

# THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BLENDED LEARNING IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION SKILLS: A CASE STUDY ON OLIVE WEBSITE TEST RESULT

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## ABSTRACT

*The research aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using blended-learning instruction in improving students' communication skills at Sekolah Vokasi Universitas Gadjah Mada. They were required to take the Test of English for Vocational Students (TEVOCS) and it indicated that there was a gap between listening and speaking ability as presented in the test scores. To support the improvement of both skills, blended-learning instruction was designed and carried out in the forms of online listening activities via Online Listening for Individual Practice (OLIVE) website and offline meeting for speaking activities. The research used experimental research, which referred to the results of pre-test and post-test scores of the group. The participants of the research were 275 students from three departments of Sekolah Vokasi Universitas Gadjah Mada; Language, Arts, and Cultural Management department; Engineering department; as well as Economic and Business department academic year 2019/2020. The pre-test and post-test scores show improvement in students' performance in both skills. The result of the t-test also shows that there is significant improvement after the application of blended-learning instruction.*

**Keywords:** *blended-learning, business communication skills, student skill*

## INTRODUCTION

To improve the quality of human resources, enhance employability, and increase community welfare, the government of Indonesia has committed to strengthen skills development through vocational education. Such effort has been formulated in the Roadmap on Development of Education and Vocational Training 2017-2025 that emphasizes graduates' readiness to enter the workforce and increase their employment rate. To achieve those goals, the government prioritizes revitalization of vocational education to address skills mismatch and unemployment, improve and strengthen skills of Indonesian workers, and to increase the readiness of workers in the global employment (International Labour Organization, 2019). By providing the students

with a variety of hands-on practices and practical experiences, it can improve their 'ready-to-work' quality and employability, so they can immediately be absorbed by the industry. Employability means the combination of an individual's knowledge, competences, and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and progress in their careers (Blackmore et al., 2016).

The era of the ASEAN Economic Community challenges vocational students to hone their potentials and equip themselves with the necessary skills for working and for taking part in the global industry. Today's working force demands these students to develop complex skills from general to specific job-related skills. This may include life and career skills, communication skills, learning and innovation skills, information literacy, media literacy, and technology

skills. It is also stated in the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework attitudes that graduates should develop knowledge, general skills, and special skills (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2017). Therefore, students should be given the opportunity and exposure to develop their expertise related to their profession and other necessary skills to carry out their tasks in the workplace like communication and computer skills. Research in Northern Philippines shows that not understanding and learning 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills find difficulties in finding, cope with, and compete in the globalized world (Tindowen, Bassig, & Cagurangan, 2017).

The shift to demand-driven objectives also affects the vocational education curriculum. Effective workplace learning curriculum should be able to connect students with workplace learning through various activities, such as working on authentic tasks that mirror the tasks at the workplace, undertaking work-based learning that brings students to workplace setting, learning the knowledge content and skills relating to their disciplines, and learning about the workplace and future employment opportunities (Fung, 2018). Therefore, vocational education in Indonesia involves industries in developing the curriculum and providing workplace learning through job-training, internship, or apprenticeship programs that enable students to learn and acquire necessary and relevant skills to be applied in their future careers. One of the vital skills that the students must have in command is communication skills. Therefore, Sekolah Vokasi Gadjah Mada provides the students with programs or courses that aim to improve students' communicative competence and language proficiency. The courses are set for at least three semesters and designed as English for business communication training that put greater attention on communication in workplace settings.

Therefore to measure students' communicative competence in their final year, Sekolah Vokasi Universitas Gadjah Mada has designed a specific test to measure their listening and speaking ability before entering the workplace. It can predict students' competence in using English for communication in their future careers. This test is called the Test of English for Vocational Students (TEVOCS), which is administered at the end of their study before completing the diploma program. Although departments in the college have developed a specific curriculum that equips the students with necessary listening and speaking skills for workplace communication, due to limited study hours, not all skills can be accommodated, especially for listening skills. This situation creates a gap between listening and speaking ability, as illustrated in the test scores. Therefore, to improve the quality of the learning process and students' listening skills, a blended learning instruction is designed, and this research aims to investigate the effectiveness of the instruction in improving students' passive and active communication skills in the workplace setting.

The students' scores in the preliminary research have suggested that they have to improve

communicative competence. Several students fail to pass the test while the rest have passed the test with minimum scores. The result of the preliminary research confirms that the students still lack communicative competence because they are still unable to comprehend spoken texts in English and to produce accurate and intelligible language. In terms of oral language output, the students still make grammatical errors, use word chunks, make frequent pauses, and mispronounce words or phrases in English. In order to help the students improve their communicative competence, blended learning activities, which combined learning inside and outside the classroom, are designed and implemented in Sekolah Vokasi Universitas Gadjah Mada. The online meeting is mediated by an online listening application named Online Listening for Individual Practice (OLIVE).

