Regular Paper

Connecting in-class and out-of-class learning: Integrating online resources and blog writing for EFL proficiency enhancement

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This study addresses common issues in the EFL context, specifically the lack of engagement and limited language exposure. The study implemented a flipped classroom approach to enhance learner engagement and improve language learning outcomes. It involved 32 non-English majors and utilized 6 Minute English Podcasts and TED Talks as core materials, supplemented by blog writing assignments to connect in-class and out-of-class learning. Students engaged with online course materials before attending in-class discussions and worked on their blog assignments after class. Research tools included pre- and post-language proficiency tests, an end-of-semester questionnaire, student blog writing, and reflection papers. The results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated a significant improvement in students' listening skills (z=−4.099, p<0.001). Regarding their performance in speaking and writing, the results of the paired t-tests showed that students demonstrated varying levels of improvement, with the most significant improvements in the writing test (p<0.001) with a large effect size (d=1.94). The findings highlight significant progress in listening, writing, and listen-to-write skills, resulting from the synergistic integration of high-quality online audio and video resources, blog-writing assignments, and the flipped teaching approach. This research provides insights for practitioners seeking to enhance language acquisition, particularly within the EFL context.

Keywords: online multimedia resources, blog writing, flipped classroom, EFL context, language proficiency

Introduction

In the ESL context, language learners use the target language for daily communication (Dörnyei, 1990). However, in the EFL setting, language learners often lack real-life language opportunities, resulting in lower learning motivation

(Li, 2014). In Taiwan, the EFL context, English courses are mandatory for college students of all majors, typically featuring large classes, meeting for 2 to 3 hours weekly. The "unfavorable class size" and the time constraints can hinder the development of authentic communication skills (Richards, 2015, p. 6). Additionally, some students come to class unprepared. This lack of readiness poses a considerable obstacle for students, particularly those at lower intermediate or beginning proficiency levels when attempting to engage in classroom discussions. Motivating students to learn and engage them both during and after class remains a critical, unsolved issue. These issues might be prevalent in other EFL contexts worldwide (Kweon & Spolsky, 2018).

To address the issue, the study implemented a flipped classroom approach in a one-semester English class for sophomore students in northern Taiwan. It integrated high-quality web resources and blog writing to enhance in-class and after-class learning. The research aimed to assess the impact of the course design in the EFL context, focusing on three key aspects: course material engagement, student preparedness, and language exposure and usage. The research questions are:

1. To what extent does this course design help students improve their English proficiency in one semester? More specifically, how does integrating authentic multimedia materials and interactive blog writing in a flipped classroom framework impact the language learning outcomes of EFL students in terms of listening, writing, and speaking skills over a semester?

2. What are the students' perceptions of the course design? Specifically, what are the students' perceptions and experiences in the class concerning the effectiveness of the integrated approach that includes online multimedia resources and blog writing in bridging in-class and out-of-class language learning?

Literature review

Flipped teaching and flipped classroom

Flipped teaching and the flipped classroom have gained considerable attention in education in the past decade. According to the definition of flipped teaching by the Flipped Learning Network (2014):

> Flipped learning is a pedagogical approach in which direct instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space, and the resulting group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter. (p. 1)

In a flipped classroom, instructors create instructional videos or select ready-made educational materials and videos from websites, and the learners study them before class. This method frees class time so students can engage in more active learning activities and higher-order learning, such as group discussions,

presentations, and projects. The flipped classroom can be designed and implemented in the class with slightly different practices based on different subjects and groups. Studies have shown that a flipped classroom contributes to students' academic achievement, increases their engagement, and decreases learners' cognitive load (O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015; Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020). Although research on flipped teaching has proliferated, there is still limited comprehensive research on the effectiveness of the method in the field of foreign language education. According to a systematic review of the use of the flipped classroom in English language teaching (Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020), it was not until 2014 that the first research on flipped teaching in ELT with empirical data was published (Hung, 2015).

The focus of flipped teaching research has varied, centered around enhancing the engagement of learners (Amiryousefi, 2017), boosting learners' motivation (Boyraz & Ocak, 2017), enhancing the preparedness of learners (Choe & Seong, 2016), enhancing learners' language skills (Webb & Doman, 2016), decreasing learners' speaking nervousness (Hsieh, Wu, & Marek, 2017), and enhancing learners' information and communication technology skills (Huang & Hong, 2016). According to Hung (2017), by engaging the students to participate in the carefully designed flipped classroom, they gradually became active learners and were constantly motivated to take control of their learning.

Language learning resources and materials selection

In the past, EFL learners faced the challenge of limited access to authentic materials. The Internet and the open educational resources (OERs) movement have changed that situation completely. Now, the primary concern is how to guide students in taking advantage of the abundant high-quality online materials for their learning. In addition, there is a mistaken assumption that learners who are capable users of technology also know how to use technology for learning purposes. In fact, research has shown that students experienced in using digital technology for entertainment may not know how to effectively utilize these resources for language learning purposes (Hubbard, 2013; Lai, 2017; Lai, Shum & Tian, 2016).

There is a wealth of high-quality language materials available online. The challenge lies in selecting materials and technology and integrating them with pedagogical tasks to promote language learning both inside and outside the classroom (Cowie & Sakui, 2014). Pedagogical support is therefore required (Hubbard, 2008; Lawrence et al., 2020; Richards, 2015). Chapelle (2001) and Tomlinson (2010) identified five key characteristics of high-quality language materials: diversity and authenticity in language exposure and use, stimulation of learners' affective and cognitive engagement, facilitation of noticing salient input features like sound, form, and meaning, and provision of broader learning benefits beyond language acquisition.

