



## **Blended Learning Application in Higher Education: EFL Learners' Perceptions, Problems, and Suggestions**

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### **Abstract:**

*This study sought to explore Indonesian university students' perceptions, problems, and suggestions of the application of blended learning in their EFL courses. A questionnaire consisting of 6 categories (benefits of online learning, benefits of face-to-face learning, learning assessment, problems in blended learning, suggestions for quality improvement of blended learning, and open-ended questions) was used as the research instrument. The collected data were analyzed descriptively and qualitatively. The results showed that most of the students perceived positively both the online and face-to-face modes used in their blended EFL courses, although they tended to have negative views on certain online technical aspects. Internet connectivity was the main problem and the solution of all technical problems was the main suggestion reported by the students. As this research was conducted only with students from one study program, the results should not be generalized and future research is suggested to be more focused on the comparison of students' preferences for other blended course formats and relate them to students' EFL achievement.*

**Keywords:** *Blended learning, EFL learning, higher education*

### **1. Introduction**

Recently, many higher education institutions have shown their increasing interest in the use of blended learning. It is often associated with integrating online components to a course (MacDonald, 2017). In some studies, it has been defined more accurately by paying attention to the complexities involved such as the learning approaches, the students, the teachers, and the learning resources. For examples, it is defined as learning approaches

with pedagogy or mixed media which is focused more on teaching than learning or a combination of face-to-face interactions and online technology-based interactions (Bliuc, Goodyear, & Ellis, 2007; Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). The present study defined it as a combination of online learning and face-to-face learning, with the proportion of online (synchronously or asynchronously) between 30% and 79%. This definition is based on the standards set by the Indonesian government (Handoko & Waskito, 2018). Studies on blended learning in higher education commonly focus on investigating its application in general learning context (Kosar, 2016; Owston, York, & Murtha, 2013). The present study, however, focused on examining this learning model in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. More specifically, this study sought to explore the perceptions of Indonesian university students about blended learning that was applied in their EFL courses. The novelty of this study lies in aspects of the application of blended learning assessed by the students which consist of the benefits of online and face-to-face activities, problems faced by the students in experiencing it, and the students' suggestions for its quality improvement.

## 2. Literature Review

Students' perception of blended learning in the present study is defined as their ability to notice and understand the learning environment, quality, and choices on specific aspects of this learning model. In various studies, students' perceptions of blended learning have been related to students' satisfaction with its application in their learning processes (Poon, 2012; Smyth, Houghton, Cooney, & Casey, 2012; Hsu & Hsieh, 2014). Researchers also found that the nature of face-to-face and online activities affected students' satisfaction with blended learning (Kemp, 2020; Castle & McGuire, 2010; McCarthy, 2010; Martínez-Caro & Campuzano-Bolarín, 2011; Korr, Derwin, Greene, & Sokoloff, 2012; Bliuc, Ellis, Goodyear, & Piggott, 2011). Other studies have focused on students' preferences for certain activities in blended learning (Fleck, 2012; Smyth et al., 2012; Farley, Jain, & Thomson, 2011; Vaughan, 2010).

In the context of English as a foreign language, blended learning has also become a major interest of many researchers. Various studies have examined how students view the use of blended learning in EFL classes (Aborisade, 2013; Gilbert, 2013). Some researchers argue that the majority of EFL students have a positive view of blended learning (Wang, Chen, Tai, & Zhang, 2019; Wu & Liu, 2013; Wright, 2017; Istifci, 2016). The correlation between perceptions of blended learning and the level of English proficiency was also investigated by some researchers (Akbarov, Gönen, & Aydoğan, 2018; Ferheen Bukhari & Mahmoud Basaffar, 2019; Akbarov et al., 2018). Researchers also highlighted online features used in blended learning and related them to students' views (Sari & Wahyudin, 2019; Al Zumor, Al Refaai, Bader Eddin, & Aziz Al-Rahman, 2013). Most studies have shown positive effect of blended learning on English achievement (Vymetalkova & Milkova, 2019; Qindah, 2018; Ghazizadeh & Fatemipour, 201; Banditvilai, 2016; Liu, 2013; Vasbieva, Klimova, Agibalova, Karzhanova, & Bírová, 2016; Tawil, 2018).

