

## **Engaging Students through Blended Learning Activities to Augment Listening and Speaking**

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### **Abstract**

The study examines pedagogically innovating with the effect of blended learning activities in supporting the improvement of students' learning on listening and speaking in elementary level English course at a college in King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia. Teachers provided content online that allowed measuring the students' engagement, satisfaction, teacher's role, and content and examination. Using the tools online on Blackboard®, discussion on forums and listening activities, the teacher provided the blended learning activities. Adopting a language learning framework, the 3SS framework, students were provided strategies that generated, supported and manipulated the blended learning activities for learning in the face to face sessions. The study investigates how blended learning activities motivate the engagement of students, their satisfaction, the role of the teacher, content and assessment from the students' point of view. The study uses a population of 38 students from two sections of a listening and speaking class (control G1  $n = 20$  and blended G2  $n = 18$ ), a placement test, examination results and responses from a questionnaire as instruments for examining the effect of blended learning activities on the students' engagement, satisfaction, teacher's role, content and examination. The results using descriptive statistics demonstrate positive effects of using blended learning activities in supporting the improvement of students' learning on listening and speaking in elementary level English course. In brief, using the evidences from the study reveals that exposing foundation year students to blended learning activities have positive effects on students' engagement, satisfaction, teacher's role, content and examination when learning English. The paper situated itself in the discussion of providing enriched language learning content online for supporting and measuring learning through the objective measurement of the content from the opinion of the students.

*Keywords:* blended learning, EFL online content, engagement, learning strategy, pedagogic innovation, student opinion

## 1. Introduction

### *Issues of an environmental nature*

The students enrolled in language programs need to demonstrate English language competency in colleges. Demonstrating competencies when using the English language in an online environment involves innovating when teaching English, producing the language and using the language to achieve academic and social purposes (Abou-El-Kheir & MacLeod, 2017; Cakır & Solak, 2015; Carroll, 1963; Gün, 2018).

Pedagogic innovation can involve the mixing of language learning content with online activities for promoting the abilities of college-level language learning students by using blended learning activities in online platforms. Indeed, the teaching of English language currently includes opportunities for mixing physical classroom activities or face to face (f2f) with the activities online in the blended platform (BL) (Bataineh, Banikale, & Albashtawi, 2019; Lamri & Hamzaoui, 2018; Tosun, 2015; Wilkinson, 2016). Blended learning activities involve teachers mixing f2f sessions with content uploaded online to practice listening and speaking activities because students expect integration of technology along with their learning career (Hockly & Clandfield, 2010; Krake, 2013). The focus on pre-listening activities through the interaction of language learning pedagogy online using BL provides unique access to understanding how students and teachers take advantage of the integration of technology. Supporting the unique access considers what impact BL has on learning English in a listening and speaking course over a semester on a foundation year course at King a college in Abdulaziz University (KAU) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Tosun (2015) introduces BL learning, as the locus for learning, with learning strategies as the framework for observing changes in learning. Examining how learning and BL merge provides access to where teachers can provide students content as well as collect the learning from the interaction with the content. Teachers mix online tools that support students learning English online (Hockly & Clandfield, 2010; Lamri & Hamzaoui, 2018; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). It is not only the students that have changed from the integration of technology, but teachers have also become students learning how to incorporate suitable learning techniques with new learning platforms. When teachers successfully gauge content and activity for BL, Krake (2013) concludes that language learning becomes successful.

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the effect of BL in supporting the improvement of students' learning on listening and speaking in elementary level English course at KAU. Successful objectives achievements for the paper becomes studying how BL motivated the engagement of students in the course. Moreover, the paper also studies student satisfaction, teacher role, and content and assessment from the students' point of view. The review of the literature provides the key terms of the study as well as how the previous research in the area supports the unique position for

using BL for supporting the improvement of students' learning of English on listening and speaking course.

### *Reviewing the literature*

Tosun (2015) defines BL as an approach to impact the learning of vocabulary and a process that is planned to be applied in a language course. As an approach, Oliver and Trigwell (2005, p. 29) define BL approaches along pedagogical lines giving concern to learning theories. Teachers can construct content; students can also construct meanings which indicate their learning. Also, traces of the content, students' assessments, and interactions online can also provide observations for the planned activities taking place online. Using BL to support different learning theories is the approach that indicates how BL provides a window for accessing learning. The learning that occurs can be planned and measured depending on the differences between what students bring to the learning and what they gain.

Similarly, Oliver and Trigwell (2005) discuss the use of BL to gauge the variation. Where the planned activities applied on a course meet learning objectives, assessing students learning after the interaction with the activities can provide what it was that the students have learnt. Hence, the variation becomes the difference in learning which students at KAU use to improve their language learning skills.

In their recent study on BL and learning English reading skills, Lamri and Hamzaoui (2018) emphasise the importance of English for comprehension of subject knowledge. What is interesting in placing learning English and the speciality that students will eventual be exposed to such as law, business or computer studies is the subject knowledge (p. 394). The connection of using BL to meet the required level of competence when learning English (Wilkinson, 2016) opens the space for the challenges of overcoming the mixture of BL activities, learning English and using the tools in an online environment. Furthermore, Tosun (2015) surveyed students and contextualised BL as a means for improving pedagogy. The aim was for exploring the impact of BL on tailoring content to the needs of the students learning vocabulary, rather than the activities that prepared students for online engagement. As teachers and students have become accustomed to the use of language teaching materials for learning English, one challenge to the teacher is how to support students listening and speaking using content blended for online activities. Taking the challenge to mean the opportunity for a teacher to harness the tools online in the learning management system called Blackboard® moves the discussion closer to the language theories that have been used to promote learning in the classroom which might also have a place in the listening and speaking classroom to promote listening and speaking activities.

