

The Students' Perceptions on Using Blended Learning for English Learning during Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The policy of remote learning (PJJ) during the COVID-19 pandemic caused new problems for the students. The Implementation of the teaching and learning process has totally changed from face-to-face into online learning and some schools tried to integrate offline and online learning. This research objective was to see the students' perception of the use of blended learning in English classes. The Subject of this study is Mechanical Engineering Students 4th Semester of STTR Cepu. This study uses a descriptive quantitative design. The researcher took data from a questionnaire on the students' perceptions in the use of blended learning which was consisted of 19 questions and an observation checklist to crosscheck the students' answers in the questionnaire. Then, analyzing the data descriptively and measuring it using a Likert scale. The results of the study showed the students' positive response toward the implementation of blended learning since it has great benefit in the teaching and learning process. The implementation of the blended learning method in English lessons required the teachers' creativity in providing an English learning platform. This research also revealed the weaknesses of Blended Learning. The success of the implementation of blended learning depended on the availability of the facilities like internet access and network in applying that method. In addition, the knowledge of using technology was necessarily mastered by the teachers and the students.

Keywords: *blended learning, remote learning, students' perception*

1. INTRODUCTION

Technology has an important role in education, especially in the pandemic era. It contributes to the teaching and learning process like what has been done by Biantoro (2020). He was exploring the integration of MALL into EFL learning for Indonesian secondary schools. Koc (2016) stated that applying technology-based learning could enhance and improve the quality of learning. The Covid-19 forced the government to make a new policy in the education sector. All the schools had to implement online learning or learning from home to break the chain of Covid-19 transmission and ensure the continuity of education. Hockly (2015) argued that the teaching and learning process can be done without face-to-face interaction that was known as online learning. Since the pandemic era, all schools and universities in the world have to shift their teaching and learning process into online learning. It was chosen as one of the best methods because of some reasons. One of them is the students critical thinking skills can be boosted and developed. In addition, learners' motivation can be increased and they can work and collaborate with others creatively (Mohammadi et al., 2011; Daneshdoust & Hagh, 2012; Mutambik, 2018).

Teaching and learning media such as websites or applications are needed to facilitate the learning process in implementing this type of learning. During the Covid-19 outbreak, the education system shifts into online learning, thus blended learning appears as one alternative method to accommodate the learning activities at all education levels. By combining online learning with other components of learning, the teaching and learning process will have greater benefits. Lalima & Dangwal (2017) argued that blended learning is an innovative approach that blends the advantage of the traditional teaching-learning process and ICT-supported teaching-learning process if implemented in a well-planned and organized way. Blended learning can integrate both modes of teaching and learning process in which the traditional and online learning are mixed in the classroom setting. The traditional learning or the face-to-face interaction that is usually done offline or meeting directly in the classroom is shifted into the virtual meeting through video conferencing such as Zoom, Google Meet, and so on. Meanwhile, Learning Management System (LMS) provides the Blended Learning platform that can be modified with another platform such as PowerPoint presentation, URL link, online video learning to share the materials before the scheduled class. While the class discussion which can be done at the scheduled time utilizes other media such as google meet, zoom, WhatsApp, and so on to conduct the class.

Shivan & Sing (2015) stated that blended learning is defined as a combination of digital content and face-to-face content that has characteristics namely, cost-effective, time-saving and flexible. It means that the students can learn according to their pace and time. In addition, blended learning is the combination of different instructional methods, i.e. face-to-face interaction and computer-mediated instruction or online learning (Boelens et al., 2015; Made et al., 2016; El-Zeftawy & Hassan, 2016; Nurmasitah et al., 2019). As we know, Blended Learning has been widely used nowadays since the pandemic has been experienced and affected all sectors in the world, including the education sector. In blended learning mode, the students got instruction in the virtual classroom and did the learning activity outside of the classroom. To put it briefly, blended learning is the combination of online and

offline learning (Flaherty, 2015). Shivan & Sing (2015) claimed that the students and the teacher's roles are important and necessary. It seemed their role is much interconnected since the teacher's role as facilitator and guide, while the students as the participants who need their active participation in the blended learning model. Blended learning gives advantages when applied to the classroom. A wide range of opportunities can be created through blended, thus the learning materials can be delivered using the various medium of learning. Not only increase flexibility and interaction but also enhance learning and improve the ability to be virtual participants is the advantages that got by blended learning. Moreover, blended learning also trains the students to develop improve time management skills and resolve the project well. Therefore the students can be provoked to accomplish the task in a given time since they can collaborate with another participant anytime and anywhere (Shivam & Singh, 2015).