The listening materials are accessed online via a web-based application and consist of four types of listening tasks to simulate TEVOCS, including short dialogue, question and response, longer conversation, and a short talk. The lecturer and students have scheduled the online meetings once every two weeks and put the online meetings in the course outline. After the online meeting, the lecturer encourages the discussion about the listening activities in the classroom on the following offline meeting. The offline meeting is especially designed for productive activities like role play, presentation, and discussion. The use of blended learning for business English is aimed to provide balance instructions for both skills. As the preliminary test results show that the students fail because they lack practice for listening skills. Equal time-on-tasks could help students develop their skills in understanding spoken texts as well as communicating their thoughts or ideas.

## METHODS

The research uses experimental research, which refers to the results of pre-test and post-test scores of the group. The participants of the research are 275 students from three departments of Sekolah Vokasi Universitas Gadjah Mada; Language, Arts, and Cultural Management department; Engineering department; as well as Economic and Business department academic year 2019/2020. These students are taking English I Course in their first semester. The evaluation process is conducted in three sections; preliminary study, pre-test in the mid-term examination, and post-test at the end of the semester. The scores are analyzed using paired-samples t-test to identify the improvement of business communication skills in English before and after the implementation of blended learning activities. The total of students' listening and speaking scores will be counted and compared from pre-test and post-test. At the end of the research, 20 students are interviewed to gather information about their perceptions, attitudes, and experiences after joining blended learning.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The development of a global industry that is marked by international trade and global migration of workers causes a shift in the purpose of communication in English. This calls educational institutions for providing technical and professional communication students with valuable work experience (Kramer-Simpson, 2018). They should be prepared with specific technical skills as well as language for communication in the workplace. Therefore, the pedagogical activities in higher institutions like vocational education include learning occupational skills in workplaces through work simulation, internship, and job training that replicate written and oral communication tasks that they will encounter in the office. Such simulations will bring benefits to the students, such as open access to occupation for individuals as they graduate, develop new skills and productivity, and increase efficiency in skills development (OECD, 2019). Encouraging the students to master the necessary skills for the industry will help to reduce the gap between the expectations of the stakeholders or the needs of the industry and the qualifications of the graduates.

As Indonesia has participated in the global trade whose one of which includes the ASEAN Economic Community, it can be predicted that the largest employment contributors would be manufacturing, service, production, and export sectors. The migration of goods and labors inside and outside a country can be made possible if the human resources are able to communicate in business English. Business English can be defined as language shared by members of the international business community in order to conduct business and work in multinational companies (Kankaanranta & Lu, 2013; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). Practical definition by Hellekjær and Fairway (2015) have specified business English as the international language used in a variety of work-related situations, from reading work-related texts, simple communication like telephoning, conversations, e-mails, letters, and memos to demanding communication like presentations, negotiations, press conferences, reports, white papers, and articles. To summarize, business English is the specific language used by all members of global industries to communicate information and conduct works in international business situations. Increasingly globalized business and trade bring an impact on the use of English. In multinational companies, English becomes 'lingua franca' that dominates the communication in the business, so employees are encouraged to effectively communicate in English even in more simplified language to 'get the work done' in the global business (Kroon, Cornelissen, & Vaara, 2015; Takino, 2017).

According to Xu (2018), in this modern society, the reasons to learn English as international language are varied. Still, practically, students learn English to use it in global contexts, to work in a multinational workplace, obtain better jobs, to work as a translator/

interpreter, and to become a functional member of the global community. Being able to enter global employment becomes the main motive to improve English skills because they are highly required for communication in international business. Another research also shows that global employment nowadays needs a diversity of skills that combine specific skills of expertise and task-based skills to finish business tasks at work (OECD, 2017). Workers who have specialized skills in one area of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics still need to have complementary skills that include literacy and communication. Therefore, countries must equip their populations with mixed skills that include technical skills, IT skills, and business communication skills to perform well in the workplace. It is also interesting that employees with various areas of expertise ranging from engineering, communications, computing, social sciences to natural sciences mention the needs of English skills to carry out tasks at work.

English proficiency is even needed since the application for the employment process before starting the jobs. It is used as a measurement to determine if a person is well-qualified for a particular job in international business. In the recruitment process, applied communication skills and knowledge in the field rank 79-84% as main factors when hiring. It can help to explain that employers seek graduates who can connect across audiences and have a broad range for delivering communication in various capacities (Ortiz, Region-Sebest, & MacDermott, 2016), especially business communication in English (Tran, 2015). That research result answers why employers prioritize new hires who have business etiquette, interpersonal skills, and oral communication competencies that can be put into practice in the workplace. While at work, non-native speakers who cannot meet expectations in terms of workplace communication are considered less competent (Kim et al., 2019) and will not succeed in the professional world (Pandey, 2014). As a result, they are less likely to be hired or are assigned to lower positions.

In Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, well-qualified immigrants often cannot find employment that builds on their skills, education, and experience even in times of high employment and skills shortages if they are lack of English language proficiency (Hunter & Cooke, 2014). Only a limited number of workers are able to use English for work purposes, and people with higher English competence are able to access better and more various types of employment.

As soon as entering the workforce, language knowledge and skills will be directly applied to serve particular and specific communicative tasks in the company. Oral communication skills that are mostly utilized by new hires at the workplace include using proper grammar, team communication, participating in meetings, telephoning, informing customers about products, presenting to the large group, and communicating persuasive messages (Ortiz, Region-Sebest, & MacDermott, 2016). There are various



written and oral communicative tasks in which the employees should be able to demonstrate their literacy and language competence. For example, professionals in the local Hong Kong workplace should be able to read and write emails, reports, websites, letters, promotional materials, notices, minutes, memos, newspapers, legal documents, and faxes (Chan, 2014). Communicative needs are non-exclusive to telephoning, meetings and discussions, presentations, conferences, training, interviews, and seminars. Students also need to develop their communication skills through text messages. Kiddie (2014) has mentioned that an ability to communicate in written forms using various channels is highly required as business and professional communication becomes digitalized. Most tasks in the company involve texting for communicating intentions using email and message services.

Other than oral and communication skills, employers also demand the ability to make use of visual and electronic communication as part of business communication skills (Coffelt, Baker, & Corey, 2016). Employees need to be able to communicate visual elements such as display boards, photos, and graphics, in addition to communicate via electronic media like telephone, email, and message service. Referring to the aforementioned skills, Tenedero and Vizconde (2015) have summarized business communication skills into five communicative abilities. They are convince (satisfy the company's requirement and standards for employment), compose (produce effective technical written outputs), concentrate (be properly attentive and responsive to oral stimuli at work), comprehend (read and analyze copious amount of information effectively), and click (utilize communication tools in the business workplace).

In Australasia and Europe, English for Specific Purpose (ESP) program is given to help students develop workplace language and literacy to enable them to access workplace opportunities (Basturkmen, 2012). This can be supplementary to specialized training or specific majors that students take in the university. In China, as they entered the World Trade Organization, workers should understand technical communication techniques in English and be able to use them as the method of communication in the workplace and international business to carry out their jobs effectively. It affects the EFL curriculum in higher education where the materials and activities are substantially designed to enhance students' English business writing performance (Lin et al., 2018; Yu & Wang, 2016). Therefore, the materials simulate its appropriate use as a medium for business. The same program is also developed in Norway, where Nordic universities systematically address students' needs for advanced occupational English skills in combination with professional skills (Hellekjær & Fairway, 2015).

Based on an economic report, Indonesia's competitiveness is low compared to other Asian countries (Aswicahyono & Rafitrandi, 2018). Even a report by International Labor Organization (ILO) says

that although Indonesia has been destination country for skilled and professional workers from Asia, it still transfers many unskilled and contract labors who engage in poor working conditions (Aswicahyono, Brooks, & Manning, 2011). Addressing this problem, Indonesia should increase the quality of its human resources. The government of Indonesia needs to insert in human capital through necessary training and education (Nomaan & Nayantara, 2018). The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture has set three sustainable goals that include human resource development, knowledge and technology development, and economic development (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2017). Report by ILO (2019) also indicates the urgency for the Indonesian government to create or promote employment well-matched to its labor force, invest in human capital, and cooperate with the industry. Therefore, it is considered necessary to enrich students' learning with activities that relate to workplace communication.

In 2009, all countries in ASEAN had agreed to promote the use of English as an international business language at the workplace and then involve the industries to improve education and economy. Therefore, Indonesia also actively improves English education. In addition, Indonesian services trade contributes to employment, especially because global trade among Asia Pacific countries will benefit Indonesia in creating more employment opportunities. However, it should become the concern of the government to support language education to create skilled workers who are capable to communicate successfully in the international business setting.

Today, global employment demands better-qualified workers with a diversity of skills such as literacy, numeracy, and business communication, other than specialized skills to seize the benefits in global value chains (OECD, 2017). The most effective method to strengthen students' business communication skills is by adding learning activities that represent workplace communication tasks. This kind of workplace learning engages learning and work that match someone's occupation (Billett, 2014). It can include role play, project-based activities, internship, and job training. The objective is to help learners know how to communicate effectively in business situations. To optimize the learning process, teachers can integrate various media into the curriculum. Teachers may combine online activities and online resources with offline instruction. It can be seen in Figure 1.