Videos of TED Talks, EFL podcast series, and Google's free blogging platform have garnered much attention. These resources vary in their language exposure and use across different media formats. In contrast to classroom-based

learning, where the teacher's speech constitutes most input, these online assets allow students to "hear or watch as many times as they like, providing the opportunity for learning through repeated exposure to authentic input" (Richards, 2015, p. 14). For instance, there is a wealth of TED Talks available, varying in length and level of difficulty, with many of them including transcripts and translations (Coxhead & Bytheway, 2014). These resources are valuable for both learners and teachers.

Podcasts

Podcasts have also gained popularity (Alm, 2013; Godwin-Jones, 2005; Gromik, 2008; O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007; Rosell-Aguilar, 2007, 2013). They offer learners easy and free access to authentic, rich materials, enabling them to personalize their listening experience both in and out of the classroom (Lawrence et al., 2020). Learners have the flexibility to choose topics, listening times, and the option to pause, rewind, slow down, or replay content. Repeated exposure enhances learners' listening abilities, vocabulary, and comprehension of various topics. For instance, BBC Learning English's 6 Minute English Podcasts present concise six-minute episodes on topical and captivating themes. Moreover, these podcasts provide learners with transcripts featuring highlighted keywords and definitions to facilitate language learning.

Podcasts for language learning have garnered support from some learning theories, including the utilization of authentic resources for language acquisition, informal and lifelong learning, and mobile learning (Alm, 2013). Furthermore, podcasts share crucial attributes with mobile learning, as they offer spontaneity, individuality, informality, portability, and widespread accessibility (Kukulska-Hulme, 2005). Empirical studies have reported positive impacts of podcasts in vocabulary learning (Bueno-Alastuey & Nemeth, 2020), listening (Cross, 2014), and speaking (Khotimah et al., 2022; Yeh et al., 2021). Despite the numerous advantages of podcasting, it does exhibit a deficiency in interaction (Stockwell, 2010).

Blogs

For learning to occur, students must produce the target language (Chapelle, 1998), use it for interaction, negotiate for meaning, and produce comprehensible output (Holliday, 1999; Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). Interaction can be encouraged through a variety of technological means, such as blog posting. On the other hand, blogs are suitable for reflective writing and collaborative communication (Alm, 2013; Lee, 2010). Podcast episodes help learners develop, produce, and share knowledge and ideas. Incorporating technology, in this case a blog, enables teachers to "connect beyond the classroom with their students and provides continuity" for students' learning (Lawrence et al., 2020, p. 109). In addition, the pre-communicative nature of the online assignments, specifically blog writing, allowed students to prepare and focus on the lexical structure and meaning of class materials before participating in class discussions (Jaramillo,

2019). Language exposure, usage, and classroom assignments should be inter-woven for optimal learning (Wong et al., 2015).

Videos and TED Talks

In recent years, TED Talk digital videos have become valuable resources in language learning. TED Talks offer several specific benefits that make them a valuable resource for language learners. First, the compelling content and storytelling of TED Talks can keep learners motivated and better engage the audience in the language learning process. Second, TED Talks cover a wide range of topics, allowing learners to explore subjects that interest them and expand their vocabulary in specific areas. Third, TED speakers are often clear and well-articulated. Listening to these speakers can help learners improve their listening comprehension and train their ears to different accents and pronunciations. Learners can also practice their listening skills with authen-tic speech. Finally, many TED Talks offer subtitles in multiple languages. This makes it easier for learners to follow along. Learners can read the subtitles while watching. In sum, TED Talk provides a rich and diverse learning expe-rience that combines language skills development with exposure to engaging content and global perspectives.

In this study, the 6 Minute English Podcasts, TED Talks, and blog writing were integrated into a college English class for one semester. 6 Minute English Podcasts and TED Talks contained rich, valuable, authentic, and educational multimedia materials aimed at increasing students' audio-visual exposure and learning motivation inside and outside the class. Blog writing was integrated into this class to create interaction and language-use opportunities. All students had to maintain a personal blog to post their pre- and after-class assignments. The pre-blog assignments guided and ensured that the students had previewed the class materials, while the post-blog assignments provided them with oppor-tunities to use the language and reflect on issues discussed in class. The blog assignments gave the students a personal and public area to speak and share their ideas at their own pace beyond the classroom.

Methods

Research design

This classroom-based research aimed to explore the influence of course design on students' language learning outcomes. The focal point of this study was the independent variable, which encompassed a comprehensive course design package. This package featured the incorporation of two carefully selected edu-cational resources: the 6 Minute English Podcasts and TED Talks, along with blog writing. These resources were seamlessly integrated into the curriculum within the context of a flipped classroom framework. The dependent variables under investigation were the students' learning outcomes, specifically focusing on enhancements in their listening, writing, and speaking skills.

Participants

The study was conducted in the participants' sophomore year for one semester. Six students did not sign the consent form; therefore, this paper reported the results of only 32 students. Each student was assigned a code, ranging from S1 (highest) to S32 (lowest), based on their scores in the pre-listening Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). Their scores ranged from 70 to 435, with a mean of 303 and a standard deviation of 91. These codes were used throughout the study for the description of and information on the students' language proficiency.

