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SOPHOMORE STUDENTS' VOICE OF WEB-BASED LEARNING ENGLISH

*** Ranta Butarbutar¹; Angla Florensy Sauhenda²; Arfiani³;
Ermelinda Agnes Gunu Pure⁴**

¹Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Department of English Language Education, Universitas Musamus Merauke, Papua, Indonesia;

²Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Department of Indonesian Language and Literature, Universitas Musamus Merauke, Papua, Indonesia;

³Department of Mathematics Education, STKIP Muhammadiyah Manokwari, Papua, Indonesia;

⁴Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Primary Teacher Education, Universitas Musamus Merauke, Papua, Indonesia

**rantabutarbutar@gmail.com; anglasau@unmus.ac.id;*

arfianievh90@gmail.com; gunu@unmus.ac.id

() Corresponding Author*

Abstract: The present study aims to bridge the gaps between limited Web-based Learning English (WBLE) focused on speaking ability enhancement and sophomore speaking students' perceptions and to design a qualitative narrative study using seven sophomore university students aged 20-24 years old. Students were chosen through purposive sampling because they used mobile phones and personal computers for learning purposes. The study

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demonstrated the use of web-based language learning to encourage students to speak English as a Foreign Language. The students used two WBLE techniques, online and offline, both on- and off-campus. They accessed five recommended WBLE: British Broadcasting Corporation, PhraseMix, VOA Learning English, British Council, and TalkEnglish. Students used online WBLE to attend blended lectures agreed upon by their teachers. The results of the study found that WBLE affected speaking performance (language use (grammatical and accuracy), fluency strategic and sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence). This study highlights the potential of WBLE to improve speaking skills among sophomore students, emphasizing the need for further research and development in this field.

Keywords: *EFL speaking, perception, techno-pedagogical tool, web-based language learning*

INTRODUCTION

Web-based English Learning (WBLE) is a web-based tool for learning English. Before gaining an understanding of WBLE, researchers determined that it is important to have knowledge of web-based learning (WBL). Therefore, there was a significant difference between WBLE and WBL treatments. Thus, to understand the differences between the two, the following are a few previous explanations: For example, Cong-Lem (2018) explored a simple understanding of WBL as a web-based tool for student access and learning. This means that all webs were used as learning tools. Yuan (2024) found that WBL increased visual communication and performance in online materials. According to Muthoni Ng'ang'a et al., (2024), WBL was implemented in Kenya to address the disparities in adult literacy. Similarly, Pedaste and Sarapuu (2014) concluded that WBL can cognitively and metacognitive support students' inquiry transformation, but does not include affective discovery.

More specifically, regarding the purposes of the current study, we emphasize that WBLE is a tool that students can access and use for speaking enhancement. Speaking is a skill in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This means that there is a purpose, task, or role that should be completed, and speaking is the way to complete it (Harmer, 2008). In addition, it requires interaction with and engagement with the tool. Intended interactions may occur both personally and collaboratively. Personally, students interact or speak with each other. Collaboratively, web-based English learning must be more productive, effective, communicative, and developed for ubiquitous speaking.

Web-based learning has the potential to construct student knowledge in the chemical field (Iyamuremye et al., 2023). Hence, many studies have explored the potential of WBL in helping students improve their language learning. Bashori (2022) asserted that WBLE can reduce students' speaking anxiety. Lee et al. (2014) claimed that Socratic questioning on WBL can help students develop higher-order thinking (HoT) and perform simpler communication. WBL can also be used as a complement and transition into first-year academic college students (Zhang, 2021).

Although many previous studies have discussed and grown WBL at high speeds, documentation of WBLE for speech enhancement is still limited. As mentioned previously, WBL is commonly applied to learn other skills, and not to make speaking particularly effective. Hence, it is extremely beneficial to encourage students to speak actively (Herr, 2012). However, research on this topic has been lacking.

