EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE OF BLENDED LEARNING IN INDONESIAN EFL CLASS

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Abstract: Inspite of the beneficial impacts of blended learning, the results of the most recent empirical studies do not support the idea that the blended learning helps learners enhance their English proficiency and their level of learning independence. There is a proof that blended learning impacts the English proficiency, learning independence, enthusiasm, and ICT skills of students. This article analyzed and quantified the effectiveness of blended learning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This study is a quantitative explanatory research type with a pre-test and post-test design. One hundred eighty students from the Agronomy Study Program at Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng participated in the study. A method of random sampling was utilized, and from that population, 73 participants were selected as samples. Data was taken by test and non-test, then analyzed by a software program called SPSS 22.0. Teen blended learning sessions, including five face-to-face and five virtual sessions, are conducted using the Zoom platform. The findings indicate that students' English language skills improve with blended learning (the mean score on the post-test was 82.57), as do their levels of learning independence (82.44%), learning enthusiasm (76%), and ICT skills (70.43%).

Keywords: blended learning method; English teaching; Indonesian EFL

INTRODUCTION

There is a need to have assistance from all stakeholders in the students' learning process. As such, the students might have a better bright future as they are strengthened with academic achievement and

humanistic values. However, an expectation of constructive, adaptive, and creative learning approaches, techniques, or even strategies is vital in scaffolding students' academic and non-academic achievement. As confirmed by (Makovec, 2018; Syarifuddin, 2015), the expectation in question supports the teachers' primary roles to teach, guide, direct, train, assess, and evaluate students' progress in learning.

Integral to the mentioned expectation, educational values and character building are essential to cope with. In this regard, the two elements should be constructed in a way that needs teachers' four competencies: pedagogical competence, personality, social competence, and professional competence. The former is concerned with teachers' pedagogical knowledge in the teaching process. The second deals with teachers' ethics, conduct, and the manner of the teaching and learning process. Social competence, that so-called socio-interpersonal competence, highlights teachers' efforts to guide the students so that they are determined to live harmoniously with others. Meanwhile, the last represents teachers' mastery of teaching materials delivered to the students. These competencies benefit from attaining the expected values and students' good character (Bautista & Oretga-Ruiz, 2015; Beijaard et al., 2004).

Along with the above statement, meeting students' achievement is compulsory. Those involved in education should be innovative, adaptive, and constructive in teaching and learning. There is no need to be stagnant; instead, there is an effort to make the students powerful, determined, pervasive, independent, and imaginative in all aspects of their life (Darong et al., 2021). The English teacher method innovation supports each competency's learning outcomes (Intarapanich, 2013; Munzaki et al., 2016). In this regard, the learning should align with individual learning styles and technology tools. As such, teachers need to cope with student learning styles, namely visual, that are concerned with visual ability, auditory (hearing ability), and kinesthetic, which is very dependent more on demonstration (Awla, 2014; Gilakjani, 2016; Widayanti, 2013).

Moving further ahead, teaching and learning interactions should follow the demands of technology which has triggered the emergence of a new learning paradigm, so-called digital-based learning. The new paradigm in question has already transformed the view and learning methods that allow students to access beyond the limits individually and collectively (Al-Maqtri, 2014; Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2014; Darong, 2022; Darong & Niman, 2021; Mathew et al., 2019). In addition, it is regarded as an excellent alternative for learning English nowadays regardless of the face-to-face teaching-learning process and online learning that has been carried out. Learners become the center point of learning and information sources in this respect. More importantly, there is greater accessibility and can improve their ability and skills digitally (Cai, 2012; Kim, 2014; Menggo et al., 2021). Therefore, blended learning is ideal as it can serve students' learning styles and the needs of advancing digital technology.

Although blended learning is associated with computers, audio, audio-visual, information technology, and mobile learning, face-to-face classrooms are still valuable in terms of student affection. Besides, the employment of blended learning is adaptive. As it shifts human interaction patterns and can acquire information, communication, and technology (ICT) (Abdullah, 2018; Zhang & Zhu, 2017), blended learning is very prospective for attaining learning goals. It benefits teachers to be more creative and innovative and provides enormous advantages to the learning pattern.