Course materials

BBC Learning English's 6 Minute English Podcasts and TED Talks served as the core materials for the course. The first half of the semester featured 6 Minute English Podcast episodes, suitable for intermediate learners (Figure 1), while the second half incorporated TED Talks. Each 6 Minute podcast episode covers current popular issues and includes downloadable PDF transcripts and MP3 audio files accessible on the website. The audio recordings reintroduce keywords two or three times and the PDFs highlight key terms while providing their meanings for learners. These materials are open, engaging, concise, and adaptable. They emphasize linguistic features and recycle vocabulary to enhance language acquisition. All these characteristics make them ideal resources for learners (Holec, 2009; Lai, 2015, 2017).
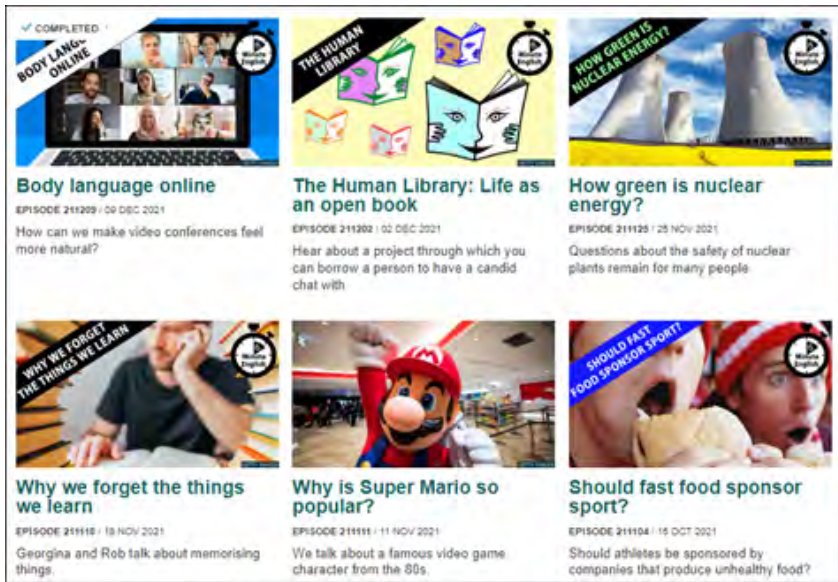

Figure 1. Screenshot of the interface for the 6 Minute English Podcasts

The second half of the semester featured TED Talks, encompassing a wide range of topics, such as success, motivation, well-being, and dreams. Each talk varied in length and adopted a format similar to listening to personal life stories. The videos served as valuable tools for learners to enhance their listening, expand

their subject knowledge, and improve their presentation skills- all of which catered to the diverse needs of learners. Since learning is often driven by interest (Barbee, 2013), the strategic use of engaging and relevant materials became crucial (Cooker, 2010). Moreover, these materials evoked emotional responses and kindle learners' interests and curiosity (Lai, 2017). TED Talks served the purpose of the current study.

Course design and class activities

The one-semester course was structured into three phases: (1) preparation, (2) training, and (3) evaluation (Table 1). In the preparation phase, students were introduced to podcasts, talks, and blogs and engaged in discussions about their potential for language learning. They were also provided guidance in crafting their own blogs.

Moving into the training phrase, three episodes from the 6 Minute English Podcasts and three talks from the TED Talks series were carefully selected, with one topic allocated for each class session. The course was designed with the flipped classroom principles in mind. Prior to the class, students needed to listen to an episode or view a talk and then complete a pre-class assignment. A routine was established wherein, every week, students were expected to post their completed assignments on their blog, no later than two days ahead of the scheduled class meeting. This approach ensured that every student engaged with the class materials beforehand, outside the confines of the classroom environment. For instance:

▶ Listen to the podcast/watch the talk at least once.
▶ Identify and research words that hold significance or pose difficulty.
▶ Compile a list of five words that you have learned (including the word, its definition, and an example sentence for each).

This methodology promotes active engagement and preparation, hoping to foster a more interactive and productive in-class experience.

Depending on the topic, role-playing, pair work and group discussion were incorporated. Students were allocated ample time for class discussions, sharing, and addressing challenging aspects. The after-class blog assignments served to extend these discussions, providing students with additional opportunities for practice, contemplation, and reflection on the given topics. For instance:

Watch TED Talk 2 (Inside the mind of a master procrastinator) and answer the following three questions: (1) Do you procrastinate sometimes? (2) Why are the reasons behind your procrastination? (3) How do you stop procrastinating?

In the subsequent week, three to four students shared their blog entries and insights within the class. These students either volunteered to present their blog posts or were invited to do so by the instructor. This approach not only nurtured learning beyond the confines of the classroom but also ensured that

students arrived well-prepared for the class discussion. The 14-week schedule is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Course design and schedule

Week	Topic
	Preparation Phase
1	– Orientation – Students create their online blog
2	Pre-tests: – TOEIC, Listening section – Speaking and writing
3	– How to improve listening? – Podcasts and English learning – 6 Minute English Podcasts
	Training Phase
4	6 Minute English Podcast 1: Transport of the future
5	6 Minute English Podcast 2: Are you hungry when you are angry?
6	6 Minute English Podcast 3: Can you trust a smart speaker?
7	TED Talks and English listening
8	TED Talk 1: Grit: The power of passion and perseverance
9	TED Talk 2: Inside the mind of a master procrastinator
10	TED Talk 3: What makes a good life?
11	More discussion
	Evaluation Phase
12	Speaking and writing (post-test)
13	TOEIC, Listening section (post-test)
14	Evaluation questionnaire

TOEIC = Test of English for International Communication.

