, the following table illustrates the proportion of sampled students from each program and their Lecturers. Furthermore, the table summarizes the methods used to sample the targeted respondents.

Table 2. Distribution of the sample

Type	of	Population	Sample size	Method used
------	----	------------	-------------	-------------

respondents				
Students		201	134	Purposive sampling
Lecturers of English module in Year3 Undergraduate		4	4	Census technique
TOTAL		205	138	

3.3. Data collection methods and research instruments

According to Silverman (2021), data collection methods to be employed depend on the methodology adopted and the research topic under investigation. In this research, interviews, questionnaire and classroom observation were used. Interviews helped gather perceptions of teachers who are involved in teaching of English module in the 4 targeted programmes. Questionnaires was used collect data from students. The classroom observation is the only way that would help to know what happens in the classroom. The researcher attended and observed teachers teaching English module. Interviews, questionnaires and classroom observations were conducted in English.

3.3.1. Interview

Interview technique was used for data collection of this research and it aims to know the lecturers' opinions, attitudes and perceptions about Blended Learning use in teaching English Language at the UR. In this regard, the research gathered lecturers' experiences of using BL in their teaching activities, and how they incorporate digital technologies into their speaking skill classrooms. Interviews allow participants to investigate their opinions of their living environment and express how they see things from their own perspective (Cohen, Lawrence, & Morrison, 2007).

The structured interview guide was carried out on lecturers who teach English module in year 3 of the 4 targeted programmes from Gikondo Campus and Nyarugenge Campus. The researcher chose this strategy because it is significant in the sense that it provides the researcher with more specific information that helped in answering the study's questions and also in coming up with solutions to the study's problem.

3.3.2. Questionnaire

A student questionnaire was employed to collect data. It was sent to students electronically.

Students of year 3 of the 4 targeted programmes filled this questionnaire online. By doing this, the researcher was hoping to acquire more about the students' perspectives on the opportunities and challenges they confront when they are taught English module using Blended Learning and how it affects the speaking abilities. The questionnaire was broken into five sections. The first is titled "student profile," the second "the impact of Blended Learning in teaching English speaking skills," the third "the opportunities of applying Blended Learning in teaching and learning English speaking skills," the fourth "student observations in using Blended Learning to improve their speaking skills," and the fifth "Open Questions."

3.3.3. Classroom observation

According to Zaare (2013), classroom observation is an increasingly common method for assessing teaching. Classroom observation helped the researcher in assessing teaching procedure of English module in year 3 of undergraduate at the UR. Classroom observation allowed the researcher to see things that the interview and questionnaire instruments cannot show such as the type of the teacher and students' interaction, the way students are cooperative and how they thrive with the environment in which Blended Learning is used. In assessing teaching, the researcher aimed to see if Blended Learning can help students of year 3 to expand their English Language speaking skills.

3.4. Area of the Study

The research was carried out at UR on lecturers who teach English for Specific Purposes module and their students of year 3 Undergraduate. The respondents will be enough and make it possible

to collect a variety of data. UR is the only public higher learning institution in Rwanda. It has six Colleges and eight Campuses in which there are a variety of programmes.

3.5. Piloting stage

Questionnaires were distributed to students before the researcher could start data collection. It was piloted on 13 students and 1 teacher. The piloting stage aim was to detect and spot-on any errors in the research instrument before distributing it to the whole sampled population. Piloting, according to Gudmundsdottir and BrockUtne (2010), is a crucial tool for avoiding methodological surprises, and researchers who apply the methodology claim that it significantly boosts the reliability and validity of research. In this sense, doing a pilot study typically helps the researcher focus and better adapt the study to the scenario as anticipated. It also helps in the evaluation of the research instruments' accuracy and consistency. This pilot test was administered from June 5, to June 7, 2023.

3.6. Data presentation, analysis, interpretation, and discussions

After data collection and presentation, the next procedure is to analyze data which aims at organizing, summarizing or synthesizing the collected data to draw conclusion. In this process, a researcher selects useful information to answer the problem stated. According to De Vos (2002), data analysis is the process of adding order, structure, and meaning to a significant amount of obtained data. With the help of figures, tables, and graphs, conclusions were drawn based on the data that were presented. In this study, these data were empirically analyzed and discussed.

3.7. Validity and reliability of the study

The dependability of data is one of the needs of any research. Here reliability refers to the uniformity, trustworthiness, and replicability of the results (Zohrabi, 2013). Through this research, reliability aims at increasing transparency, decreasing opportunities to be biased and consider methods employed to collect data. In this framework, the study's findings remained constant over time and the population in general in the study was represented. Validity is purely concerned with measurement error or bias. The content legitimacy of the research tools for this study was determined through pilot stage testing to determine if the questions are acceptable, answerable, and could be well understood.

3.8. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations must be acknowledged before commencing analysis. Kivunja&Kuyini (2017) stressed that ethical matters are important in carrying out a research work. In other words, the research should take into account the ethical principles of respondents' privacy, accuracy, property, and accessibility in order to minimize potential harm to individuals deemed vulnerable. In this aspect, we may violate their personal autonomy by requiring individuals who know them well and can protect their interests to give consent on their behalf in order for them to engage in a study project (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). In the case of this study, before conducting it, the permission was sought from the College of Education, University of Rwanda. Furthermore, confidentiality, consent, and anonymity were rigorously adhered to. The respondents' anonymity was emphasized by not recording their names. The researcher collected and used information for academic purpose only.

As a conclusion to chapter 3, it focused on the methodology that was used to meet the objectives of the study. It illustrates how data were collected and analyzed. This part provided scientific methods that were used during the study and explained the research design, the population under study and the sample size. Data collection tools such as interview, questionnaire and classroom observation, in this study, were used. The other part further narrated data analysis which was composed of qualitative data analyses methods.

CHAPTER IV: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSIONS

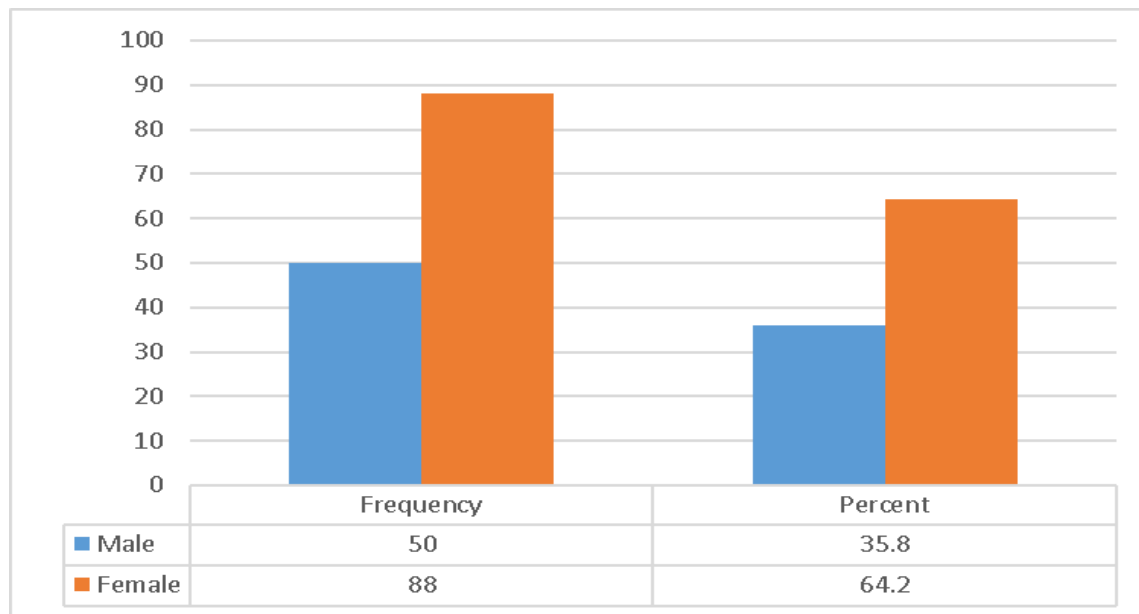
This chapter entails data analysis, presentation and interpretation. The collected data through student questionnaires, lecturer interviews and classroom observations is presented, interpreted and analyzed in line with the study's objectives in this chapter. The first section of this chapter provides identification of the respondents. This includes their gender, age, and their programs of study. The second section analyzes both students' questionnaire, lecturers' interview guide and classroom observation as per objective. The third section is devoted to discussions. SPSS was used to analyze and present the data. The data analysis provided a clear picture of the impact of Blended Learning on the learners' English speaking proficiency enhancement.

4.1. Demographic information of respondents

4.1.1. Characteristics of respondents according to their gender

As highlighted on figure 1, the number of female respondents outnumbered the male students who participated in this study. 88 females out of 50 males took part in the study and that makes 64.2% for females, and 35.8% for males. The characteristics of the respondents according to their age indicated that all gender participated in responding the provided structured questionnaire and interview. These findings are presented in the table below:

Figure 3: Characteristics of respondents according to their gender



Source: Primary data (2023)

4.1.2. Characteristics of respondents according to their age

Table 3 indicates that the largest group of respondents according to their age is equivalent to 84.8% (115) of entire respondents and are between the ages of 18-29. On the other hand, in the middle, there is the number of students (3) of age between 30-39 years which represents 13.2% (19). The lowest group is that of lecturers who are between the age 39-50 years which has 2.0% (4) of the total number of respondents. If one considers the total number of the respondents ranging between 18 and 29, this group constitutes roughly more than two thirds of the total respondents.

Table 3. Characteristics of respondents according to their age

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	18-29 years	115	84.8
	30-39 years	19	13.2
	39-50 years	4	2.0
	Total	138	100.0

Source: Primary data (2023)

4.1.3. Characteristics of respondents according to their programs of study

The table below (Table 4) shows a distribution of the four programs among the respondents. The majority of 34.3% came from the program of Bachelor of Science in Business Information Technology. On the other hand, the lowest number of student respondents is 14.9% from Bachelor of Science in Applied Mathematics.

Table 4. Characteristics of respondents according to their programs of study

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Bachelor of Science in Applied Mathematics (Nyarugenge Campus)	20	14.9
	Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering (Nyarugenge Campus)	30	22.4
	Bachelor of Science in Business Information Technology (Gikondo campus)	46	34.3
	Bachelor of Science in Economics (Gikondo Campus)	38	28.4
	Total	134	100.0

Source: Primary data (2023)

4.2. Presentation of findings

The tools used were a questionnaire, interviews and classroom observations. The characteristics of respondents as indicated in the questionnaire for students were mainly gender, age, and programs of study for students. For lecturers' interviews, they were also gender, age and academic qualification.

The questionnaire was administered to students electronically and those students are in year 3 of Undergraduate programs. All the four selected programs were represented. Through the study, the researcher explored the students' points of view on how the use of Blended Learning promotes English Language speaking skills and the opportunities and challenges they confront at the University of Rwanda.

Students of year 3 of the 4 targeted programmes filled the questionnaires. By doing this, the researcher learnt more about the students' perspectives on the opportunities and challenges they confront when they are taught English Language module using Blended Learning and how it promotes their speaking abilities. The questionnaire had five components. The first section is titled "student profile," the second "the impact of Blended Learning in teaching English speaking skills," the third "the opportunities of applying Blended Learning in teaching and learning English Language speaking skills," the fourth "student observations in using Blended Learning to improve their English Language speaking skills," and the fifth "Open Questions."