This research takes place in a listening and speaking classroom at KAU. The underlying principles of the listening and speaking activities are built around top-down and bottom-up processing skills (Beretta, 1991; Ellis, 2010; Macalister, 2016). Thus, learning is meaningful to students when the BL provides support for the f2f session.

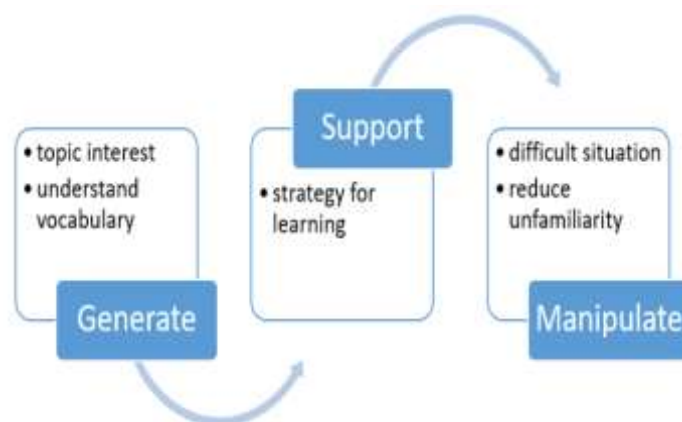
So, the BL model provides activities online for students to build the students' skills around the opportunity to develop their knowledge of the English language when listening and speaking in class, the top-down process (Hoopingartner, 2009; Nation & Newton, 2009). Also, processing target words identified for decoding the items contained in the vocabulary items support what students do within a bottom-up process. One key issue with teaching students English with content that contains cultural topics is the support for building the top-down processing of language. Using the BL activities, the instructions for students to use language that will be used in the f2f session provide opportunities for building what the students need to know when speaking about the target language topic. In their recent study, Ali, Shamsan, Guduru and Yemmela (2019, pp. 355–357) identify the power of effective communication engagement which supports the confidence of students because students have the opportunity to understand the differences between using content when they need to be fluent and using content when they need to do to be accurate. When the students have access to the content, and they carry out the activities that improve their listening, such activities support the learning which encourages students to continue learning. Also, when the students interact with the content online and then speak in the classroom due to the shift in the learning, students demonstrate the effect of the content on their learning.

Evaluating the interaction of the students on a foundation year course at a college in King Abdulaziz University (KAU) begins with placing students according to their language placement test results. When a teacher is assigned a speaking and listening class, the content based on the Common European Framework (CEFR) supports creating content appropriate for the students to interact with the content according to their placement test results. In this context, the BL activities make sense (Lesiak-Bielawska, 2014) because the students meet online and use BL activities to support their learning in the f2f class according to their language proficiency (Alsowayegh, Bardesi, & Garba, 2018; Bielawski & Metcalf, 2003; Read, 2015). Considering the time factor for teaching over an academic semester, the teacher assigned to two different listening and speaking classes offers students who score low marks in the placement test the opportunity to learn online. The students who score higher can be taught in the class with no BL activities online (Oliver & Trigwell, 2005; Russell, 2009; Tosun, 2015). Therefore, a teacher teaching two different classes at the same language proficiency level can provide BL activities for one group and teach 100% f2f with the second group.

#### *Purpose of our study*

The principled mixing of content with online tools requires theoretical grounding. The language course aims to improve the communicative competences of the students where students function according to the need for using the language. Adopting the

technique from Nation and Newton (2009), students improve their listening skills by engaging with the following strategies:



*Figure 1.* The three-step strategy (3SS) adapted from Nation and Newton (2009)

Thus, students' interest in the listening activity is generated using the vocabulary items from the course book to understand interactively – online. Students also learn how to select a strategy that allows them to manipulate situations where vocabulary is unknown. The manipulation of the activity creates familiarity when students join the f2f session by manipulating strategies when they listen and speak about the topics in class. The effect of generating the 3SS on students learning and how the learning influences their views of BL activities provides the focus of where we hypothesize that our research will impact through our pedagogic innovation to mix language learning content with online activities for promoting college-level language learning in a blended platform more fluent.

Our research examines the effect of BL in supporting the improvement of students' learning on listening and speaking in elementary level English course at KAU. To achieve the objectives of the paper, we studied how BL motivated the engagement of students in the course. Moreover, we studied student satisfaction, teacher role, and content and assessment from the students' point of view. The examination leads us to ask the following sub-questions which became the focus of the questionnaire about the positive effect of using BL to achieve the following:

- Does BL have a positive effect on the students' engagement?
- Does BL have a positive effect on the students' satisfaction?
- Does BL have a positive effect on the teacher's role?
- Does BL have a positive effect on the contents and assessments?

## 2. Method

The method describes the background of the participants how they were selected from the two sections of the listening and speaking class to join the session without BL activities and the session with BL activities. Furthermore, the description of the

activities that students that were exposed to the BL activities is presented as it provides the focus for data collection and observing the forum work of the students who work online against the aims of the research.

### 2.1 *Students' background and selection*

Students' selection for BL depended on the placement test results which relied on language items from the CEFR (University of Cambridge, 2011). Students who scored A1 remained on the course and students who scored higher were given a choice to remain or proceed to the next level. Hence, the analysis of learning used the CEFR because the learning conducted was based on the items from materials that relied on the CEFR. All the students joined the language program from high school. The students were on a foundation year course with completion leading to professional qualification programs taught in English language.

