

THE IMPACT OF BLENDED-LEARNING APPROACH ON IMPROVING ARABIC SPEAKING SKILLS PERFORMANCE AMONG MALAYSIAN SCHOOL STUDENTS

Roa Mohamed Mahdi Abu-Ali
roaa@student.unimap.edu.my

Amani Ali Elmetwaly Ali Ibrahim
amaniali@unimap.edu.my

Salleh Bin Abd Rashid

Faculty of Business & Communication (FPK)
Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP)

Abstract : *The aim of this study to establish an efficient blended learning approach, as intervention program, to enhance the speaking skills performance among the fourth-year school Malaysia primary school students. A single arm randomized trial experimental design with repetitive measures used to determine the efficiency of interventional program on the students' speaking performance. There are 30 students selected randomly from the classes of an Islamic school located in Penang, Malaysia, and for three months. Blended approach (Face-to-Face/online and multimedia) of learning is the main program involved in present study. There are teaching strategies used in present study to enhance the students' speaking ability like group-based strategy, role-play strategy, storytelling strategy, and collaborative learning strategy, and others. There are four sessions of this interventional program are Pre-, Post-1, Post-2, and Post-3 to determine the levels of learning ability. Overall speaking performance showed significant differences among the study sessions, where improvement of students' speaking skills performance with effect size equals to 89.4%. Current intervention program obviously enhanced the knowledge and awareness about involvement of difference learning approaches and speaking strategies towards to provide maximal benefits of learning withing short period of time.*

Keyword: *Blended learning approach, learning ability, teaching strategies, Intervention programme.*

2022 JGBSE

Article Received:08 June 2022, Revised: 13 June 2022, Accepted 01 July 2022

Introduction

The Malaysian Ministry of Education published various pedagogical strategies for teaching Arabic in public national elementary schools in 1998 (Kamarudin et al., 2016). Due to a shortage of Arabic language instructors, the Ministry of Education has launched the QAF programme at various levels. The goal of this initiative was to increase the

number of teachers who graduated from Islamic schools. The number of Arabic language teachers is still in limited supply (Ibrahim & Rahman, 2018). The Ministry of Education's goals for teaching Arabic were, first and foremost, improving language skills (listening, conversation, reading, and writing). Secondly, the appropriate topic choice for the Arabic language for primary school students; thirdly, using commonly used Arabic words from the students' environment; and fourthly, the formation of a curriculum that explains cognitive and knowledge, Noble values, local values, social systems, and values skills (Ibrahim & Rahman, 2018). Arabic instruction in the Malaysian educational system was anticipated for elementary school students. This was regarded as a serious challenge to pedagogical operations because of the increasing obligations for instructors, in addition to teachers' shortage (Ariffin & Al-Muslim, 2015). The Malaysian educational system prioritized reading and writing above speaking and listening, reducing students' capacity to communicate in Arabic (Mokhtar, 2020). As a result, Malaysian secondary and college graduates struggled to communicate and understand the lectures of Arabic classes (Rouyan et al., 2017). Conventional learning and slow learning movements have emerged for students (Al-sobhi & Preece, 2018). Furthermore, students are not engaged in any effort to develop their talents and skills in speaking Arabic (Medini et al, 2019). The main objective of the current study is to enhance the speaking skills performance of students in speaking the Arabic language through the utilization of the blended learning approach (Face to Face/Online & Multimedia) among Malaysian school students.

Method

Study design

A single arm randomized trial with repetitive measures used to determine the efficiency of the interventional program for students of a foreign language learners. This research design involves experiments involving repeated dependent variable measurements. The current study's methodological stages followed the typical quantitative research methodologies. According to Fraenkel, Norman, and Hellen (2012), quantitative research is subject to the standard requirements for conducting research.

The experimental design is utilised to fulfil the study's aims. As a result, the current study's design included an educational programme to improve the abilities to speak Arabic as a foreign language. Students in their fourth year of primary school (Pusat Islam) in Malaysia were enrolled in the current study. A blended learning programme will be deployed in one of the school's classes. This blended curriculum will be separated into two sections: face-to-face/online learning and multimedia learning. PowerPoint slides and videos are the types of multimedia that will be utilised since they are seen to be the most compatible with the traditional teaching style. Interventional sessions and exams were also included in the study. There will be one pre- and three post-sessions, ensued by a test following the east post-session. The combination of Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development and Dale's Cone of Learning theories supported the learning and speaking performance of primary school students.

