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Developing a Content-Sensitive Blended Learning Model for Teaching English in Multilingual Polytechnic Contexts

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ABSTRACT

English proficiency is critical for academic success in Nigerian polytechnics, where classrooms are linguistically diverse. This study developed and validated a Content-Sensitive Blended Learning Model (CSBLM) to address the instructional needs of multilingual learners. Adopting a Developmental Research design, data were collected from 120 National Diploma students, 12 English lecturers, and four experts in English language teaching, educational technology, and curriculum design. Quantitative data from student questionnaires and expert evaluations were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Content Validity Index (CVI), while qualitative data from interviews were thematically analyzed. Results revealed significant challenges in speaking, writing, and vocabulary, compounded by mother-tongue interference and limited access to consistent digital resources. Lecturers reported reliance on traditional methods but expressed willingness to adopt blended learning strategies. Expert validation confirmed the model's clarity, relevance, feasibility, and pedagogical adequacy, with CVI values ranging from 0.80 to 0.92. The CSBLM incorporates dual instructional pathways: skill-focused topics delivered primarily face-to-face to enhance communicative competence, and knowledge-focused topics delivered via digital tools to support independent learning and cognitive processing. Instructional stages include content analysis, scaffolding, delivery, and continuous formative assessment. The framework integrates digital tools flexibly, accommodates diverse proficiency levels, and supports differentiated instruction. Findings suggest that the CSBLM can enhance learner engagement, language skill acquisition, and academic performance in multilingual polytechnic classrooms. The study concludes that CSBLM is a timely intervention in Nigerian polytechnics. Recommendations include lecturer training in blended pedagogy, provision of mobile-friendly and offline-accessible resources, and integration of continuous formative assessments to ensure sustained learning outcomes.

1. Introduction

English language proficiency remains a key determinant of academic achievement and professional mobility in Nigeria, where English serves as the official language and primary medium of instruction across all educational levels (Adakonye, Ojiweh & Babangida, 2025; Bamgbose, 2014; Adegbite & Odebunmi, 2020). In polytechnic education, competence in English is essential not only for mastering technical content but also for developing workplace communication skills aligned with global standards. However, persistent pedagogical and linguistic challenges continue to undermine effective English learning in these institutions.

Nigeria's multilingual environment significantly shapes English language acquisition. Students typically enter polytechnics with diverse first languages such as Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa, which strongly influence their English usage (Adakonye et al., 2025; Adegbija, 2004). This linguistic diversity contributes to phonological interference, syntactic inaccuracies, limited vocabulary range, and weak academic discourse skills. Consequently, many students demonstrate low classroom participation and difficulty expressing ideas in both spoken and written English (Adakonye et al., 2025; Adebayo, 2018). Similar findings in multilingual education research indicate that heterogeneous language backgrounds complicate instructional planning and assessment, placing additional demands on teachers (Alisaari et al., 2019; Raud & Orehhova, 2020 cited in Frontiers, 2023; García & Wei, 2014).

Compounding these challenges is the dominance of teacher-centred pedagogical practices in Nigerian polytechnics. Studies reveal that English instruction frequently relies on lecture-based delivery, rote learning, and examination-oriented assessment, with limited emphasis on communicative activities or learner interaction (Olaosebikan & Kolawole, 2025; Yusuf & Fakomogbon, 2021). Such practices restrict opportunities for authentic language use and disproportionately disadvantage learners who require scaffolded support. Moreover, inadequate integration of digital technologies limits access to flexible, personalized learning pathways (Olaosebikan & Kolawole, 2025; Afolayan & Oyetade, 2020).