In this study, four English Language lecturers from the University of Rwanda, Gikondo and Nyarugenge Campuses who teach English Language module in year 3 of Undergraduate were interviewed. They were interviewed for 18 to 20 minutes per each to explore their views on Blended Learning use to promote English Language speaking proficiency among year 3 Undergraduate students. The lecturers were interviewed individually and in comfortable and conducive settings.

The interview technique was used for data collection of this research and the aim was to identify the lecturers' opinions, attitudes and perceptions about Blended Learning use in teaching English Language speaking skills among year 3 Undergraduate students at the University of Rwanda. In this regard, the research gathered lecturers' experiences of using Blended Learning in their

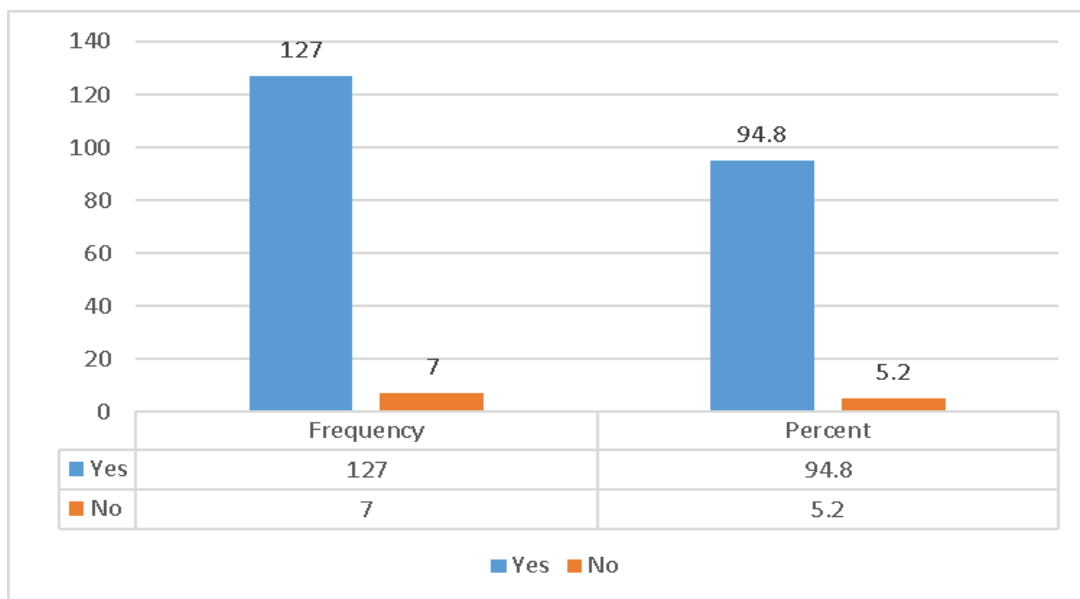
speaking skills teaching activities, and how they incorporate digital technologies into their classrooms. Interviews allow participants to investigate their opinions of their living environment and express how they see things from their own perspective (Cohen, Lawrence, & Morrison, 2007).

The interview guide consisted of 11 open-ended questions with no choices, allowing the lecturers to respond and justify their answers, as well as provide more information if necessary.

The researcher also used classroom observations. According to classroom observations that were conducted, the findings are clear and support the literature.

4.2.1. Finding 1: Use of blended learning in year 3 programs

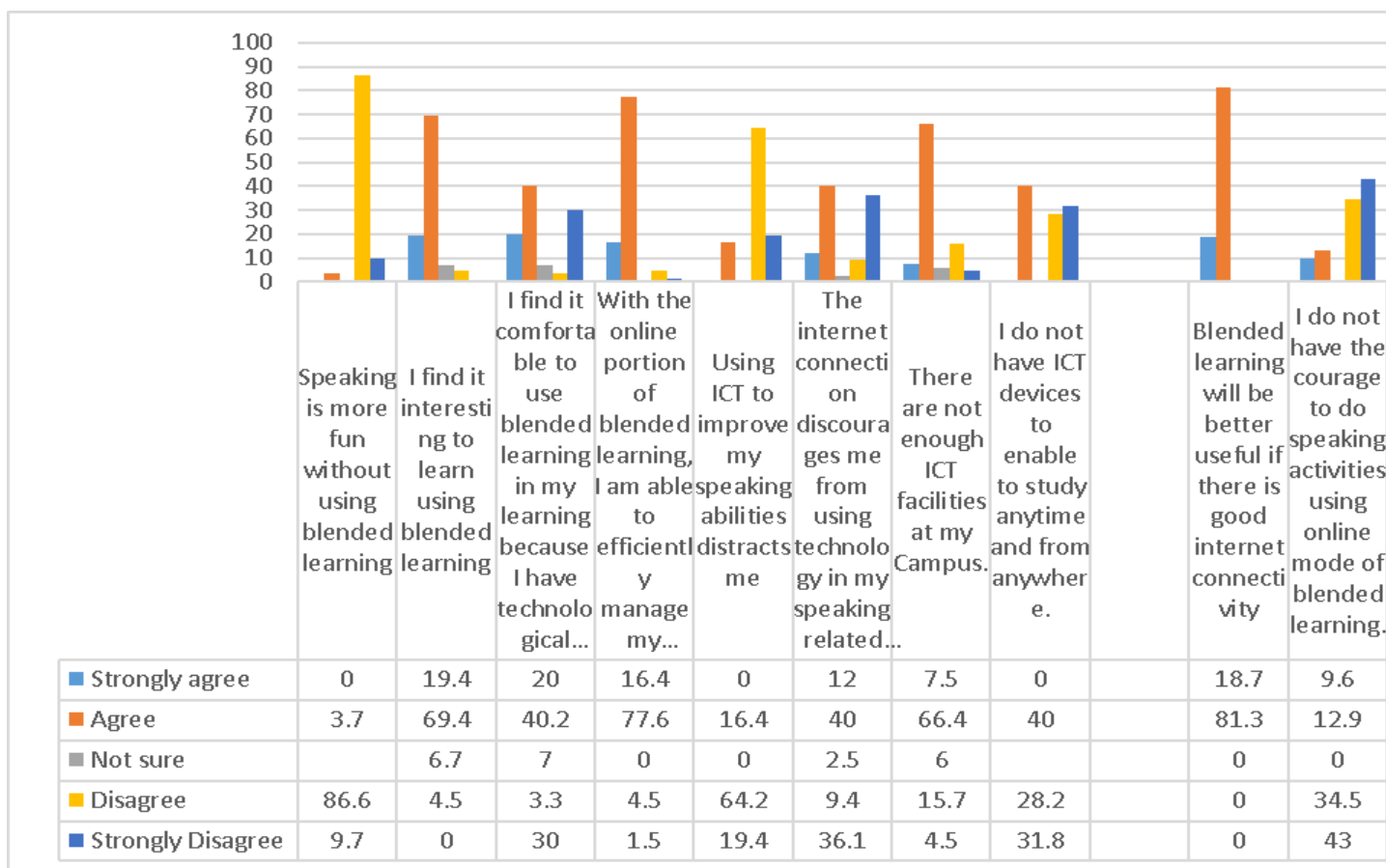
Figure 4: Use of blended learning in year 3 programs



As per the figure above, 94.8% of respondents confirmed that they use Blended Learning to study English especially speaking skills. Only 5.2% said that they do not use it. So, results show that blended learning is used by almost every student at the University of Rwanda.

4.2.2. Finding 2: Learners' appreciation on Blended Learning use in teaching English Language speaking skills

Figure 5: Learners' appreciation on Blended Learning use in teaching English Language speaking skills



As indicated by the data on learners' appreciation on the use of Blended Learning to improve English Language speaking skills, 86.6% and 9.7% disagreed with the statement that speaking is more fun without using Blended Learning. The researcher wanted to know if learners find

Blended Learning interesting. Considering the results, students enjoy using Blended Learning when studying English Language speaking skills.

Concerning the questions on ICT facilities, 20.0% and 40.2% of the students find it comfortable to use Blended Learning in their learning because they have technological facilities and they do not need to go to the campus every time they have class. 40% of the students said that they do not have devices to enable them to study anytime and from anywhere they want. The highest proportion of the respondents corresponding to 7.5% and 66.4% confirmed that there are not enough ICT facilities at the campuses. They claimed that some campuses do not have enough computer laboratories.

12.0% and 40.0% of the total respondents confirmed that poor internet connection discourages them from using technology in their speaking related classroom activities. This impacts on the way they use the online portion of Blended Learning.

Blended Learning will be better useful if there is good internet connectivity. This was asserted by 18.7% and 81.3% of the total number of respondents. The results show that students are negatively affected by internet connectivity when carrying out their speaking related activities.

All the four lecturers, who were interviewed, agreed with the first question, and they confirmed that they use Blended Learning to deliver their English Language teaching of speaking skills. The results indicated that English Language lecturers use BL and that it supports their teaching and learning process of English Language speaking skills. Below are some extracts from the respondents (ELL refers to English Language Lecturer):

ELL 1 stated that *“Blended Learning vis-à-vis teaching English speaking skills is a good approach but with some difficulties in our context. It is very good in that it can be made anytime anywhere as long as the two parties have internet connection. Furthermore, the two parties have an opportunity to be exposed to varied ways of speaking, thus increasing the possibility of improving speaking skills. However, some of the setbacks include poor internet connectivity and sometimes lack of control of participants and so it is sometimes difficult to manage such classes when they are remotely controlled.”*

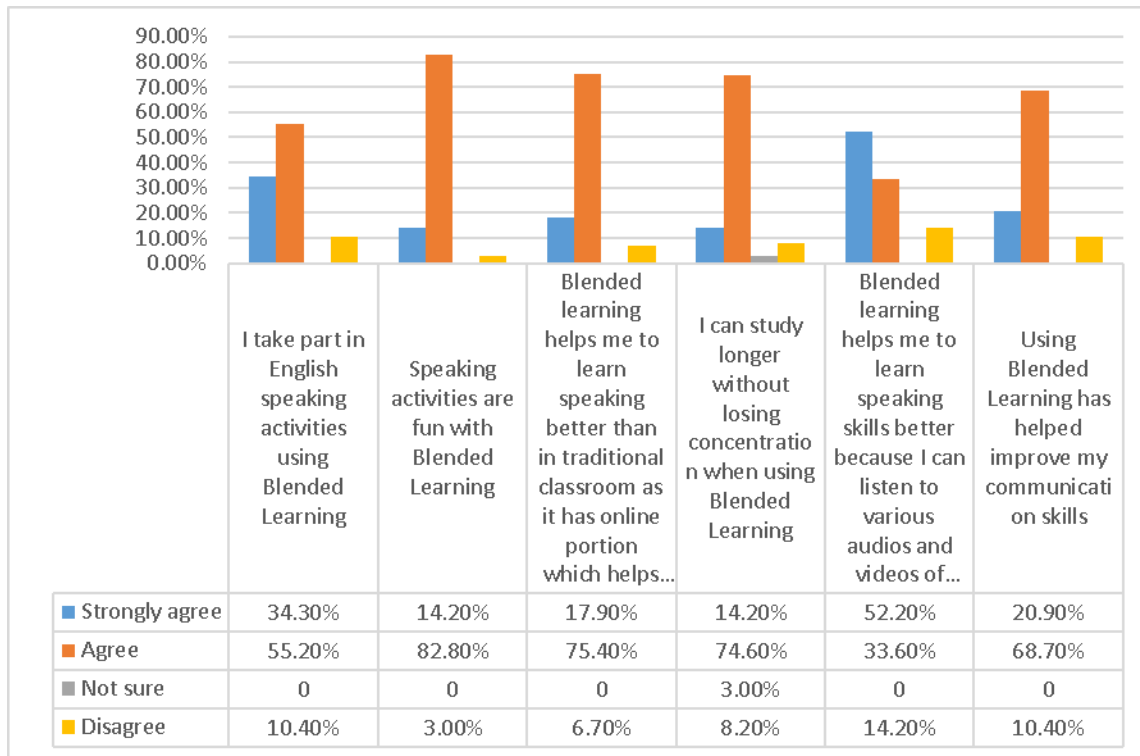
ELL 2 added that *“For the students in year 3 (the finalists), Blended Learning becomes a very useful tool specially to interact with the students doing their final projects. Since a supervisor has to regularly give feedback, Blended Learning comes in very often to make sure that the learners are on the proper track.”*