Pertinent to students' perceptions, many previous explorations have been conducted and have evidently had a potential impact on their learning outcomes and academic development (Elkhamisy & Wassef, 2021). Students had a positive perception of, and expected of, a WBL curriculum (Butarbutar et al., 2021; 2023) that explored the pedagogical perception of WBL as a digital literacy pandemic. Similarly, Al-Sayid and Kirkil (2023) asserted that WBL's success was

caused by the acceptance of human-computer interaction and activity. Subsequently, students perceived that emotional and cognitive factors affected wiki-based collaborative learning (Kuo et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, studies of sophomore multilevel-speaking students' perceptions of WBLE tools are limited. However, it is crucial in terms of student learning progress and outcomes, and its effectiveness refers to the diversity in students' learning styles. For this reason, students in the sophomore period shifted their transition to the senior academic year, and their perceptions were determined by their learning methods and input for lecturers. Inspired by Yang (2018) and Zhang (2023), teachers synchronously needed mixed-group language proficiency levels and the adoption of background diversity in their experiments. For this reason, the more proficient students are in the language, the more they lead, revise, and generate new language knowledge compared to less proficient students.

The research findings demonstrated that WBLE had a positive impact on students' speaking skills. The study utilized five online English language resources: PhraseMix, Voice of America (VOA), British Council (BC) (Alkateeb, 2023; Rodriguez Gómez et al., 2020), and TalkEnglish.com. These websites provide courses at various proficiency levels and cultural and language programs, and are accessible to non-native English speakers. British Broad Casting (BBC) learning English offers a British perspective (Bilyalova, 2017; Zheng et al., 2023), whereas PhraseMix focuses on phrase-based learning (Bilyalova, 2017; Masuram & Sripada, 2020; Sychev, 2023). VOA provides news and educational materials on different proficiency levels, media types, and topics (Dalva et al., 2018). TalkEnglish.com emphasizes improving speaking skills by listening to new vocabulary, phrases, and idioms. Users can enhance their listening comprehension, mimic native speakers, and develop their speaking abilities by using the given text. This website offers learning materials that incorporate various idioms, new vocabulary, and useful tips to improve speaking skills.

Specifically, this study was motivated by two factors: contribution to the literature on speaking skill enhancement and learning outcomes. Regarding previous observations, the present study found that sophomore university students showed significant progress in their speaking performance. Hence, interaction in the classroom with a more relaxed, stress-free environment, ease of use, playful activities (Hwang et al., 2016), and speaking outcomes. Therefore, the present study is essential for exploring the extent to which WBLE affects speech enhancement. This is relevant to Vygotsky and Cole 's (1978) assertion that students are more capable of performing when they combine diversity, knowledge, and expertise. Accordingly, the students' voices with different speaking skill levels improved the learning process and were the reasons for and motivation for the present study.

Overall, the present study aimed to bridge the gap between limited WBLE, focusing on speaking ability enhancement, and sophomore multilevel speaking students' perceptions. Therefore, our study can be used to expand the body of literature on speaking pedagogy tools, facilitating learners' self-developed and collaboratively based web-speaking abilities. To simplify our comprehension, this study specifically intends to answer the following questions.

1. How do students use web-based language learning to encourage their EFL speaking?
2. What learning strategies are used by students during WBLE?
3. What are the benefits and drawbacks of WBLE on campuses either online and offline?
4. How do students perceive WBLE in terms of speaking outcomes?

METHOD

Research Design

The objective of this study was to investigate prior knowledge, information, and expertise in WBLE and its impact on the academic enhancement and language ability performance of sophomore university students. Thus, this study intended to design a qualitative descriptive study that involved English language department university students. Qualitative descriptive research presents an in-depth examination of the 'who, what, and where' elements of events or experiences offer subjective perspectives (Kim et al., 2017 cited in Doyle et al., 2020).

Participants

The participants were seven sophomore university students aged between 20 and 24 years old who were selected through purposive sampling and enrolled in the second semester of their academic year in the English language department. The study employed an open-ended questionnaire and online group discussions to determine the participants' characteristics and English proficiency levels.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The research proposal was submitted to the faculty and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Universitas Musamus Merauke for approval of the research setting. The questionnaires and interview items were reviewed and validated by the head of the English language department, and the respondents were invited to participate in online interviews. The interviews were conducted at WhatsApp conferences and recorded by the researcher. The data were then transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically (Terry et al., 2017) to simplify the conceptual framework as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

FINDINGS

In response to the first research question, 'How do students use web-based language learning to encourage EFL speaking?' Regarding the results of the study, students used two WBLE techniques, online and offline, both on- and off-campus. In doing so, They perceived that they accessed five WBLE namely, (1) British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), (2) PhraseMix, (3) VOA Learning English, (4) British Council, and (5) TalkEnglish. They perceived that they were free to choose those websites as long as they were comfortable and interested. The following is a detailed description of this application:

WBLE on-campus and off-campus

In this vein, students used online WBLE to attend blended lectures agreed upon by their teachers at the beginning of the class meetings. Hence, sophomore students' speaking courses are conducted in both face-to-face (on-campus) and online (off-campus) classrooms. Therefore, students were allowed access to the five recommended WBLE, as mentioned in the previous section. In the second meeting, an English course class was conducted on campus by students who had access to the BBC website through their mobile phones. As their level

as sophomore students, they chose and watched the core topic "agree and disagree." After that, they prepared cards and wrote about their topics. For example, R1 wrote a fully online classroom topic to be discussed. She asked others to show her card's topic and asked for a response. In response to R1's topic, three students agreed and the rest disagreed. During this session, the teacher paid attention to each student's participation, length of speaking, how to express agreement such as "I agree with R1's topic" and sequences of opinion expression. At the end of the second class session, the teacher concluded all the students' performances.

Then, the third-class meeting students were allowed to attend off-campus and used Zoom meetings for utilization. In this session, the teacher changed topic which is, "shared experience" as they could see BBC's program as an alternative source for students. The teacher invited each student to share both good and bad experiences in ten minutes. The rest of the course time was used for peer evaluation in terms of the number of new vocabulary items and correct grammar and pronunciation. Consistent with this website, R6 perceived "My pronunciation has improved as my peers repeatedly practiced the right pronunciation before I attempted to do so."

In the fourth meeting, the participants were asked to visit the VOA Learning English website. On this occasion, students have access to VOA learning English and then select the recommended audio and video programs and the "everyday grammar" sub-program. Hence, the students provided numerous kinds and uses of grammar in their everyday activities and habitual actions. In this session, first, they watched the video provided, and then the students made a conversation referring to the watched topic. Consequently, students perceived that accessing the program instantly improved their grammatical competence. [R1: "I prefer accessing VOA almost every day when listening to up-to-date news; R2: I choose because VOA offers learning materials regarding my speaking ability at the beginner level"].

Furthermore, at the fifth meeting, collaboration was conducted off campus. This technique is intended to collaboratively build face-to-face speaking skills in the classroom. This atmosphere encourages students to speak more confidently because they can see their non-verbal or gesturing peers directly. Nonverbal language supports self-confidence in speech. For this reason, students were asked to visit the PhraseMix website for source learning on that day using English laboratory computer utilities. To encourage them to work collaboratively, they instructed and emphasized the response to the question "why and how" while conversing. Furthermore, they were instructed to listen to others' opinions and provide constructive comments so that the meaning of collaboration could be experienced by students. With regard to this, students' perceptions were as follows. [R7: "This web is useful for helping me more actively and bravely reply to my peers' arguments. By using more frequently used phrases, I recognized that my conversation was better"]"

Online & offline WBLE application

Finally, in the sixth and seventh meetings were arranged through both of online & offline WBLE techniques as the response to the second research question as well, "What learning strategies are used by students during WBLE? The results showed that students used the "TalkEnglish" program to guide them in conduct online group discussions. In this vein, the whole class is divided into two groups namely "Become a student and Become an instructor." This group division refers to students' English proficiency levels, as previously mentioned in the student characteristics section. In this vein, the group student plays the role of interviewee, and the group instructor acts as an interviewer. They were in a shifting interview simulation during 100 minutes course time, as shown in the following short excerpt: [Interviewer: "What extracurricular activity did you take with sophomore university students?" Interviewee: "I was involved in an internal university English debate competition..."]. At the end of the session, the teacher evaluated their speaking progress during the

online class interview role-play. Regarding roleplaying, students perceived the following excerpt.

R3: "I like the TalkEnglish website very much because its materials can download the offline version so I can use it when I do not have Internet access."

R5: "I enjoy learning through this website. Hence, offers conversation that consists of sentences often used by native speakers, so I usually listen."

R4: "After I visited these websites almost three times a day, my nerves slightly reduced day by day I liked it."