Blended learning has increasingly been proposed as a pedagogical alternative capable of addressing these limitations. Empirical evidence from Nigerian tertiary institutions shows that combining face-to-face instruction with digital platforms improves engagement, supports learner autonomy, and enhances academic performance when appropriately implemented (Nwosu, 2024;

Benjamin, Ohwodede, Mamudu & Awunor, 2025; Graham, 2013). International scholarship further suggests that blended environments facilitate differentiated instruction and multimodal learning, which are particularly beneficial in linguistically diverse classrooms (Horn & Staker, 2015; Means et al., 2014). Despite these advantages, blended learning applications in Nigerian polytechnics remain fragmented and rarely adapted to the specific demands of multilingual English instruction.

These gaps highlight the need for a content-sensitive blended learning framework that aligns instructional strategies with both subject matter characteristics (skill-based versus knowledge-based content) and learners' linguistic profiles. Such an approach can enhance interaction, accommodate language diversity, and promote deeper cognitive engagement.

Accordingly, this study aims to develop and validate a Content-Sensitive Blended Learning Model for English teaching in multilingual polytechnic contexts by identifying learners' instructional needs, designing a context-responsive framework, and validating the model through expert review. The proposed model seeks to offer a theoretically grounded and practically viable solution for improving English language outcomes within Nigeria's linguistically complex tertiary education landscape.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Blended Learning in Language Education

Blended learning has become a prominent approach in English language teaching by integrating face-to-face instruction with online environments to promote flexible, learner-centred pedagogy (Graham, 2013; Ramalingam, Md Yunus & Hashim, 2022). In ELT, it incorporates learning management systems, multimedia resources, and online discussion platforms to extend linguistic input and practice beyond the classroom (Sharma & Barrett, 2007; Marsh, 2012). Research indicates that blended learning enhances learner autonomy, interaction, and collaboration—core elements for developing communicative competence (Horn & Staker, 2015; Means et al., 2014).

It also supports sustained engagement through synchronous and asynchronous modes, fostering self-regulated learning behaviours (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Empirical studies in higher education further show that blended approaches facilitate language acquisition while addressing 21st-century skills such as critical thinking and communication (Jassni, Ismail & Md Yunus, 2024; Nwosu, 2024). However, challenges including uneven technology access, limited teacher preparedness, and variable learner motivation persist, underscoring the need for context-specific pedagogical frameworks (Afolayan & Oyetade, 2020; Olaosebikan & Kolawole, 2025).

2.2 Multilingual Learning Challenges

Multilingual classrooms present distinct challenges for English language instruction. Students often enter higher education with diverse first languages, which influence English use and produce uneven proficiency across linguistic skills (Frontiers in Education, 2023; García & Wei, 2014). This heterogeneity frequently results in phonological transfer, grammatical inaccuracies, and limited lexical range, negatively affecting overall communicative competence (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021; Adegbija, 2004). Contemporary multilingual pedagogy emphasizes recognizing learners' full linguistic repertoires rather than framing multilingualism as a deficit, advocating translanguaging and inclusive instructional practices (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021; García & Wei, 2014).

Traditional transmission-based teaching methods further constrain learning in linguistically diverse classrooms. When language and content are treated separately, students struggle to process disciplinary knowledge alongside second-language demands, increasing cognitive load and reducing comprehension (De Jong et al., 2013; Sweller, 2011). Research therefore stresses the need for pedagogical adaptations that integrate language scaffolding with meaningful content engagement to support multilingual learners effectively (Cummins, 2008; Adebayo, 2018).

2.3 Content vs Skill-Focused Instruction

Language instruction commonly alternates between content-based and skill-focused orientations. Content-based instruction promotes language acquisition through meaningful subject matter, enabling learners to develop academic knowledge and linguistic competence simultaneously. This aligns with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which integrates language and curriculum content to enhance conceptual understanding and communicative ability (Marsh, 1994; Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010). CLIL studies show increased learner engagement and deeper cognitive processing when language tasks are embedded in authentic disciplinary contexts (Dalton-Puffer, 2011).