### 2.2 *Students' demography*

Using a proficiency test placed 38 male English language learners at Elementary A1-level (University of Cambridge, 2011). Two sections according to the college regulations were opened. Group 1 (G1  $n=20$ ) and Group 2 (G2  $n=18$ ) formed the basis of the two groups that informed the research. Table 1 below highlights the breakdown of the learners' demography, proficiency and instruction format at the start of the semester. The academic semester (14 weeks) was used to inform the research.

Table 1. *Students' demography*

<b>Group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Language Proficiency</b>
G1 - control	20	A1 – elementary
G2 - blended	18	

### 2.3 *Framing the examination*

This study asked what the effects of BL are in supporting the improvement of students' learning on listening and speaking in elementary level English course at KAU. We utilized a case study design to elaborate on how BL activities supported students' learning English in a listening and speaking class. The students' in the researcher's class were selected due to the accessibility and availability of the students for conducting the research (Poon, 2013; Yin & Davis, 2007). Students were notified about the research and none were identified by the ethical standards of KAU research ethics.

At the end of the semester, we used data from the G1 and G2's placement and examination results. Also, we used a questionnaire that asked closed-ended questions to gather data from the blended group, G2 about their views of engagement, satisfaction, the teacher's role, the content and assessment (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2005; Ginns & Ellis, 2007). Furthermore, G2 worked in discussion forums

and quizzes created to meet the overall course's learning objectives (University of Cambridge, 2011). The researchers collaborated online and used excel, word processor and emails to exchange data and editing of the research. The researchers included the students' the classroom teacher, an associate professor of English at the English Language Institute (ELI) and the dean of the Deanship of e-Learning and Distance Education (DELDE).

#### 2.4 *Learning online*

##### *What was the learning environment?*

Lamri and Hamzaoui (2018) and Wilkinson (Wilkinson, 2016) discuss the features teachers can use to overcome the challenges of using BL tools in an online environment. Our online learning environment was in Blackboard®. Wilkinson describes asynchronous learning as the capacity for accommodating the place and time students select to log online and use the activities the teacher provides for meeting the learning objectives. We took advantage of the discussion and gathered the students interaction Blackboard® by placing content online for students to interact with asynchronously.

##### *What did the teacher do?*

The teacher covered the content in the course book in Blackboard® by providing the students with a place to practice the language in a safe and personalized environment. Wilkinson (Wilkinson, 2016) accurately contextualizes the tools in Blackboard® accessing where the activities reside through clicking on links connected through the internet. Lamri and Hamzaoui (2018) present the difficulty of language understanding of vocabulary eased through carrying out BL activities. The teacher linked the challenges of cultural understanding of the video activities students must respond to before watching the video activities. In the classroom, students were required to have prior knowledge of the vocabulary. Due to the time shortage for using the allotted hour for each class, the teacher provided the difficult words online through tests that practice understanding the vocabulary. Also, the discussion forums gave students opportunities to practice using the language in context before they were asked similar questions in the f2f sessions. G2 needed more time to learn the vocabulary. Then G2 used the contents on the tools like the forum and quizzes to practice using the language safely. To ensure the link between what students learnt online with the requirements of the course, the teacher had to ensure the content created online aligned with what the students learnt using the BL activities and the course requirements. Also, the teacher emphasized on participation while online without focusing on G2's mistakes to encourage more fluency online and a lack of hesitation in the f2f session due to a lack of emphasis on accuracy.

##### *What did G1 students do?*

The students in G1 were led by the teacher who facilitated the pre-listening and cultural background check during the normal classroom sessions. Then G1 proceeded with the listening and follow up activities according to the outline in the coursebook.

Also, G1 were not asked to do any follow-up activities outside the allotted activities from the syllabus.

*What did G1 students do?*

G2 logged onto Blackboard® using their KAU provided username and passwords using the KAU-Blackboard® portal available at <http://lms.kau.edu.sa/>. Once logged on, G2 carried out the activities created in the online discussion forum and the quizzes. The discussion was mainly conducted in the Forum created between the start of the semester in September 2017 (Forum 1) and towards the end of the semester in December (in Week 5: Describing yourself).

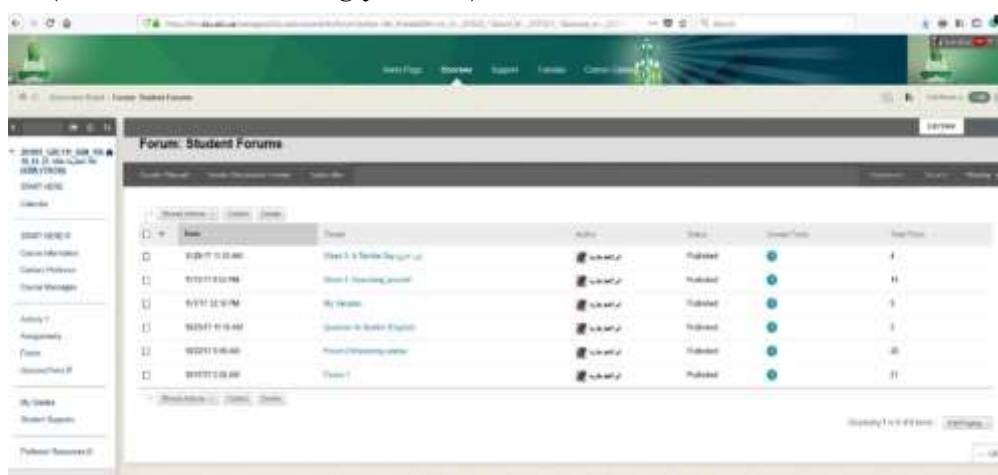


Figure 2. Sample activity G1 carried out in Blackboard®

*How did the teacher create the BL activities?*

At the start of each chapter in the listening and speaking course book (LSB) are the cultural and vocabulary content as well as a link of the content to the central theme in the course book. The LSB requests the teacher to provide the cultural and vocabulary content as homework or emphasise the importance of students having the language as background knowledge before the listening activities. As the coursebook practice-vocabulary tasks were not difficult to replicate online, the teacher created links to videos online through Blackboard® and asked the students to identify the vocabulary items. Also, the listening activities were tested through the quizzing tools of Blackboard® so students could guess and became accustomed to what would be expected of them in the f2f session through the online activities. When the students completed the tasks, G2 were given opportunity to be familiar with how the vocabulary related to the topic of discussion and G2 could ask relevant questions online and in class about the language before G2 were exposed to the f2f sessions.