Accordingly, the results of the study in response to the first, second, and third questions are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

The using WBLE to foster speaking performances

Category/ aspect	Main category	Sub- category	Example	Excerption
1. Technique of WBLE			On campus, off campus, online & offline WBLE	"I often use WBLE when in online classes"
2. Types of WBLE used			VOA, BBC, PhraseMix, British Council & TalkEnglish	"I prefer VOA & TalkEnglish"
3. Learning strategy- based WBLE			Online discussion, presentation & off line-based project	"To ensure that this web fits an easy online topic discussion"
4. Benefits	Cognitive	Language use	Grammar tool	"My grammar improved during this access to learning material from

		this website, and I like it so much"
	Sharing tool	Facebook, Twitter, Telegram, Email, and copy links.
Speaking skills	Reduce anxiety	"When I am listening to the VOA online and offline repeatedly, I slowly control my anxiety when speaking up"
	Interactive conversation tool	Interacts with other language learners.
	Collaboration facilitator	"I can collaborate virtually, irrespective of our physical location"
Assessment & Feedback	Creativity tool	"exposure to a wide range of experiences, and upholding a creative attitude. Solving problems, innovation, and the

		creation of new goods and technology is essential"
	Efforts to confidence	"Audio and video improve my confidence to speak up, even in front of native speaker"
	Cross culture insights	I can learn many insights from American cultures, particularly from the VOA"
	Digital corrective feedback	"Correct", "try again", &
Metacognitive	Identifying fit topics, evaluating learning outcomes	"I can also choose interesting topics, as I need"
	Paperless assignment	"It is very effective for me, as a student who does not need money to buy paper"
	Multimedia Integration	

			Technology pedagogical tool	"providing immediate feedback to students"
	Affective	Motivation	Self-regulated learning tool	"I can identify, choose, and evaluate my scores"
5. Drawbacks		Technical support	Illiterate technology-web using	"Sometimes, I am confusing with web access.
			Incompatible personal devices with WBLE	"My devices were incompatible"
		Others	Lack offline engagement	"Yeahh...some times, I lack the willingness to engage in it"
			High cost internet access	"In my experience, internet access is still a high cost for students"

Consistent with the fourth research question, 'How do students perceive WBLE toward speaking performance?' This study explored the impact of WBLE on students' speaking performance in terms of four components: (1) strategic and sociolinguistic competence, (2) fluency, (3) language use (grammatical and accuracy), and (4) discourse competence. The results showed that students' speaking fluency was improved by learning and accessing WBLE as frequently as possible. It is relevant to speaking rules that are offered by TalkEnglish websites such as "study & learning through phrases". Students attempt to construct good sentences using newly acquired terminology. They simultaneously study words and sentences while learning a new language. The same applies to learning words and phrases. Even if students are familiar with 1000 words, they may not be able to form a complete phrase. However, if the students know only one word, they can construct hundreds of sensible phrases. Students may have been astonished by the number of sentences they could say if they had known 100 phrases. Consequently, the students were virtually fluent English speakers when they only know 1000 phrases. An excellent example of how multiple phrases can be created from a single phrase is found on the PhraseMix website. Therefore, it avoids spending a significant amount of time memorizing multiple words. Instead, they spend time studying phrases, and the students become closer to speaking English fluently.

To evaluate pairs in this WBLE technique, the application teacher provides guidebook evaluations for students to utilize when assessing their pairs to consolidate and reinforce their speaking performance. It attempts to improve how well students present their conversations. The teacher believes that peer evaluation is a method for ensuring the effectiveness of online and offline WBLE. When students gave in-depth explanations individually and dialogues with pairs, their classmates evaluated them both orally and in writing. Generally, pairs repeat or reformulate their mistakes with correct sentences or grammar, whereas a written evaluation is provided in the guidebook.

Fluency and language use performance

To measure the students' fluency and language use performance, they were asked to self-record during online and offline class meetings. In doing so, our results showed that fluency refers to words per minute (wpm), where the number of words is divided by the time taken to compare the length of pause or stop time. According to Kormos and Dénes (2004); Riggenbach, 1991), less than three seconds of silence implies an articulation stop rather than hesitancy or lack of ideas. Accordingly, it was established that students' speaking performance improved in particular fluency components, which is in line with the results of the students' open-ended questionnaires and online group discussions, as seen in Table 2.

Table 2.