Skill-focused instruction, by contrast, targets discrete abilities such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing, ensuring systematic development of specific competencies (Nation, 2007). Approaches emphasizing sequential mastery of skills provide focused remediation for learners with identifiable language gaps. Both orientations offer complementary strengths: content-based instruction supports contextualized learning, while skill-focused teaching ensures precision in linguistic development. Integrating both within a blended learning framework allows instructors to balance contextual meaning with targeted practice, creating responsive learning environments suited to multilingual classrooms (Graham, 2013; Horn & Staker, 2015).

2.4 Theoretical Foundations

The theoretical grounding of blended learning and language instruction draws from several complementary theories.

Constructivism posits that learners construct knowledge through active engagement with tasks, prior knowledge, and social interactions (Piaget, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978). In blended environments, constructivist principles support learning activities that encourage exploration, collaboration, and reflection both online and in face to face settings (Jonassen, 1999; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). This theory undergirds instructional designs that position learners as active agents in their language learning process (Fosnot, 2013).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasizes meaningful interaction as the central mechanism for second language acquisition (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). CLT asserts that language learning is most effective when learners engage in purposeful communication, often facilitated through interactional tasks that mirror real world uses of language (Littlewood, 2004). Blended learning environments can extend communicative opportunities through online discussion, collaborative projects, and simulation tasks that complement in class interaction (Sharma & Barrett, 2007; Graham, 2013).

Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) highlights the limitations of working memory in learning complex tasks (Sweller, 2011). When learners are required to simultaneously process content and language, cognitive overload can occur, hindering both comprehension and retention (Paas & van Merriënboer, 1994). Instructional designs that segment information, provide scaffolding, and balance language and content complexity can reduce cognitive load and enhance learning outcomes in blended settings (Mayer, 2009). This theoretical perspective supports the design of blended learning sequences that scaffold linguistic complexity while introducing substantive content.

Together, these theories provide an integrated foundation for a blended learning model that supports active meaning making, authentic communication, and cognitive processing in multilingual language classrooms (Cummins, 2008; Horn & Staker, 2015).

2.5 Research Gap

Despite extensive research on blended learning and its pedagogical benefits, several gaps persist. First, much of the existing research synthesizes blended learning strategies without explicitly addressing the specific challenges of multilingual learners in polytechnic contexts. Literature on blended learning in language education often lacks a framework that distinguishes content-focused from skill-focused instruction while accommodating diverse linguistic backgrounds. Second, while studies have explored blended learning's impact on individual language skills or autonomous learning, fewer have proposed comprehensive, theoretically grounded models tailored for polytechnic English programs where instructional demands include both technical content and communicative competence. Finally, existing frameworks often emphasize technology integration in general terms but do not provide structured guidance for aligning pedagogical stages with linguistic and cognitive needs unique to multilingual tertiary learners. This study addresses these gaps by developing and validating a Content-Sensitive Blended Learning Model that integrates blended modalities with content and skill demands in multilingual polytechnic environments.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a Developmental Research (Design-Based Research) design, which emphasizes iterative design, empirical testing, and expert validation of instructional models in real-world contexts (Richey & Klein, 2007; Plomp, 2013). This approach was appropriate for developing a Content-Sensitive Blended Learning Model tailored to multilingual polytechnic learners, allowing for continuous refinement based on empirical evidence and expert feedback.

3.1 Participants

Participants included 120 National Diploma students aged 16–25 years from three Nigerian polytechnics, representing diverse linguistic backgrounds: Yoruba (=65%), Igbo (=15%), Hausa (=5%), and other languages (=15%). Additionally, 12 English language lecturers contributed insights through interviews, while four experts in English language teaching, educational technology, and curriculum design evaluated the draft framework.

3.2 Instruments

Three instruments were used: (1) Students' Needs Analysis Questionnaire (SNAQ) to identify linguistic, technological, and pedagogical needs; (2) Lecturer Interview Guide (LIG) for semi-structured exploration of classroom challenges and blended learning perceptions; and (3) Framework Validation Checklist (FVC) to assess clarity, relevance, feasibility, and pedagogical adequacy of the draft model. All instruments underwent expert review for content validity.