*How did G2 use the BL activities?*

Each activity using the LSB lasted an hour. An hour in the f2f session was valuable time especially when the teacher had mixed ability students in G2. Before each f2f session and the start of the activity using the LSB the teacher asked the students to visit the link on Blackboard® and carry out the activities. Also, the college's language laboratory provided internet access which G2 could access on Thursdays. Then in the



f2f session, G2 attended and proceeded to use the coursebook activities without spending more time than necessary on pre-listening and cultural contextualization activities because of G2's exposure to the content online which provided support for G2's understanding of the listening activities.

Furthermore, the teacher created links to the forum in Blackboard® and asked G2 to respond to questions that followed up the listening which prepared G2 for speaking activities in subsequent f2f sessions. G2 worked on these sessions outside their normal classroom hours online. The teacher had to be creative in creating the links because the course book materials only provide activities without necessary information about the cultural background checks students need to have access to when they need to understand English as spoken in North America and Canada according to the Interchange Video Activity course book. Therefore, the time spent in teaching G2 in the classroom supported more individualized and group activities which G2 prepared and practiced for online reducing the time the teacher spent explaining to the class. G2 also carried on working on the activities individually and in groups outside their normal classroom sessions using the links provided online.

### 3. Results

The results section begins with the analysis of the results from the placement test given to all students at the start of the semester. Also included in the results section is the examination results from G1 and G2 at the end of the semester covering all the work that both groups carried out to meet the objectives of the listening and speaking course. After that, G2's responses to the questionnaire provided after their formal written final examination will be analysed. Finally, the themes that emerged from the work of G2 will be analysed.

#### 3.1 Placement test results

The placement test was carried out at the start of the semester in September 2017. Each student who joined the program was assigned a unique number and password for accessing Blackboard®. The teacher who taught the course also had access to each student's placement test result as well as when the test was conducted. However, since a placement test (see Table 2 below) for the entire college requires collaboration, the actual test date was available online with a time stamp of when the students took the test. As the researcher was teaching both G1 and G2, access to the test results for both groups were available for the researcher to access from Blackboard®.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the placement test results administered at the beginning of the course

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
G1 – control	41.5500	19.72302	4.41020
G2 – blended	31.4000	14.61218	3.26738

Hence, the statistical analysis of the results for the control group or G1 and the BL group or G2 provides access to both the results of the placement test and the examination marks allotted at the end of the semester (see table 3 below). The results

from Table 2 confirms that G1 (*mean 41.5500 SD19.72302*) performs better than G2 (*mean 31.4000 SD 14.61218*) on the placement test.

Also, the same teacher taught G1 and G2. Therefore, what G1 and G2 were exposed to regarding content for achieving the aims of the program were similar. Both G1 and G2 had to complete activities that involved collecting results from the activity to meet the aims of the program as presented in Table 2. However, as we established, to select the group to join the BL group, the teacher decided to work with G2 online and provided G2 support due to their low performance during the placement test. The members of G1 did not all take the placement test, and three members could have changed their class to join a level B language proficiency class because their listening and speaking competencies during the activities in class were above the A1 level. The placement test result shown in Table 3 included only grammar and vocabulary items that were based on the CEFR. Finally, all members of G1 and G2 remained in their respective sections throughout the semester, and the members of G2 were in the correct language proficiency level of A1 according to their placement test results taken at the start of the academic semester in September 2017.

### 3.2 Examination results

The results from Table 3 shows the significantly better performances of G1 over G2 in the total activity marks. The results for G1's achievement show a total *mean 12.4091 SD 3.64704* and G2 achieved a *mean of 11.6316 SD 3.13068*. However, in the culmination of the total marks for the activities in the final examination, the four activities in Table 3 supported the improvement and achievement of G2. The significant improvement over the semester can be attributed to the activities and support given to G2 online and in the f2f sessions. G1 could not provide access to their work online nor could they conduct activities beyond using the course book. Hence, G2 working online and had access their work online which they could repeat with no cost of marks which can improve confidence and fluency.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of G1 and G2 program aim achievement results at the end of the course

Activity and marks for achieving course aims (18)	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Quiz 5	G1	2.8545	1.27785	.27244
	G2	2.8726	1.25667	.28830
Portfolio work 3	G1	2.7273	.88273	.18820
	G2	2.8421	.68825	.15789
Listening 5	G1	3.3918	1.27192	.27117
	G2	2.7432	1.38488	.31771
Speaking 5	G1	3.3918	1.27192	.27117
	G2	3.1489	1.47097	.33746
Total	G1	12.4091	3.64704	.77755
	G2	11.6316	3.13068	.71823

### 3.3 Questionnaire response

The results from the questionnaire will be analyzed based on the positive effect of BL on following: (1) students' engagement; (2) students' satisfaction; (3) on teacher role; and finally (4) on content and assessments. The tables are presented with Table 4 and Figure 5 shows the descriptive statistics and graphical representation of the effect on the students' engagement. Tables 5-7 and Figures 6-8 have been placed as items in Appendix A labelled from A1 to A3. All references in the text to the figures will be according to their table numbers. The first table and figure will be Table 4 followed by the tables in Appendix A. Each result from the questionnaire will also be related to the relevance to the sub-research questions and their effect on the positive effect of BL and the learning of the students.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of the effect on the students' engagement