In a global context, the use of blended learning in EFL classes has been investigated by many researchers. However, investigations that focus on Indonesian EFL students are still very limited. Therefore, by involving Indonesian university students who took blended EFL courses, this study investigated the following research questions:

1. What are the students' perceptions of online learning benefits in their blended EFL courses?
2. What are the students' perceptions of face-to-face learning benefits in their blended EFL courses?
3. What are the students' perceptions of learning assessment in their blended EFL courses?
4. What problems do the students face in experiencing their blended EFL courses?
5. What suggestions do the students give for quality improvement of their blended EFL courses?

### 3. Research Methodology

Participants in this study were 149 students majoring in English education at the University of Borneo Tarakan, Indonesia. They were students in semesters 1 to 5, aged between 18 and 21 years, comprised of 122 females and 27 males, and 91 of them had a higher English level and 58 had a lower English level. The online parts of the blended learning were basically done through the Borneo e-Learning (BeL), an online learning management system that is provided by the university. A questionnaire consisting of 6 categories with a total of 38 items was used as the research instrument. Its categories and their related items is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Categories and Items Used in the Questionnaire

Category and Item	Response Type
<b>Benefits of Online Learning in Blended EFL Courses</b>	
1. The online learning can be reached at any time.	Likert scale
2. The online learning clearly defines lesson objectives.	Likert scale
3. The online learning clearly describes learning procedures.	Likert scale
4. The online learning helps the followed lessons.	Likert scale
5. The online learning provides clear instructions.	Likert scale
6. The online learning provides comprehensive materials.	Likert scale
7. The online learning provides needed materials.	Likert scale
8. The online learning provides user friendly features.	Likert scale
<b>Benefits of Face-to-Face Learning in Blended EFL Courses</b>	
9. The face-to-face learning improves learning interactions better.	Likert scale
10. The face-to-face learning improves subject understanding better.	Likert scale
11. The face-to-face learning improves communication better.	Likert scale
12. The face-to-face learning is more effective because it uses movement and mime.	Likert scale
13. The face-to-face learning is more effective because it uses printed worksheets.	Likert scale
14. The face-to-face learning provides a better discussion environment.	Likert scale
15. The face-to-face learning provides better explanation for missing lessons.	Likert scale
16. The face-to-face learning provides more profound answers to questions.	Likert scale
17. The face-to-face learning provides more detail content explanation.	Likert scale
18. The face-to-face learning retained subject information better.	Likert scale

Learning Assessment in Blended EFL Courses

- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| 19. The face to face guidance in assignments is more helpful         | Likert scale |
| 20. The face to face quizzes and exams are more effective            | Likert scale |
| 21. The instructions in online exams are better                      | Likert scale |
| 22. The online exercise criteria are clearer and more understandable | Likert scale |

Problems Faced by Students in Blended EFL Courses

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| 23. The online features are difficult to handle.        | Likert scale |
| 24. The online instructions are difficult to follow.    | Likert scale |
| 25. I feel socially isolated while online.              | Likert scale |
| 25. Internet connection is poor.                        | Likert scale |
| 27. I am not familiar with the online platforms.        | Likert scale |
| 28. The online modes are less effective.                | Likert scale |
| 29. I always experience technical problems while online | Likert scale |
| 30. I prefer printed materials                          | Likert scale |

Suggestions for Quality Improvement of Blended EFL Courses

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| 31. Department gives awards for leading online learning users     | Likert scale |
| 32. Department increases number of blended courses                | Likert scale |
| 33. Department increases number of internet laboratories          | Likert scale |
| 34. Department provides online learning training for all students | Likert scale |
| 35. Department reduces time for online activities                 | Likert scale |
| 36. Department must resolve technical problems                    | Likert scale |

Open-Ended Questions

- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| 37. What problems did you face in experiencing the blended learning in your English courses? | Open answers |
| 38. What do you suggest for quality improvement of blended learning in your English courses? | Open answers |
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The instrument was considered reliable as the value of reliability coefficients for each category was greater than .50: benefits of online learning in blended EFL courses (.726), benefits of face-to-face learning in blended EFL courses (.821), learning assessment in blended EFL courses (.510), problems in blended learning (.686), and suggestions for quality improvement of blended EFL courses (.688). To obtain quantitative data, the students were asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with statements about the application of blended learning which were measured in five Likert scales: 1 = Strongly Disagree (SDA), 2 = Disagree (DA), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), and 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). Meanwhile, to get qualitative data the students were asked to write their answers to the two questions given. The data collected from the questionnaire statements were analyzed descriptively using the SPSS. However, for the qualitative data, the researcher only analyzed answers from eleven students who were taken using a simple random sampling method.