3.3 Procedure

Data collection occurred in three phases: (1) Needs Assessment, using SNAQ and interviews; (2) Draft Framework Development, informed by student and lecturer data; and (3) Expert Validation, where the FVC was used to obtain quantitative ratings and qualitative feedback for model refinement.

4. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) and Content Validity Index (CVI), with values ≥0.75 considered acceptable (Lynn, 1986). Qualitative data were thematically analyzed (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to extract patterns and recommendations, which informed iterative revisions of the framework, ensuring it is context-sensitive, pedagogically sound, and practically feasible.

4.1 Results

This section presents findings from the needs analysis, lecturer interviews, technology assessment, and expert validation, which collectively informed the development of the Content-Sensitive Blended Learning Model.

4.2 Student Needs

Analysis of the Students' Needs Analysis Questionnaire (SNAQ) revealed significant linguistic and instructional needs among polytechnic learners. Many students demonstrated limited communicative competence, particularly in speaking and writing, with

frequent mother-tongue interference affecting sentence structure, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Additionally, students reported difficulty comprehending complex academic texts and constructing coherent written assignments. A majority expressed interest in interactive and technology-assisted learning, indicating that digital tools, mobile devices, and online exercises could enhance engagement and self-directed learning. Table 1 summarizes key linguistic and pedagogical needs identified.

Need Area	Mean Score	Interpretation
Speaking Skills	3.6	High Need
Writing Proficiency	3.5	High Need
Vocabulary Development	3.4	Moderate-High Need
Digital Learning Engagement	3.7	High Need

4.3 Lecturer Perspectives

Semi-structured interviews with 12 English lecturers highlighted challenges in teaching multilingual classes. Lecturers reported reliance on traditional teacher-centered methods that limited student participation and interaction. They also noted difficulties in balancing language support with subject content, particularly when learners' proficiency levels varied widely. However, lecturers expressed openness to blended learning approaches, provided there was adequate training, technical support, and structured instructional guidance. These insights informed the model's emphasis on differentiated instruction and scaffolding strategies.

4.4 Technology Access

Assessment of digital readiness revealed that most students possessed mobile devices, though access to laptops or tablets was limited. Internet connectivity was generally inconsistent, and some institutions lacked robust Learning Management Systems (LMS). These constraints underscored the need for a flexible, mobile-friendly blended learning framework that could function effectively both online and offline.

4.5 Expert Validation

The draft framework was evaluated by four experts using the Framework Validation Checklist (FVC). Quantitative analysis showed high ratings across all dimensions: clarity (mean = 3.8), relevance (mean = 3.9), feasibility (mean = 3.7), and pedagogical adequacy (mean = 3.8), all exceeding the 3.0 benchmark. The Content Validity Index (CVI) for all components ranged from 0.80 to 0.92, indicating strong agreement among experts. Qualitative feedback suggested minor adjustments to sequence instructional activities, enhance multilingual scaffolding, and incorporate formative assessment tools. These recommendations were incorporated in the final model.

4.6 Summary of Results

The findings indicate a clear need for a context-sensitive blended learning model that addresses linguistic gaps, accommodates technological constraints, and integrates differentiated instruction. Students' high interest in digital learning, lecturers' readiness to adopt new teaching strategies, and expert validation collectively support the feasibility and pedagogical soundness of the proposed framework. These results provide an empirical foundation for the development and implementation of the Content-Sensitive Blended Learning Model in Nigerian polytechnic classrooms.

5. The Content-Sensitive Blended Learning Model

The Content-Sensitive Blended Learning Model (CSBLM) developed in this study represents a structured approach to teaching English in multilingual polytechnic environments. The model integrates face-to-face and digital instruction, aligning pedagogical strategies with both content type (skill-focused vs knowledge-focused) and learners' linguistic and technological contexts. Its design draws on findings from student needs, lecturer perspectives, and expert validation, ensuring contextual relevance, feasibility, and pedagogical rigor.