Research instruments

The research instruments included: (1) the TOEIC Listening section (pre- and post-test); (2) speaking and writing tests (pre- and post-test); (3) an end-of-semester evaluation questionnaire; and (4) students' reflection papers.

The paper-based TOEIC was administered to measure the students' improvement in listening over one semester, and the scores were checked manually. In addition to the TOEIC, a language test was developed by the instructor to evaluate the student's progress in speaking and writing, which comprised three tasks. These tasks are designed to simulate the TOEFL speaking and writing tests. For Task 1, students were asked to express their opinion on whether they preferred to work alone or to in a team, along with their reasons, in one minute. Task 2 required the students to view a brief video story, during which they were allowed to take notes and then retell the story in five minutes. Task 3 was a writing test in which students responded to a statement about common life challenges in school, family, and academics. They chose a preferred method from four options: seeking help from experienced individuals, finding

information online, discussing the issue with a friend, and taking time for contemplation. They were encouraged to provide reasons and examples to support their answer.

The end-of-semester evaluation questionnaire was designed to understand how much time the students spent on the course, their experience of attending the class, and their perceptions of the overall course design. The questionnaire included five parts: (1) pre-class and after-class preparation; (2) in-class participation; (3) out-of-class blogging assignments; (4) selection of course materials; and (5) perceptions of the course design. Table 2 shows the five parts of the evaluation questionnaire and provides an example statement for each part (see Appendix B for more details).

Table 2. The five parts of the evaluation questionnaire and example statements

Parts	Statements
Part 1: Students' pre-class and after-class preparation	– How much time did you spend previewing the class materials? – How much time did you spend on the after-class blogging assignment?
Part 2: Students' perceptions of their in-class participation	– This semester, I actively joined the class discussion.
Part 3: Students' perceptions of the out-of-class blogging assignments	– The after-class blogging assignments provided me with an opportunity to express my ideas in English.
Part 4: Students' perceptions of the selection of course material	– I liked/disliked using the quality online English resources as the major class materials.
Part 5: Students' perceptions of the course design	– Assigning class materials to listen to/to watch before each class meeting on a routine basis was a good class arrangement.

In addition to the evaluation questionnaire, the students wrote a reflection paper at the end of the semester. They were asked to reflect on topics covered in class from either the 6 Minute English Podcasts, TED Talks, their blog writing, or class activities. The reflection paper served to guide students in finding meaningful aspects of their learning journey and contributed value to their educational experience. Furthermore, it provided the teacher with enhanced insight into the students' experiences. The qualitative data derived from these reflection papers supplemented and supported the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires and the test results (see Appendix A for the prompt used to elicit student reflections).

Results

Question 1: To what extent does this course design help students improve their English proficiency in one semester? More specifically, how does integrating authentic multimedia materials and interactive blog writing in a flipped

classroom framework impact the language learning outcomes of EFL students in terms of listening, writing, and speaking skills over a semester?

Results of the TOEIC (Listening section) pre- and post-tests

The first research question investigated the students' language progress using two data sets: (1) the pre- and post-simulated TOEIC listening scores; and (2) the pre- and post-speaking and writing fluency tests. To assess whether the students made any significant improvements in their listening skills, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used due to the non-normal distribution of TOEIC scores (Table 3).

Table 3. Comparison of the TOEIC (Listening section) pre- and post-tests

Test	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test z	p
Pre-test	32	303.3	91	70	435	−4.099	0.000
Post-test	32	345.2	75	175	440		

The total score in the listening section was 495.

The students' performance on the TOEIC (Listening section) increased from an initial score of 303.3 (SD=91) on the pre-test to 345.2 (SD=75) on the post-test. The results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated a significant improvement in students' listening skills (z=−4.099, p<0.001). This showed that engaging students in weekly listening and writing tasks beyond the classroom, using readily available multimedia web resources, successfully contributed to a substantial improvement in their listening abilities over one semester.

When examining each student's progress, most of the significant improvements were achieved by lower-level students, such as S32, S28, and S21. For instance, S32 started with a modest score of 70 but displayed a remarkable increase of 100 points, reaching 175 in the post-test. Likewise, S28 began with a score of 200 and achieved an impressive jump to 310, a noteworthy improvement of 110 points. The materials and method seem to help the lower-level learners even more.

Results of the speaking and writing pre- and post-tests

Fluency is a complex construct in SLA, and there are various methods to assess fluency, with one common approach being to examine speech rate, a narrow sense of fluency (Lennon, 1990). In this study, the number of words produced by students in each task was counted, disregarding grammatical errors and incomplete sentences. Students were awarded one point for each word produced. Before conducting the t-tests, the Shapiro-Wilk test was employed to confirm that the results of all three tasks exhibit normal distributions. Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics and t-test statistics:

Table 4. Results of the paired t-tests for the pre- and post-tests

Task	Test	Mean	N	SD	*Df*	*t*-statistic	*p* (two-tailed)	Cohen's *d*
Task 1 Speaking	Pre	68.9	32	28.0				
	Post	74.3	32	23.6	31	−1.719	0.096	0.3039
	Paired Differences	5.4	32	17.7				
Task 2 Speaking	Pre	243.3	32	86.5				
	Post	271.5	32	86.3	31	−2.932	0.006**	0.5183
	Paired Differences	28.1	32	54.3				
Task 3 Writing	Pre	56.2	32	15.5				
	Post	89.9	32	21.0	31	−10.965	0.000***	1.9384
	Paired Differences	33.7	32	17.4				

Task 1=one-minute speech; Task 2=watching a video and retelling the story in four minutes; Task 3=five-minute writing task; * , **, and *** denote statistical significance at 5%, 1%, and 0.1%, respectively, using a two-tailed test.