ELL 3 confirmed that *“Blended Learning has promoted English Language speaking skills of year 3 Undergraduate students at the University of Rwanda at a very large extent. The reason for this is that, students speak freely and can access materials from different sources using its online portion.”*

ELL 4 established that *“As it is done in a physical class alone, Blended Learning is used with routine speaking activities such as debates or other presentations and/or oral tasks and this has proven to be engaging. “*

4.2.3. Finding 3 : Learners’ perceptions on Blended Learning effectiveness in teaching English Language speaking skills

Figure 6: Learners’ perceptions on Blended Learning effectiveness in teaching English Language speaking skills



The results on the graph above show that a big number of respondents believe that their English language speaking skills have improved because they use Blended Learning in their studies. 20.9% strongly agreed with the statements and 68.7% agreed that Blended Learning facilitated them improve their communication skills. Yang et al. (2013) found that combining communication and technology into personalised English listening and speaking training using Moodle, a computer-generated learning environment, was beneficial. According to the study findings, pupils who took part in the study improved greatly their English speaking and listening skills. As indicated by the aforementioned literature, employing Blended Learning can just improve speaking skills.

As stated by lecturers, Blended Learning has promoted English Language speaking skills of year 3 Undergraduate students at the University of Rwanda at a very large extent. They added that the reason is that, students speak freely and can access materials from different sources using Blended Learning online portion. It keeps students interested inside and outside of the classroom. Mayadas et al. (2009) agree that online education is already improving access to education for many. This is the online portion of Blended Learning that allows learning whenever and wherever they want without being controlled, and it is referred to as ubiquitous learning.

4.2.4. Finding 4: The effectiveness of Blended Learning in teaching English Language speaking skills vis-a-vis English Language Proficiency

One of the research objectives was to determine whether or not Blended Learning is effective when it comes to teaching English Language speaking skills vis-a-vis English Language Proficiency.

4.2.4.1. Preferences of learners on the use of Blended Learning in teaching English speaking skills

As per the data on the graph, the study's findings revealed that when used to teach all language skills, Blended Learning is successful and effective. Furthermore, 68% of students strongly felt that they could emulate the sounds and rhythms of the English Language without the assistance of teachers via the use of Blended Learning. Additionally, 78.4% of the participants confirmed that with Blended Learning, they can access rich resources of native speakers who are good models to learn speaking skills. Adas and Bakir (2013) studied the use of a Blended Learning strategy to improve the writing proficiency of EFL learners.

The results show that Blended Learning is essential as far as learning of English Language speaking skills is concerned and students can learn and improve their speaking skills or proficiency without the assistance of the teacher. Furthermore, graduates will be able to assess information critically and do research, which is only feasible with technology use, which comes with the online component of Blended Learning.

4.2.4.2. Lecturers' experience on the effectiveness of Blended Learning in English language speaking skills

Lecturers confirmed that when Blended Learning is effectively implemented in teaching English Language, it increases proficiency in the language tremendously. This is so because speaking skills is an active/productive skill, once it runs well passive skills improve automatically. Secondly, the language is naturally a tool for oral communication, therefore one who orally communicates well can be seen as proficient in a language. Both lecturers and students have positive attitudes and opinions about using Blended Learning into English Language education.

ELL 1 said: *“I am confident that when Blended Learning is effectively implemented in teaching and learning English Language, it increases proficiency in the language tremendously. This is so because speaking skills is an active/productive skill, once it runs well passive skills improve automatically. Secondly, the language is naturally a tool for oral communication, therefore one who orally communicates well can be seen as proficient in a language.”*

The importance of Blended Learning is significant in the way it supports lecturers to deliver their lessons and students to learn and make knowledge. It also adds to the energy and brightness of the classroom with its online portion which allows lecturers and students to learn anytime and from anywhere. But this is possible when lecturers and students have all the necessary tools and equipment and those tools and equipment at campuses are accessible but still limited. Interviewed lecturers highlighted that there is a need to improve the infrastructure, that is providing IT devices for teachers and learners but also improve the quality of internet connectivity on campus. Secondly, there is a need to promote the culture of ICT in the classroom, thus not doing business as usual.

During the observations, it was found out that students demonstrated engagement in speaking activities in online speaking exercises with an attentive posture, notetaking, and avoiding

distractions from their colleague students. They also asked questions and maintain pace to achieve the intended learning outcomes of the lessons.

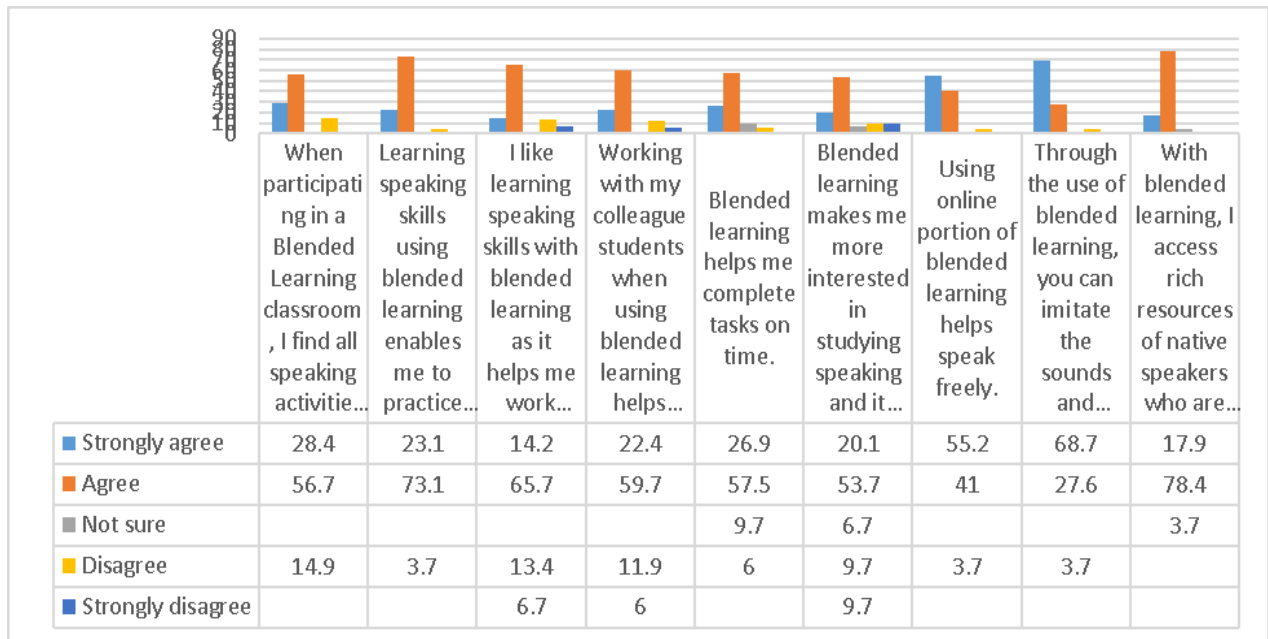
During the online lessons, students were active and demonstrated meaningful progress as classroom time progressed. Students could also explain what they were working on clearly. This supports the statement by Garrison et al (2008) which says that BL is employed to actively involve learners in their learning in order to attain higher order learning outcomes, which are critical in higher education. During interviews, lecturers shared that they see more engagement in online sessions from students who are shy and do not feel comfortable sharing in front of their classmates in F2F sessions. They added that student active engagement increases comprehension which is the case for year 3 Undergraduate students at the UR.

Blended Learning allows students to have access to various information sources from anywhere and using the digital devices helps them to access the information. According to Ibrahim and Yusoff (2013), when Blended Learning is used for speaking course, it allows learners to practice speaking when learning from home through its online component. The observer could see that students were attending class from different places. Some of the students were at their homes, others were in an open space and others were sitting in a computer laboratory.

As far as the lessons content that was provided by the teacher is concerned, the observer could see that it was aligned with the lesson title and it is at the level of year 3 students. Students could also access materials from different online sources which added on what the teacher provided. Furthermore, students understand how their work relates to the overall learning objectives of the course. The teachers were working together with their students. When students needed assistance from the teacher, the teacher consistently offered it. Teachers were aware of what all students in the room were doing during the lecture.

4.2.5. Finding 5: The opportunities and challenges of using Blended Learning in teaching and learning English Language speaking skills

Figure 7: The opportunities and challenges of applying Blended Learning in teaching and learning English Language speaking skills for year 3 students at the UR



The results on the above graph discuss the opportunities and challenges of using Blended Learning in promoting English Language speaking skills among year 3 Undergraduate students of University of Rwanda. They demonstrated that approximately all students have enhanced their speaking proficiency due to the use of Blended Learning in their English Language speaking skills activities. The fact that using online portion of BL helps students speak freely occupied 4.48 of the overall mean. Besides, 68.7% of the participants, strongly agreed that through the Blended Learning use, you imitate the sounds and rhythms of English language without the assistance of instructors. Additionally, 78.4% of the respondents confirmed that with BL, they can access rich resources of native speakers who are good models to learn speaking skills the aforementioned statement. Here, the researcher wanted to know if students can learn and improve their speaking skills or proficiency without the assistance of the teacher.

The minority number of students 3.7% went against the statement that through Blended Learning use, you can imitate sounds and rhythms of English Language without the assistance of instructors and 3.7% were not sure of the statement.

4.2.5.1. The opportunities of using Blended Learning in teaching English Language speaking skills

a) Opportunity 1: Blended Learning as an accelerator for teaching English speaking skills

Blended Learning as a learning tool to improve English Language speaking abilities has been researched on widely. Lecturers and students of the UR also confirm that Blended Learning is an essential ingredient in today's English-speaking related activities as it allows students to practice speaking not only in the classroom but also outside. The statement is supported by Ibrahim and Yusoff (2013) who points out that BL when employed for speaking course, it provides additional benefits for students to practice speaking outside of the classroom through its online component.