#### 4. Findings

The students' perceptions of blended learning applied in their EFL courses were analyzed in five aspects namely online learning benefits, face-to-face learning benefits, learning assessment, problems faced by the students, and the students' suggestions for blended learning quality improvement.

##### 4.1. Students' Perceptions of Online Learning Benefits

The respondents were given eight statements regarding the aspect of online learning benefits. As shown in Table 2, the percentage of students who were in agreement with the benefits of online learning was higher than that who were in disagreement. The students' responses fell into the upper middle scale for 7 items as indicated by the mean scores: item 5 (M=3.42), item 1 (M=3.37), item 4 (M=3.34), item 8 (M=3.32), item 6 (M=3.15), item 2 (M=3.10), item 7 (M=3.09), and the lower middle scale for 1 item (item 3 with a mean score of 2.96).

Table 2. Students' Perceptions of Online Learning Benefits in their Blended EFL Courses

Questionnaire Item	SDA		DA		N		A		SA		Mean	St. D
	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Item 5	4	2.7	17	11.4	57	38.3	55	36.9	16	10.7	3.42	.923
Item 1	8	5.4	19	12.8	52	34.9	50	33.6	20	13.4	3.37	1.042
Item 4	6	4.0	22	14.8	51	34.2	55	36.9	15	10.1	3.34	.985
Item 8	2	1.3	20	13.4	77	51.7	43	28.9	7	4.7	3.22	.787
Item 6	2	1.3	23	15.4	83	55.7	32	21.5	9	6.0	3.15	.803
Item 2	2	1.3	28	18.8	74	49.7	43	28.9	2	1.3	3.10	.760
Item 7	4	2.7	25	16.8	79	53.0	35	23.5	6	4.0	3.09	.817
Item 3	3	2.0	44	29.5	63	42.3	34	22.8	5	3.4	2.96	.861

##### 4.2. Students' Perceptions of Face-to-Face Learning Benefits

A total of ten statements were included to measure the face-to-face learning benefits. As shown in Table 3, the number of students who rated agree and strongly agree to all items of this variable was higher than that who rated disagree and strongly disagree. Overall, the students' responses were at the upper-middle scale as indicated by the mean score of each item: item 11 (M = 4.01), item 10 (M = 4.01), item 18 (M = 3.89), item 9 (M = 3.89), item 12 (M = 3.85), item 17 (M = 3.83), 14 (M = 3.75), 13 (M = 3.69), item 16 (M = 3.67), item 15 (M = 3.22).

Table 3. Students' Perceptions of Face-to-Face Learning Benefits in their Blended EFL Courses

Questionnaire Item	SDA		DA		N		A		SA		Mean	St. D
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Item 11	4	2.7	9	6.0	29	19.5	46	30.9	61	40.9	4.01	1.046
Item 10	6	4.0	9	6.0	27	18.1	60	40.3	47	31.5	4.01	1.007
Item 18	2	1.3	5	3.4	41	27.5	61	40.9	40	26.8	3.89	1.047
Item 9	2	1.3	5	3.4	50	33.6	52	34.9	40	26.8	3.89	.889
Item 12	2	1.3	23	15.4	36	24.2	49	32.9	39	26.2	3.85	1.018

Item 17	2	1.3	12	8.1	26	17.4	51	34.2	58	38.9	3.83	.913
Item 14	3	2.0	13	8.7	33	22.1	55	36.9	45	30.2	3.75	.907
Item 13	3	2.0	9	6.0	39	26.2	69	46.3	29	19.5	3.69	1.013
Item 16	5	3.4	10	6.7	46	30.9	53	35.6	35	23.5	3.67	1.068
Item 15	10	6.7	27	18.1	46	30.9	52	34.9	14	9.4	3.22	1.064

### 4.3. Students' Perceptions of Assessment

With regard to learning assessment in blended EFL courses, four statements were given to the respondents. As reported in Table 4, the majority of students gave their agreement to all items, with the highest approval (75.8%) was for item 19 and the lowest approval (31.6%) was for item 22. The students' responses fell into the upper-middle scale, with mean scores of 3.88, 3.74, 3.46, and 3.13 respectively for items 19, 20, 21, and 22.

