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## The significance of hybrid learning in improving undergraduates' English vocabulary in the ESL classroom: A strategic review

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### Abstract

This strategic review aims to ascertain if hybrid learning approaches effectively improve undergraduates' vocabulary in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. It explores the ever-changing field of English as a Second Language (ESL) education, particularly emphasising how hybrid learning might be incorporated to improve undergraduate students' vocabulary skills. Given the growing ubiquity of technology in education, the study explores the efficacy of combining traditional in-person instruction with online platforms to maximise language learning outcomes. In the context of ESL education, the study covers current hybrid learning approaches, opportunities, and problems. It guides teachers and organisations looking to optimise vocabulary acquisition for undergraduate ESL students. In order to shed insight into the current paradigms that have moulded language education, the literature review section methodically analyses the benefits and drawbacks of standard ESL training. It compares this with the newly developing field of hybrid learning models, which include several types and meanings in the context of ESL. In order to lay the groundwork for the upcoming analysis, the paper also summarises earlier research that looked into the efficiency of hybrid learning in language acquisition. In order to better understand how hybrid learning can help undergraduates in ESL settings increase their vocabulary in English, the researchers looked over 23 publications. This strategic analysis concludes with a sophisticated assessment of the contribution of hybrid learning to undergraduates' increased vocabulary in English in an ESL classroom. This review provides educators, policymakers, and researchers with a thorough guide to optimising language acquisition strategies in the dynamic field of ESL education by navigating the spheres of traditional instruction, hybrid learning models, and technological infusion.

**Keywords:** ESL, hybrid learning, strategies, undergraduates, vocabulary

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### Introduction

The most widely spoken language in the world today, English is used in various crucial domains such as communication, international trade, and education. It has also grown to be a well-known Lingua Franca worldwide. English language proficiency is essential and should be increased. It is possible through the development of vocabulary that refers to word strength or word knowledge. Several factors need English as Second Language (ESL) students to increase their vocabulary (Somathasan, 2021) <sup>[1]</sup>. In the context of ESL (English as a Second Language) classes, hybrid learning can significantly increase undergraduates' English vocabulary. With hybrid learning, teachers can use various online resources, including interactive vocabulary games, language learning applications, and digital dictionaries. Students can use these materials to increase their vocabulary in fun and exciting ways.

The foundation of teaching and learning is the student, who serves as the topic of instruction and the ultimate judge of the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process. When students can experience and discover the benefits of the learning materials firsthand, teaching and learning can be successful (Alqahtani, 2015) <sup>[2]</sup>. Real-world language applications, such as social media, online forums, and virtual language immersion experiences, can be incorporated into hybrid learning. Students can connect academic terminology and ordinary communication by participating in actual language use. However, teaching and mastering vocabulary is a continuous struggle for teachers and students because vocabulary instruction in ESL classrooms has historically received little attention. As a result, during the language acquisition process, the English language student must focus more on expanding their vocabulary (Mukoroli, 2011) <sup>[3]</sup>. With hybrid learning, students' vocabulary development can be regularly assessed. Assessments can be done online, and the information gathered can help teachers and students understand areas for growth, areas of progress, and the efficacy of different teaching strategies.

One way to integrate hybrid learning is through hybrid online learning. The interface lectures are still given in this prototype, but they also include an activity that requires the internet to finish. Like e-learning, hybrid online learning creates a website to oversee the learning process (Huda *et al.*, 2018) <sup>[4]</sup>. In summary, hybrid learning affects undergraduates' English vocabulary in ESL classes. By integrating conventional and digital materials, interactive exercises, and flexible learning aids, instructors can establish a dynamic and efficient learning environment that fosters the acquisition of vocabulary and language fluency. However, considering the current need for improving undergraduates' English vocabulary in the context of ESL, this strategic review thoroughly looked over 23 publications, emphasising the significance of hybrid learning. This strategic analysis comes to a sophisticated conclusion with an evaluation of how hybrid learning has helped undergraduates in an ESL classroom expand their vocabulary in English. In the ever-changing field of teaching English as a second language, this review offers educators, policymakers, and researchers a comprehensive guide to optimising language acquisition tactics through navigating the domains of traditional instruction, hybrid learning models, and technological infusion.

### Literature Review

A substantial amount of background study on vocabulary learning and how to improve it through hybrid learning and the systematic review of various strategies in over 23 research papers is included in the literature review. This literature review seeks to thoroughly understand several productive strategies through previous research, where hybrid learning played a vital role in improving undergraduates' English vocabulary.