People of the 21st century have installed technology in their homes all across the world, and it has impacted many aspects of our lives, including education. Diffusion is seen as the future of language training, which will be driven by fresh breakthroughs in computer, internet, and mobile technology. Nonetheless, even with low-tech solutions, how we integrate technology into our classrooms can have a substantial influence on success or failure of a technologically driven classroom (Davis, 2006). This statement gives power to what students said when filling questionnaires. They said that they find it comfortable to use Blended Learning in their learning because they have technological facilities and that allows them to study from anywhere they want.

Lecturers highlighted that Blended Learning impacts positively the speaking proficiency of students as it involves ICT tools and devices and ICT is considered a key teaching tool. After collating the responses, all the four lecturers stated that Blended Learning with its online portion provides much information from various sources in a short period of time and that students have access to technology and learn anytime and from anywhere.

ELL 3 confirmed: *“Blended Learning has promoted English Language speaking skills of year 3 Undergraduate students at the UR at a very large extent. The reason for this is that, students speak freely and can access materials from different sources using its online portion. It keeps them engaged whenever and wherever they could be”.*

It was also proved by ELL2 who declared that BL has become a very useful tool especially when it comes to interact with students.

ELL 2 stated: *“For the students in year 3, i.e. the finalists, BL has become a very useful tool especially to interact with the students doing their final projects. Since a supervisor has to regularly give feedback, BL comes in very often to make sure learners are progressing well.”*

During the classroom observations the researcher could see that technological devices are a very important tool in teaching and learning of English Language speaking skills. Many of the learners had their own devices and others did not have them. In some cases, students were sitting together using the same device.

b) Opportunity 2: Blended Learning as a prompter for ubiquitous learning

As stated by lecturers, Blended Learning has promoted English Language speaking skills of year 3 Undergraduate students at the UR at a very large extent. They added that the reason is that, students speak freely and can access materials from different sources using BL online portion. It keeps students interested all the times. Mayadas et al. (2009) agree that online education is already improving access to education for many. This is the online portion of BL that allows students to learn whenever and from wherever they want without being confined by groups or partners, also known as omnipresent learning.

Ubiquitous learning is a source of knowledge and it permits learning from anywhere and at any time. Yahya et al. (2010) define ubiquitous learning as "anywhere and anytime learning." This concept refers to any setting that allows any mobile learning device to access learning and teaching content via wireless networks at any time and in any location. BL allows students to have access to various information sources from anywhere and using the digital devices helps them to access the information. In this case, learners are not tied to a certain location by using the online portion of BL. It encourages the habits which include persistence, independence to choose information and the type of engagement. Learning data such as coursework, assignments, and

lectures are permanent with ubiquitous learning, and students should always have access to the material. Because these materials are available, students can be considerably more self-directed and independent than in traditional learning methods.

Blended Learning allows students to have access to various information sources from anywhere and using the digital devices helps them to access the information. Blended Learning when employed for speaking course, according to Ibrahim and Yusoff (2013), it allows students to practice speaking outside of the classroom through its online component. During classroom observation, the observer could see that students were attending class from different places. Some of the students were at their homes and others were in an open space.

As far as the lessons content that was provided by the teacher is concerned, the observer could see that it was aligned with the lesson title and it is at the level of year 3 students. Students could also access materials from different online sources which added on what the teacher provided. Furthermore, students understand how their work relates to the overall learning objectives of the course. The teachers were working together with their students. When students needed assistance from the teacher, the teacher consistently offered it. Teachers were aware of what all students in the room were doing during the lecture.

c) Opportunity 3: Blended Learning for active engagement of students

According to Garrison et al. (2008), BL is utilized to actively engage students in their learning in order to attain higher order learning outcomes, which are critical in higher education. This was also highlighted by Lecturers where they said that as it is done in traditional class alone, BL is used with routine speaking activities such as debates or other presentations and/or oral tasks and it has proven to be engaging. Lecturers shared that they see more engagement in online sessions from students who are shy and do not feel comfortable sharing in front of their classmates in Face to Face sessions. Lecturers added that student active engagement increases comprehension. Students also confirmed that with the online portion of Blended Learning, they are able to efficiently manage their speaking activities as they can use different materials from internet. The materials of native speakers help them very much as they can learn good pronunciation, vocabulary and even language use.

Using a methodology tailored to the interests of today's digital native learners who fit in the virtual world is crucial for success, as incorporating digital learning in education is what will help 21st-century learners. This is one of the reasons why we need ICT to empower both teachers and students to make instruction student-centered not teacher-centered (Trucano, 2005). Students confirmed that they enjoy using BL in their speaking activities as it gives them more time to collaborate and learn in an engaging, interactive, and technological way.

The researcher managed to see the active engagement of students in the online classroom when she was conducting observations. Students were very active and many of them preferred to turn off their cameras which allowed them to speak freely.

d) Opportunity 4: Blended Learning provides plenty of source for English speaking skills

Blended Learning provides extra learning possibilities that encourage students to contribute in the classroom and when learning from home (Albiladi and Alshareef, 2019). Students find interesting to learn using Blended Learning. They continued saying that it allows them to study from anywhere and anytime. They do not need to be on campus to be able to learn. They can use different materials from different online sources and be able to practice speaking. BL, according to Senffner and Kepler (2015), is meaningful way of teaching. The statement was supported by students as they confirmed that they find it comfortable to use Blended Learning in speaking skills learning because it allows them to effectively balance schoolwork and other obligations. They supplemented this saying that it teaches them to learn to be autonomous and have control over their learning experience which is essential for success.

e) Opportunity 5: Blended Learning as a lifelong learning promoter

Blended Learning gives an opportunity for a lifelong learning. According to Blicek et al (2012) and Badescu and Saisana (2009), lifelong learning focuses on an individual's capability growth and capacity to learn. This signifies a shift away from traditional education and toward a field of classic and modern learning methods that are more process and outcome driven, with a modular framework, and with learning shifting to the persons who are students themselves. Evseeva (2015) describes lifelong education transition to lifelong learning as a constant and self-driven search for information for different career reasons." Students confirmed the statement that BL gives an opportunity for a lifelong learning. Blended Learning helps them to learn English Language speaking skills better because they can listen to various audios and videos of native speakers from different platforms and this enhances their English Language proficiency and that using Blended Learning has helped improve their communication skills. This equips them with the practical skills they need in their everyday life in both personal and career settings.

4.2.5.2. Challenges of using Blended Learning in teaching English Language speaking skills

The lecturers and learners who took part in the research mentioned some challenges that include inadequate skills on how to use computers, poor internet connectivity, electricity cuts and lack of materials like computers to be able to teach virtually using the online portion of Blended Learning.

a) Challenge 1: Learners' reluctance to embrace Blended Learning due to environments and cultural belief

One of the key challenges Learners' reluctance to embrace Blended Learning due to environments and cultural belief. In this study some lecturers stated that some of their colleagues do not use technology in their classrooms. According to Alebaikan et al. (2010), faculty perceptions of the internet's potential influenced their attitudes toward Blended Learning in the implementation of Blended Learning at Saudi universities, according to Alebaikan et al. (2010), is culture and Blended Learning contexts. The problems that arise are specifically tied to how comfortable they feel with technology use in education. Some instructors, according to Sait et al.

(2008), are averse to new electronic educational practices as it replaces Face to Face instruction. This demonstrates that there are conservative elements in the society.

b) Challenge 2: Learners' limited skills in manipulating Blended Learning technological gadgets

Alebaikan et al. (2010) confirmed that students' and instructors' technical skill level may be another key challenge for them to implement Blended Learning as they are not familiar with online learning and many of them have struggled with attaining the necessary skills to use BL. Furthermore, Sait et al. (2003) observed that teachers with inadequate internet access are reluctant to incorporate technology into their classroom instruction. Sait et al. (2003) proposed that extended tutorials, support services, and a helpdesk be investigated to solve the issue for both students and teachers. Some students and educators mentioned that computer skills are a big worry for them.

ELL 2 mentioned that *“The challenges that are faced when dealing with BL include lack of skills on a computer. We are not conversant with the computer and the new technologies that are emerging.”*

From the classroom observations, the researcher could see that some students did not manage to join the class because they did not know how to do it. The lecturer tried to help them but some of them failed completely and did not attend.

c) Challenge 3: Teacher/learner demand on time

In terms of BL, instructors/teachers that implement mixed courses will need to spend more time developing digital content and managing the online learning component. According to Alebaikan and Troudi (2010), due to the redesign of the course, transforming old-style course materials to blended courses requires more time on the side of the teacher than creating traditional courses. Furthermore, with BL, teachers and students often spend more time learning new techniques and abilities and communicating with one another. Lecturers said that BL requires them more time compared to the time they use in a F2F class.

ELL 3 said that *“Blended Learning requires us more time as we have to prepare notes to be uploaded on the online platform and students need time to be facilitated and be given feedback and that feedback should be timely. Another thing is that the content that can be covered in an online class is less than the one of a F2F class”.*

d) Challenge 4: Unavailability and inaccessibility of Blended Learning technological tools

The accessibility and availability of ICT resources is critical to the effective introduction of technology into schools, and if technology is not accessible by the teacher and student, as it is in many educational settings, it will not be used (Hennessy et al. 2010). This entails that, Blended Learning is not possible as it has an online component. Some students said that they do not have technological devices to help them use the online portion of Blended Learning.

Another issue is poor internet connectivity. ELL 2 highlighted that managing a class becomes difficult when internet cuts interfere with ongoing activities. Remote learning, which is one of the two constituents of Blended Learning, is quite related to working from home. It necessitates a stable internet connectivity and technological devices. ELL 1 added that Blended Learning requires the two parties involved to have internet connection.

ELL 1 stated that *“Blended Learning vis-à-vis teaching and learning English speaking skills is a good approach but with some difficulties in our context. It is very good in that it can be made anytime anywhere as long as the two parties have internet connection. Furthermore, the two parties have an opportunity to be exposed to varied ways of speaking, thus increasing the possibility of improving speaking skills. However, some of the setbacks include poor internet connectivity and sometimes lack of control of participants and so it is sometimes difficult to manage such classes when that are remotely controlled.”*

ELL 2 added that *“From experience, my employer, i.e. UR strives to provide reliable internet connectivity and this helps me a lot when I am on the campus and this makes a lot of difference in my teaching of English Language speaking skills.*

Lecturers, when asked how they managed the challenges, they said that it is not easy for some of the challenges because they require involvement of the institution. For example, to get a stable internet connectivity or computers to be used.

ELL 3 said: *“The question is not easy to answer. Sometimes I address these challenges and sometimes I fail. For example, I always try to have different sources of internet to manage my classes but unfortunately none of them may not be relied on sometimes. “*

According to the classroom observations, some students did not manage to join the class because they did not have computers and others had poor internet connectivity. So this confirms that BL is not possible when both sides do not have technological devices or stable internet connectivity.

Observations in the classroom revealed to the researcher that technology devices are a significant aid in the teaching of English language speaking skills. Many of the learners had their own devices, but others did not. In some circumstances, learners sat together while using the same device.

4.3. Discussions

In this section, the primary findings are scrutinized in connection with the literature and research done previously. The discussion is guided by the study's objectives. I will go over the demographic data of the respondents and show how it relates to the study's conclusions. The present study shows both students and lecturers' positive perceptions of using BL in teaching to promote English Language speaking skills.