Statement	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	Not agree	Not Strongly agree	Mean	SD	الإجابة المصاح
Using Blackboard® is an interesting way to learn English.	8	6	3	1	0	4.167	0.92	Agree
The teacher's recommendation of websites through Blackboard® was necessary.	7	5	4	1	1	3.889	1.18	Agree
The teacher's introduction to the content of the materials on Blackboard® was necessary	8	8	2	0	0	4.333	0.69	Strongly agree
The teacher's use of the discussion forums was effective	7	9	1	1	0	4.222	0.81	Strongly agree
Students opinions average	Mean= 4.15			SD=0.209				Agree

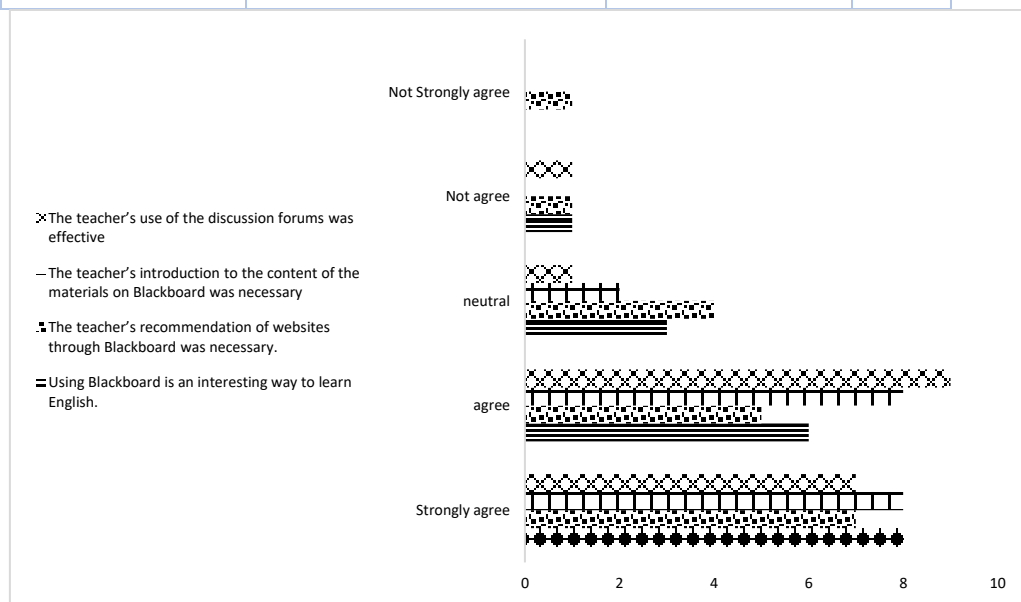


Figure 3. Effect on the students' engagement

### 3.3.1 Does BL have a positive effect on the students' engagement?

Table 4 focuses on the students' engagement. The results in Table 4 show that G2 agreed with the positive effect of BL in engaging them in the course which confirms our first sub-question. Notably, the recommendation of websites through Blackboard® and using Blackboard® was exciting way to learn English as illustrated in Figure 5.

### 3.3.2 Does BL have a positive effect on the students' satisfaction?

Table 5 and Figure 4 show that G2's satisfaction was neutral, but they agreed about their satisfaction for understanding the Blackboard® instructions and internet access. G2 also agreed that understanding the instructions for the Blackboard® system supported their satisfaction. The overall opinion of the students (mean 3.2776 SD0.240) confirms the second sub-question because most of the students did not have issues connected to the technical aspects of learning online while doing the activities online.

### 3.3.3 Does BL have a positive effect on the teacher's role?

Table 6 and Figure 5 show that most of G2 strongly agreed on the teacher's role in introducing the content location online. G2 also strongly agreed on the effectiveness of teacher use of discussion forums and the use of website links through Blackboard® which confirms the third question.

### 3.3.4 Does BL have a positive effect on the contents and assessments?

Table 7 and Figure 6 show G2 agreed about the appropriateness of the content and assessment in the course. The result confirms the fourth question. They strongly agree on the effectiveness of taking homework through Blackboard® and that the application of Blackboard® is appropriately linked to the content of the course.

#### *How did G2 use the forum activities?*

As indicated in Figure 2 above, there were a forum was prepared by the teacher. In one of the six forums students had to introduce themselves by sharing information about where they lived in Jeddah, their likes and dislikes about sports and which program they consider studying when they complete their English course. The teacher provided a sample description for students to copy so that the students can see both what is expected from them as well as narrow the variable language different students have been expected to exhibit (Ellis, 2010, p. 22). Analyzing the errors using online and document checker showed the errors displayed in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Descriptive statistics of the placement test results administered at the beginning of the course

Error	Count
Spelling	48
Grammar	48
Punctuation	15

The 48 spelling errors mainly centered around proper and common nouns because Arabic does not distinguish between the first letter and its capitalization in proper nouns like the students' names, the error in spelling vastly centered on the two types of nouns. Other errors included the ordering of the letters while typing such as placing the consonant before the vowel in spelling word. The grammatical errors focused on absence of determiners such as a distinction of using the correct articles with words that begin with vowels or the absence of definite articles. Also, because of the way text is recognized in digital format, most of the use of the personal pronoun I was in lower case as well as when it was used to describe where the students were from (for example students wrote – *iam from jeedah*). Finally, punctuation online is a significant type of error the students were not accustomed to identifying with their language variable. For instance, spaces after the last word and a full stop or absence of a comma was a common error observed in the forum activity of the students.