As universities have different situations and resources, each requires different curriculum designs (Zhu & Liu, 2014). The result of the preliminary study has suggested that the students need learning media and personalized-learning instruction to facilitate business communication practice. Learning facilitation could be conducted by integrating information technology in the learning environment. This method is called blended learning that combines face-to-face interaction and computer-supported collaborative learning (Graham, 2014). In practice, blended learning does

not only blend classroom instruction and web-based technologies but also combine varieties of resources and activities (Breen, 2018). Other than online-listening activities, the students are given samples of various business documents and communicative tasks that require the use of business communication skills in the interaction. The implementation of blended learning itself is divided into four stages.

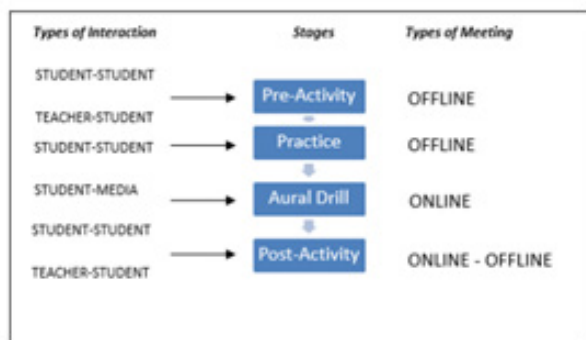


Figure 1 The Design of Blended Learning Instruction

In stage 1, pre-activity, the lecturer leads the learning process. New learning materials are presented, and new strategies are practiced in this stage. The learning process takes place in the classroom. Most of the materials are intended for knowledge building. In this stage, the students should also be encouraged to access authentic or real texts to capture clear pictures of the texts that they are going to produce in their future careers (Ruiz-Garrido & Palmer-Silveira, 2015). For example, the students can be given samples of office communication, such as recorded phone calls, video conferences, or meetings. Presenting various types of business communication samples will enable learners to identify the purposes, structures, characteristics, and language features. Teachers also need to adjust the materials from textbooks that correspond to the English business skills that need to be developed.

Stage 2 is practice. To create workplace simulation, teachers can provide various activities that include the kind of company communication that employees might encounter in the real workplace such as attending meetings/workshops, giving peer feedback, conducting group projects, and collaborating on a company project (Ismail & Sabapathy, 2016). After observing the samples of texts, the students are given a chance to make use of their knowledge in real communication practice. These activities have focused on productive skills. Some best practices of business English learning include role-play and simulation that elicit interaction or communication and build up business knowledge. Those activities allow the students to use practical content relevant to their jobs and business needs through role play, simulation, and business writing practice that will be used during the training or internship (Xie & Chen, 2019).

Stage 3 is aural drills. The meeting in this stage is conducted online. In this stage, the interaction

is conducted between student and online listening media. The students have to sign in to their accounts in OLIVE and have worked on the listening tasks. The meeting schedule has been distributed before. During the scheduled time, the students could set their own time to access the online listening materials and replay the audio as many times as needed to find the answers to the questions. After the practice, the students earn the score immediately, and they could monitor their progress in every meeting. As teachers have little control over listening experiences outside the classroom, the students can be encouraged to keep listening journals (Siegel, 2015). The students would report the time when they access the materials, how many times they play the audios, difficulties in understanding oral communication, and progress or improvement they have made.

In stage 4, post-activity, it could be conducted in online and offline settings using the messenger menu in the web-application or the classroom. It is to give a chance for students to receive feedback about their performance in both skills. The feedbacks are obtained from their lecturer and friends. In the online activity, the students could immediately see the score as feedback that would show in what items or tasks they still lacked competence. Providing simpler and more immediate feedback for this listening activity is considered more effective as the students spend significantly more time checking immediate feedback instead of ignoring it (Van der Kleij, Feskens, & Eggen, 2015) because it can inform current performance, future action, and demand to become more capable learners (Henderson et al., 2019). If necessary, the lecturers could review the feedback in the classroom. To support the effect of feedback, the students also make their reflections or learning journals throughout the learning process.

In the first meeting, the students are given TEVOCS simulation. The result indicates that the students lack the ability to listen to the spoken language. According to Mahboob (2018), accessing such texts can be difficult due to specific registers or dialects, so the students should receive appropriate training and support to improve their competence in understanding the spoken text. In the first simulation, almost all students obtain very low scores in the listening test. Although they do not find any problems in the speaking section, their scores in the listening section make them fail in the first test simulation.