Students' speaking fluency

Respondents	Words per minutes (wpm)= number of word/time taken	Pause (seconds)	Category (fluent / disfluent)
R1	474/9.18 (51.63)	4.5	Poor
R2	485/10.01 (48.45)	5.2	Poor
R3	495/8.89 (55.68)	3.2	Good
R4	501/8.90 (56.02)	2.8	Very good
R5	487/9.24 (54.01)	2.9	Very good
R6	502/8.00 (62.75)	2.5	Very good
R7	503/7.9 (63.67)	2.3	Very good

(Adapted from Riggenbach, 1991)

According to Table 2 and Figure 1's results, R1 was categorized as "poor" since she produced her work at a speed of 51.63 words per minute with a pause of 4.5 seconds. The results showed that R2 could produce "poor" material at 48.45 wpm with 5.2 second pause, participant R3 could produce "good" material at 55.68 wpm with 3.2 second pause, participant R4 could produce "very good" material at 56.02 wpm with 2.8 second pause, and participant R5 could produce "very good" material at 54.01 wpm with 2.9 second pause. R6 could produce "very good" material at 62.75 wpm with 2.5 second pause. R7

could produce "very good" material at 63.67 wpm with 2.3 second pause.

In this vein, pairs served as evaluators; with regard to this, the more students speak with limited pauses, the more fluently they speak. Hence, the students were emphasized by the following excerpt: [R2: 'I feel that the WBLE had an impact on her pronunciation corrections and fluency. R6: "I asked to evaluate my pair R4 to note counts of vocabulary that she has gotten and the length of her speaking. Also, I have directly corrected my pairs in my perception that this strategy will keep it in my long-term memory.

In terms of language use enhancement, the teacher counted the correct grammar used by students during the conversation. The student results are shown in figure 1. Meanwhile, sociolinguistic and discourse skills were evaluated by teachers with regard to language variant, diction, using language use based on context, environment, and interlocutors, and ways to avoid misinterpretation. To simplify the results, they are illustrated in Figure 2.

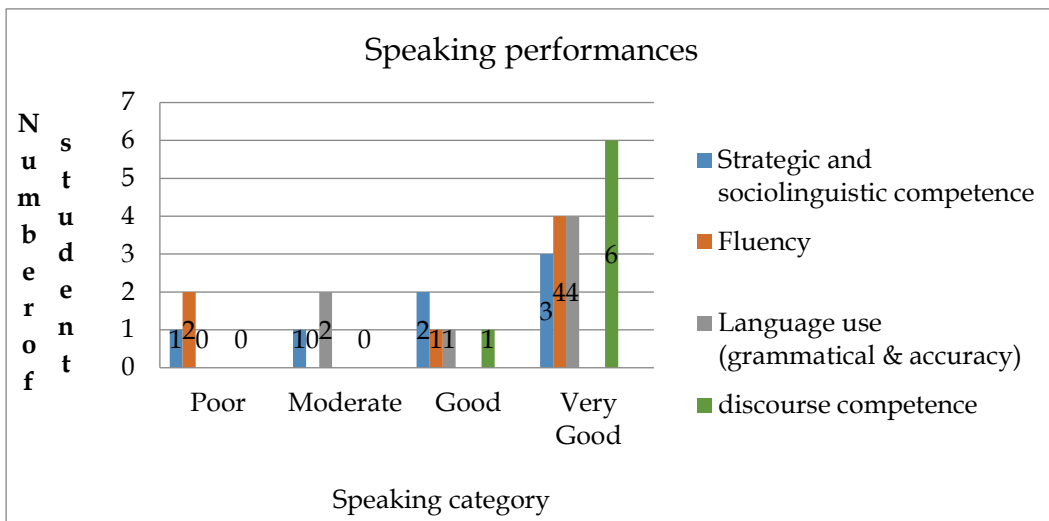


Figure 2. *The impact of WBLE on speaking performance*

DISCUSSION

Sophomore multilevel speaking students need to choose methods and strategies to encourage, motivate, and enhance their speaking performance. Therefore, this study explored five WBLE tools to help students improve their speaking performance. This study explored the strategies, benefits, and drawbacks of implementing WBLE. The results showed that their speaking performance improved significantly after accessing websites as frequently as possible. Bashori et al. (2022) stated that Web-based English language learning has the potential to reduce speaking anxiety among secondary school students in Indonesia. Web-based language learning (WBLL) is gaining attention in computer-assisted language learning (CALL), owing to the widespread use of the Internet and its associated technologies. Websites can be useful for FL learning and learners have a positive perception of e-learning websites. Website instruction can alleviate learners' anxiety, enabling them to accomplish tasks at their own pace. Yang et al. (2022) found that online game simulation helps reduce foreign language anxiety and potentially increases students' vocabulary learning. This is consistent with the current students' perception that beneficial WBEL cognitively reduces anxiety (Min et al., 2019) and improves their speaking skills.