#### 4. Discussion

The paper has taken up the challenge of mixing content for online and f2f listening and speaking sessions using BL activities with a group of college-level learners on a foundation year course at A1 English proficiency level (Hockly & Clandfield, 2010; Krake, 2013; Lesiak-Bielawska, 2014). Competently using BL (Wilkinson, 2016) provides students and teachers planned Oliver and Trigwell (2005) opportunities to take advantage of the integration of technology. The 3SS theoretical framework adapted from Nation and Newton (2009) allows students in the f2f listening and speaking session to manipulate vocabulary as content that supports the manipulation of the content the students have been exposed to online during the use of the BL activities. The challenge and opportunity through examining 3SS have culminated in achieving the positive effect of BL on the students' engagement, satisfaction, the teacher's role and finally the content and assessments.

The placement test and examination test of the students begin the selection process of creating the content for supporting the f2f listening and speaking sessions with BL activities. G1 have performed better overall than G2 on the placement test and the examination results (see Table 3). We have supported G2 with BL activities that have encouraged G2 to view the teachers' role (see Table 6) as having positive effects on maintaining interest in the topic and understanding the vocabulary for the topic to be used during the f2f session (Nation & Newton, 2009). Achieving the interest edges learning closer towards what Lamri and Hamzaoui (2018) critically discuss as the learning purpose. The 3SS framework has been framed for generating the students' interest and ability to both deduce and infer from the content online to aid both listening comprehension and speaking in the f2f session.

The access to the content and the interaction in a safe environment also encourages the students joining the program to want to continue learning due to the modification of the language content to reduce what can be described as complexity (Bataineh et al., 2019; Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Tosun, 2015). The engagement (see Table 4 and *Figure*

3) with content on Blackboard® and the use of the tools provided have ensured that G2 moved towards achieving the learning objectives by understanding the requirements of the instructions on online and improving their skills through . The response of G2 (see Table 5) on their level of satisfaction suggests a positive response. Notably, the incorporation of homework and applying the link with the f2f session (see Appendix A.3 Table 7 and *Figure 6*) links with e-learning component that provides the power of self-paced learning to shine on the learner and what the learner can achieve given the opportunity to interact with a BL activity in listening and speaking course. Interacting with what is familiar during the f2f session has allowed the members of G2 to manipulate the Blackboard® instructions provided by the teacher when asked to use the forum and quiz activities. Also, the accessibility to online content for educational purposes furthers the discussion on the types of difficulties Lamri and Hamzaoui (2018) identified as part of understanding what the teacher does and how to link the learning environment with learning objectives to support students' learning abilities. Explaining the support of students in a f2f session through engaging with BL activities enable the students to understand the language. Lightbown and Spada (2013) generalised how modifying the content on the BL activities encourages understanding. In principle, the mixing encourages the understanding using 3SS (Nation & Newton, 2009) to enhance how the students improved their listening strategies and improved their academic performances. For example, in Table 8, the type of errors the students exhibited closely resembled how the students perceived the language in relation to completing the forum objectives. However, observing the distinction visually with the teacher giving feedback on the information and noting the errors provides access to what can be taught to the A1 targeted students in the f2f session. Thus, the feedback given as shown by the student and teacher (see A.1. Forum activity in *Figure 7* Forum 1 activity) allow students online to calmly show what they know of the language which can help the teacher provide more guidance in the f2f session. We characterize such observation, guidance and capturing of the work of students at KAU as meeting the wider goal for researching the effect of innovating in the classroom (Ellis, 2008).

## Conclusions

The findings of the study demonstrate that our experimental research has been a successful study of how listening and speaking students can be supported online to improve their engagement, . The research has examined the effect of BL in supporting the improvement of students' learning on listening and speaking in elementary level English course at KAU using BL activities online. The activities from Blackboard®, students, result from their placement test, examination results, G2's responses from the questionnaire and what the teacher has carried out have recorded, measured and presented.

Based on the recorded, measured and presented findings of this research, we accept that the use of BL has been effective in promoting the students in Group 2's learning on the listening and speaking course at the language program at KAU. The acceptance

has been based on the results we have discussed which indicate that the activities of the students on Blackboard® for conducting a formal examination as well as allowing the responses from the questionnaire have been carefully conducted on the students in G2 who were exposed to BL activities on Blackboard® at KAU. The findings describe what a teacher does on Blackboard® to improve the learning of listening and speaking of English language learners. Also, the study paves the way for finding out how to relate the activities with other learning theories based on further demonstrating the learning potential of students when setting up for successful English language learning using BL activities online. While the study has not related the activities of G2 as a sample of a larger population from the college, the research has focused on the population of language learners in G1 and G2 with G2 not being the subset of the population, but the actual sample selected based on the researchers supporting the low placement performance of G2. Therefore, the research using the content for listening and speaking English online has been innovative for supporting G2 produce the language and use the language to achieve academic and social purposes using online blended learning activities.