Aside from creativity and innovations, previous studies have confirmed that blended learning is of benefit for teachers and students' digital literacy skills, the flexibility of teaching materials, time and spaces, and students' responsibility and enthusiasm in learning English as a Second Language (ESL) or a Foreign Language (EFL) (Jeffrey et al., 2014; Khan et al., 2012). Furthermore, the previous studies in question have highlighted that blended learning is needed as it could magnify language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and non-language skills (self-engagement, meaningful classroom atmosphere adaptation, critical thinking, and digital literacy

skills) (Damaiyanti & Sari, 2017; Ginaya et al., 2018). These researchers argue that applying blended learning in English classes could enhance linguistic and non-language skills. The English language skills addressed include listening, communicating, reading, and writing, whereas non-linguistic skills pertain to a more relevant and interactive classroom environment, enhancing students' critical reasoning skills and fostering their ICT skills.

Therefore, one of the 21st century's educational criteria has been the ability to solve problems. Educators' primary goal is to foster students' ability to think critically, communicate effectively, and work together (Ndiung et al., 2021; Zubaidah et al., 2017). Students who possess the ability to think critically are better equipped to engage with others, make appropriate decisions, and overcome various challenges that arise during their educational endeavors (Kızıltoprak & Köse, 2017; Runisah et al., 2016).

Nevertheless, this does not negate that implementing blended learning has several difficulties. All higher education stakeholders need to address the pressing challenges of digital instructor skills, understanding the substance of blended learning, student initiative, and policies for implementing blended learning by government or university management (Apandi & Raman, 2020; Daud & Ghani, 2019).

Blended learning has been shown to positively impact specific language skills or components in the research mentioned. Research on the effectiveness of blended learning in improving English language proficiency and the difficulties of applying it at various educational levels has not been convincing in recent years. Researchers were inspired to conduct this analysis because of this lack.

English for non-English students in Indonesia is still integrated, specifically the introduction of English learning to achieve four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Advancement of these fundamentals as an understanding of language components, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, is essential to a strong command of the English language. Students must

learn four skills and three language components in a reasonable amount of time to achieve these comprehensive English language skills (Masson, 2013; Menggo, 2021a; Sadiku, 2015). In order to meet these needs, new teaching strategies, such as blended learning, are required.

Following the descriptions, research findings, and gaps outlined above, exploring how blended learning impacts English courses is interesting.

LITERATURE REVIEW
The Blended Learning and Covid-19 Pandemic

As a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent implementation of a significant digital change in the learning process, many educators and researchers have recently begun exploring blended learning. Technology-based digital platforms allow English language teachers to continue their education process despite the outbreak of the covid-19 disease. Blended learning is a hybrid model that incorporates online and face-to-face learning. Blended learning, on the other hand, has recently been renamed by some scholars. Learning, on the other hand, is defined as the act of being taught. In other words, "blended learning" refers to instruction that incorporates classroom meetings and online settings (Colis & Moonen, 2001; Dziuban et al., 2018).

In the minds of some experts, blended learning is not a mix of two distinct techniques. As an alternative to face-to-face instruction, blended learning combines student-centered and online learning methods. Besides, "blended learning" refers to the employment of internet technology in a teaching and learning process (Stracke, 2007).

Conventional learning is characterized by face-to-face interactions, in which students participate directly in classroom activities. On the other hand, online learning takes place outside of school using technological advances. Figure 1 illustrates how these two educational systems work together.

Face-to-face instruction + Online instruction = Blended learning

Figure 1. A Conceptual Model of Blended Learning (Adapted from Graham, 2006)

For example, a teacher can learn offline and online via blended learning, as shown in Figure 1, which supports the idea that it is possible to study in two ways. The application of blended learning is limited since English teachers cannot master its complexity.