Similarly, Chen et al. (2019) found that teaching English vocabulary using information technology can reduce teachers' skills and improve learners' motivation (Min et al., 2019). English vocabulary acquisition is the primary basis for learning English as a foreign language (EFL). However, this is a long and often boring process. Effective learning strategies and methods, such as word cards, communicative language teaching, Task-Based Learning, and mind mapping, can help learners acquire, internalize, and use vocabulary more efficiently.

Maunula et al. (2023) assert that WBL can build students' international competence. For this reason, learning materials offered on websites are intended for international users so that students can access them for sourcing, and their competence is balanced. Their

assertion is parallel to what R7 perceives [*"I like accessing VOA & TalkEnglish website because I can find topics of worldwide cross cultures"*].

The excerpt above implies by applying course materials all over the world students' ability will be internationally as well. These international skills can be learned ubiquitously to access remote areas (Romero et al., 2023). This is consistent with the results of Zheng et al. (2023), who posited that web-based learning and technology influence self-regulated learning. However, in contrast to Zhang's (2023) exploration, WBL can help teachers meet students' needs so that they can self-direct learning based on WBL.

Parallel to WBLE as a multimedia integration tool (Butarbutar, 2019; Cui, 2023), online courses frequently incorporate different multimedia components such as movies, photos, animations, and audio to improve the learning experience (Butarbutar, 2021). In doing so, students' sociolinguistic competence might develop because WBLE simultaneously offers topics and movies across cultures worldwide. They can learn skills from cultural diversity, such as interpersonal skills, collaboration, and communication, which fosters speaking fluency. Interestingly, these websites might be considered more in sociolinguistic skill development, whether students utilize them as a sharing tool. In this vein, all learning materials have the potential to enlarge people on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Telegram. In doing so, sophomore university students are attracted and sensitive to social media. Tankosić & Dovchin (2023) asserted that the impact of social media can create a new form and meaning of language by manipulating the original form of ethics and local sociolinguistic (Butarbutar et al., 2019) practices. In contrast, Aloraini & Cardoso's (2022) investigation verified that Saudi Arabian adult English learners do not use social media to achieve academic goals and prefer Twitter for reading purposes, Snapchat for listening purposes, or WhatsApp for family and friend communication (Butarbutar et al., 2020; Butarbutar et al., 2022; Butarbutar & Leba, 2023).

Interestingly, WBLL, as a grammar tool, can help students improve their grammatical competence. It is software or an online service that helps users find and fix grammatical faults in their written content. It is also known as a grammar check or a grammar correction tool. These tools are beneficial for editing and raising the capability of written works such as essays, reports, emails, and other types of writing. This supports Nur et al. (2022) and Abdelaziz & Al Zehmi's (2021) assertions that e-cognition has an impact on students' grammatical competence. Technology plays an essential role in teaching and learning (Nur & Butarbutar, 2022; Butarbutar et al., 2020). Simultaneously, they suggested using scaffolding instruction integrated with technology to teach students grammar skills.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights the potential of WBLE to improve speaking skills among sophomore level students. To do so, students used WBLE in on-campus, off-campus, online, and offline modes. Furthermore, students leveraged VOA, BBC, PhraseMix, the British Council, and TalkEnglish as a learning source-based web. With regard to this, students were invited by teacher to online discussions, presentations, and off-line-based projects as strategies to support speaking performance. It was empirically proven that WBLE is beneficial as a grammar tool, sharing tool, reducing anxiety, interactive conversation tools, collaboration facilitator creativity tools, efforts to confidence, cross-cultural insights, digital corrective feedback, identifying fit topics, evaluating learning outcomes, paperless assignment, technology pedagogical tools, and self-regulated learning tools. However, challenges such as technical support, illiterate technology-web use, incompatible personal devices with WBLE, lack of offline engagement, and high-cost internet access may pose challenges in applying the WBLE strategy.

The findings of this study suggest that university students can enhance their oral communication abilities even in the absence of a professor by leveraging the WBLE technique. Furthermore, WBLE is suitable for sophomore students, as they progress from their first year of academic advancement to their senior year, where they are expected to demonstrate greater autonomy in selecting learning resources.

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