The results of the paired t-tests indicated that the students made significant improvements in Task 2 and Task 3, albeit with varying significance levels. The most substantial improvements were observed in Task 3, the five-minute writing task (p<0.001), with a large effect size (d=1.94) according to Plonsky and Oswald's (2014) field-specific benchmark for effect size. In the pre-test, the students generated 56.2 words for the opinion essay writing within the designated five-minute timeframe; in the post-test, this number increased from 56.2 to 89.9 words. Following one semester of weekly blog writing after class, students exhibited the ability to articulate their thoughts in written form more extensively.

Regarding the speaking fluency tests for Task 1 and Task 2, the students performed better in Task 2. In Task 2, students watched a video and had four minutes to retell the story in their own words. The number of words they produced increased from 243.3 words to 271.5 words (p<0.01), with a small effect size (d=0.52). This exercise engaged both listening and speaking skills. Given the significant improvement in the students' listening comprehension, as demonstrated by the TOEIC listening post-test, it is unsurprising that they had more to say, as their enhanced understanding allowed for a more comprehensive oral presentation. As for Task 1, students were allotted one minute to express their thoughts on a given topic. Although there was an improvement on the post-test, with an increase from 68.9 words to 74.3 words, the improvement did not reach a significant level.

In summary, by incorporating high-quality learner-fit materials (audio and video) to enhance students' language exposure both inside and outside the classroom and using blogs as a supplementary tool to extend class discussions and promote increased language usage, the students showed significant

improvement in listening, writing, and listening to speak tasks over the relatively short duration of one semester. The designed course was successful.

Question 2: What are the students' perceptions of the course design? Specifically, what are the students' perceptions and experiences in the class concerning the effectiveness of the integrated approach that includes online multimedia resources and blog writing in bridging in-class and out-of-class language learning?

Evaluation questionnaire

An evaluation questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale examined the students' perceptions of the course design and their participation over the course of one semester (Appendix B). The overall scores were positive regarding material selection and course design. The students liked using the two websites (the quality online resources) as their major class materials (Item 11, M=4.4); they also believed that listening to and watching the online audio and video files on a routine basis was a good class arrangement (Item 12, M=4.4 and Item 13, M=4.4).

Regarding the out-of-class blog writing assignments, the students' attitudes were positive. They believed that the pre-class blogging assignments facilitated their in-class discussions (Item 4, M=4.2). On the other hand, the extended assignments gave the students an opportunity to express themselves in English and think critically about the topics covered in class (Item 5, M=4.2). They also believed that the blog assignments helped them improve their writing fluency (Item 10, M=4.3).

Understanding how much time the students committed to the course was also important. The students indicated that they were more engaged and spent more time on English learning during the semester (Item 15, Mean=4.1). Figure 2 shows that two-thirds of the students spent about 30 to 60 minutes pre-listening or pre-watching the class materials. Eleven students spent approximately one hour. Most students pre-listened or pre-watched the audio and video files two or three times (Figure 3). Six students, nearly one-fifth of the class, indicated that they usually viewed the TED Talks more than four times.
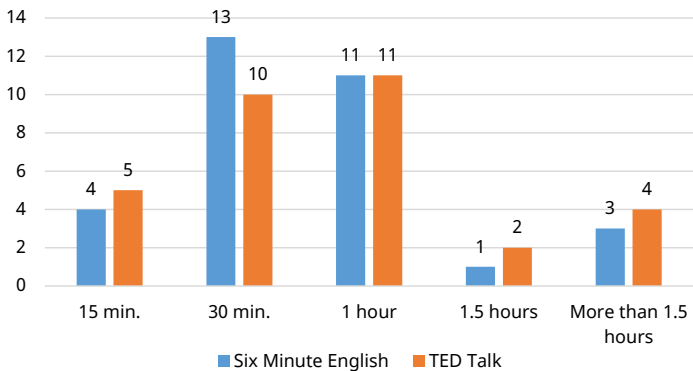

Figure 2. Length of time the students spent listening to/watching the assigned materials before class
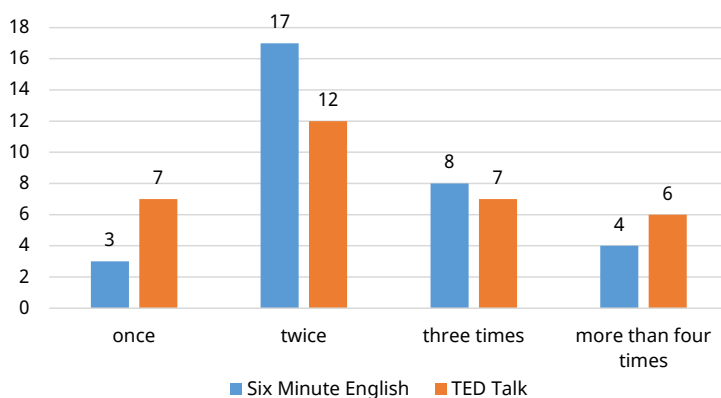
Figure 3. Number of times the students listened to/watched the materials before class