Since blended learning meets the needs of Industrial Revolution 4.0, blended learning and digital skills go hand in hand. Information and communication technology (ICT) literacy, media literacy, and other forms of media literacy are all part of digital literacy (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). The ability of learners to obtain and interpret data before sharing it with others is referred to as information literacy (Bury et al., 2017; Nizam et al., 2010). To be considered media literate, a speaker has to be able to select and use various forms of media in order to be able to communicate successfully. The digital media evaluation and identification relevant to English learning can also be accomplished through ICT literacy (Bahadorfar & Omidvar, 2014). This report only talks about the Zoom application and digital media in education. ICT has been a crucial part of teaching English. ICT gives learners and teachers many ways to get to essential resources that can help them improve their English skills. Several digital media, like Zoom, Skype, YouTube, and many others, can be used to improve English skills (Hariry, 2015; Hennessy et al., 2005).

Blended Learning in Indonesia EFL Context

The teachers should fully understand the capabilities of blended learning so that the process does not get stopped. Blended learning has the basic specifications: 1) Teachers can do the learning process in two ways: they can teach students directly in the classroom and also add additional explanations through online learning; 2) Teaching can be executed in face-to-face learning and virtual classrooms; 3) Students are given two ways to learn (offline and online); 4) Instructors already

know how to do the learning process in two different ways; and 5) Students are taught in a way that matches their learning style (Lalima & Dangwal, 2017; Medina, 2018).

To summarize, there are numerous reasons why blended learning cannot be implemented systematically at all educational levels. When it comes to the implementation of blended learning, there are several considerations, such as the ability of teachers to apply two learning models; the enthusiasm of teachers to adapt to advances in digital technology; the availability of ICT equipment that universities own; flexibility in the timetable of learning activities; and the readiness of learners to absorb the responsibility of the two models of the learning process (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019; Ma'arop & Embi, 2016). This condition is not particularly difficult to fulfill, provided everyone involved is willing to comply. Due to this commitment, blended learning has become the principal method of instruction at all educational levels, including university. This concept is especially relevant in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The use of blended learning provides a variety of advantages, all of which contribute to the development of students' linguistic skills and affective values (Ghazizadeh & Fatemipour, 2017; Sheerah, 2020; Shivam & Singh, 2015). Researchers have argued that 1) increasing the ICT skills of teachers and students; 2) provides students with two different spaces in which to transform their knowledge (offline and online); 3) helps to promote enhanced pupil practical values (learning encouragement, commitment, discipline, and autonomy); 4) providing students with up-to-date teaching material, and 5) providing students with the opportunity to practice communication and interaction in English with native English speakers from a variety of countries. Blended learning in a class for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) can have a substantial effect, as demonstrated by the advantages mentioned above.

Blended learning has several advantages that encourage English teachers to pay close attention to its implementation. An instructor can

take a variety of steps to adopt blended learning, including the following:

1. Engage students in a dialogue on the concept of blended learning.
2. Have a discussion with your learners about the many types of technologies that are utilized for online learning.
3. Engage in discussion and compromise with the learners over the percentage of in-class to online learning sessions.
4. Plan a schedule for students to follow in both the classroom and online learning by communicating with them.
5. Specify which materials should be used for learning in the classroom and which are used for learning online.
6. Clearly define the information that is covered in each language skill that is presented in a school setting as well as through web-based learning
7. Try for a standard way between the roles of students and instructors when it comes to in-classroom and web-based learning.
8. Specify the assessment method that will be used for each linguistic ability that will be acquired based on its intended purpose.

Blended learning is becoming increasingly popular among Indonesian EFL instructors due to the above benefits. If you are a non-native English speaker in a country where English is not widely spoken or utilized in official contexts, you are speaking EFL, which stands for English as a Foreign Language (Harmer, 2004; Peng, 2019).

RESEARCH METHOD
Research Type
This study uses a pre-and post-test design for quantitative explanatory research. In this study, the researchers compared the impact of a particular learning method on two different groups of students (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 276). Blended learning was analyzed in

two different research groups as part of this study. These two groups, one as an experimental group and the other as a control group, were selected at random from six classes (Bungin, 2005, p. 127).