5.1 Model Structure

The CSBLM is organized around multi-level instructional pathways. Each lesson begins with a content/topic analysis, classifying instructional material as either skill-focused or knowledge-focused. Skill-focused topics emphasize communicative competence, such as speaking, listening, or interaction skills, while knowledge-focused topics prioritize theoretical understanding, grammar, vocabulary, and research skills. This dual-pathway structure allows instructors to match teaching strategies to learning objectives, optimizing classroom time and digital resource use.

5.2 Skill vs Knowledge Pathways

For skill-focused content, instruction is primarily face-to-face, supporting interactive activities such as role plays, discussions, debates, and collaborative exercises. These tasks allow learners to practice language in authentic contexts, enhancing fluency and pragmatic competence. Digital tools, such as online discussion boards and multimedia resources, supplement face-to-face sessions by providing additional practice and scaffolding opportunities.

For knowledge-focused content, instruction is predominantly technology-mediated. Online exercises, interactive modules, quizzes, and research tasks using tools such as Google Docs or simulation software allow learners to engage with content asynchronously or synchronously. This approach accommodates diverse proficiency levels and promotes independent learning while reducing cognitive overload.

5.3 Instructional Stages

The model follows four stages:

i. Content Analysis: Determine whether the topic is skill- or knowledge-focused.
ii. Planning and Scaffolding: Design instructional activities appropriate to content type and learners' language proficiency.
iii. Delivery: Conduct face-to-face sessions for skill-focused tasks and deploy digital tools for knowledge-focused instruction.
iv. Assessment and Feedback: Provide formative and summative evaluations tailored to content type, including peer assessments, quizzes, oral presentations, and written assignments.

5.4 Digital Integration

Digital integration is designed to be flexible and context-sensitive. Mobile-friendly resources, asynchronous exercises, and offline-accessible content ensure inclusivity for learners with limited internet access. Digital platforms also facilitate collaboration, interactive assessments, and real-time feedback, reinforcing learning outcomes across both pathways.

5.5 Assessment Design

Assessment aligns with content type: skill-focused pathways rely on performance-based assessments such as oral presentations and collaborative projects, while knowledge-focused pathways utilize formative quizzes, research assignments, and online exercises. Both pathways emphasize continuous feedback, enabling instructors to monitor learner progress and adjust instruction accordingly.

5.6 Flowchart Concept (Narrative Version)

- Content/Topic → Classification: Skill-focused or Knowledge-focused
- Skill-Focused: Face-to-face → Speaking, Oral Practice → Role plays, Discussions, Debates → Collaborative Learning
- Knowledge-Focused: Digital Tool-Based → Grammar & Syntax, Vocabulary, Research & Projects → Online exercises, interactive modules, quiz platforms, Google Docs

This flowchart illustrates how instructional delivery is differentiated by content type, while integrating digital and face-to-face modalities to optimize engagement and learning outcomes.

5.7 Conclusion

The CSBLM provides a context-sensitive, flexible, and empirically grounded framework for English language instruction in multilingual polytechnic settings. By distinguishing between skill- and knowledge-focused content, integrating digital tools, and scaffolding instruction based on learner needs, the model enhances engagement, supports differentiated learning, and provides structured assessment mechanisms to improve linguistic competence and academic performance.

5.8 Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the relevance and feasibility of a Content-Sensitive Blended Learning Model for teaching English in multilingual polytechnic contexts. The results indicate that students exhibit significant linguistic needs, particularly in speaking, writing, and vocabulary development, consistent with previous research highlighting the challenges of English acquisition in multilingual classrooms (Adakonye, Ojiweh & Babangida, 2025; Cenoz & Gorter, 2021). The interference of mother-tongue languages observed among students aligns with prior studies emphasizing the impact of linguistic diversity on communicative competence (Frontiers in Education, 2023). These findings validate the necessity for instructional designs that are responsive to learners' linguistic profiles.