Regarding students' perceptions of blended learning, many studies have been conducted in exploring students' perceptions. Berrio (2017) in his research concluded that the implementations of Blended Learning could improve students' language skills i.e. listening, vocabulary, pronunciation, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and spelling. His research also showed the positive perception on the advantages of blended learning like self-paced learning, benefit from teacher feedback and more effective mode. It also showed the limitation of blended learning in terms of technical resources. Internet connections and technical problems were the biggest limitations that the students found during the learning process. Thus, proper training for students, increase of computer classrooms, increase of blended courses and the solution of technical problems were suggested for the improvement.

Mulyadi et. al (2019) in their research analysed the students' perception of the blended learning in mastering ESP course which integrates ICT into ESP instruction. The finding showed the students satisfaction of engaging in blended learning. Although the quality of interaction with other students and their teacher were relatively low, they felt satisfied by having blended learning in ESP class since the ease of finding educational resources from websites, internet and other online platforms. Moreover, accessing the class content whenever and where ever the students are, would be flexible. The flexibility of the schedule made the students feeling convenient in joining the class since they do not need to go to school and attend the class regularly. Another study that was conducted by Nurmasitah et al, (2019) concluded that in some aspects, the implementation of blended learning got a good response. By implementing blended learning, the students and teachers can share learning materials easily, has independent learning, and save time and costs in the learning process. The combination of both traditional and online classes is a productive method that can boost the students to be active in the learning process and they can do a self-evaluation anytime and anywhere without any pressure and intimidated from their classmates.

Pustika (2020) investigated the pre-service teachers; perspective toward the implementation of e-learning in the pandemic era. It revealed both advantages and disadvantages of e-learning that they have experienced. Her subject of the research only focused on the pre-service teacher, thus the different subjects were still needed to be explored. Rosayanti & Hardiana (2021) also conducted a study on the same area. They

investigated the senior high school teachers' and students' perceptions toward the implementation of an online classroom during the COVID-19 pandemic. Another study on the same topic was also carried out by Rianto (2020) and Ariyanti (2020). Both the researchers explored the students' perception from higher education on the implementation of Blended Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Those studies have involved the students majoring in English education. However, the students' perception from different program study has limited data and still needed to be investigated.

Although many studies have been discussing students' perceptions of the use of blended learning in mastering English for special purposes, a few of which discuss blended learning in English for the mechanical engineer classes. A case study was conducted by Harris & Park (2017), investigate teachers' techniques in teaching English at the Mechanical Engineer class. Flipped classroom pedagogy was implemented in this class and it covered three types of activities namely hands-on activities, problem-solving, and class discussions to create an active learning experience. English for a mechanical engineer has its challenges both in teaching and learning because it has its vocabulary and the term that relates to mechanical engineer. Thus, the teachers' techniques play an important role in delivering the topic to the students and ensuring the students' understanding of the material that they discussed. Moreover, blended learning can encourage the student to learn English especially those who do not come from the English department. English for Special purposes is different to General English in terms of vocabulary, writing, reading, etc (MOET, 2008). Therefore, this study is aimed to explore the students' perceptions of the implementation of blended learning in mechanical engineer class.

In STTR Cepu, all lecturing applied blended learning in the teaching and learning process. The lectures applied various platforms in Blended learning, in addition to the provided LMS. Blended learning can be an alternative method for the lectures and the students to have the class during this pandemic. It will get the greater result if the lectures could mix the method with the new variation of teaching technique that can be produced by the lectures and it can be implemented for all subjects. The reason why the researcher chose the fourth Semester was to anticipate the possibility of students not getting this method in the previous semester. Based on those reasons, the researcher was interested in conducting a study about "Investigating the Students' Perception Toward Blended Learning Method Implemented in Teaching English at fourth Semester Mechanical Engineering students of STTR Cepu".