Population and Sample

The research population consisted of 180 students enrolled in the Agronomy Study Program at Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng who took English classes. The whole population was sampled using a random sampling technique to determine 73 students (two classes) as a representative population.

Instruments

The test is meant to evaluate the respondents' English proficiency. The question test is the idea of a test proposed by Brown (2004, p.118), which considers the four most fundamental English skills. There is a maximum score of 25 for each skill, with a minimum possible score of 5. The total score is based on how well students perform in these four fundamental English skills. Therefore, the maximum possible score for each respondent is 100, and the lowest possible score is 25.

In contrast, the non-test was in the form of a questionnaire distributed in Google form. This instrument aimed to identify the learners' opinions of implementing blended learning for a total of 12 meetings, consisting of six times for face-to-face learning and six times for online meetings through the use of the Zoom application.

The researchers were responsible for developing each item that was included in the questionnaire, which was subsequently given to the participants and verified by three experts from Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng in terms of its accuracy and constructed validity. The questionnaire consisted of fifteen items, each of which was a closed-ended question, and it utilized a Likert scale with five points, with higher scores signifying stronger relationships. On this scale, which ranged from 1 to 5, a score of 1 indicated extreme unhappiness, while a 5 indicated extreme pleasure.

Data Analysis

The t-test, followed by the assumption test, which included the normality test and the variance homogeneity test, was used to analyze the data, and SPSS 22.0 was used to conduct all of these analyses. After that, the researchers analyzed the data and provided a narrative for that as well.

FINDINGS

In this section of the report, the researchers concentrate solely on the presentation of data from two research classes, namely the experimental class and the control class, and data concerning respondents' perceptions of the application of blended learning. The data from the two classes that have been pointed out can be detailed descriptions in the Tables and Charts provided.

Table1. Average scores of pre-tests

Class	N	Mean	Median	SD	Variance	Min	Max
Experimental	37	63.64	65	7.03	49.51	50	75
Control	36	62.70	60	6.19	38.32	50	75

As seen in Table 1, which can be found above, the mean scores for both of the research classes are quite close to one another, and there is also no statistically significant difference between them. The experimental group (with a p-value of.083) and the control group (with a p-value of.072) were validated by the findings of the normality test and the variance analysis. In light of these findings, the data would appear to follow a normal distribution. The homogeneity variance gives a fair result of p =.359, which indicates that the two classes considered in this research have a homogeneity variant.

Blended learning is employed for ten meetings; five face-to-face learning sessions and five online meetings are conducted utilizing the Zoom platform. This distinction is based on an agreement between the lecturer and respondents at the beginning of the course. After that, a

post-test was conducted. In table 2, the findings of the post-test could well be found.

Table 2. Post-test results

Class	N	Mean	Median	Modus	SD	Variance	Range	Min	Max
Experimental	37	82.57	85	90	6.83	46.69	25	65	90
Control	36	77.83	80	75	6.29	39.63	25	65	90

It was determined whether or not the data in Table 2 were standard and whether or not they had homogenous variance. To determine whether or not the data were normal, the researchers utilized the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The significant values for the experimental and control groups' English ability are p =.167, *ns* and p =.084, *ns* correspondingly, suggesting that the population sample data is normally distributed. This result was determined by comparing the two groups' English abilities. If we assume that the categories are interchangeable, the results of the data's homogeneity test show a significance level of p =.347.

In addition, the t-test is utilized to examine the hypothesis's validity. Blended learning benefited the experimental class at the Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng for first-year students in the Agronomy Study Program. The difference in the mean scores the two groups achieved on the post-test provides supporting evidence for this argument.

Table 3. Gain score results

Class	N	Score			
		Ideal	Min	Max	Average
Experimental	37	100	0.29	0.75	0.35
Control	36	100	0.13	0.75	0.27

Table 3 shows that the experimental conclusions were comparable to those of the control group. Diagram 1 depicts the contrast between the two groups.