Lecturer perspectives revealed a reliance on traditional teacher-centered methods, corroborating earlier reports that conventional pedagogy often limits interaction and practical language use in Nigerian tertiary classrooms (Olaosebikan & Kolawole, 2025). However, lecturers' readiness to adopt blended learning strategies reflects the growing acceptance of digital integration in higher education, echoing literature advocating the transformative potential of blended approaches in fostering engagement and learner autonomy (Ramalingam, Md Yunus & Hashim, 2022; Nwosu, 2024).

The dual pathways of the CSBLM, that is, distinguishing between skill-focused and knowledge-focused content address these pedagogical challenges by aligning instructional mode with learning objectives. Skill-focused topics employ face-to-face strategies, facilitating authentic communication through role plays, discussions, and collaborative exercises. Knowledge-focused topics leverage digital tools, providing flexibility and scaffolding for independent learning. This integration resonates with findings that blended learning enhances both cognitive and communicative outcomes when content is carefully matched to instructional strategies (Sharma & Barrett, 2007; Marsh, 2012).

Expert validation confirmed the clarity, relevance, feasibility, and pedagogical adequacy of the model, with CVI scores exceeding the 0.75 benchmark, reflecting strong professional consensus. The iterative refinement of the framework, informed by qualitative and quantitative feedback, aligns with best practices in Developmental Research, ensuring that the model is context-sensitive and theoretically grounded (Richey & Klein, 2007; Plomp, 2013).

In sum, the CSBLM effectively bridges gaps identified in multilingual polytechnic classrooms, integrating empirical evidence, theoretical foundations, and technological considerations. It demonstrates that a structured, content-sensitive approach to blended learning can enhance both language skill acquisition and knowledge development, while accommodating the diverse needs of multilingual learners.

5.9 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study developed and validated a Content-Sensitive Blended Learning Model (CSBLM) for teaching English in multilingual polytechnic contexts. The research revealed that learners face significant challenges in communicative competence, vocabulary acquisition, and overall English proficiency, compounded by mother-tongue interference and uneven access to digital resources. Lecturers rely heavily on traditional, teacher-centered methods, which limit student interaction and engagement. Findings also highlighted students' interest in interactive and technology-supported learning, while expert validation confirmed that the proposed framework is clear, relevant, feasible, and pedagogically sound.

The CSBLM addresses these challenges by providing distinct instructional pathways for skill-focused and knowledge-focused content. Skill-focused topics employ face-to-face strategies such as role plays, debates, and collaborative exercises to foster authentic communication, while knowledge-focused topics leverage digital tools, online exercises, and interactive modules to support independent learning and cognitive processing. The framework incorporates scaffolding, differentiated instruction, and continuous formative assessment, ensuring alignment between content type, learner needs, and pedagogical objectives. By bridging face-to-face and digital modalities, the model enhances engagement, accommodates diverse proficiency levels, and supports effective language acquisition in multilingual classrooms.

5.10 Practical Implications

- Polytechnic institutions can adopt the CSBLM to improve English teaching outcomes, particularly in linguistically diverse classes.
- Lecturers should receive training in blended learning strategies, including the use of digital tools and scaffolding techniques for multilingual learners.
- Flexible digital infrastructure, such as mobile-friendly resources and offline-accessible content, should be prioritized to ensure equitable learning opportunities.
- Continuous formative assessment, aligned with content type, should be integrated to monitor learner progress and guide instructional decisions.

In conclusion, the CSBLM provides a context-sensitive, theoretically grounded, and practically feasible framework for enhancing English language instruction in multilingual polytechnic environments. Its implementation can improve learners' linguistic competence, engagement, and overall academic performance. Future research may explore longitudinal impacts of the model on student learning outcomes and its adaptability to other tertiary and technical education contexts.

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