2. RESEARCH METHODS

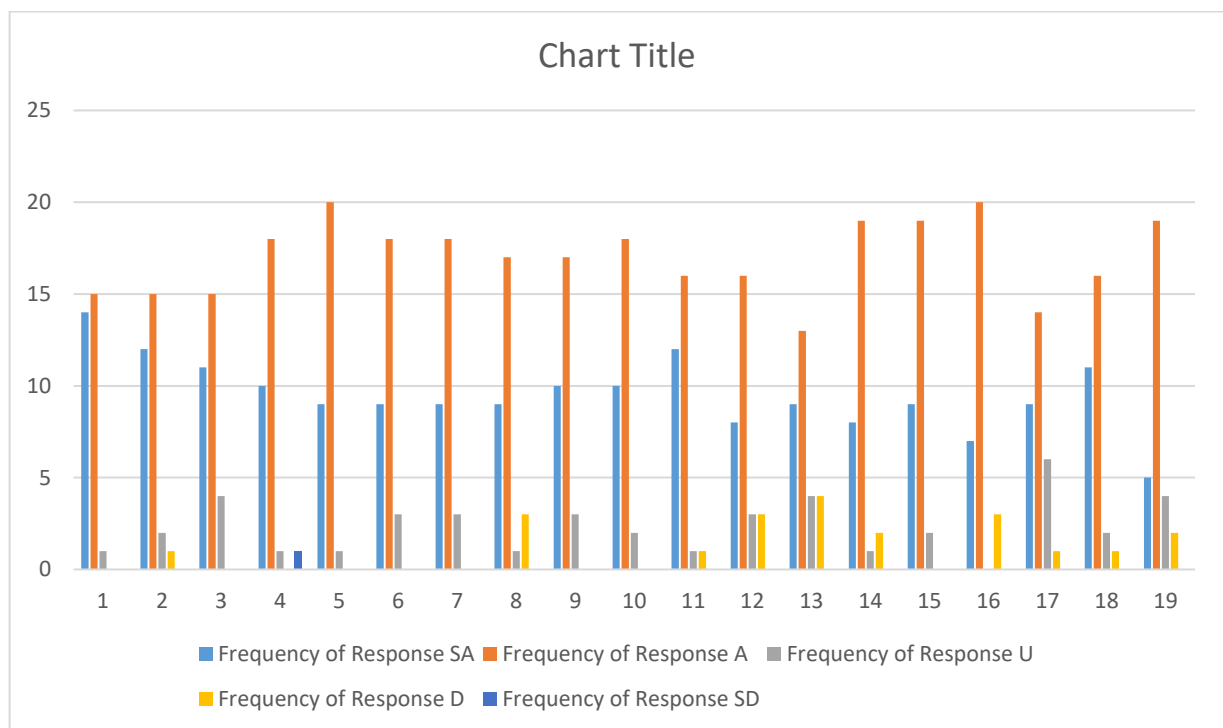
The research design used in this study is quantitative descriptive which aims to obtain information about the student's response to the implementation of Blended Learning in terms of its benefits and weaknesses. Research subjects who were involved are Mechanical Engineering Students 4th Semester of STTR Cepu which consist of 35 students. Two research instruments used are in the form of a questionnaire Likert scale containing statements for exploring the students' responses and an observation checklist. The questionnaire consists of 19 questions that focus on the benefit and weaknesses of Bended

Learning. It was delivered to the students through a google form. While the observation checklist is in the form of questions and answers activity from the researchers to the students. It aims to know whether the students have experienced Blended Learning in their class in the previous semester and also to crosscheck the students' answers in the questionnaire. For data analysis, the percentage descriptive is used as the analysis method that was obtained by calculating the frequency of response, then, dividing by the number of respondents and multiplying by 100%.