Blended Learning as a learning or teaching tool to improve English Language speaking abilities has been researched on widely. Lecturers and students of the University Rwanda confirmed that Blended Learning is an essential ingredient in today's English speaking related activities as it allows students to practice speaking not only in the classroom but also outside. According to Ibrahim and Yusoff (2013), when BL is used for a speaking course, it gives additional opportunity for students to practice speaking when learning from home through its online element.

This study assessed whether Blended Learning is used by lecturers and students towards promoting English language speaking abilities. As stated by lecturers, Blended Learning has promoted English Language speaking skills of year 3 Undergraduate students at the UR at a very large extent. They added that the reason is that, students speak freely and can access materials from different sources using Blended Learning online portion. It engages students within and outside of the classroom. Mayadas et al. (2009) added that online education is already boosting access to education for many people. This is the online portion of Blended Learning that allows students to learn whenever and wherever they want.

According to Garrison et al. (2008), Blended Learning is utilized to actively engage students in their learning in order to attain higher order learning outcomes, which are critical in higher education. This was also highlighted by Lecturers where they said that as it is done in traditional class alone, Blended Learning is used with routine speaking activities such as debates or other presentations and/or oral tasks and it has proven to be engaging. Lecturers shared that they see more engagement in online sessions from students who are shy and do not feel comfortable sharing in front of their classmates in face to face sessions. Lecturers added that student active engagement increases comprehension. Students also confirmed that with the online portion of BL, they are able to efficiently manage their speaking activities as they can use different materials from internet. The materials of native speakers help them very much as they can learn good pronunciation, vocabulary and even language use.

Blended Learning provides extra learning possibilities that encourage students to contribute in the classroom and when learning from home (Albiladi and Alshareef, 2019). Students find interesting to learn using Blended Learning. They continued saying that it allows them to study from anywhere and anytime. They do not need to be on campus to be able to learn. They can use different materials from different online sources and be able to practice speaking. BL, according to Senffner and Kepler (2015), is a meaningful way of teaching. The statement was supported by students as they confirmed that they find it comfortable to use BL in speaking skills learning because it allows them to effectively balance schoolwork and other obligations. They

supplemented this saying that it encourages them to feel autonomous which is critical for success.

Blended Learning gives an opportunity for a lifelong learning. As cited by Blieck et al (2012) and stated by Badescu and Saisana (2009), lifelong learning focuses on an individual's capability growth and learning capacity. This signifies a shift away from traditional education and toward a field of classic and modern learning methods that are more process and outcome driven, with a modular framework, and with learning shifting to the persons who are students themselves. Evseeva (2015) describes lifelong education transition to lifelong learning as a constant and self-driven search for information for different career reasons." Students confirmed the statement that BL gives an opportunity for a lifelong learning. BL helps them to learn English Language speaking skills better because they can listen to various audios and videos of native speakers from different platforms and this enhances their English language proficiency and that using BL has helped improve their communication skills. This equips them with the practical skills they need in their everyday life in both personal and career settings.

Lecturers confirmed that when Blended Learning is effectively implemented in English Language teaching, it increases proficiency in the language tremendously. This is so because speaking skills is an active/productive skill, once it runs well passive skills improve automatically. Secondly, the language is naturally a tool for oral communication, therefore one who orally communicates well can be seen as proficient in a language. Both lecturers and students have favourable attitudes and opinions about using Blended Learning into English Language education.

People of the 21st century have brought and installed technology in their homes all across the world, and it has impacted many aspects of our lives, including education. Such diffusion is seen as the future of language training, which will be driven by fresh breakthroughs in computer, internet, and mobile technology. Nonetheless, even with low-tech solutions, how we integrate technology into our classrooms has a meaningful impact on the success or failure of a technologically driven classroom (Davis, 2006). This statement gives power to what students

said when filling questionnaires. They said that they find it comfortable to use Blended Learning in their learning because they have technological facilities and that allows them to study from anywhere they want.

As far as the challenges are concerned, Anggawirya, et al (2021) stated that in so many cases, our students are 'digital natives' and those are learners who keep an eye on technological developments and use them in their learning, while many of our teachers are 'digital immigrants'. To support this statement, some students and Lecturers highlighted that they have an issue of limited skills on how to use a computer and it is very hard for them to digest the emerging technologies which include Blended Learning. Many scholars, on the other hand, have claimed that, while technology has advanced, instructors' use of it is often outdated and limited to simple writing and internet searches (Cuban, 2001). According to some lecturers, this is due to teachers' inadequate understanding of the function of technology in language education.

Among the challenges that lecturers face, according to Tshabalala et al. (2014), are perceptions of BL policies, faculty support from management, computer abilities of students and lecturers, and limited computer access for students. Some students claimed that they do not have technical gadgets, which prohibits them from participating in the online element of BL. Lecturers mentioned that some colleagues are reluctant to use BL as they are not used to using technology in their teaching. For the University Management support, Lecturers said that, they get support but it needs to be improved. They added that they need regular trainings on emerging technologies which will allow them to always be ready to provide to their students.

Fahlvik, (2014) talked about the teacher's and students' role in his book. He highlighted that students need to understand content and also be allowed enough time to reflect on what they learn. However, this demands more work on the side of teachers particularly as they are faced with a challenge of bigger class sizes and a diverse population of students. Teachers need to do more to keep up with learners' expectations and they are turning to the use of technology which brings in BL. Consequently, a new teaching pedagogy was needed to change the role of the teacher from disseminating knowledge to coaching and helping or facilitating learners and that is

Blended Learning. The statements above were supported by Lecturers in their interviews where they said that the teacher's role in BL evolves from the provider of knowledge to coach and mentor. They went on to say that traditionally, classroom instruction was mostly teacher-directed, with some differentiation, but that with BL, it is becoming more student-driven, with differentiation as a key component. Much of this new learning dynamic can be attributed to the expanded involvement of technology in training.

In terms of Blended Learning, instructors/teachers that implement mixed courses will need to spend more time developing digital content and managing the online learning component. According to Alebaikan and Troudi (2010), due to the redesign of the course, transforming old-style courses to blended courses requires more time on the side of the teacher than creating traditional course materials. Lecturers supported the statements saying that it requires them more time to be able to design course materials to be uploaded on the online platforms and they also spend more time on moderating and facilitating students. Another thing that is time consuming for teachers is that of providing feedback to students. Teachers' schedules will need to be adjusted for them to get more time for more learner engagement, who demand regular feedback in online settings than in traditional teaching settings (Graham et al, 2013). ICT resources are critical to the effective introduction of technology into schools, and technology will not be used if it is inaccessible to teachers and students, as it is in many educational settings (Hennessy et al. 2010). This entails that, Blended Learning is not possible as it has an online component. Some students mentioned the issue that they do not have technological devices and that prevents them from using the online portion of Blended Learning.

This chapter presented, analyzed and interpreted data, and discussed the results. It showed that both students and lecturers have positive perceptions of using Blended Learning in teaching English Language speaking skills. The study findings indicated that both lecturers and students of year 3 Undergraduate at UR use Blended Learning to teach English Language speaking skills. In this regard, Blended Learning has so many opportunities and challenges. The results agree with the CABLS (Complex Adaptive BL System) Theory which was introduced by Yuping

Wang, Xibin Han and Juan Yang (Wang et al., 2015) as it contributes to education and it fits well in the use and effective implementation of Blended Learning programme in teaching.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter offers the study's findings in summary in relation to the objectives in order to form a sound conclusion. Based on the study's findings, it makes recommendations that can have a good impact on the usage of Blended Learning in teaching English Language speaking skills.

This chapter describes the findings from student questionnaires, lecturer interviews, and classroom observations, as well as make recommendations for future research.

The objectives of the study are restated as follows:

- (4) To investigate the extent to which Blended Learning has promoted English Speaking Skills among year 3 students at the University of Rwanda.
- (5) To explore opportunities offered by Blended Learning in teaching English speaking skills.
- (6) To highlight challenges related to English Speaking Skills that were prompted by Blended Learning.

This study assessed whether Blended Learning is used by lecturers and students towards promoting English language speaking abilities. It was found that lecturers and students of year 3 Undergraduate use BL to promote English Language speaking skills and it impacts positively on the improvement of English Language speaking skills/proficiency. Henceforth, using Blended Learning merely boost the speaking skills.

Referring to the first objective, this study investigated the extent to which Blended Learning has promoted English Language speaking skills among year 3 Undergraduate students at the University of Rwanda. Blended Learning has gone to the extent that it actively engages students in their learning, allowing them to attain higher order learning outcomes, which are critical in higher education and this allows them to increase proficiency in the language tremendously. As stated by lecturers,

Blended Learning has promoted English Language speaking skills of year 3 Undergraduate students at the UR at a very large extent.

As far as the effectiveness of Blended Learning in promoting English Language speaking skills vis-à-vis English Language proficiency is concerned, lecturers confirmed that when Blended Learning is effectively implemented in teaching and learning English Language, it increases proficiency in the language tremendously. This is so because speaking skills is an active/productive skill, once it runs well passive skills improve automatically. Secondly, the language is naturally a tool for oral communication, therefore one who orally communicates well can be seen as proficient in a language. Both lecturers and students have positive attitudes and opinions about using Blended Learning into English Language education.

The importance of Blended Learning is significant in the way it supports lecturers to deliver their lessons and students to learn and make knowledge. It also adds to the energy and brightness of the classroom with its online portion which allows lecturers and students to learn anytime and from anywhere. But this is possible when lecturers and students have all the necessary tools and equipment and those tools and equipment at campuses are accessible but still limited. Interviewed lecturers highlighted that there is a need to improve the infrastructure, that is providing IT devices for both teachers and learners but at the same time improve the quality of internet connectivity on campus. Secondly, there is a need to promote the culture of ICT in the classroom, thus not doing business as usual.

It has also been found that using ICT to teach and learn English Language speaking skills has the potential to save time and effort while performing speaking-related activities. The study confirms that students of year 3 Undergraduate are able to properly manage their speaking activities while adhering to time limits by incorporating technology. The lecturers and students also confirmed that BL is an essential ingredient in today's English speaking related activities as it allows students to practice speaking not only in the classroom but also outside.

Students confirmed that Blended Learning gives an opportunity for a lifelong learning. BL helps them to learn English Language speaking skills better because they can listen to various audios and videos of native speakers from different platforms and this enhances their English language proficiency and that using Blended Learning has helped improve their communication skills.

Based on the current study findings and discussions, Blended Learning enhances the speaking skills of year 3 Undergraduate students at the University of Rwanda. The use of Blended Learning also encourages active-learning, which results in understanding and has a beneficial impact on their speaking abilities, and because speaking is an active ability, it allows students to attain English language proficiency.

The current study discovered that using Blended Learning in teaching English Language promotes speaking skills and that impacts positively on their English Language proficiency. Both year 3 Undergraduate students and lecturers of the UR, Gikondo and Nyarugenge Campuses, use Blended Learning to promote speaking skills in their classes and confirmed that it has a positive impact on English Language proficiency of their students. The study also revealed some of the opportunities it provides in teaching English Language speaking skills. Despite the fact that lecturers and students use Blended Learning and that they find it beneficial, the study also identified a number of challenges that are prompted by Blended Learning in teaching English Language speaking skills.