Stacey and Gerbic (2007) <sup>[5]</sup> claim that Hybrid learning refers to integrating in-person and virtual learning environments within a curriculum. Online instruction is initially more widely used in remote education as a platform for continuous and dynamic social learning and for instructors and students to communicate. However, as technology has advanced and internet connection has become more accessible, online

instruction, or e-learning, has increased as a supplement to traditional classroom instruction for on-campus education. This has prompted educators to investigate the use of e-learning in various ways.

### Significance of vocabulary in mastering English

Learning vocabulary is essential to every artisan's toolkit, and understanding English is similar to learning a craft. The meanings of words in the rich language of English are often complex. An extensive vocabulary makes selecting the ideal term to convey your ideas more efficiently and accurately. This accuracy improves your capacity to communicate complex concepts and feelings effectively. The four primary language acquisition skills are speaking, writing, listening, and reading. There are more abilities, such as vocabulary and grammar in English. The foundation of communication is language. It implies that a nation's ability to develop socially, economically, politically, and culturally depends on its language (Akram & Malik, 2010) <sup>[6]</sup>.

For language learners, vocabulary is one of the most critical areas of knowledge to acquire. Building a lexicon or vocabulary is an essential component in learning English as a second language and plays a significant role in learners' language acquisition. Since having a restricted vocabulary in a second language makes communicating difficult, vocabulary knowledge is frequently seen as an essential skill for second-language learners (Alqahtani, 2015) <sup>[2]</sup>. According to Nist and Mohr (2002) <sup>[7]</sup>, a student of English as a second language (ESL) can acquire excellent vocabulary abilities by developing an adequate vocabulary. They offer some solid supporting evidence for this claim below.

- Vocabulary is a fundamental component of reading comprehension as far as reading skills are concerned. In other words, a learner will struggle to comprehend what he reads if he lacks vocabulary. A word here or there might not stop him, but comprehension will suffer if there are too many words he is unfamiliar with.
- Almost all standardised tests, including reading achievement tests, college entrance exams, diagnostic tests, and placement tests, heavily weigh vocabulary. The test's creators know that vocabulary is a crucial indicator of learning and learning capacity. They include a different vocabulary in assessments because of this. Therefore, word knowledge increases a student's chances of performing well on such crucial exams.
- Students with great vocabulary agree that having a large vocabulary helps them learn more effectively. Furthermore, a well-known study discovered that people who experience successful occupations have a more substantial vocabulary than any other characteristic. In actuality, words are the tools for improving reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking. A student can communicate more effectively and significantly impact others around him if he has access to more words.
- A strong vocabulary is more important than ever in the modern world. Words are our tools; we utilise them for speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Experts also predict that future workers will need to pick up new skills and shift careers at an ever-increasing rate. The capacity for effective communication and rapid learning will be essential for both survival and success. Both of these abilities require a strong vocabulary.

### The role of hybrid learning in improving English Vocabulary

The combination of traditional in-person instruction with online learning elements, known as hybrid learning, can be an effective strategy for increasing vocabulary in English. Numerous resources are available through hybrid learning, such as interactive vocabulary games, language learning applications, and online dictionaries. A fun and exciting approach to learn and practice new words is with these resources. Adaptive learning technologies that accommodate different learning styles and paces are frequently available online. By selecting activities based on their interests and skill levels, students can have a more individualised and successful vocabulary-building experience. The hybrid learning methodology creates a dynamic and flexible environment for increasing vocabulary in English by combining the advantages of traditional and online learning. Integrating interactive technologies, personalised learning paths, and collaboration opportunities facilitates a thorough and successful language learning experience. In today's higher education, hybrid learning is the fusion of in-person and technology-mediated or online learning, becoming the most popular 21st-century skill (Bolandifar, 2017) <sup>[8]</sup>. Hashemi and Si Na (2020) <sup>[9]</sup> stated that hybrid learning promotes teamwork, simplifies the evaluation procedure, offers resources, and increases student involvement to enhance language learning abilities. In light of the perspectives mentioned above on the application of hybrid learning to enhance language proficiency, it is necessary to determine which proficiency levels are impacted by the usage of hybrid learning.

It is critical to take into account pupils' motivation for learning English. A novel technique for teaching and studying ESL has been made possible by information technology advancements. This strategy can increase students' dedication to learning, which will raise their level of development (Entwistle, 2018) <sup>[10]</sup>. These days, with technology constantly evolving, teachers are under pressure to adapt their pedagogical approaches. It is familiar in this day and age to include technology in English language instruction. It has been demonstrated that using computers, mobile devices, the internet, and other technology during teaching and learning sessions benefits teachers and students in hybrid learning (Yunus, 2018) <sup>[11]</sup>.