Figure 2. Average Result of Gain Score

T-tests have confirmed the average gain score's results. The t-test results show that t_{ob} is 19.00 and t_{cv} is 1.684. Blended learning has an impact on English proficiency, according to these findings.

A favorable influence on students' positive perceptions of learning independence, learning motivation, and increased ICT skills is also a result of the implementation of blended learning. Diagram 2 illustrates each of these points.
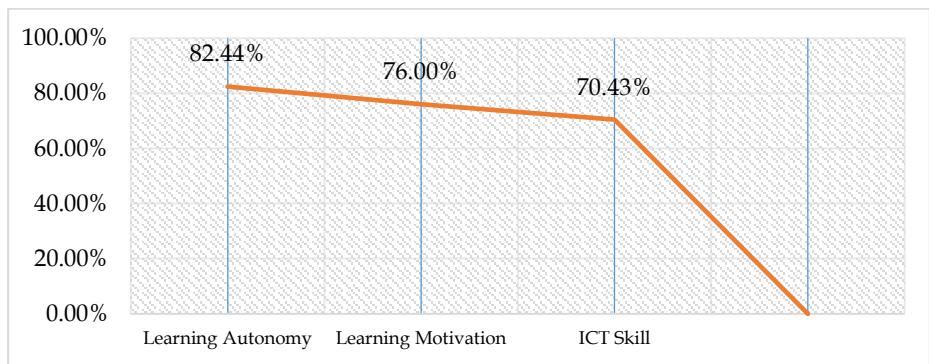

Figure 3. Students' perception

DISCUSSION

First-year students in the Agronomy Program at the Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng benefit from the use of blended learning (Table 2). This result gives credibility to the argument put forth by several earlier researchers that blended learning has the potential to improve students' listening and speaking abilities

(Ehsanifard et al., 2020; Rahmawati, 2019; Sholihah et al., 2018). In addition, these researchers believe that using blended learning not only has an impact on improving listening and speaking skills but also on other learning components that can enhance student learning progress. Some examples of these learning components include creating a classroom atmosphere that is more interactive and meaningful, practicing listening and speaking autonomously, increasing learners' motivation, and getting better students' ICT skills.

In the process of acquiring English as a foreign language, abilities in listening and speaking play a significant role in the context of real-world encounters. The ability to verbally communicate ideas, concepts, or viewpoints is referred to as speaking ability (Harmer, 2007); while listening is a skill, it is not only the ability to listen; it is also the ability to comprehend, analyze, and reply to the sounds it receives (Lindsay & Knight, 2006; Yavuz & Celik, 2017).

Students are taking more outstanding care to ensure that they comprehend the text and speech contents of a variety of texts being taught to them. Understanding what they read is an essential part of learning English, and blended learning can help students improve their reading skills (Lamri & Hamzaoui, 2018; Rahman & Iwan, 2019; Rombot et al., 2020). Blended learning has been shown to improve students' comprehension of various reading texts. In order to properly comprehend the content of certain readings, blended learning, which incorporates both electronic and non-electronic texts, uses relevant digital evidence.

In the English classes of this study, the primary emphasis is on paragraph writing. Three forms of paragraph writing, including narrative, descriptive, and persuasive, are taught to students. Blended learning enables students to demonstrate proficiency in numerous aspects of paragraph writing assessments, including organization of ideas, structure, word choice, and mechanics (Alghammas, 2020; Mabuan & Ebron, 2017; Suastra & Menggo, 2020). In earlier studies, blended learning has increased writing skills (AlTameemy et al., 2020; Muhtia et al., 2018). They believe that using blended learning promotes

students to identify and produce paragraphs appropriate for writing skill evaluation rubrics.

Blended learning has been shown to improve students' language skills. Students must have a proportional understanding of the four languages. Thus instructors must be able to include them in the learning process (Ristati et al., 2019; Umar, 2021). Besides, (Harmer, 2004) pointed out that four language skills and three language components are used to properly assess students' English skills (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation).