Table 4. Students' perceptions of blended learning assessment in their Blended EFL Courses

Questionnaire Item	SDA		DA		N		A		SA		Mean	St. D
	f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%		
Item 19	3	2.0	7	4.7	26	17.4	82	55.0	31	20.8	3.88	.861
Item 20	6	4.0	6	4.0	37	24.8	72	48.3	28	18.8	3.74	.947
Item 21	3	2.0	20	13.4	48	32.2	61	40.9	17	11.4	3.46	.934
Item 22	4	2.7	28	18.8	70	47.0	39	26.2	8	5.4	3.13	.872

### 4.4. Problems Faced by Students

To measure this research variable, eight statements were given to respondents. As illustrated in Table 5, the majority of students expressed their agreement that internet connection, online technical problems, and preference to printed materials were the three main difficulties they faced in their blended EFL courses, with the percentage of agreement respectively 78.5%, 49.7%, and 30.9%. The students' responses to these three items fell into the upper-middle scale as indicated by the mean scores: internet connection (M = 4.06), online technical problems (M = 3.39), and preference to printed material (M = 3.27). Meanwhile, the majority of students conveyed their disagreement with the other five items: items 25, 24, 28, 27, and 23. The students' responses to these five items fell into the lower middle-scale as indicated by their mean scores: item 25 (M = 2.92), item 24 (M = 2.88), item 28 (M = 2.86), item 27 (M = 2.79), and item 23 (M = 2.74).

In line with the result of the questionnaire, some students had negative perceptions of the blended learning application and stated their negative opinions in their answers to the open-ended question given. The major complaint was about the internet connection, as stated by students 1, 3 and 4:

"The internet connection is very bad, and this is a major problem for us". (S1)

"The internet connection is not good, we are having trouble uploading and downloading files". (S3)

"The internet connection is very slow. I think there needs to be additional bandwidth". (S4)

In addition, students 2 and 11 expressed their difficulty in using the online platform as follows:

"Sometimes, I don't really understand how to use the online parts in the Borneo e-Learning (BeL) system". (S2)

"The BeL system is difficult to use and sometimes makes me frustrating". (S11)

Moreover, some students expressed their negative perception of the online sessions in the blended learning as follows:

"The online session takes longer time". (S7)

"The online learning is a waste of time". (S8)

"The online session is very time consuming". (S10)

Table 5. Problems Faced by Students in their Blended EFL Courses

Questionnaire Item	SDA		DA		N		A		SA		Mean	St. D
	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Item 26	6	4.0	10	6.7	16	10.7	54	36.2	63	42.3	4.06	1.079
Item 29	7	4.7	19	12.8	49	32.9	57	38.3	17	11.4	3.39	1.005
Item 30	2	1.3	20	13.4	81	54.4	28	18.8	18	12.1	3.27	.890
Item 25	12	8.1	36	24.2	64	43.0	26	17.4	11	7.4	2.92	1.017
Item 24	12	8.1	34	22.8	68	45.6	30	20.1	5	3.4	2.88	.937
Item 28	6	4.0	30	20.1	93	62.4	19	12.8	1	0.7	2.86	.707
Item 27	19	12.8	44	29.5	47	31.5	27	18.1	12	8.1	2.79	1.129
Item 23	18	12.1	41	27.5	54	36.2	33	22.1	3	2.0	2.74	1.001

#### 4.5. Students' Suggestions for Quality Improvement

To address this research variable, the respondents were asked to rate six statements. As shown in Table 6, most students expressed their agreement with all the statements given, with the highest percentage of approval (73.1%) was for item 36 and the lowest approval percentage (45%) was for item 32. Student responses for these six items fell into the upper middle scale as indicated by the mean score of each statement: item 36 (M = 3.97), item 34 (M = 3.84), item 33 (M = 3.77), item 31 (M = 3.49), item 35 (M = 3.48), and item 32 (M = 3.40).

In harmony with the results of the questionnaire, several positive suggestions were given by the students in their answers to the open-ended question. For example, the design of the online platform needs to be made better as stated by students 1 and 3:

"The system in the online platform needs to be upgraded". (S1)

"The assignment platform needs improvement, because sometimes I can't send the assignment via a mobile phone". (S3)

Additionally, some students suggested to have more face-to-face learning instead of online, as stated in the following answers:

"I like online learning, but I recommend only 40% of the learning process". (S2)

"I suggest online learning for only 40% and 60% for face-to-face learning". (S4)

"I suggest the department can increase face-to-face learning time and reduce online learning time". (S5)

"I suggest face-to-face learning needs to be applied more deeply in every meeting, online activities do not have to be more dominant". (S8)