Knowing which platforms are used for hybrid learning is essential since it will help us understand it better. This systematic literature evaluation uses two different kinds of platforms to teach and learn ESL. Both online and physical platforms are involved. The categories for examples of online platforms are online game learning, Face book and TikTok are examples of social media. At the same time, Padlet, Quizlet, and Grammarly are examples of online learning applications. When implementing hybrid learning, offline platforms incorporate more real materials, such as printed materials, textbooks, periodicals, and brochures (Rao, 2019) <sup>[12]</sup>. Therefore, teachers should help students sustain their enthusiasm for learning English in various ways, raise their aptitude and level of English learning, and guarantee the most significant learning outcome. It is critical to consider pupils' motivation for learning English (Hasan & Hashim, 2022) <sup>[13]</sup>. Hybrid learning may improve motivation and interest in learning by combining traditional classroom techniques with internet learning. Additionally, many researchers have indicated that students have positive attitudes toward using

mobile applications to learn vocabulary asserted that traditional teaching methods failed to spark students' interest in learning, whereas regularly supplied material via mobile phone was manageable when conducting research. In addition to teaching students how to use mobile phones in the language learning process, teachers should serve as role models for their pupils. Students may need to learn how to use their smartphones as learning tools, even though they use them daily. They, therefore, require a teacher's direction. MALL implementation is sufficient if it occurs just in one of the learning phases, ideally in the information processing phase. Teachers can use conventional teaching methods to present new languages to their students in the classroom. Later, when not in class, they can review the vocabulary using a mobile application. The final stage of production should occur in the classroom when students' vocabulary knowledge can be verified through various exercises (Polakova & Klimova, 2022) <sup>[15]</sup>.

Majeed and Rehan Dar (2022) <sup>[16]</sup> claim that one of the realistic options is to introduce hybrid learning. Furthermore, emphasising the advancements it can provide refutes the presumptive obstacles. The entire process confirms the usefulness of asynchronous learning and shows how it may be applied in the Pakistani setting. Despite the current budget constraints, it implies that integrating technology into ESL classes is unavoidably a positive step. The results also suggest that, due to their tech-savvy nature, neo-millennials are somewhat easier to train using computers than traditional rote learning techniques. The use of counselling is the other important recommendation supporting the findings about resistance to change. One of the main conclusions is that anxiety is a contributing factor to students' low language proficiency and unmotivated attitudes. Hence, they must receive counselling and motivation.

### Methods & Materials

When it comes to increasing vocabulary in ESL environments, hybrid learning—which blends traditional and online methods—can be highly successful. There are often a few methods used when teaching vocabulary. To drill vocabulary in an interactive and adaptable way, use Quizlet, Memrise, or Anki. Identify or make flashcard sets specifically for ESL students. Applications for learning languages, such as Duolingo, Babbel, or Rosetta Stone, provide gamification as a standard feature of these apps, which makes learning fun. Promote reading online news, blogs, and articles written in English, while reading, highlight and bookmark new words with LingQ or other similar applications. Online dictionaries with interactive features, pronunciation instructions, and sample sentences include Cambridge, Oxford, and Merriam-Webster.

Nonetheless, most English teachers must consider a few factors while introducing new vocabulary or lexical objects to their students. It indicates that English teachers want their pupils to retain new terminology. Then, to keep pupils from forgetting, it must be learned, practised, and updated. Teachers' methods vary depending on several variables, including the subject matter, time constraints, and the importance of the material to the students. This gives educators a justification for using particular methods when teaching language. Instead of using just one strategy while presenting a single planned vocabulary item, teachers typically mix many strategies. Additionally, it is advised that teachers use as many different prepared vocabulary

presentations as they can (Pinter, 2017) <sup>[17]</sup>.

Students of varying competence levels will benefit from being able to set their learning speed in an English language classroom that is aligned with the CEFR through the use of hybrid learning. Teachers can evaluate and observe face-to-face interactions in the classroom to ensure the teachings align with the worldwide global scales' "can do statement" for equity included in the CEFR. It is widely accepted that hybrid learning is the most effective strategy for assisting less skilled students (Krishnan & Yunus, 2019) <sup>[18]</sup>.

