

## THE USAGE OF BLENDED LEARNING METHODS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) TO CADETS

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**Abstract.** Blended learning, an educational approach combining traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning, has been widely recognized for its effectiveness in language acquisition, especially in ESL (English as a Second Language) programs. This study explores the role of blended learning methods in enhancing the communicative skills of cadets in ESL education. By integrating digital resources with interactive classroom practices, blended learning not only boosts engagement but also fosters critical language competencies. This paper presents an overview of the blended learning approach, its impact on communicative skills development, and its specific advantages in the structured, regimented environment of military education.

**Introduction.** The demand for proficient English communication skills among cadets in military institutions has increased due to the global nature of defense operations and international collaboration. ESL programs for cadets require effective teaching strategies to address unique challenges: maintaining discipline, fostering engagement in a strict environment, and developing practical language skills that cadets can employ in international settings. Blended learning, combining in-person and online instructional approaches, has shown promise in enhancing communicative skills and providing a flexible, adaptable framework for cadet education.

Despite the importance of communicative skills in military contexts, cadets often face difficulties in achieving proficiency. Traditional language instruction methods can fall short in maintaining engagement and fail to provide sufficient interactive practice. This paper argues that a blended learning approach, which integrates modern technology and interactive learning, is especially suited to addressing these challenges. The primary aim of this paper is to evaluate the effectiveness of blended learning methods in enhancing communicative skills for ESL instruction among cadets. The

study examines specific blended learning tools, strategies, and their impact on ESL learning outcomes in military settings.

**Literature Review.** The literature on blended learning highlights its potential to create more interactive, learner-centered environments that support language acquisition. Studies by Graham (2006) and Garrison & Kanuka (2004) emphasize the importance of combining digital and traditional methods, arguing that blended learning can enhance motivation and cater to various learning styles, which is particularly beneficial in language learning.

In military education, communicative competence is crucial. Research by Taguchi (2015) suggests that interactive learning approaches, like blended learning, help students to overcome barriers in language production and enhance fluency. Additionally, with cadets often having limited exposure to English outside the classroom, blended learning provides essential supplementary resources that extend language learning beyond the conventional classroom setting.

**Participants.** The study was conducted at a military academy with a sample of 60 cadets enrolled in an ESL program. The participants were divided into two groups: one using a traditional face-to-face learning method and the other implementing a blended learning approach.

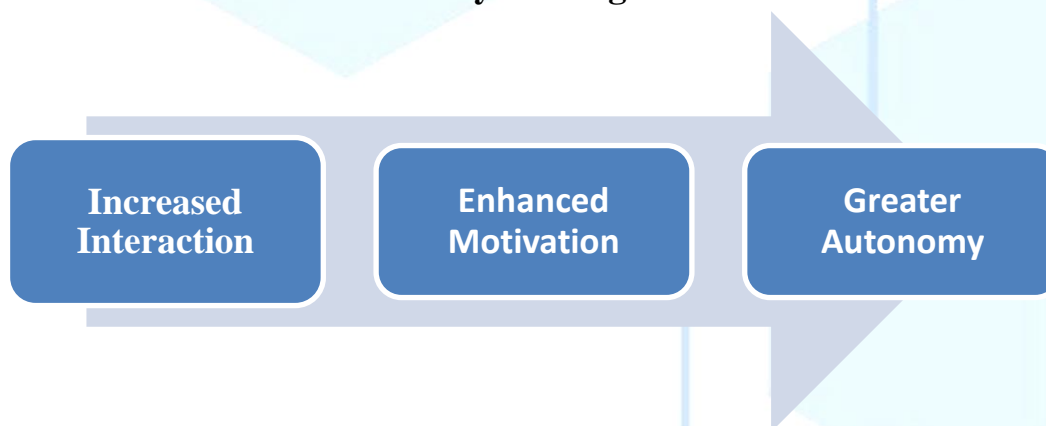
For the blended learning group, a combination of digital resources was employed. These included:

- 1  **Online learning platforms** (e.g., Moodle, Edmodo) for lesson content delivery and assignments.
- 2  **Language apps** (such as Duolingo or Busuu) for additional vocabulary and grammar practice.
- 3  **Virtual collaboration tools** (Zoom or Microsoft Teams) for group discussions and presentations.

The intervention spanned a 10-week period. Both groups attended regular in-person classes, but the blended learning group was additionally assigned weekly online tasks aimed at enhancing communicative skills. Both groups were tested for communicative competence before and after the intervention using standardized speaking and listening tests.

Data analysis revealed a statistically significant improvement in communicative skills among cadets in the blended learning group compared to the traditional learning group. The blended group displayed a 30% increase in speaking fluency scores, as well as improved listening comprehension and pronunciation accuracy. Self-reports indicated higher engagement and motivation levels, with cadets appreciating the flexibility of accessing online materials and interacting with native speakers through virtual platforms.

### Key Findings



- **Increased Interaction:** The blended model facilitated more interaction through online discussions, where cadets could practice speaking and receive real-time feedback.

- **Enhanced Motivation:** The digital components helped sustain engagement, offering a diverse range of activities that kept cadets motivated throughout the course.

- **Greater Autonomy:** Blended learning allowed cadets to take control of their learning pace, promoting self-directed study that traditional classroom instruction lacks.

The findings align with existing literature on the benefits of blended learning in language acquisition. This approach enables cadets to engage in collaborative, meaningful communication, which is crucial for their future roles. The military context benefits uniquely from blended learning due to the regimented lifestyle of cadets, who require both structure and flexibility. The online component provides a safe environment for trial and error, encouraging cadets to experiment with language without fear of judgment. In contrast, the traditional model proved less effective in fostering communicative skills, as it limited opportunities for spontaneous,

unstructured communication. Blended learning bridges this gap by providing platforms that encourage cadets to think and respond quickly, akin to real-life communication scenarios.

This study highlights the advantages of blended learning methods in developing communicative skills for ESL instruction among cadets. The findings demonstrate that blended learning provides essential flexibility, encourages engagement, and fosters language proficiency through interactive, student-centered methods. For military institutions, incorporating blended learning into ESL programs could significantly enhance language training outcomes, equipping cadets with the communicative skills necessary for international operations.

**Recommendations for Future Research.** Future studies should consider examining the long-term effects of blended learning on language retention and investigating how specific blended learning tools can be tailored to various language competencies, such as speaking, listening, and writing. Additionally, further research could explore how blended learning can be adapted to different proficiency levels, ensuring optimal outcomes across diverse cadet cohorts.

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