Listening skills are essential factors for communication and cannot be separated from speaking. The students consider listening comprehension as challenging language tasks because they lack knowledge about the content and vocabulary related to business communication settings, and are not able to discriminate sounds in English and listen to the target language in normal speed. The situation could be changed if the students have willingness, persistence, and motivation to put more efforts on listening and accessing listening materials. McKay (2018) has suggested teachers to encourage learners to develop expertise on standard language that has the most global

currency and power. In this context is business English. Learning a language should be no longer considered as separated from real future use and should be no longer given as non-interactive activity.

After practicing business communication skills, the students will be assessed for their competence to function in-office communication. Connecting academic and workplace learning can be done through an assessment that mirrors the tasks needed in the workplace (Fung, 2018). The test tasks elicit students' performance in using the language to successfully maintain communication for business purposes, such as client communication, transaction, and negotiation. Learners can apply and be assessed for competencies in knowing what for, what to, and how to perform (Trede & McEwen, 2015). The results of this test will not only measure students' knowledge about language use but also exemplify learners' readiness to communicate using the language in the workplace, whether they can really apply the language to accomplish office tasks. One of the most potential assessment methods is the internship. The internship can provide technical and professional communication students with valuable work experience, helping students find a job once they graduate (Kramer-Simpson, 2018). Workplace learning like internship program shapes and facilitates learning opportunities, but further research should be considered to explore the student preparation for workplace learning to reduce barriers (O'Donovan, 2018). Lack of language preparation before the internship inhibits the students from using the language to conduct business successfully.

The implementation of blended learning activities is expected to help the students improve their business English skills. Considering the nature of TEVOCS as a high stake test, the students of Sekolah Vokasi Universitas Gadjah Mada have to accomplish all types of tasks in listening and speaking sections. Before the implementation, almost all students are not able to pass the test. In order to solve the problem, the students are given the opportunity to access the supplementary listening materials on the OLIVE website and practice their communication skills in the classroom. The activities help the students to improve their communication skills, and the result of the test helps to describe students' current communicative competence level that can predict their abilities to use the language in the workplace.

One factor that also hindered the students from understanding the spoken text is the lack of familiarization. Limited time and interaction reduce time to interact using the language. To accommodate access to communication, teachers are suggested to combine offline and online learning that enables collaboration, intensive interaction, and exposure to language cues (Graham, 2014). In blended learning, teachers should balance instruction with offline learning that focuses on communication or speaking. Before the class, the students individually access online listening materials about the types of spoken text or topics they would practice and discuss in the classroom, and they

are allowed to replay the audio as many times as needed to grasp the content and information. Developing listening skills is considered necessary for working because individuals need to understand messages and instructions or communication in English at work (Tran, 2015). Table 1 shows students' scores before and after implementation.

Table 1 Students' Scores Before and After Implementation

Scores	N	Min	Max	Mean
Pretest	275	37,50	92,00	70,5509
Posttest	275	60,00	92,00	81,1564

The results of the statistical analysis in Table 1 illustrate the improvement of students' business communication skills. The students make significant progress in listening. Before the blended-learning activity, 40 among 275 students do not pass the test due to their low listening scores. After the simulation, all students pass the test. The result of the listening test helps to describe students' listening ability, which includes the ability to comprehend the intended meaning of the language expressions, identify the main ideas and details, and respond to spoken language that commonly appears in the workplace. As Albino (2017) mentions in his study, preparing the students to access explicit types of texts for the workplace will help them to increase understanding. This means that exposures given in the online activities help to familiarize them with structures, functions, and features of the texts as well as skills needed to understand the texts.

In addition to listening ability, the students also make improvements in speaking. As another important communication skill, speaking ability gives information about students' competence in producing language accurately, fluently, and meaningfully. Based on the evaluation that included mechanics, content, pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary, the scores on speaking show that the students successfully maintain communication in English. It can be identified that integrating online learning in business English class provides support for communication and engagement in learning. Based on research, using blended learning brings ease of communication (Khan, Bibi, & Hasan, 2016), which means it can give samples of interaction and exposures to communication anywhere and anytime.

Almost all students have mentioned that the implementation of blended learning instruction improves their communicative competence. The students believe that they have the ability to communicate using the target language in the real setting. It can be seen from these interviews.

“Yes, I think that my listening and speaking ability improve because many practice that given. Speaking and learning can helpful for me.” (Interview: P.3)



“Yes, because the test online (OLIVE) speakers sounded clearer so it was easier to understand.” (Interview: P. 10)

These students’ responses confirm that blended learning instruction brings benefits to them in developing their workplace communication skills. The answers illustrate how the online and offline meeting raised students’ confidence in communicating.