3. FINDINGS

The findings and discussion are respectively based on the data gathered from the questionnaire about blended learning in Mechanical Engineer Class. From the chart below, it can be seen that most of the students give positive responses. It was proved by the frequency of their response in each item number. See the table below.

Figure 1. Students' response in each question



From the chart, we can see the students' response to the implementation of blended learning in the English class of Mechanical Engineer Students. After collecting the data, the researcher analysed the data by making it into percentage form. It can be described in more detail by calculating the frequency of response in each item number or each question. It, then, is divided by the number of respondents and multiplied by 100% to get the percentage descriptive. See the table below.

Figure 2. Students' response of blended learning

Questions number	frequency of response				
	SA	A	U	D	SD
1	47%	50%	3%	0%	0%
2	40%	50%	7%	3%	0%
3	37%	50%	13%	0%	0%
4	33%	60%	3%	0%	35
5	30%	67%	3%	0%	0%
6	30%	60%	10%	0%	0%
7	30%	60%	10%	0%	0%
8	30%	57%	3%	10%	0%
9	33%	57%	10%	0%	0%
10	33%	60%	7%	0%	0%
11	40%	53%	3%	35%	0%
12	27%	53%	10%	10%	0%
13	30%	43%	13%	13%%	0%
14	27%	63%	3%	7%	0%
15	30%	63%	7%	0%	0%
16	23%	67%	0%	10%	0%
17	30%	47%	20%	3%	0%
18	37%	53%	7%	3%	0%
19	17%	63%	13%	7%	0%

4. DISCUSSION

From question number 1 up to 19, most students' responses strongly agree (SA) and agree (A). more than half of the students gave their positive responses. Meanwhile, less than 50 % of the students answered undecided (U), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD). Sixteen statements are about the advantage of blended learning and three questions reveal the weaknesses of blended learning. The students' response toward the first statement showed more than 50 % of the students agreed the learning process can occur independently and conventionally by implementing blended earning. It means that combining both online and offline learning can complement each other which is beneficial for the teaching and learning process. The students also gave a positive response to the second statement relates to the effectiveness and efficiency of blended learning. Both the teacher and the students can decide the scheduled time of their course freely, thus they can save more time and cost. Blended learning also promotes the students' collaborative learning. This finding was in line with the research conducted by Setyoningsih (2015). Her finding concluded that the lectures and the students can get a good feeling through the Blended Learning method since the teaching and learning activities can be more effective and efficient. In term of the learning material through blended learning, most of the students answer the third statement by giving positive response as they will find easier in accessing the learning materials. They can get

the materials anytime and anywhere by downloading them on a given platform by their teachers. The students can learn via the internet, so they don't need physical books because the material can be obtained online and the students just need to download it. Students can also save more time because they don't have to go to campus to get lessons. by just sitting at home, the students can get learning via a virtual classroom.

The students' response to statement number 4, 60% agree and 33% strongly agree since they can learn the subject independently by looking for the material which is available online on the internet and additional information related to the subject. The students thought that they can learn by themselves since they can prepare themselves before the scheduled time of the lesson by reading and understanding the material first. In addition, they can find supplementary materials on the internet to understand deeper the topic that they learnt. Related to statement number 5 gets the most response to agree which is 67% and 30% strongly agree. By implementing Blended Learning, teachers can discuss the materials with the students or students with their friends in a virtual learning conference. In other words, the students can have discussions with teachers or other students without having to face to face or in the same place. The students also give the most response 60 % agreed to statement number 6. They stated that the lectures can control and manage the class anytime and anywhere. The teachers can schedule the class freely and lecture the students easily. Moreover, the class discussion can be done not only in the scheduled time of the lesson and also outside of it. Therefore, the students can get both synchronous and asynchronous feedback. This result is the same as the finding of Sadeghi (2019) and Pustika (2021) in their research. The implementation of blended learning enables the students to learn anytime and anywhere since it provides them to access the material easily. While the teachers could schedule the class flexible.