Because visual aids like pictures and objects are very dependable sources of information, this strategy can aid learners in improving their vocabulary recall. This method involves demonstration and the use of visual aids. According to (Jerry & Yunus, 2021) <sup>[19]</sup>, a mixed-method approach with a sequential structure provided explanations. Triangulation and integration of quantitative and qualitative data analysis were observed throughout the study process to authenticate the data acquired from both modes of data collecting used in this research effort. Hybrid learning improved both the teaching and learning of English. However, there was still more to learn about instructors' decisions to use hybrid learning. The little hybrid learning experience and understanding validated teacher perspectives that suggested otherwise. Different learning environments with an emphasis on classrooms teaching English as a second language (ESL), Investigating the impact of implementing hybrid learning with undergraduates of varying ages and skill levels, integrated approach to teaching and learning the four main English language competencies in an ESL classroom, mixed learning model types and suitable designs for the existing curriculum that is linked with the CEFR in ESL situations, Digital tools and programs that educators like or use frequently to teach English language skills and components. Ramana *et al.* (2023) <sup>[20]</sup> claim that it made it possible to discover several strategies for maintaining students' interest in synchronous and asynchronous online learning and bridging the knowledge gap between teachers and students. EdTech tools are crucial in providing the goods and assisting students in honing their abilities during the course, especially in ELT. According to our research, using Kahoot for online instruction allowed students to experience something new and exciting while learning English vocabulary in all its splendour. Students in the Experimental group have been using Kahoot! extensively as an asynchronous method of learning vocabulary in English.

Using Bloom's Taxonomy with hybrid learning in language classrooms can be productive and successful. Aside from this, the blending process can be used to support collaborative learning strategies including think-pair-share, pair work, and group work. It is possible to use platforms like EDMODO to assign tasks and get feedback to incorporate the blending process. The online learning platforms that provide a variety of courses for teaching and self-regulated learning are Khan Academy, BYJUS, EDX, COURSERA, NPTEL, and GIAN. These platforms allow teachers to assign online courses, and they can control the content to improve student learning. Students may see what they will learn when hybrid learning is used as a teaching approach. It fosters autonomy and pushes students to become self-sufficient learners by allowing teachers and students to actively participate in the teaching-learning process (Alam *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[21]</sup>.

## Discussions & Findings

For undergraduates, hybrid learning, which blends traditional classroom instruction with online resources, has proven to be a successful strategy for increasing vocabulary in English. Combining online and in-person learning activities provides a dynamic and adaptable learning environment. Students can interact with English vocabulary through various modalities through hybrid learning, including online tests, multimedia presentations, in-class conversations, and interactive exercises. This diversity enhances overall comprehension and retention by accommodating various learning styles.

According to Alam *et al.* (2022) <sup>[21]</sup>, it is vital to synchronise the technology and platforms that will be utilised prior to altering the educational medium. Teachers should be familiar with every facet and element of hybrid learning modules. Laid-out course instructions that let instructors and learners understand when and how to move between in-person and online components. For classroom pedagogy to maximise learning results, institutional support is necessary for implementing innovative hybrid learning methodologies and strategies. Being motivated during the course is essential for the teacher and the students to accomplish the goals mentioned earlier. Motivation will progressively increase when all parties involved in the ESL context are encouraging and supportive.

Students can access a wide range of materials, such as online dictionaries, language learning applications, and e-books, through the online portion of hybrid learning. Because of its accessibility, students can learn independently and practice language outside the classroom. Real-world language scenarios are frequently incorporated into hybrid learning through online simulations, virtual reality, or language exchange platforms. By helping undergraduates connect academic knowledge and real-world application, this application-oriented method makes vocabulary more memorable and relevant. Online tests and quizzes give pupils instant feedback, allowing them to recognise and quickly correct vocabulary mistakes. This immediate feedback loop facilitates learning and aids in reinforcing proper usage habits.

Several factors need English as Second Language (ESL) students to increase their vocabulary. As per a widely acknowledged statement in English pedagogy, for someone to successfully learn a second language, they must first build up their vocabulary in that language, as language development is contingent upon vocabulary development. This means that they must first master word knowledge. Additionally, students utilise English in their education—particularly in higher education—to grasp the thoughts of others, express their opinions, and communicate their feelings. Furthermore, they will feel good about themselves when they are proficient in word power. In order to gain all of these things, students must enrich their vocabulary in English and gain the support of their teachers, since a student's growth in vocabulary is inextricably linked to the encouragement and inspiration of their teachers. Therefore, this research focuses on a straightforward yet powerful assessment method to significantly enhance the vocabulary of ESL students, taking into account the teachers' role in the student's vocabulary development (Somathasan, 2021) <sup>[1]</sup>.