Blended intervention program

An interventional programme will be conducted using the blended learning approach using different strategies and multimedia previously reported by other studies. This method is said to be a developed strategy for improving the speaking abilities of non-native Arabic primary school students. It is dependent on the educator's expertise and ability to improve the student's speaking abilities, as well as the amount of time and the quality of orientation for this programme. The strategies and approaches of the new

blended learning approach are Group Based Strategy, Role-Play Strategy, Storytelling Strategy, Collaborative Learning Strategy, Use of Multimedia. The time allotted for courses will be one hour. The intervention programme has 24 classes (8 classes for each module). The main scenario for conducting this strategy/approach is according to the following phases:

- 1) First post-session teaching module: The students will be able to grasp the words and events via the use of PowerPoint presentations and videos for Malaysian stories. In the meantime, the teachers will explain these stories in Bahasa Malaysia and Arabic language. In addition, the teacher will instruct the students on the proper way to pronounce words.
- 2) Second post-session teaching module Students will sit at one table and begin telling stories among themselves, playing out certain roles, and exchanging the phrases. When someone is at a loss for words, the others will assist each other and the roles in the stories will alternate among them. This will result in a sort of information sharing and Malaysian storytelling sharing utilizing Arabic as a foreign language. Furthermore, they will improve their memory and drive their psychological features in terms of eagerness to learn new things and the capacity to help others.
- 3) Third post-session teaching module: the intensive instruction course used a combination of multimedia and face-to-face/online, employing PowerPoint presentations and videos of narratives and methods to improve speaking abilities.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Arabic language classes are made available to fourth-year students of both genders. These students were chosen from a primary school on Penang Island. Fourth year primary school students who are receiving the Arabic lessons in a Malaysian school are included in this study. All students who have speaking difficulties (medical and psychological problems) are excluded from participating in the study.

Location, duration, and approval of study

This study will be conducted at a selected primary school (Pusat Islam), located on the island of Penang, Malaysia. The main reason of choosing a school from Penang because the northern regions and especially Penang obtain different geographical factors with the race and cultural diversity of teachers and students which influence the adoption and acceptance of technology and virtual learning approaches (Ramli, & Saleh, 2019). This study will last for 12 weeks and will begin in February 2020, during the period of the Arabic language course. One month is the duration of time between the tasks, i.e. one month is the time between the pre-and post-1, post-1 and post-2, and between post-2 and post-3. This study will be approved by the primary school's headmaster, and it will be carried out under the supervision of two academics and assessed by school teachers.

Sampling and Study Procedures

The class was chosen at random from among the fourth-year classes at the school. The current research will include all fourth-year primary school students, with a total of 30 students in each class. The current study includes 30 students, with 15 males and 15 females participating in equal numbers. Random sampling will eliminate prejudice in the selection of students and, as a result, their subsequent progress.

Instruments of Students speaking skills performance

Teachers of the Arabic language will first examine the fourth-year students' speaking skills as part of a routine evaluation of the student's progress at the start, after, and follow-up. Following each post-intervention session, a follow-up evaluation will be conducted every month. The students' language abilities will be assessed based on their pre-and post-development in terms of executing the blended method to enhance pronunciation and speaking skills. Evaluation is done based on performance, and usually, the quizzes of each student will be graded in percentages. Students' speaking abilities will be evaluated using three levels of questions. There are three levels of difficulty: simple, medium, and difficult. A simple exam will ask students to pronounce an Arabic word, which the majority of students will easily accomplish. The second question is about matching the meanings of five distinct Malay terms with their peers. The third question, which is almost regarded as difficult for students since it is dependent on students' capacity to speak for thirty seconds. This question indicates the students' performance in recalling the words as well as their ability to create a narrative or scenario for actions in a scene and/or drawn from their own experience. The degree will be determined by the evaluator of question three based on the number of words per time, repetitions, pauses, accurate pronunciation, and fluency of speech. The recorder may be used to correctly examine each student individually.