Blended Learning allows students to have access to various information sources from anywhere and using the digital devices helps them to access the information. By utilizing the online component of Blended Learning, learners are not restricted to a specific place. It encourages the habits which include persistence, independence to choose information and the type of engagement. Learning data such as coursework, assignments, and lectures are permanent with ubiquitous learning, and students should always have access to the material. Because these materials are available, students can be considerably more self-directed and independent than in traditional learning methods. Students enjoy learning through Blended Learning. They confirmed that they find it comfortable to use Blended Learning in speaking skills learning because it

allows them to effectively balance schoolwork and other obligations. They supplemented this saying that it gives them more time to collaborate and learn in an engaging, interactive, and technological way and it encourages them to feel autonomous and in control of their learning experience, which is critical for success.

Lecturers in their interviews said that Blended Learning requires more time for the teachers to prepare content that can be uploaded on the platforms for students to have access to it. Some students and lecturers highlighted that they have an issue of limited skills on how to use a computer and it is very hard for them to digest the emerging technologies which include BL. Another challenge that was mentioned by lecturers is teachers' inadequate understanding of the function of technology in language education. Some challenges identified in the research include teachers' attitudes of e-learning or Blended Learning policies, faculty support from management, computer abilities of students and lecturers, and insufficient computer access for students. Some students mentioned the issue that they do not have technological devices and that prevents them from using the online portion of Blended Learning. Lecturers mentioned that some of their colleagues are reluctant to use Blended Learning as they are not used to using technology in their teaching. For the University Management support, Lecturers said that, they get support but it needs to be improved. They added that they need regular trainings on emerging technologies which will allow them to always be ready to provide to their students.

Future success of teaching English Language needs to consider including BL as it has been confirmed that it is effective in teaching all skills of English Language. BL impacts positively the speaking proficiency of students as it involves ICT tools and devices and ICT is considered a key teaching tool. This is so because speaking skills is an active/productive skill, once it runs well passive skills improve automatically. Secondly, the language is naturally a tool for oral communication, therefore one who orally communicates well can be seen as proficient in a language.

Recommendations

The first recommendation is that more research should be carried out on the use of Blended Learning in teaching English Language and the CABLS framework can be used to understand it from a holistic perspective as the field is not widely explored. This would help to develop a more effective and efficient Blended Learning environment. Many studies reported that blended learning could contribute to higher learning achievements than traditional approaches and that was confirmed by many scholars cited in this work.

Secondly, lecturers of English Language modules should adopt Blended Learning in order to develop and improve their students' English Language speaking skills/abilities. This will help students learn English any time and everywhere.

Thirdly, awareness is still necessary in order to get every lecturer to use Blended Learning. This would benefit their students. Incentives should also be thought of to increase lecturers and students' adoption of technology, as they are the main participants of Blended Learning and also in the CABLS framework. The University of Rwanda should invest in it.

Fourthly, ICT should be implemented as a teaching tool to develop English Language speaking skills as Blended Learning needs it because of its online portion. In this digital era, ICT use in the classroom is important for giving students opportunities to learn and apply the required 21st century skills. It has become an essential tool in offering students a comprehensive education at all times, enabling them to develop all their digital skills and abilities, thus enriching the teaching-learning process with dynamic and innovative methodologies. Hence studying the issues and challenges related to ICT use in teaching and learning can assist teachers in overcoming the obstacles and become successful technology users.

Students are encouraged to use Blended Learning as it allows them to learn from anywhere and anytime they want. It also allows them to efficiently manage their speaking activities within the allocated time. Unlike the rigid schedules of traditional learning, blended learning provides

students with more autonomy over their learning pace and how they use their time. They can access online resources and assignments at their convenience, from anywhere and anytime, allowing for a personalized learning journey. This means that they do not need to be in a physical classroom to be able to learn.

Students are advised to use ICT facilities on Campus when they do not have their own technological devices to improve their English Language speaking proficiency. The findings of this study highlighted that some students do not own technological devices to help them with the use of Blended Learning but there are computer laboratories on their campuses that they can use to learn.

The Management of the University of Rwanda should explore increasing the amount of ICT facilities/computer laboratories accessible on campus, as ICT is a key instrument in teaching and learning. The University Computer Labs offer a space for students to explore, create, connect, and build digital literacy. These technologically advanced rooms can accommodate more students by providing more computing power, online learning and more. The computers in the labs are connected this helps students not to spend their money on buying internet.

The University Management should organize and provide proper training to lecturers and students on different computer skills and the emerging technologies like Blended Learning and help them implement and reinforce it. Computers have evolved and enhanced Teacher-student interaction. Now teachers can teach and demonstrate the practical aspects of theories to the students with the help of various tools in Computers. They also help in the use of different technologies like Blended Learning. The University of Rwanda should also provide ongoing technical support and pedagogical guidance to help faculty adapt and thrive in the blended learning environment.

The University of Rwanda should provide support in terms of policy, human resource, and finance for enhancement of the system. Committed institutional support, such as resources for

pedagogical and technical expertise, is needed to launch and sustain Blended Learning both within individual schools and across the University.

The University of Rwanda should also investigate how they might construct an action plan and a road map to improve the efficacy of employing Blended Learning to generate supporting learning opportunities for language learners.

The Ministry of Education should establish policies to support implementation of Blended Learning in Higher Learning Institutions and make sure they are properly implemented.

Do you think that Blended Learning can help promote English Language speaking skills? In this study I did not do assessment to confirm that Blended Learning can promote English Language speaking skills but this can be a good topic for future research.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Anggawirya, A. M., Prihandoko, L. A., & Rahman, F. (2021, December). Teacher's Role on Teaching English during Pandemic in a Blended Classroom. In *International Joined Conference on Social Science (ICSS 2021)* (pp. 458-463): Atlantis Press.

Albiladi, W. S., & Alshareef, K. K. (2019). Blended Learning in Saudi universities: challenges and perspectives in English teaching and learning: A review of the current literature. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 10(2), 232-238.

Albiladi, W. S., & Alshareef, K. K. (2019). Blended learning in English teaching and learning: A review of the current literature. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 10(2), 232-238.

Alebaikan, R., & Troudi, S. (2010). Blended Learning in Saudi universities: challenges and perspectives. *ALT-J*, 18(1), 49-59.

AlKhaleel, A. (2019). The Advantages of using Blended Learning in Saudi universities: challenges and perspectives in studying English as a foreign language at the University of Tabuk. *Modern Journal of Language Teaching Methods (MJLTM)*, 9(2), 1-7.

Allen, I. E., & Seaman, J. (2010). Class differences: Online education in the United States, 2010. *Sloan Consortium (NJ1)*.

Almalki, S. (2016). Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Data in Mixed Methods Research-- Challenges and Benefits. *Journal of education and learning*, 5(3), 288-296.

Akkoyunlu, B., & Soylu, M. Y. (2006). A study on students' views on blended learning environment. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 7(3), 43-56.

Andrade, M. D. L. (2014). Role of technology in supporting English language learners in Today's Classrooms.

Ayob, N. S., Abd Halim, N. D., Zulkifli, N. N., Zaid, N. M., & Mokhtar, M. (2020). Overview of BL: The effect of station rotation model on students' achievement. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 7(6), 320-326.

Banditvilai, C. (2016). Enhancing students' language skills through Blended learning. *Electronic Journal of e-Learning*.

Barbour, M. K. (2014). Training teachers for a virtual school system: A call to action. In *K-12* Başal, A., & Aytan, T. (2014). Using Web 2.0 tools in English language teaching. In *Conference proceedings. ICT for language learning* (p. 372).

Barker, A. (2003). Faculty development for teaching online: Educational and technological issues. *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, 34(6), 273-278.

Bernard, H. R., Pelto, P. J., Werner, O., Boster, J., Romney, A. K., Johnson, A., ... & Kasakoff, A. (1986). The construction of primary data in cultural anthropology. *Current Anthropology*, 27(4), 382-396.

Bersin, J. (2004). *The Blended Learning book: Best practices, proven methodologies, and lessons learned*. John Wiley & Sons.

Blieck, Y., De Jong, M., & Vandeput, L. (2012). BL for lifelong learners in a Multicampus Context (MuLLLti). *L. Leuven University College, Belgium*.

Brown, J. D. (2001). *Using surveys in language programs*. Cambridge university press.

Bryan, A., & Volchenkova, K. N. (2016). Blended Learning: definition, models, implications for higher education. *Вестник Южно-Уральского государственного университета. Серия: Образование. Педагогические науки*, 8(2), 24-30.

Bull, S., & Ma, Y. (2001). Raising learner awareness of language learning strategies in situations of limited resources. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 9(2), 171-200.

Cleveland-Innes, M., & Wilton, D. (2018). Guide to Blended Learning. *Commonwealth of Learning Journal*.

Cuban, L. (2009). *Oversold and underused: Computers in the Classroom*. Harvard University Press.

Davis, R. (2006). Utopia or chaos? The impact of technology on language teaching. *Teaching English with Technology*, 6(4). *Modern Language Journal*.

Denscombe, M. (2017). *EBOOK: The good research guide: For small-scale social research projects*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Dulock, H. L. (1993). Research design: Descriptive research. *Journal of Pediatric Oncology Nursing*, 10(4), 154-157.

Eng, T. S. (2005). The impact of ICT on learning: A review of research. *International Education Journal*, 6(5), 635-650.

Evseeva, A., & Solozhenko, A. (2015). Use of flipped classroom technology in language learning. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 206, 205-209.

Fahlvik, M. (2014). The Teacher's Role in the Blended Classroom... Or When $1 + 1 > 2$. In *Practical Applications and Experiences in K-20 Blended Learning Environments* (pp. 239-248). IGI Global Journal.

Freitas, H., Oliveira, M., Jenkins, M., & Popjoy, O. (1998). The Focus Group, a qualitative research method. *Journal of Education*, 1(1), 1-22.

Garrett, N. (1991). Technology in the service of language learning: Trends and issues. *The Modern Language Journal*, 75(1), 74-101.

Garrison, D. R., & Kanuka, H. (2004). Blended Learning: Uncovering its transformative potential in higher education. *The internet and higher education journal*, 7(2), 95-105.

Garrison, D. R., & Vaughan, N. D. (2008). *Blended Learning in higher education: Framework, principles, and guidelines*. John Wiley & Sons.

Ghavifekr, S., Kunjappan, T., Ramasamy, L., & Anthony, A. (2016). Teaching and Learning with ICT Tools: Issues and Challenges from Teachers' Perceptions. *Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 4(2), 38-57.

Ginaya, G., Rejeki, I. N. M., & Astuti, N. N. S. (2018). The effects of BL to students' speaking ability: A study of utilizing technology to strengthen the conventional instruction. *International journal of linguistics, literature and culture*, 4(3), 1-14.

Ginzburg, E., Chepya, P., & Demers, D. (2007, October). Creating an effective training curriculum for faculty who teach online. In *E-Learn: World Conference on E-Learning in Corporate, Government, Healthcare, and Higher Education* (pp. 2025-2026). Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE).