Arju (2011) <sup>[22]</sup> claims that language instructors frequently lament that ESL learners are falling behind due to a lack of

vocabulary while complimenting them on their speaking and writing abilities. As "Reading Vocabulary Expansion and Language Use Consolidation" clarifies, vocabulary plays a significant role in reading. With sufficient vocabulary, readers can fully understand reading materials; instead, they can only interpret them hazily and frequently incorrectly, forcing them to make educated guesses about unfamiliar words suggest that, in order to stop test takers (students) from cheating, Google Forms—which are used for quizzes, surveys, and other assessments—can be combined with Auto Proctor (Timer+ Proctor). For any instructor to give tests to their pupils, adding a 'Timer+ Proctor' to Google Forms is a piece of cake. The exam taker must first construct a Google Form in his or her Gmail account's Google Drive. After generating an exam on the platform, teachers need to go to the 'Add-ons,' which are available on the three dots right beneath the Gmail Profile Icon in the produced Google Form. You must download and install "Timer+ Proctor" as an Add-on for Google Forms under "Add-ons." The Auto Proctor (Timer+ Proctor) records the students' test results by observing them as if a teacher were observing them. Simultaneously, this AI-driven AutoProctor compiles instances of all the infractions committed by the students, including "switching tabs, making noise, going offline occasionally, maintaining no proper demeanour, trying to discuss with friends, trying to indulge in malpractice, etc." and saves them with supporting documentation. The AutoProctor releases each student's Trust Score in response to proof of test-taking or infractions. In addition, using "Quizizz" in practice exams piqued their interest since it provided them with immediate feedback and enabled them to raise their performance to the level of their classmates. With Quizizz in Practice Tests for Gamification and Google Forms in assessment tests, hybrid learning enhances English vocabulary, while traditional learning is the control group. This study focused on two main areas: using Quizizz's gamification to enhance vocabulary learning and using AutoProctor to prevent student misconduct in Google Forms. Its methodology proved to be innovative.

For many reasons, vocabulary is essential when studying English as a second language (ESL). It is, above all, the foundation of communication. Communicating ideas, feelings, and emotions becomes complicated when one needs a solid linguistic base. Increasing one's vocabulary also improves understanding when reading and listening. Words you must familiarise yourself with can make following along with written or spoken discourse challenging. An extensive vocabulary facilitates overall language understanding and helps learners understand new words through context. It is impossible to undersell the importance of vocabulary in ESL—it is a foundational element that supports every facet of language acquisition and competency.

Most people choose to include hybrid learning in ESL through online platforms. New educational concepts and approaches for English language learning have been made possible by the increasing use of mobile internet, cloud computing, and deep learning. Therefore, both platforms are useful for adopting hybrid learning in ESL instruction; how teachers and students use them will rely on their creativity and ingenuity. All of the skills in the ESL context are also applicable to hybrid learning. Hybrid learning can help improve English language proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Hybrid learning is available on various platforms and may be utilised to improve all ESL skills.

Additionally, it frequently results in favourable student feedback (Hasan & Hashim, 2022) <sup>[13]</sup>.

### Conclusion

The flexibility of hybrid learning accommodates different schedules and learning speeds to enhance undergraduates' English Vocabulary. The online resources allow students to review vocabulary at their convenience and in the locations and times of their choice. The Hybrid learning strategy was found to have a good impact on learners' ESL socio-psychological aspects, such as skills, emotions, and behaviours. It was statistically significant for improved academic achievement. Numerous studies provide an accurate and unbiased assessment of the effects of hybrid learning, which may inspire researchers to close learning gaps and gain a more thorough understanding of the field's research trends. Using technology with traditional in-person training, ESL teachers can transform commonplace technology into an effective teaching tool. The development of the internet has made the globe more global, meaning that education is no longer limited to a classroom's four walls. As long as the students have access to the internet, they can do their assignments pertaining to vocabulary. Among the gadgets that could be used for teaching and learning vocabulary are iPads, iPhones, and personal PCs. In order to stay up with the fast-paced society, ESL teachers need to be innovative and technologically savvy. In addition to helping teachers address the issue of insufficient class time, combining traditional in-person education with online learning resources will appeal to today's tech-savvy students. To sum up, incorporating hybrid learning into undergraduates' English vocabulary classes offers a comprehensive and flexible method for language learning. By integrating online resources and the advantages of traditional instruction, educators can establish a more productive and captivating vocabulary learning environment for their students.

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