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## Appendix A. The descriptive statistics from the responses of G1 to the questionnaire

### A.1. Descriptive statistics of students' satisfaction

Table 5. Effect on the students' satisfaction

Statement	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	Not agree	Not Strongly agree	Mean	SD	الإجابة لصالح
I spent more time supposedly studying through Blackboard®.	3	3	9	3	0	3.333	0.97	neutral
Disconnection when download educational resources available on the Internet.	3	4	3	4	4	2.889	1.45	neutral
Allow your computer to be used permanently	4	3	2	4	5	2.833	1.58	neutral
Understand the instructions for the Blackboard® system	7	5	2	4	0	3.833	1.20	agree
Internet access to use Blackboard®	5	6	3	1	3	3.5	1.42	agree
Students opinions average	Mean= 3.2776				SD=0.240			neutral

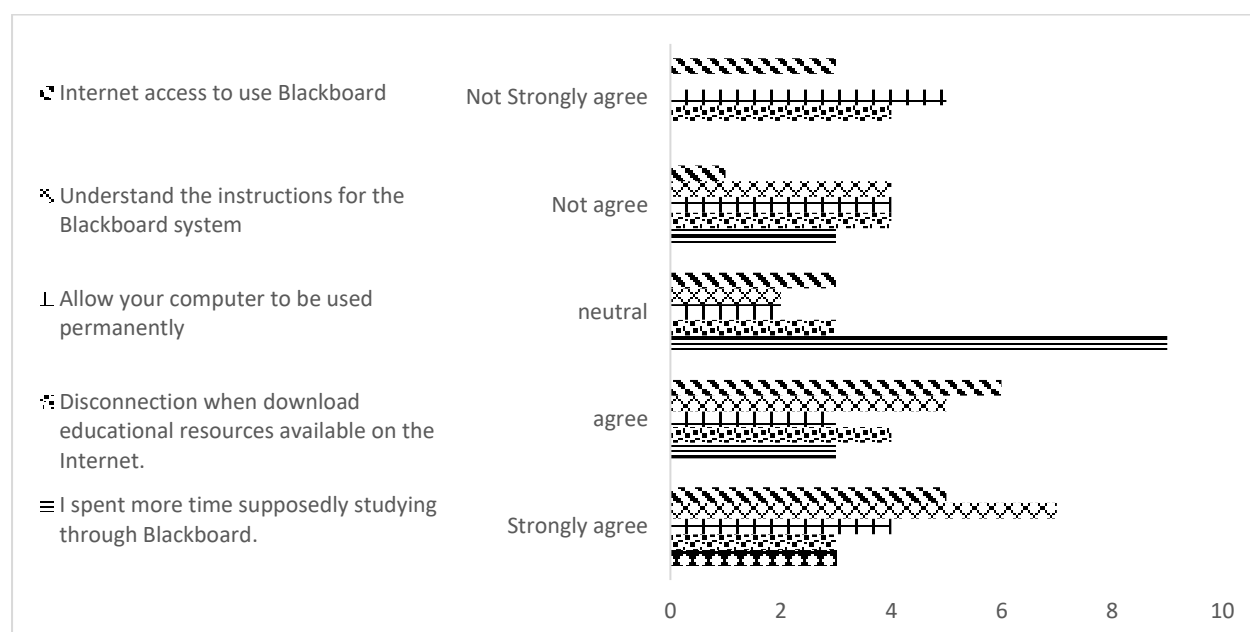


Figure 4. Effect on the students' satisfaction

### A.2. Descriptive statistics on the teacher's role

Table 6: Descriptive statistics effect on the teacher's role

Statement	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	Not agree	Not Strongly agree	Mean	SD	الإجابة لصالح
Professor suggestions for websites through Blackboard® is essential.	6	10	1	1	0	4.167	0.79	agree
The professor's introduction to the content of the material on the Blackboard® is necessary.	7	8	2	1	0	4.167	0.86	agree
Using a forum from professor for discussion is effective.	9	5	2	0	0	4.438	0.73	Strongly agree
Using website links by a professor through Blackboard® is effective.	9	5	4	0	0	4.278	0.83	Strongly agree
Students opinions average	Mean=4.2625				SD=0.056			Strongly agree