The students' answer on the question number 7 and 8 mostly agree. It shows the students agree by implementing Blended Learning, teachers can provide more material such as enrichment through internet facilities, ask students to read the material or take a test before learning begins, and can organize quizzes, provide feedback both in synchronous and asynchronous learning. It indicates by implementing Blended Learning, the teacher can deliver the material and explain it to the students easily and ask them to understand the material before and after the class hour. Moreover, both the teachers and the students can find additional materials that can support their learning process by searching on the internet. Thus, the students understand and comprehend the materials well. In terms of assessment and feedback, question number 9 also get more than 50% of the students agreed to the statement of organizing the assessment in Blende Learning. The teacher can arrange the test attractively with an interesting form that can be got from the internet and track the students' results easier to check their achievement during the learning process. While the students can get the answer clearly by finding related materials on the internet. Relates to the next question, 60% of the students agree and 33% strongly agree that the students felt easy to discuss the materials that have been learnt by directly sharing the file or data through the internet. They can share their opinion and argument related to the materials given to them. This finding is supported by Rosayanti & Hardiyanan (2021). They stated that the student can easier share and get the material in the learning process.

Another advantage of blended learning has been proven by the students' answer to the question number 11 and 12. Most of them agree that blended learning can give a lot of options of the platform and it is regarded as the ease of implementation. Thus, the students argue the practicality of the implementation of blended learning in terms of sharing materials and independent learning. Aji, et.al (2020) concluded that Blended learning is easy to use because it is supported by the existence of LMS. It also relates to the question number 13 and 14 concerning the efficiency of money consuming and the optimal result in the learning process as the impact of blended learning. Most of the students give a good response as they thought by implementing blended learning, the learning process can save time and cost. They do not worry to have difficulty finding the materials in the form of hardcopy since all the materials are accessible on the internet. They can learn anytime and anywhere without having to go to the class. That is why it can save more time and money to do learning and the result of the learning can be optimal.

The students' response to questions number 15 is the same as the questions number 16. More than 60% of the students agree that Blended Learning can satisfy their learning needs and increase the attractiveness of learning. The material presented via the internet is made into interactive media to make it more detailed and attract the attention of participants. The learning media can be used according to the way each participant learns, for example, through interactive videos, video explanations from lecturers, podcasts, written material in e-book format and exciting game concepts. In addition, there will be various live sessions, online chats with teachers or lecturers and various other technological support. The students' response to question number 16 showed that they agree with the statement "attractiveness of learning can be enhanced by utilizing an attractive platform in the learning process". This finding was in line with Rosayanti & Hardiana (2021) who revealed that the platform utilized by the teachers would be the key success in the teaching and learning process. Those sixteen questions are the advantage of blended learning that was in line with Husamah's explanation. Some advantages of Blended learning are ease of implementation, cost efficiency, make the optimal results, can adjust various learning and increase the attractiveness of learning (Husamah, 2014)

However, several questions revealed the weaknesses of blended learning. Those were responded by the students with a large number of agreed responses. Those questions are from number 17 up to 19. The students agree to the statement that blended learning will be difficult to be implemented if the facilities and infrastructures do not support such as the internet access and networks needs are inadequate. Amiruddin & Jannah (2021) stated that the first problem that the students faced was the unstable internet connection. Moreover, lack of knowledge of learning resources among instructors, students and parents will affect the implementation of blended learning since the learning activity will integrate with technology. This finding was supported by Hermansah & Aridah (2021) and Aji, et.al (2020) who concluded that the internet connection and teachers' knowledge were the biggest obstacles in implementing blended learning.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it is shown that blended learning has an important role in the learning process which has advantages and obstacles in the learning process. The advantages of this model are save-time, save cost, effective and efficient learning, accessible learning materials, independently learning, ease of utilizing online materials, the flexibility of the time discussion for the students and teachers. the teachers do not spend a lot of energy on teaching, adding material enrichment through internet facilities easily, expanding the teaching and learning activity so it can get optimal results and increasing the students' attractiveness in the learning process. Meanwhile, it also reveals the weaknesses of Blended Learning. Inadequate facilities and infrastructure, and the knowledge of learning resources about technology are the weaknesses that will be the obstacle in implementing Blended learning. For the next researcher, this research can be a reference to conduct new research about Blended Learning in the term of a different subject and discussion.

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