Graham, C. R. (2006). Blended learning systems. *The handbook of Blended Learning: Global perspectives, local designs*, 1, 3-21. San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer Publishing House.

- Graham, C. R., Woodfield, W., & Harrison, J. B. (2013). A framework for institutional adoption and implementation of BL in higher education. *The internet and higher education journal*, 18, 4-14.
- Gudmundsdottir, G. B., & Brock-Utne, B. (2010). An exploration of the importance of piloting and access as action research. *Educational Action Research*, 18(3), 359-372.
- Haelermans, C., Aarts, B., Cabus, S., Kirezi, J., Muramutse, R., & Peeraer, J. (2021). *Effectiveness of two e-learning modalities for school leader professional development on effective school leadership in Rwanda*. VVOB Education for development.
- Halverson, L. R., Spring, K. J., Huyett, S., Henrie, C. R., & Graham, C. R. (2017). Blended Learning research in higher education and K-12 settings. *Learning, design, and technology*, 1-30.
- Hammersley, M., & Traianou, A. (2012). *Ethics and educational research*. British Educational Research Association.
- Hennessy, S., Harrison, D., & Wamakote, L. (2010). Teacher factors influencing classroom use of ICT in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Itupale online journal of African studies*, 2(1), 39-54.
- Higher Education Council, (2007). National Policy on Language Teaching in Higher Education. Government of Rwanda Printing Office.
- Horn, M. B., & Staker, H. (2011). The rise of K-12 Blended Learning. *Innosight institute*, 5(1), 1-17.
- Ibrahim, A. H., & Yusoff, Z. S. (2012). Teaching public speaking in a Blended Learning environment. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 2(6), 573.
- Jung, I. (2005). ICT-pedagogy integration in teacher training: Application cases worldwide. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 8(2), 94-101.
- Kannan, J., & Munday, P. (2018). New trends in second language learning and teaching through the lens of ICT, networked learning, and artificial intelligence. *Sacred Heart University, Languages Faculty Publications*.
- KIRKGÖZ, Y. (2011). A Blended Learning study on implementing video recorded speaking tasks in task-based classroom instruction. *TOJET: The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 10(4).

Kumar, A., Krishnamurthi, R., Bhatia, S., Kaushik, K., Ahuja, N. J., Nayyar, A., & Masud, M. (2021). Blended Learning tools and practices: A comprehensive analysis. *IEEE Access*, 9, 85151-85197.

Kuzmina, N., Kochkina, D., & Kuzmin, M. (2021). Blended Learning as a Means of Foreign Students' Integration into a University Educational Process. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning*, 16(6).

Lee, K. W. (2000). English teachers' barriers to the use of computer-assisted language learning. *The internet TESL journal*, 6(12), 1-8.

Lim, D. H., & Morris, M. L. (2009). Learner and instructional factors influencing learning outcomes within a BL environment. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 12(4), 282-293.

Limberg, L., Alexandersson, M., & Lantz-Andersson, A. (2008). To be lost and to be a loser through the Web. In *Handbook of research on digital information technologies: Innovations, methods, and ethical issues* (pp. 249-263). IGI Global.

Lionarakis, A., & PAPADEMETRIOU, D. (2003). The quality of the learning experience: A comparative study between open distance and conventional education. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 4(2).

Mayadas, A. F., Bourne, J., & Bacsich, P. (2009). Online education today. *Science*, 323(5910), 85-89.

Mineduc, (2018). Education Sector Strategic Plan 2018/19 to 2023/24. Government of Rwanda.

Ministry of ICT and Innovation, (2019). Rwanda ICT Sector Profile. Government of Rwanda.

Morris, N. P. (2010). Podcasts and mobile assessment enhance student learning experience and academic performance. *Bioscience Education*, 16(1), 1-7.

Mugiraneza, J. P. (2021). Digitalization in teaching and education in Rwanda. *The Report*, 28.

Mukama, E. (2009). *Information and Communication Technology in Teacher Education: Thinking and learning in computer-supported social practice*. Linköping University, Faculty of Educational Sciences.

Mukul, G. (2011). *Research methodology*. PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.

Muianga, X., Byungura, J. C., Hansson, H., Colombage, R. P., & Mutimucuo, I. (2016, November). Blended Learning systems in tertiary education: A comparative analysis of two universities from Rwanda and Mozambique. In *E-Learn: World Conference on E-Learning in Corporate, Government, Healthcare, and Higher Education* (pp. 1006-1015). Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE).

Ndayisenga, J. P., Nkurunziza, A., Mukamana, D., Murekezi, J., Babenko-Mould, Y., Kasine, Y., ... & Marilyn, E. (2022). Nursing and Midwifery Students' Perceptions and Experiences of Using BL in Rwanda: A Qualitative Study. *Rwanda Journal of Medicine and Health Sciences*, 5(2), 203-215.

Nsengimana, T., Bazimaziki, G., Nyirahabimana, A., Mushimiyimana, J. B., Mutarutinya, V., Mugabo, L. R., & Nsengimana, V. (2021). Online Learning during COVID-19 pandemic in Rwanda: Experience of postgraduate students on language of instruction, mathematics and science education. *Contemporary Mathematics and Science Education*, 2(1), ep21009.

Nurkamto, J., Mujiyanto, J., & Yuliasri, I. (2019). The Implementation of Station Rotation and Flipped Classroom Models of Blended Learning in EFL Learning. *English Language Teaching*, 12(12), 23-29.

Okaz, A. A. (2015). Integrating Blended Learning in higher education. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 186, 600-603.

Pavalam, S. M., Jawahar, M., & Akorli, F. K. (2010, November). Blended Learning at National University of Rwanda. In *2010 International Conference on Education and Management Technology* (pp. 233-236). IEEE Access.

Poulou, M. (2005). Educational psychology within teacher education. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice*, University of Crete.

Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB). (2015). Competence-Based Curriculum. 15Th International Conference the Knowledge-Based Organization: Behavioral and Social Sciences, Conference Proceedings 4, 4, 308– 312.

Rovai, A. P., Baker, J. D., & Ponton, M. K. (2014). *Social Science Research Design and Statistics*. Chesapeake, VA: Watertree Press LLC.

Sait, S. M., Al-Tawil, K. M., Khan, S. A., & Faheemuddin, M. (2008). The Use and Effect of Internet on General Education in Saudi Arabia. King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals.

Sharma, S. (2018). ICT in education: Catalyst for effective teaching-learning. *American International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, 22(1), 19-25.

Sharpe, R., Benfield, G., Roberts, G., & Francis, R. (2006). The undergraduate experience of blended e-learning: a review of UK literature and practice. *The higher education academy*, 4(2), 24-250.

Shaykina, O. I. (2015). BL in English language teaching: Open educational resources used for academic purposes in Tomsk Polytechnic University. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(3 S5), 255.

Silverman, R. M., & Patterson, K. (2021). *Qualitative research methods for community development*. Routledge.

Sinclair, M. (2007). A guide to understanding theoretical and conceptual frameworks. *Evidence-Based Midwifery*, 5(2), 39-40.

Soliman, N. A. (2016). Teaching English for academic purposes via the flipped learning approach. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 232, 122-129.

Sung, Y. T., Chang, K. E., & Liu, T. C. (2016). The effects of integrating mobile devices with teaching and learning on students' learning performance: A meta-analysis and research synthesis. *Computers & Education*, 94, 252-275.

Tabaro, C. (2015). Rwandans' motivation to learn and use English as a medium of instruction. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 5(2), 78-85.

Tallent-Runnels, M. K., Thomas, J. A., Lan, W. Y., Cooper, S., Ahern, T. C., Shaw, S. M., & Liu, X. (2006). Teaching courses online: A review of the research. *Review of educational research*, 76(1), 93-135.

THACIEN, M. (2015). English as a medium of instruction and academic performance of pupils in primary schools in Gakenke district, Rwanda (Doctoral dissertation, Mount Kenya University).

+

Tongco, M. D. C. (2007). Purposive sampling as a tool for informant selection. *Ethnobotany Research and applications*, 5, 147-158.

- Trucano, M. (2005). Knowledge Maps: ICTs in Education-What Do We Know about the Effective Uses of Information and Communication Technologies in Education in Developing Countries?. *Online Submission*.
- Tshabalala, M., Ndeya-Ndereya, C., & van der Merwe, T. (2014). Implementing BL at a developing university: Obstacles in the way. *Electronic Journal of E-learning*, 12(1), 101-110.
- Twagilimana, I., & Mannikko-Barbutiu, S. (2018, June). ICT in education policy in Rwanda: current situation, challenges and prospects. In *ACRID 2017: EAI International Conference for Research, Innovation and Development for Africa* (p. 360). European Alliance for Innovation.
- Warne, V. (2021). Blended Learning in Universities in East Africa.
- Wend, P. (2006). Towards a joined-up student learning experience strategy at Oxford Brookes University. *Brookes eJournal of Learning and Teaching*, 2(1).
- Yahya, S., Ahmad, E., & Abd Jalil, K. (2010). The definition and characteristics of ubiquitous learning: A discussion. *International Journal of Education and Development using ICT*, 6(1).
- Yang, Y. T. C., Chuang, Y. C., Li, L. Y., & Tseng, S. S. (2013). A BL environment for individualized English listening and speaking integrating critical thinking. *Computers & Education*, 63, 285-305.
- Yorke, M. (2004). Retention, persistence and success in on-campus higher education, and their enhancement in open and distance learning, *Open Learning*, 19,1, pp. 19-32.
- Yu, Y., & Qi, A. (2018). Teaching System of Smart Learning Environment for Aerobics Course. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning*, 13(5).
- Zaare, M. (2013). An investigation into the effect of classroom observation on teaching methodology. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 70, 605-614.
- Zhang, C., Wen, M., Tong, K., Chen, Z., Wen, Q., Yang, T., & Liu, Q. (2022). Institutional Adoption and Implementation of BL in the Era of Intelligent Education. *Applied Sciences*, 12(17), 8846.
- Zohrabi, M. (2013). Mixed method research: Instruments, validity, reliability and reporting findings. *Theory and practice in language studies*, 3(2), 254.

APPENDICES

Research consent form

Agreement to participate in research at the University of Rwanda

I, (*Names*), a student/teacher at the UR,
agree to willingly take part fully in the study entitled, “*Applying BL in Promoting English Language Speaking Skills among year 3 Undergraduate students: Opportunities and Challenges at the UR*”.

I agree to give my opinion about BL in English Language teaching at the UR. I understand that the information I am going to provide will help to investigate teachers and students’ perceptions of the BL and the challenges confronted to achieve the intended learning outcomes of English for Academic Purposes module as English is a medium of instruction at the UR.

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

My names are Christine INGABIRE, a Master student at the College of Education, UR. As part of my degree, I am conducting a study on *Applying BL in Promoting English Language Speaking Skills among year 3 Undergraduate students: Opportunities and Challenges at the UR*, and it is conducted under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Epimaque NIYIBIZI

BL is an educational strategy that mixes F2F and online mode of teaching by utilizing student-centered instructional methodologies. The goal of this study is to look into teachers' and students' opinions of BL, as well as the problems they have in achieving the desired learning outcomes of the module taught in Year 3 of Undergraduate programs.