It is essential to teach students how to speak and write integratively rather than separately. Students not majoring in English should have their English language proficiency assessed using an integrated approach that considers all four of the language's fundamental abilities (Brown, 2004, p. 118; McKay, 2007).

Data also show that placing first-year students in the Agronomy Study Program through blended learning has a positive effect on their learning autonomy (82.44 %), learning motivation (76 %), and ICT Skills (70.43 %). These findings support a prior study that demonstrated that implementing blended English learning enhances both language and non-language skills, such as learning independence, motivation, and growing ICT digital competence (Derlina et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2018; Pardede, 2012).

Students' academic achievement is influenced by some factors, two of which are autonomy and motivation. Students can adjust their learning strategies and reach the required learning targets according to these two internal factors, which are referred to as variables (Phuong & Vo, 2019; Üstünlüoğlu, 2009). Motivation encourages students to put in the most work and take the most responsibility for their studies; motivation is a valuable thing for acquiring English (Al-Qahtani, 2013; Hong & Ganapathy, 2017; Long et al., 2013). When teaching, it is essential to think about what motivates the students. The students are likely to get much encouragement to learn English, use English on their

own, and be able to think critically (Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009; Anjomshoa & Sadighi, 2015).

Blended learning has the additional benefit of promoting student initiative in their learning. A constant main inspiration for students is the idea of self-directed study in their chosen disciplines. Students can monitor and assess their learning outcomes when they have a strong learning independence level. Learners with an excellent level of learning independence would attempt to perform tasks and assignments by depending on themselves according to their capabilities. Therefore, independent learning can be regarded as a learning approach founded on the learner's motivation, choice, and commitment (Reinders, 2010).

The ability to use information and communication technology is also one aspect that influences the emphasis on education in this country (Bahadorfar & Omidvar, 2014; Menggo et al., 2019). Literacy in information and communication technologies (ICT) relates to the capability of learners to examine and choose the various forms of digital technological sources that can assist in English language learning achievements. Zoom, WhatsApp, Electronic Dictionaries, Skype, Podcasts, YouTube, Screen sharing, and many more digital technologies and media platforms are among the numerous that can be used to promote English language skills (Bicen & Kocakoyun, 2013; Koo, 2016; Menggo, 2021b; Mubarak et al., 2020). These cutting-edge technological platforms are not only significantly more exciting and enjoyable, but they also encourage real student interaction and instruction. Furthermore, utilizing these resources stimulates and enhances student involvement, particularly regarding the Zoom application.

Proficiency in information and communication technology cannot be passed over in blended learning. Students' English proficiency, motivation, effort, learning independence, and adaptability in implementation can all be ensured with this skill enhancement (Abbasova & Mammadova, 2019). According to what was stated (Gaballo, 2019), the role of ICT skills is vital in the success

of English language acquisition. Proficiency in information and communication technology is the trend lately in language learning, both among teachers and learners (Hockly & Dudeney, 2018; Menggo, 2020). They asserted that digitalization is highly flexible, efficient in terms of costs, usable, and available to everyone involved.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

This paper examined the effects of blended learning in the English course for Agronomy Study Program students. Based on the existing data analysis, the researchers conclude that blended learning improves students' English language skills. Furthermore, blended learning promotes learning independence and motivation and increases learners' ICT skills.

In teen sessions, blended learning is used with five face-to-face and five Zoom-based online learning meetings. Although such findings focus on English courses for first-year Agronomy Study Program students, blended learning in other courses is not considered possible. It is suggested that instructors implement this technique by considering the availability of information and communication technology infrastructure at their higher education institutions.

For students to be prepared for the immensely challenging global competition, educational institutions are responsible for ensuring that students have adequate information, English language abilities, and humanism principles. Differentiated instruction, knowledge and skills, and ICT skills all play a significant role in the lives of the larger community, and higher education institutions play a crucial role in all three of these areas.

As a consequence of the increasing advancement of technology, which provides enormous opportunities for all individuals to acquire varied information, knowledge, and skills, learners are allowed to choose whether or not they become competent in digital skills.

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