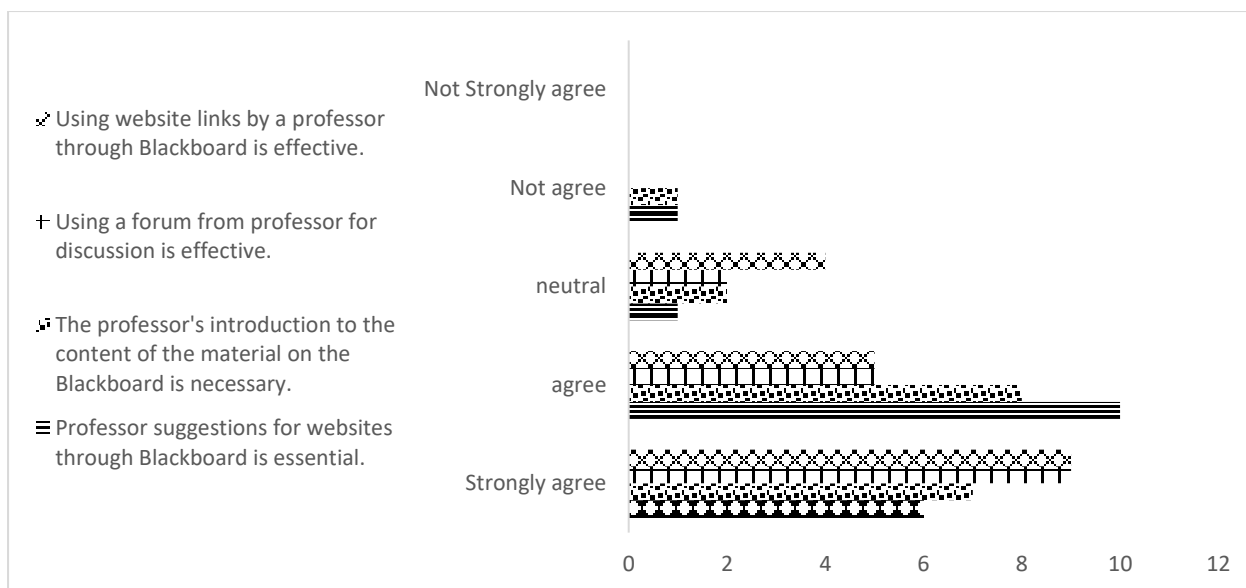


Figure 5. Effect on the teacher's role

A.3. Descriptive statistics on the content and assessments

Table 7: Effect on content and assessments

Statement	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	Not agree	Not Strongly agree	Mean	SD	الإجابية لصالح
Placing homework through Blackboard® is effective.	11	2	4	1	0	4.278	1.02	Strongly agree
Blackboard® teaching tools are appropriate classroom teaching supplements.	4	9	3	2	0	3.833	0.92	agree
Blackboard® teaching tools are appropriate for students' skill levels.	7	7	3	0	1	4.056	1.06	agree
Implementation / application of Blackboard® in an effective manner appropriately linked to the scientific content of the course.	6	11	1	0	0	4.278	0.57	Strongly agree
Students opinions average	Mean=4.1112				SD=.223			agree

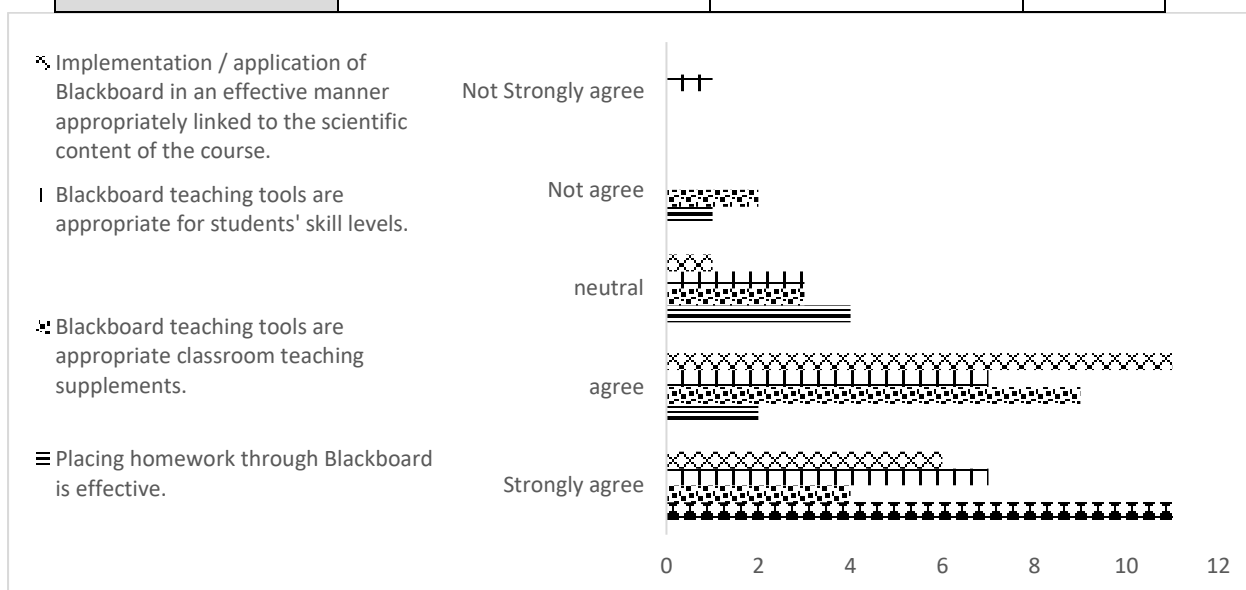


Figure 6: Effect on content and assessments

#### A.4. Forum activity

Collection – 201801\_GRC111\_02M\_15630\_EL <https://lms.kau.edu.sa/webapps/discussionboard/do/message?action=co>.

### Collection

Users can Collect posts into a printable, sortable format. Collections are a good way to organize posts for quick reading. A Collection must be created to tag posts. [More Help](#)

<b>Thread:</b>	Forum 1	<b>Posted Date:</b>	October 14, 2017 6:08 PM
<b>Post:</b>	Forum 1	<b>Edited Date:</b>	October 17, 2017 2:26 AM
<b>Author:</b>	 ابراهيم جاريا	<b>Status:</b>	Published

• **Tell the class**

- What is your name?
- Where are you from?
- Where do you live in Jeddah?
- Which program do you like at JCC (ACCA, CISCO, ADOBE, MICROSOFT CERTIFICATION)
- Do you like football?
- Which team do you like?
- What do people call you?

• Now read your friends post and introduce yourself to **ONE** classmate.

(Post is Read)

<b>Thread:</b>	Forum 1	<b>Posted Date:</b>	October 17, 2017 6:57 PM
<b>Post:</b>	RE: Forum 1	<b>Status:</b>	Published
<b>Author:</b>			

My name is Nader Saleh Al Ghamdi  
I am from Jeddah  
In the Ajaweed neighborhood  
d.

I do not know about these programs very much

e.Yes, I love football a lot

f.  
Saudi Al Ahly Club  
neeno ❤️

(Post is Read)

<b>Thread:</b>	Forum 1	<b>Posted Date:</b>	October 17, 2017 9:07 PM
<b>Post:</b>	RE: Forum 1	<b>Status:</b>	Published
<b>Author:</b>			

Nice to meet you nadir ❤️ .

(Post is Read)

<b>Thread:</b>	Forum 1	<b>Posted Date:</b>	October 18, 2017 10:53 PM
<b>Post:</b>	RE: Forum 1	<b>Status:</b>	Published
<b>Author:</b>	 ابراهيم جاريا		

Hi Nadir,  
Welcome to the course.  
You have time to decide which program you want to study.  
I also like Ahly FC.  
Have you watched any of their games?  
Ibrahim

(Post is Read)

Figure 7: Cycle of post, reply, response and teacher feedback from Forum 1: Tell the class

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