In addition to listening and watching the ready-made high-quality online multimedia materials, the students also spent time writing their blog assignments outside of class. The blog assignments were divided into two categories: one with easier tasks, such as learning vocabulary; and the other with more challenging assignments, such as commenting on weekly topics. Figure 4 shows that for both categories of the blog assignments, students spent approximately 30 minutes to an hour per week writing blog posts. The course design was deemed successful in engaging students in more learning outside of class, for both perceptive and productive learning. It is therefore not surprising that the students' post-test scores in listening, writing, and even speaking all improved.
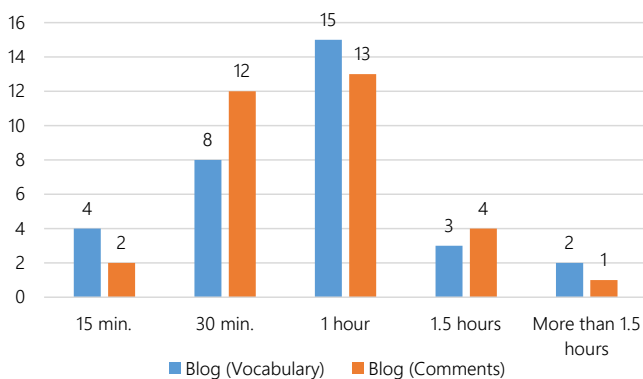

Figure 4. Length of time the students spent on writing their blog assignments

Reflection papers

The students' reflection papers complemented the information gathered from the evaluation questionnaires and test results with qualitative data. Students reflected their thoughts on the course materials and the blogging assignments. Regarding the 6 Minute English Podcast, three students (S10, S13, and S32) noted that they made gradual progress after a brief period of investigation

with the 6 Minute English Podcasts. Language learners often tend to prefer non-classroom learning methods that are time-efficient, easily accessible, and resources with user-friendly learning support (Lai, 2015). Additionally, the episode transcripts were also important:

> … if you didn't hear what the host said clearly, or if you encountered any unfamiliar words, there's no need to worry because it [6 Minute English Podcast] provides users with the transcript…These features make me feel that this is a valuable platform to enhance my English proficiency. (S13)

Regarding TED Talks, several students commented that the TED Talks were a great resource for learning English and personal growth. They found the talks inspiring and beneficial for improving their language skills while also gaining insights into various topics:

> I enjoyed the TED Talks very much. I was pleasantly surprised by the stories and research findings shared by the speakers. Some topics are close to our life … I learned that money and fame are not the most important things; good relationships are the key to a happy life. As for the key to success, it is passion and never giving up. Although I found some vocabulary in the talk challenging, I plan to listen to more TED Talks when I have free time. (S25)

> TED Talks have many great speech videos. These speeches allowed me to empathize with the speakers' emotions and understand how they faced and overcame life's challenges. I enjoy learning not only English but also how others discover the truth in life. It's like hitting two birds with one stone. (S22)

One student (S12) mentioned that after listening to numerous TED Talks and exploring the research findings presented by TED speakers, she came to realize the importance of "expressing one's thoughts." She diligently studied the transcripts and tried to mimic the speakers' accents and tones. After some practice, she felt she was developing her unique way of speaking in English. These materials helped her grasp the purpose of learning English and motivated her to enhance her communication skills and express herself in English. Interest plays a significant role in extracurricular learning (Barron, 2006), and personal enjoyment is often cited as a primary factor influencing learners' choice of out-of-class learning activities. Therefore, materials need to be engaging, enjoyable, and relevant to learners' lives (Cooker, 2010).

Several students elaborated on their thoughts and experiences in blogging. In this study, blog writing was utilized as a platform for students to write and post their weekly assignments publicly. They were encouraged to prioritize the content and the message they wished to convey, rather than overly concerning themselves with grammar mistakes. There were no complaints from any students regarding the upkeep of their blogs. The students seemed to derive enjoyment from maintaining their blogs for a multitude of reasons. One student noted that blogging contributed to a deeper understanding of the course

materials, making them more meaningful and enhancing the overall learning experience:

> The learning process involving the 6 Minute English Podcasts and TED Talks cannot be separated from blog writing. I wouldn't have gained as much knowledge without writing about it. ... The act of producing the blog helped me to consolidate what I had learned, which is a crucial aspect of the learning process. Moreover, the exploration of word collocations, my reflections on the discussed topics, and the comments made on the subject matter encouraged me to delve deeper into my thoughts. (S12)

Compared with paper-and-pencil assignments, the students considered blog writing as a superior form of assignment:

> It is a good idea to create and maintain a blog as part of the course. We can post and share our thoughts with everybody after [it's] well thought out. I prefer posting blogs rather than doing paper-and-pencil homework. It contributes to environmental protection.... We can post our work and look back on it. ... I think I might revisit my blog many years later and reminisce about my English learning [this semester]. (S23)