Statistical analysis

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. If the p values are less than 0.05, the results are deemed significant. First, the dependent variables will be evaluated for normalcy and committed to the test assumptions. Repeated measured ANOVA is considered to be the most acceptable statistical test to find out the differences in the students speaking ability among the study sessions.

Results

Demographic Characteristics

There are several variables involved in this study are gender, attending the religion class, income level, father and mother Arabic fluency, father and mother education, and father and mother occupation. Equal numbers of females and males involved in this study (50% each). The participants' characteristics and illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of study's participants

Demographic characteristics			<i>n.</i>	%
Gender		Male	15	50.0
		Female	15	50.0
Attended religion classes		Seldom	24	80.0
		Sometimes	3	10.0
		Always	3	10.0
Income level		< RM 1000	7	23.3
		RM 1000-5000	18	60.0
		> RM 5000	5	16.7
Father Arabic fluency		Poor	4	13.3
		Medium	20	66.7
		Good	6	20.0

Mother fluency	Arabic	Poor	7	23.3
		Medium	23	76.7
Father education		Secondary	11	36.7
		College	12	40.0
		Primary	7	23.3
Mother education		Secondary	7	23.3
		Primary	4	13.3
		College	19	63.3
Mother occupation		Self-employed	9	30.0
		Employed	8	26.7
		Unemployed	13	43.3
Father occupation		Self-employed	3	10.0
		Unemployed	7	23.3
		Employed	20	66.7

Factors Affected the Level of Speaking Performance with Study Sessions

To determine the difference in students' speaking performance, the speaking performance difference among sessions is the only significant factor observed while no significant observed with gender and mothers' education. The effect size of intervention program to the students' speaking performance started from the pre session until the end of post sessions was 89.4% ($\eta^2 = .894$).

Table 2 Impact of study Sessions and other variables on differences in students' speaking performance

Source	Df	MS	F	<i>p</i> *	η^2
Speaking performance	2.774	6251.796	218.161	<0.001	.894
Speaking performance * Gender	2.774	6.735	.235	.857	.009
Speaking performance * Mothers' education	5.548	18.639	.650	.678	.048

* Huynh-Feldt

Differences the Level of Speaking Performance with Study Sessions

Figure 1 depicts the improvement in participants' speaking performance, from lowest score at pre-session escalated gradually into higher levels reaching the highest score at post 3 session.