In the early stage of implementation, the students have found difficulty to understand spoken language. As parts of communicative competence and language elements, the discourse and sociolinguistic factors of the language can be a challenge for language learners. Listening to the target language is considered difficult because the students fail to understand the meaning and the social function of the language expressions. Failures to comprehend meanings in conditional clauses, negations, and inferential statements often lead to misinterpretation of the messages. When the students work on short dialogues, longer conversations, and questions/responses parts, most of the time, they are unable to identify the contexts of the interactional and transactional speech because of their erroneous interpretation of specific registers. Other than language and discourse elements, pronunciation and normal speed of speaking also become a challenge for listening tasks. The presence of similar-sounding words might confuse the students and make them mistake the meanings. Another problem that is usually encountered by language learners is the speed of communication. In the recording, the native speakers usually speak within the normal speech. If the learners are still struggling in the level of words, chunks of words, or phrases, this task can be difficult because they should listen for general ideas, main ideas, or details in more rapid speech and at the same time, grasp the meaning of the language expressions. The same problem is also experienced by the students of Sekolah Vokasi when taking TEVOCS.

Before implementing blended learning instruction, the students are unwilling and reluctant to speak. Unplanned speech and limited preparation time are responsible for causing difficulties in speaking. The students are only given 60 seconds to prepare and 60 seconds to speak about the topic. Most of them feel that they are not ready to give the expected response, so frequent pauses and repetitions are found at some or most parts of the speech. They feel uncomfortable and worried to speak because they are afraid of making mistakes. As a result, they prefer to speak less. Being not familiar with the test types is also mentioned as one factor that lower the quality of their listening and speaking skills.

The repetitive and more intensive tasks provide more opportunities for them to aim the targeted skills of listening and speaking. The students find it easier to locate the main ideas or details in the spoken text. When speaking, they feel more confident and eager to share ideas or speak in front of others. Although grammatical errors and mispronunciation are still

unavoidable, they do not interfere with the message. The students could produce more complete sentences instead of word chunks. The number of errors in grammar and pronunciation is also more limited. Being confident about their ability makes them feel more ready and eager to speak. Similar research also shows how combining online and offline learning can effectively improve students’ communication performance because it improves their motivation, engagement, and positive attitudes toward learning (Yu & Wang, 2016).

Students’ positive behavior is also identified from their willingness and motivation to engage in learning. In addition to in-class meetings, the students voluntarily manage their time for personal learning through online learning activities. In this blended-learning instruction, other than motivation, learning success also depends heavily on students’ self-direction to practice and access the online materials independently (Kebritchi, Lipschuetz, & Santiago, 2017). Having high motivation and control over learning, these students regularly work on the listening tasks to improve their listening skills and enjoy the online learning activities because they could freely access the learning materials and set their own personal learning time. The online listening application also keeps the record of their scores and activities so that they could monitor their progress. This result answers why students are most interested in educational experiences that put them into a professional setting that can help to grow their self-confidence and ability to make well-informed plans in the future (Washor, 2018).

During the implementation of blended learning, the students perform positive learning behavior. The integration of online and offline meetings gives more spaces for language exposure. Participating in the classroom activities provide students with activities to apply what they have learned in the class and obtain support (Lin et al., 2018). The students have mentioned that accessing OLIVE improves the mobility of learning. They could access online listening materials anywhere and anytime. The use of online learning extends the time to access learning, so the process of learning does not end in the classroom. The students are helped by the online listening application. It serves as language drills and helps them improve their listening skills. They could also set the learning process at their own learning pace. They have mentioned that they access the online listening materials when they are free and played the recordings as many times as they need. By doing so, they are able to find the strategies to tackle the tasks and apply the same strategy in similar task types. Students’ following responses show how they gained benefits from the activities, especially to improve their listening and speaking skills.

“It was very effective for me, because it can help me in practice my listening skill so hopefully that my ability will improve after practicing in OLIVE. Maybe in my opinion, olive really help

me because it's easy to access the sites. In every condition we can practice our listening skill in olive site, it's caused, we can use our mobile for practice." (Interview: P.7)

"In my opinion presentation and discussion is important because it helps me in improving my knowledge and my skill. If I was lazy to practice in home, so only in the class I can practice and it's the way to improve my skill. And I learn about how to be a good speaker in public discussion." (Interview: P. 11)

The implementation of blended learning provides more time and more various activities for speaking, which builds students' learning behavior. In the activities of speaking, the students employ various learning strategies to achieve the learning goals. They are self-motivated themselves to communicate in the target language. When delivering a presentation and conducting group discussion, the students practice to share opinions, ask for opinions, negotiate, ask for and give information, and use daily expressions as the targeted speaking skills in TEVOCS. The activities invite more immediate feedbacks or comments from friends. If the students make a mistake, other friends will help to locate and correct the mistake. Correcting others' mistakes or being corrected by others helps the students to be aware of their language. The situations mentioned before illustrate how the students used time on task more effectively.