In this class, most students were lower-intermediate to intermediate learners and speaking presented a challenge for them. Several students expressed a fear of public speaking. They were either too shy to speak in public, or their language proficiency was insufficient for immediate responses. Blog writing, being asynchronous, provided them with the luxury of time to express themselves, making it a significantly less intimidating option. Moreover, it also allowed them to practice and fulfilled their "speaking" needs through written expression:

> ...it is a good idea to exchange ideas through blog writing because not everyone is outgoing. For instance, it is very challenging for me to communicate with someone I am not familiar with in English. (S19)

> ... blogging is a good way to submit my homework. ... I used to think that homework made me unhappy, but when I tried this new approach [blogging], it improved my speaking. I used to be so afraid of speaking English because I believed my English wasn't good enough. However, the blogging homework helped me overcome these difficulties. (S25)

In an EFL context, English is typically used only within classroom settings. Due to the limited exposure and opportunities to apply English in real-life situations, students' writing and speaking experiences are restricted. The blogging environment, however, can offer students a secure space to formulate and share their opinions in English outside of the classroom. Consequently, blogs serve as a medium that bridges the gap between in-class and out-of-class learning.

Discussion

In the EFL context, both the perceptive and productive uses of English are often quite limited in learners' everyday lives. Common issues are: (1) students often lack exposure to real-life listening situations, leading to poor listening ability; (2) due to large class sizes and limited class hours, speaking and interaction opportunities are scarce; (3) even when speaking opportunities are provided, many students struggle to respond spontaneously due to low language proficiency; and (4) many students simply do not have the habit of previewing and reviewing the course materials. There is a clear need to engage students in learning beyond the classroom, addressing both perceptive and productive skills. In this study, integrating technological resources and blog writing into the English coursework, bridging the gap between in-class and out-of-class spaces, successfully improved students' listening, writing, and speaking abilities. The data also indicated increased engagement and motivation among the students. Overall, the students had a positive experience in this study.

Affordances of web resources for listening

The web materials align with Vandergrift and Goh's (2012) three key principles for listening outside the classroom: variety, frequency, and repetition. The 6 Minute English Podcasts provide audio clips of conversations, while the TED Talk videos offer more narrative and argumentative content. Both platforms cover a wide range of themes and topics to help learners expand their vocabulary. In addition to variety, regular and consistent listening practice is essential. Lastly, repetition, as suggested by Vandergrift and Goh (2012), supports cognitive development, and familiarizes learners with the content, vocabulary, and structure. The media files mentioned can be downloaded, saved, paused, replayed, and even slowed down, enabling listeners to focus on challenging segments. Over time, through repetition, students' listening processes become automatic, leading to an improvement in their listening skills. At every level, these two websites and numerous other web materials support these three fundamental principles.

Out-of-class learning

Richard (2015) emphasized the limitations of classroom-based learning and advocated for the effective use of Internet resources to support out-of-class learning in the EFL context. In response to this call, this study integrated two readily available Internet resources with weekly blog writing. The findings revealed that students improved their listening, writing, and listen-to-speak skills over the course of one semester. Several factors contributed to these successful learning outcomes.

First, the online materials were accessible outside of the classroom. Responses from evaluation questionnaires and reflection papers indicated that students dedicated a substantial amount of time to listening to podcasts, watching TED Talks, and working on their blog assignments after class. This approach

provided them with more meaningful and authentic input and interaction compared to a traditional classroom environment dominated by teacher talk.

Furthermore, the input included multimodal sources, encompassing audio input, video input, and texts. Students incorporated elements such as pictures, texts, and even embedded audio files and videos into their blog posts, resulting in multimodal writing. These elements served as powerful and motivating stimuli for the students.

Another crucial factor enhancing students' learning is the content itself. When students can relate to or find useful information in a talk, they are more likely to dedicate additional time to learning. In this study, students had the opportunity to explore two websites beyond the classroom content. This approach promoted autonomous learning; it led to improved learning outcomes and encouraged students to engage "beyond the bounds of the course" (DeRosa & Robison, 2017, p. 117). As the students actively participated in the thoughtfully designed classroom activities, they gradually transformed into active learners who were motivated to take control of their own learning outside the classroom.

Monitor for out-of-class learning and a space for reflection and interaction

As a social technology, blogging is not as popular as Facebook and Instagram. Prior to the study, none of the students were familiar with blogging. However, blogging fulfilled many roles, and its pedagogical benefits were significant. Using blogging as a learning medium ensured that students kept up with the class materials and came prepared for the class (Kim, 2008). Furthermore, blogging serves as a space for students to further reflect on the topics discussed in class, as well as a platform for interacting with peers by reading their classmates' work and leaving comments on their posts. Blogs also encourage students to become more open in their communication compared to face-to-face situations, as they provide asynchronous communication channels that show for well-thought-out posts (Hemmi et al., 2009).

By extending class discussions through blogging sharing, students can practice using English to express their thoughts and apply them in practical situations. Additionally, it enables students to learn from each other, offering an "authentic audience for their listening experience" (Alm, 2013, p. 278). The public, multimodal, and interactive aspects of blog writing can serve as powerful motivators and engagement tools for students in their English learning. Throughout this study, spanning one semester, there was a notable improvement in students' writing fluency. According to the students' reflection papers, they believed that their learning experience would not have been as fruitful without the incorporation of blogging.