Furthermore, to make the learning more interesting and effective, the learning activities (techniques) in the blended course need to be varied, as expressed by students 6, 7 and 9:

"We need more variation in learning activities that can make us more interested in following the learning process". (S6)

"The learning techniques need to be varied so that students can easily understand the materials presented". (S7)

"The lecturer needs to tolerate the deadline for assignment submission". (S9)

Table 6. Students' Suggestions for their Blended EFL Courses

Questionnaire Item	SDA		DA		N		A		SA		Mean	St. D
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Item 36	2	1.3	9	6.0	29	19.5	61	40.9	48	32.2	3.97	.940
Item 34	2	1.3	5	3.4	46	30.9	58	38.9	38	25.5	3.84	.893
Item 33	0	0	7	4.7	60	40.3	43	28.9	39	26.2	3.77	.896
Item 31	0	0	4	2.7	87	58.4	39	26.2	19	12.8	3.49	.750
Item 35	0	0	18	12.1	67	45.0	39	26.2	25	16.8	3.48	.912
Item 32	2	1.3	22	14.8	58	38.9	49	32.9	18	12.1	3.40	.929

### 5. Discussion

In connection with the first research question, it was found that majority of the students had a positive view of the online activities in their blended EFL courses. This indicates that the online activities are beneficial to the students when participating in blended EFL courses. They bring some benefits in the forms of providing clear learning instructions, being reachable at any time, helping the lessons being followed, providing user-friendly features and comprehensive learning materials, clearly defining learning objectives, and providing learning materials needed. Although different in the aspects analyzed, this finding is in line with those found in previous studies that students generally show a positive response to the application of blended learning in English learning for an academic context (Aborisade, 2013; Gilbert, 2013). Also, in the findings of Korr, Derwin, Greene, & Sokoloff (2012), the students felt more satisfied in blended learning because in online classes they received instructor feedback and their scores faster than in traditional classrooms.

Related to the second research question, the majority of students also had a positive view of the face-to-face activities in their blended EFL courses, indicating their agreement to certain advantages of this learning mode. In addition to improving communication, subject understanding, and learning interactions, the face to face activities helped the students retain subject information better. This result supports previous research findings which also highlighted the advantages of face-to-face sessions in blended learning. Kemp (2020) found that in blended learning the students had the opportunity to ask questions and revised content through face-to-face sessions and appreciated online sessions for the

need for independent thinking. Other studies also found that in addition to being favored by students, face-to-face tutorial activities in blended classes can strengthen peer learning and overcome the problems being discussed (Fleck, 2012; McCarthy, 2010; Smyth et al., 2012). Meanwhile, Castle & McGuire (2010) reported that face-to-face sessions in blended learning gave students the opportunity to communicate directly with faculty and to get the support and guidance they need right away.

More interestingly, this study found that perception of face-to-face activities was higher than online activities, indicating that students preferred face-to-face learning mode in their blended EFL courses. This might be related to the students' academic level and their readiness to adapt to blended learning environment. The first year students could face difficulties and need to adapt to this new learning model. Some online features in the Borneo e-Learning System (BeL) could technically become a problem for the students because they were not familiar with them. The activities and learning materials displayed online in the BeL platform might not meet the students' expectations. This was in accordance with their disagreement with the questionnaire item 3. In addition, the online learning processes that did not satisfy the students might be another reason why they preferred face-to-face learning in their blended EFL courses. This was indicated by the high number of students who gave neutral responses on all items related to the online learning and the higher mean score of face-to-face learning as compared to the online learning. The students' preference to face-to-face instruction might also due to their belief that this type of learning helped them understand the content more clearly and in more detail. This was indicated by their strong agreement with the items 10, 18, 17, and 16. This finding is in accordance with that was found by Farley, Jain, & Thomson (2011), Vaughan (2010), and Fleck (2012) that students' academic level affected their preferences, where the first-year students were more likely to prefer lectures and tutorials conducted face-to-face rather than online. The limited skills in using the online learning features were believed to be the main reasons why the first-year students preferred the face-to-face format in their blended learning.

The students' preference for the face-to-face learning in their blended EFL courses was also in accordance with their preference for the face-to-face learning assessment. They believed that face-to-face guidance in assignments helped them a lot. In addition, face to face quizzes and exams were reported to be effective in reflecting what they had learned. On the other hand, the student tended to be neutral and in their disagreement when responding to the statements related to the online assessment (items 21 and 22). In line with current results, previous research revealed that the most common reason why students preferred face-to-face learning was the lack of learning skills to utilize online learning formats (Farley et al., 2011). This finding is also consistent with those found by Kemp (2020), Castle & McGuire (2010), and McCarthy (2010) that the students appreciated the face-to-face learning because it was able to engage them more closely with the learning materials and activities.