After the students finish working on the online listening activities, they could immediately check their scores, compare their answers, and locate the mistakes. They could identify what they still lack and look for strategies to improve it. Similar research also shows that providing feedback is useful because most learners have different characteristics, such as prior knowledge, learning pace, and learning preference (Bimba et al., 2017). By accessing the online-based listening materials, the students are given more chance to self-evaluate their communicative competence, improve their skills, and be responsible for learning. Although some students still experience the same difficulties in the listening tasks, their self-motivation helps them to persist in learning and gradually improve their ability.

"I feel many benefit for me from speaking to improve. And I feel learning method in this one semester is very fun." (Interview: P.8)

Clear learning goals direct students towards learning. The students are fully aware of the expected learning outcomes. Thus, they put efforts on learning and participated in all learning activities. In the interview, the students have mentioned that the integration between online and offline learning activities builds a different learning atmosphere. Learning becomes more enjoyable, challenging, yet feasible. Nevertheless, the activities provide balance exposures for listening and

speaking as they are interconnected skills that build communicative competence. The learning goals also motivate the students to challenge themselves to learn, even when the materials become more difficult. The situations confirm that students' perceptions also contribute to learning performance. From learning the language, the students also learn the values that shape their personal agency in terms of confidence and skills (Kersh, 2015).

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the research suggest that the implementation of blended learning conducted in Sekolah Vokasi Universitas Gadjah Mada can help to improve students' business communication skills in English. In addition to the improvement of business communication skills, the implementation of blended learning also makes a significant contribution in building students' positive judgment about language competence, positive affective factors, good learning behaviors, and positive perceptions on language learning that help to maintain positive learning atmosphere. As English is highly required in global business activities, this research can also add ideas in teaching business English.