Pedagogical implications, limitations, and conclusion

Many Internet resources are motivating, user-friendly, adaptable, and available in English, making them highly suitable for repurposing in English learning

contexts. However, effectively integrating these materials requires teachers to possess expertise in harnessing the various technologies at their disposal (Kessler & Hubbard, 2017; Egbert & Shahrokni, 2019).

This study provides a feasible and replicable guide for achieving this integration. Furthermore, in the EFL context, where most language teachers are non-native speakers of English and face heavy teaching workloads, the use of ready-made, high-quality Internet resources can be an optimal alternative (Conole & Alevizou, 2010).

By incorporating learner-appropriate online audio and video resources, along with an easy-to-use writing platform, learners can significantly increase their exposure to the target language and enhance their opportunities to use the language effectively in the EFL environment. Learners can extend their learning beyond the teacher's instructions by exploring additional episodes and talks outside of class, a crucial step in achieving a high level of language fluency (Chen, 2020; Nunan & Richards, 2015).

It is important to note that this study lacks a control group, which should lead to cautious interpretation of the data. While the students' reflection papers offer valuable qualitative insights into how the combination of the three technologies enhanced their motivation, engagement, and language skills, introducing a control group could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of these technologies in language learning. In addition, proficiency in language learning is a multifaceted concept. This study measured students' speaking and writing by counting the words students produced. Future studies should investigate the issue using different measurements or standardized tests.

The challenges posed by COVID-19 have compelled ESL/EFL teachers to prioritize digital literacy to better prepare students for online classes and learning. As emphasized by Webb and Doman (2020), digital literacy skills are highly valued by students in the 21st Century. Teachers can incorporate technology and adopt a flipped approach to "promote digital literacy skills, content mastery, and engagement in the class" (Webb & Doman, 2020, p. 265).

The evolution of technology has introduced new opportunities for both students and teachers. While current technological trends often focus on virtual reality, augmented reality, and artificial intelligence, simpler technologies like podcasts, videos, and blogging, which are easy to access and consume, continue to play a significant role in the ESL/EFL context. However, as noted by Kessler (as cited in Meniado, 2022), there remains a need for "practical research and pedagogical guidelines" (p. 278) despite the abundance of Internet resources available to EFL students and teachers.

Declaration

The researchers have no conflicting interests to declare.

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Appendix A

Guidelines for reflection paper

1. The paper must be typed.
2. The paper should be 360 to 500 words (approximately 1.5 to 2 pages, 1.5 spaced).
3. Your writing should follow the conventions of formal English, including accurate spelling and punctuation.
4. Topics may include any information covered in class, ranging from the 6 Minute English, TED Talk, your blog writing, or class activities.
5. When writing your reflection, think about the following:
   A. What are your thoughts on the 6 Minute English website as a language learning resource?
   B. How do you view TED Talk as a language learning resource?
   C. Have your blogging skills improved over time? Do you believe it is a good idea to have a blog as part of the course, or do you prefer traditional paper and pencil homework? Why?
   D. What's your opinion of working in pairs or groups in class? Did you talk with your classmates in English and share your ideas?
   E. What have we learned that interested you?
   F. What new things have you learned?
   G. Do you think what you've learned will change how you learn English in the future?

Reminder: Writing a reflection paper helps you understand what is important to you and adds value to your learning. Please do not just summarize what we have covered; tell me what these materials mean to you.

Appendix B

End-of-semester evaluation questionnaire results

	Mean	SD
Part 2 In-class Participation		
1. There was ample time to discuss the class materials in class.	4.2	0.63
2. This semester, I actively joined the class discussions.	4.0	0.90
3. Class discussions were helpful in understanding the class materials better.	4.3	0.58
Part 3 Out-of-class Blogging Assignments		
4. The pre-class blogging assignments were helpful to my class discussions.	4.2	0.61
5. The after-class blogging assignments provided me with an opportunity to express my ideas in English.	4.2	0.86
6. I used the new words learned in the new unit when I worked on my after-class blogging assignments.	3.8	0.81
7. I integrated the new knowledge I learned in the new units when I worked on my after-class blogging assignments.	4.0	0.74
8. I listened to the podcasts and watched the talks again in order to finish my after-class blogging assignments.	3.5	1.11
9. I liked the extended after-class blogging assignments.	3.7	0.69
10. The weekly blogging assignments were helpful to my English writing skills.	4.3	0.63
Part 4 Students' Perceptions of the Selection of Course Materials		
11. I liked using the quality online English resources as the major class materials.	4.4	0.67
A. 6 Minute English 1 (Transport of the Future)	3.4	0.72
B. 6 Minute English 2 (Are you hungry when you're angry)	4.1	0.59
C. 6 Minute English 3 (Can you trust a smart speaker?)	3.7	0.64
D. TED Talk 1 (Grit: The power of passions and perseverance)	4.3	0.63
E. TED Talk 2 (Inside the mind of a master procrastinator)	4.3	0.67
F. TED Talk 3 (What makes a good life)	4.4	0.56
Part 5 Students' Perceptions of the Course Design		
12. Assigning class materials to listen to or watch before each class meeting on a routine basis was a good class arrangement.	4.4	0.56
13. Focusing on one new topic per week was a good class arrangement.	4.4	0.49
14. The in-class pair discussion and sharing help improve my speaking fluency.	4.0	0.88
15. Compared to Freshmen English, I was more engaged and spent more time on English learning this semester.	4.1	0.75

Results of Part 1 are shown in Figures 2, 3, & 4.