Regarding the fourth research question, it was found that the internet connectivity was the biggest problem reported by the students, as shown in the questionnaire response for item 25. Responses to the open-ended question strengthened this finding, as expressed by students 1, 3, and 4. This finding supports the previous research by Sari & Wahyudin (2019). In addition to the internet connection problems, the students also experienced

difficulties in using the online platform. This was indicated by the students' agreement with the questionnaire item 29. This finding was strengthened by the views of students 2 and 11 in their answers to the open-ended question, "I did not really understand how to use online components in the BeL system" (S2) and "the BeL system was difficult to use and sometimes frustrated me" (S11). Furthermore, some students stated in their answers that the online learning in their blended courses was a waste of time (S8), was very time consuming (S9), and required more time (S7). Although the students were in their agreement with the benefits of online learning, the problems faced by the students made them to have a negative tendency towards certain aspects of blended learning, especially related to its technical features.

The last question to address in this study is related to students' suggestions for quality improvement in their blended EFL courses. The students' dissatisfaction in many aspects of blended learning applied in their EFL courses had an impact on their negative views on the department's efforts to improve the quality of learning through this method. The top three points suggested by the students were solution to all technical problems, online learning training for all students, and the addition of internet laboratories. This suggestion was in accordance with the problems they faced in their blended EFL courses. In more detail, to overcome this technical problems, the students hoped that the department could improve the system used in the online platform. For example, the assignment features in the platform need to be upgraded to make them easier to submit assignments via mobile phones, as said by students 1 and 3 in their answers to the open-ended question. Concerning the instruction mode used in their blended classes, the students suggested that the department could reduce the time for online activities. Specifically, the students wanted 60% for face-to-face activities and 40% for online activities, as expressed by students 2, 4, 5 and 8 in answering the open-ended question. An explanation that might be given to this finding is related to certain advantages the students could get when participating in face-to-face activities in their blended EFL courses. Among the advantages that the students could get from the face-to-face learning were it could improve learning interactions and help them to study the content better. Furthermore, the students believed that sharing and discussion conducted in the face-to-face sessions was more effective than the online sessions. These results corroborate findings from previous studies that some learners want more time allotted for their face-to-face activities (Farley et al., 2011; Fleck, 2012; Korr et al., 2012).

Interestingly, the current research also found that the instructional techniques used in the blended EFL courses were expected to be more varied, as expressed by students 6 and 7 in their answers to the open-ended question. The students believed that the use of various teaching techniques could improve their learning motivation and make them easier to understand the material presented. Giving prizes or awards to active and prominent students and tolerating deadlines for assignment submission were examples of teaching techniques to be considered by the instructors, as these points were suggested by the students in their answers to the open-ended question and in the questionnaire.

## 6. Conclusion

This study has provided detailed information about the students' perceptions, problems, and suggestions related to their blended EFL courses. The data generated by this study provides evidence that the students had different perceptions of their learning modes.

Although most of the students were in their agreement with the advantages of the online learning, they tended to have negative views on certain online aspects, especially on its technical aspects. In contrast, the majority of students had more positive perception and prefer the face-to-face learning. One of the reasons for their preference of face-to-face learning was their low level of readiness to adapt to blended learning system and its environment. This preference was also in line with their preference for face-to-face learning assessment format. They believed that the assessment given in face-to-face format could help them understand and reflect their learning progress.

The students experienced difficulties in their blended EFL learning especially related to the internet connection and the online features provided in the BeL system. Their dissatisfaction in many aspects of the online learning had an impact on their negative views on the department's efforts for quality improvement of blended learning. Some of the main suggestions given by students for the quality improvement included solutions to all technical constraints, online learning training for all students, increasing the number of internet laboratories, and the improvement of systems used in online platforms. Under such conditions, the amendment of online tools and systems were expected to be the department's first action plan because this could play a major role in the successful implementation of their blended learning.

Because this research was conducted only with students from one study program, the findings should not be generalized. A future study that can involve students from various departments needs to be carried out to obtain more valid and general results. In addition, future research is suggested to be more focused on the comparison of students' preferences for the course formats used in blended learning and relate them to students' EFL achievement.

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