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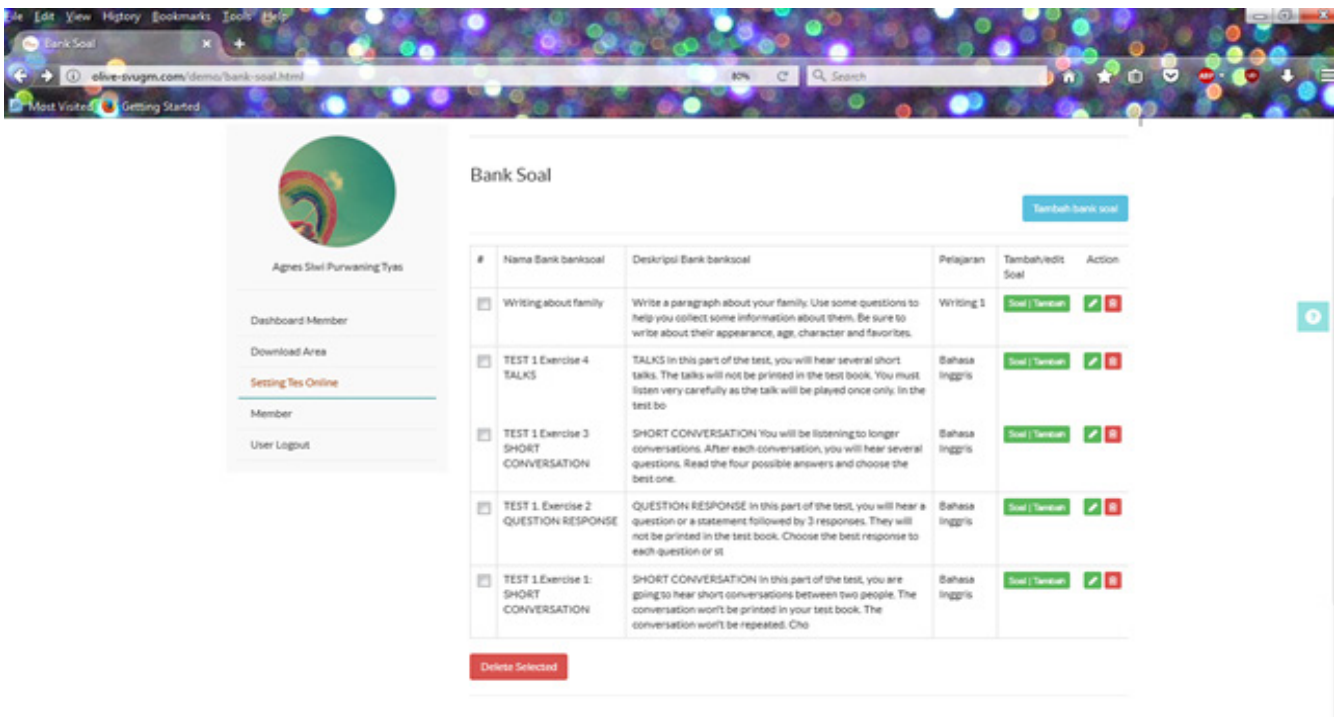
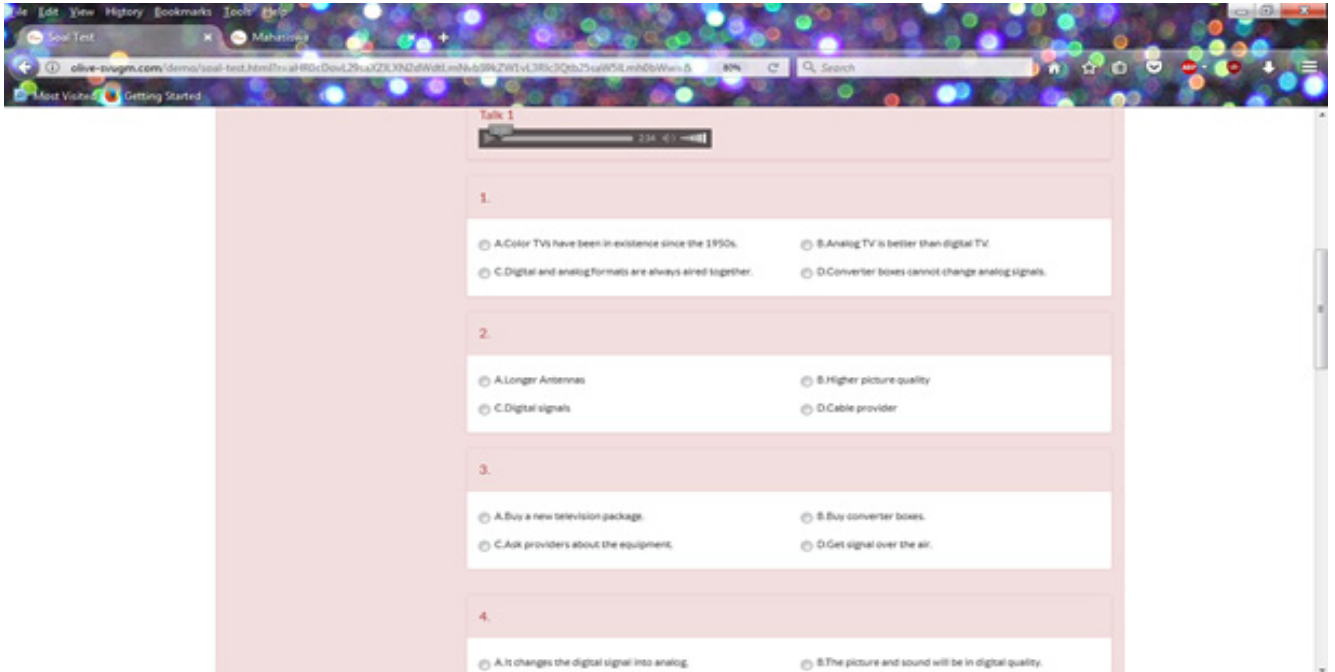


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# Appendix 1

## Sample of OLIVE Page





## Appendix 2

### Sample of Students' TEVOCS Pre-Test Score

St Number	Listening	Speaking	Total
1	30	72	51
2	52	78	65
3	32	92	62
4	42	82	62
5	35	75	55
6	58	80	69
7	40	80	60
9	42	82	62
10	68	80	74
11	32	78	55
12	45	75	60
13	42	82	62
14	45	82	64
15	40	78	59
16	62	80	71
17	50	82	66
18	45	85	65
19	52	78	65
20	42	82	62
21	40	75	58
22	38	82	60
23	35	85	60
24	20	80	50
25	45	82	64

## Appendix 3

### Sample of Students' Mid Test and Final Test Score

St Number	Mid Test			Final Test		
	List	Speak	Total	List	Speak	Total
1	62	70	66	80	75	78
2	68	82	75	85	88	86
3	68	88	78	82	88	85
4	72	75	74	80	85	82
5	65	80	72	88	88	88
6	72	72	72	85	75	80
7	68	85	77	85	85	85
9	75	85	80	85	92	88
10	68	80	74	88	82	85
11	68	82	75	85	90	88
12	80	82	81	85	80	82
13	75	82	78	90	90	90
14	62	82	72	85	85	85
15	75	82	78	85	88	86
16	70	85	78	80	92	86
17	80	82	81	90	88	89
18	75	82	78	88	88	88
19	75	82	78	85	88	86
20	68	80	74	82	95	88
21	72	82	77	88	90	89
22	78	85	82	88	85	86
23	85	82	84	90	88	89
24	60	80	70	88	85	86
25	80	80	80	82	90	86