The goal of this interview guide is to elicit replies that will aid in the investigation of teachers' and students' impressions of BL and the issues they face. This research has been approved by the College of Education Research Ethics Committee. Contribution in this interview is entirely voluntary, and your comments will be kept strictly personal and anonymous, with the results utilized just for this research.

Participating in this survey is voluntary and the survey is anonymous. **Do you consent to contribute to this study? If YES, please answer the questions below. If No, feel free not to respond to the questions.**

- YES
- NO

I. TEACHER'S PROFILE

1. Age:

- 22-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50+

2. Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Other

3. Degree:

- Bachelor
- Master
- Doctorate

II. QUESTIONS RELATED TO APPLYING BL IN TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SPEAKING SKILLS

1. How long have you been teaching English related courses at the University?
2. Have you ever used BL model in teaching English Language speaking skills at the University?
 - Yes
 - No

If yes, what are your perceptions of BL in the context of teaching and learning English speaking skills?

3. How do you incorporate BL into your teaching practice for year 3 Undergraduate students?
4. To what extent has BL promoted English Language speaking skills of year 3 Undergraduate students at the UR?
5. How do you encourage student engagement and participation in BL activities when teaching speaking skills?

6. What are the opportunities of applying BL in teaching English Language speaking skills?
7. Have you ever faced any challenges in applying BL in teaching English Language speaking skills?
 - a. Yes
 - b. NoIf yes, please mention some.
8. How have you addressed those challenges and what strategies have you used to overcome them?
9. Does using BL contribute to improving English Language speaking skills? Please explain.
10. How do you assess the effectiveness of BL in teaching English Speaking Skills vis a vis English Language Proficiency?
11. How can BL be further improved to enhance the teaching and learning of English Language speaking skills at the UR?

Thank you for your collaboration!

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

My names are Christine INGABIRE, a Master student at the College of Education, UR. As part of my degree, I am conducting a study on *Applying BL in Promoting English Language Speaking Skills among year 3 Undergraduate students: Opportunities and Challenges at the UR*, and it is conducted under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Epimaque NIYIBIZI

BL is an educational strategy that mixes F2F and online mode of teaching by utilizing student-centered instructional methodologies. The goal of this study is to look into teachers' and students' opinions of BL, as well as the problems they have in achieving the desired learning outcomes of the module taught in Year 3 of Undergraduate programs.

The goal of this interview guide is to elicit replies that will aid in the investigation of teachers' and students' impressions of BL and the issues they face. This research has been approved by the College of Education Research Ethics Committee. Contribution in this interview is entirely voluntary, and your comments will be kept strictly personal and anonymous, with the results utilized just for this research.

Participating in this study is voluntary and the study is anonymous. **Do you consent to contribute to this study? If YES, please answer the questions below. If No, feel free not to respond to the questions.**

- YES
- NO

I. STUDENT'S PROFILE

1. Age

- 18-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50+

2. Gender

- Male
- Female
- Other

3. Please specify your program:

- Bachelor of Science in Applied Mathematics (Nyarugenge Campus)
- Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering (Nyarugenge Campus)
- Bachelor of Science in Business Information Technology (Gikondo campus)
- Bachelor of Science in Economics (Gikondo Campus)

II. QUESTIONS RELATED TO APPLYING BL IN TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SPEAKING SKILLS

Please indicate one choice for each of the following statements.

1=Strongly disagree, 2 =Disagree, 3 = Not sure, 4 =Agree, 5 = strongly agree

Section I. Impact of BL in teaching English speaking skills					
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I take part in English speaking activities using BL					
2. Speaking activities are fun with BL					
3. BL helps me to learn speaking better than in traditional classroom as it has online portion which helps me access materials from different sources					
4. I can study longer without losing concentration when using BL					
5. BL helps me to learn speaking skills better because I can listen to various audios and videos of native speakers from different platforms and this enhances my English language proficiency.					
6. Using BL has helped improved my communication skills					
Section II. The opportunities of applying BL in teaching and learning English Language speaking skills					
1. When participating in a BL classroom, I find all speaking activities fascinating					

2. Learning speaking skills using BL enables me to practice speaking anytime and from anywhere					
3. I like learning speaking skills with BL as it helps me work with my peers easily					
4. Working with my colleague students when using BL helps me to learn efficiently					
5. BL helps me complete tasks on time.					
6. BL makes me more interested in studying speaking and it improves my speech performance.					
7. Using online portion of BL helps speak freely.					
8. Through the use of BL, you can imitate the sounds and rhythms of English language without the assistance of instructors.					
9. With BL, I can access rich resources of native speakers who are good models to learn speaking skills.					
Section III: Students observations in using BL to improve their English speaking skills					
1. Speaking is more fun without using BL					
2. I find it interesting to learn using BL					
3. I find it comfortable to use BL in my learning because I have technological facilities and I do not need to go to the campus every time.					
4. With the online portion of BL, I am able to efficiently manage my speaking activities within the allocated time					
5. Using ICT to improve my speaking abilities distracts me					
6. The internet connection discourages me from using technology in my speaking related activities					
7. There are not enough ICT facilities at my Campus.					
8. I do not have ICT devices to enable to study anytime and from anywhere.					
9. BL will be better useful if there is good internet connectivity					
10. I do not have the courage to do speaking activities using online mode of BL.					

Section IV. Open Questions

Please answer the following questions briefly

1. Have you ever participated in a BL classroom?

a. Yes

b. No

2. What do you think are the opportunities of applying BL in teaching English Language speaking skills?

.....
.....
.....

3. Do you feel that BL courses adequately prepare you for your future career?

.....
.....
.....

4. Have you ever faced any challenges in BL classroom when studying English Language speaking skills?

.....
.....
.....

5. Do you have access to technologies which can enable you to use the online portion of BL? What kind of technologies are those? Please give some specific details.

.....
.....
.....

6. What is your experience in using BL in learning English speaking skills in order to enhance your English language proficiency?

.....
.....
.....

7. Does using BL contribute to improving English Language speaking skills? Please explain.

.....
.....
.....

8. How do you assess the effectiveness of BL in teaching English Speaking Skills vis a vis English Language Proficiency?

.....
.....
.....

9. How can BL be further improved to enhance the teaching and learning of English Language speaking skills at the UR?

.....
.....
.....

Thank you for your collaboration!

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

QUESTIONS	TIPS FOR OBSERVATION	COMMENTS
<p>1. Are all students engaged in the task of the activities on speaking throughout the lesson?</p>	<p>Students can display participation during online time by maintaining a focused posture, taking notes, escaping distractions from colleagues.</p>	
	<p>Learners are aware that they can inquire about their online session.</p>	
	<p>Students actively use score paper or internet resources to work over obstacles during English language speaking skills courses.</p>	
	<p>Students working on a speaking task make significant progress as class time passes.</p>	
	<p>Students can describe their projects.</p>	
	<p>When asked, students comprehend how their virtual lesson relates to their learning goals..</p>	
	<p>2. Are all students studying with content that satisfies the English Language lesson and level standards?</p>	<p>If a group of students is working on a topic, focus on alignment during the observation. Follow up on other group and independent task themes in a separate observation or post-observation.</p>
<p>Remember that one advantage of BL is that learners can work on information that is appropriate for their level of preparation. However, every content should serve to advance students through grade-level requirements.</p>		

3. Are all students responsible for doing the thinking in this classroom?	When asked, students comprehend how their work relates to their bigger lesson objectives.	
	Students recognize why they are put in a group or learning environment and how that is the best position to stimulate their learning.	
	Learners transition smoothly and rapidly between virtual and real education.	
	Learners dynamically seek solutions to difficulties before approaching the teacher(s). Learners can recognize an issue they have had with a lesson when prompted. They can elucidate how they found a solution to it and when, if required, they sought assistance from the instructor.	
	When students ask their teacher for help, the teacher continually redirects the inquiry back to them, primarily through extra questions that aid in their problem-solving process. This could include an inquiry that drives them to seek answers utilizing the online means available to them, in which case a follow-up effort could be documented.	
	Based on the findings, teachers make strategic decisions about lesson content and delivery to students using data collected by online programs.	
4. Do all students show	When learners are working on a	

evidence of learning?	various topics, demonstrating student learning might be more difficult. Concentrate your observations on the greatest group of pupils who are working on the same topic.	
	If a student's individual dashboard exists, request to access it. Monitor during and after class and ask about how their lesson fits into their overall course objectives.	
5. Is there teamwork among teachers?	Teachers have a set of learner norms and expectations.	
	Instructors are aware of what all students are working on during class time.	
	Learners understand the function that each teacher plays and know when and who to consult for problem solving.	



RESEARCH AND INNOVATION OFFICE

Rukara, 7th June, 2023

Ref: 03/DRI-CE/089(a)/ EN/jp/2023

Mrs Christine INGABIRE
Master Student
Master of Education in English Education
School of Education
UR-CE

Dear Mrs Ingabire,

RE: RESEARCH ETHICAL CLEARANCE FOR YOUR STUDY

Following your application for research clearance for your study entitled: **"Applying Blended Learning in Promoting English Language Speaking Skills among Year 3 Undergraduate Students: Opportunities and Challenges at the University of Rwanda;"**

Having reviewed your application and being satisfied with your protocol (research topic, interview schedule, classroom observation and questionnaire): this study is ethically acceptable. This ethical clearance shall last for 12 months and is renewable upon your request and presentation of the progress report to the UR-CE Research Screening and Ethics Clearance Committee (RSEC-C) through the Research and Innovation Unit. Please note that you will have to apply for ethical clearance before making changes in the protocol during the implementation phase. The Research and Innovation Unit shall receive a final copy of your study report at the end of your study.

We wish you success in your study.



Assoc. Prof. Eugene NDABAGA
Chairperson, UR-CE RSEC-C
Director of Research and Innovation Unit
Tel.: 250788308862
Email: ndabaga@yahoo.ac.rw
UR-College of Education
Cc:

- The Principal, CE
- Dean, School of Education
- Assoc. Prof. Epimaque Niyibizi (Supervisor)



RESEARCH AND INNOVATION UNIT

Rukara, 7th June 2023

Ref: 03/DRI-CE/089(b)/EN/gi/2023

A Research recommendation letter for Mrs Christine INGABIRE to collect data for her study

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of the University of Rwanda-College of Education (UR-CE), I introduce Mrs Christine Ingabire, a postgraduate student at the School of Education of UR-CE. She is writing her thesis on **"Applying Blended Learning in Promoting English Language Speaking Skills among Year 3 Undergraduate Students: Opportunities and Challenges at the University of Rwanda"** to complete her Master of Education in English Education.

This research will involve UR lecturers of the English for Academic Purposes Module (EAP 3113) and their students in Year 3 in selected UR Colleges (Gikondo and Nyarugenge Campuses). Therefore, we kindly request your permission for her to collect data for this study at the identified UR Campuses.

We very much hope to get your usual cooperation.

Yours sincerely,



Assoc. Prof. Eugene NDABAGA
Director of Research and Innovation
University of Rwanda-College of Education

E-mail: ndabaga@ur.ac.rw

Mobile: +250788308862

Cc:

- Principal, UR-CE
- Postgraduate Program Coordinator, School of Education
- Assoc. Prof. Epimaque Niyibizi (Supervisor)