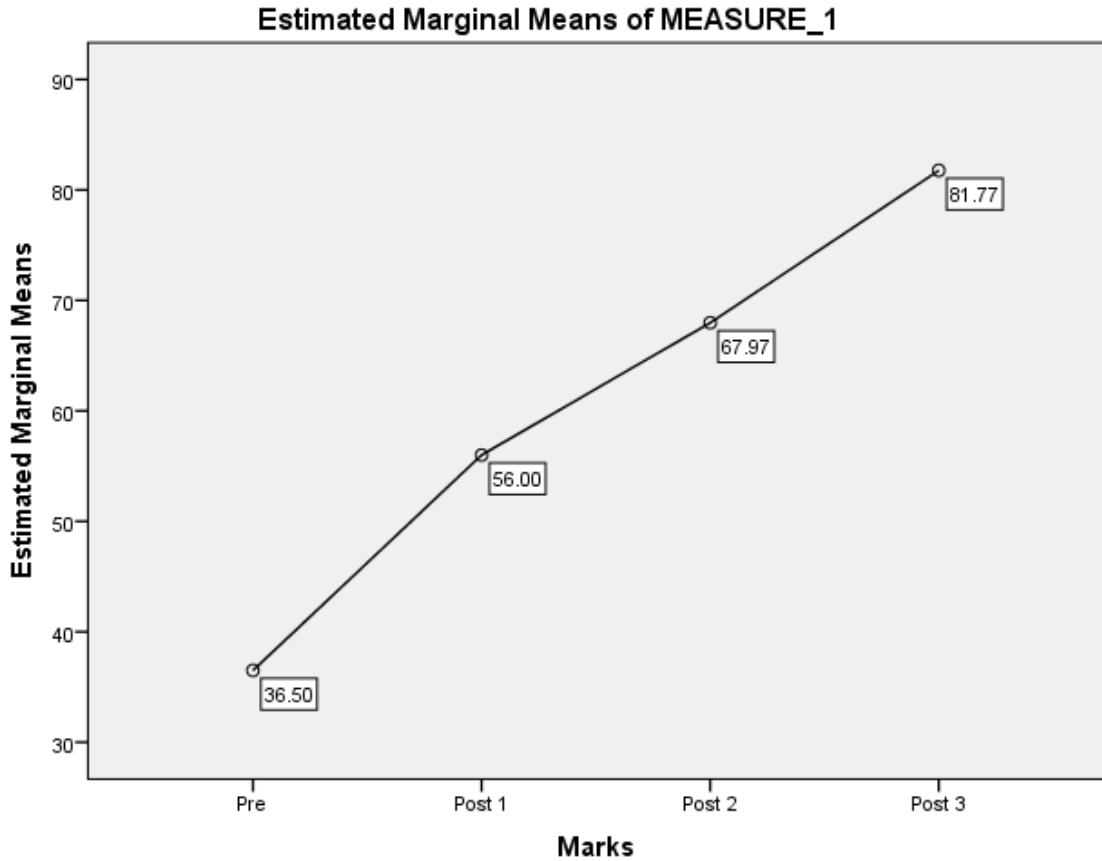


Figure 1 Improvement in students’ speaking performance at study sessions

Bonferroni post-hoc test used to determine the differences in students’ speaking performance among study sessions. Significant differences found in all sessions based on students’ speaking performance, where highest score observed with post 3 session, while lowest score observed with pre session, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Differences in students’ speaking performance among study sessions

(I) Speaking performa nce	(J) Speaking performa nce	Mean Difference (I-J)	SE	p	95% CI for Difference	
					LB	UB
Pre	Post 1	-19.500*	1.433	<0.001	-23.556	-15.444
	Post 2	-31.467*	1.641	<0.001	-36.112	-26.821
	Post 3	-45.267*	1.610	<0.001	-49.824	-40.709
Post 1	Pre	19.500*	1.433	<0.001	15.444	23.556
	Post 2	-11.967*	1.215	<0.001	-15.408	-8.525
	Post 3	-25.767*	1.299	<0.001	-29.444	-22.089
Post 2	Pre	31.467*	1.641	<0.001	26.821	36.112
	Post 1	11.967*	1.215	<0.001	8.525	15.408
	Post 3	-13.800*	.769	<0.001	-15.978	-11.622

Post 3	Pre	45.267*	1.610	<0.001	40.709	49.824
	Post 1	25.767*	1.299	<0.001	22.089	29.444
	Post 2	13.800*	.769	<0.001	11.622	15.978

Bonferroni

Effect Size and Cohen's d

Large effect sizes found with speaking performance, where highest values found for comparisons between pre and post sessions than comparisons among post sessions. Table 4 showed the effect size for the intervention program on the difference in score of students' performance among the sessions.

Table 4 Effect size of comparisons in study students' performance among study sessions

Variables	Sessions		Cohen's d	Assessment
Speaking performance	Pre	Post 1	2.484	Large
		Post 2	3.503	Large
		Post 3	5.138	Large
	Post 1	Post 2	1.798	Large
		Post 3	3.625	Large
		Post 2	Post 3	3.272

Discussion

Performance tests are commonly used to assess students' communicative levels of performance and the extent of efficiency of the interventional programme. The performance tests assessed the effectiveness of using learning techniques and the value of the implemented programme. As a result, several research scholars discovered that assessing their interventional programme might fulfil the study's objectives (Baker et al., 2010; El Shazly, 2021; Paulo et al., 2009).

There have been very few studies performed in Malaysia to enhance the speaking skills performance of primary school students studying the Arabic language as a second language using accomplishment performance tests. In this regard, Noor et al. (2016) researched to enhance students' Arabic vocabulary acquisition through achievement tests; nevertheless, this study revealed numerous limitations in methodology and study outcomes. The main limitations of the study conducted by Noor et al. are as follows: 1) the study aimed to improve the writing skills rather than the speaking skills, 2) implementing their programme in a religious school rather than a local primary school, and 3) the inability to determine the first stage levels of the students' knowledge and communication skills, i.e. a lack of pre-session evaluation of Arabic language communication abilities.

The current study found that the pre- and post-session Arabic communication abilities of students improved significantly. Figure 4.1 illustrated the steady development of students' Arabic speaking abilities from 36.5 at pre-session to 81.77 at the end of the intervention language assessment tests, indicating a significant improvement in students'

speaking performance. This result demonstrated that Malaysian students with ongoing intervention requirements developed phases with integrated intervention to maximise the advantages of existing programmes. Furthermore, this technique should be carried out at several time points of intervention in order to discover the time-points of advantages. As a result, the current intervention approach is regarded as a novel technique, particularly in terms of Arabic as a second language intervention for Malaysian primary school students. On the four-month intervention programme, the percentage of programme efficiency, or impact size, contributed to an 89.4 percent improvement in students' speaking performance on tests. Furthermore, no significant impact was seen for demographic variables on the students' speaking performance in the assessment tests, indicating that this programme provided pure and full advantages without the influence of confounding factors.

Unfortunately, there have been no comparisons of this value with literature studies due to differences in contextual settings and/or the absence of research with intervention programmes targeted to Arabic language development. As distinctive results, at each step of intervention and before evaluation, the students' speaking performance was tested on a continuous improvement basis, highlighting the students' need for this sort off.

Conclusion

This is an interventional education programme that is used to improve the performance of students' speaking skills in several sessions. On the intervention study daily schedules, this blended programme consists of learning techniques and technological media. The primary goals of this study were to first investigate the efficacy of this interventional programme in improving students' skills in utilising appropriate vocabulary while speaking in Arabic. This study considered firstly, the improved students' speaking skills level over a long period of intervention using a blended programme of learning techniques and multimedia in a Malaysian primary school.

References

- Kamarudin, M. Y., Yusoff, N. M. R. N., Yamat, H., & Ghani, K. A. (2016). Inculcation of higher order thinking skills (HOTS) in Arabic language teaching at Malaysian primary schools. *Creative Education*, 7(2), 307-314.
- Abdullahi, A., & Rouyan, N. B. M. (2018). The Use of Web 2.0 Technologies to Determine Receptive Skills among Malay Learners of Arabic Language. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 8(9), 651-659.
- Ariffin, Z., & Al-Muslim, M. (2015). The quality of Arabic language teachers in Malaysia: Facing the fundamental issues. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(1), 544-544.
- Ismail, N. S., Zaid, S. B., Mohamed, M. H., & Mohd Rouyan, N. (2017). Vocabulary teaching and learning principles in classroom practices. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ)*, 8(3), 119-134.
- Al-Sobhi, B. M. S., & Preece, A. S. (2018). Teaching English speaking skills to the Arab students in the Saudi school in Kuala Lumpur: Problems and solutions. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 6(1), 1-11.

- Medini, T. K. R., Huang, Q., Wang, Y., Mohan, V., & Shrivastava, A. (2019). Extreme classification in log memory using count-min sketch: A case study of amazon search with 50m products. *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems*, 32.
- Fraenkel, J., & Wallen, N. E. Hellen.(2012). *How to Design And Evaluate Research in Education*.
- Ramli, N., & Saleh, S. (2019). FrogVLE application in science teaching in secondary schools in North Malaysia: teachers' perspective. *Education Sciences*, 9(4), 262.
- Baker, H. K., & Nofsinger, J. R. (Eds.). (2010). *Behavioral finance: investors, corporations, and markets* (Vol. 6). John Wiley & Sons.
- Noor, Z. A. M., Yusoff, N. M. R. N., Yasim, I. M. M., & Kamarudin, M. Y. (2016). Foreign language vocabulary learning strategies in Malaysia. *Creative Education*, 7(03), 428.