

PHOTOVOICE STUDY ON EFL STUDENTS' BLENDED LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Efrilia Siska Damayanti

efriliask@gmail.com

English Education Department, University of Swadaya Gunung Jati – Indonesia

I. Robia Khaerudin

irobiakhaerudin@gmail.com

English Education Department, University of Swadaya Gunung Jati – Indonesia

Misdi

misdirina@gmail.com

English Education Department, University of Swadaya Gunung Jati – Indonesia

Abstract

The education area is always changing to keep up with the fast-paced world, such as the phenomenon of Industry 4.0, which has ushered in massive changes in the world of education. Because of this trend, more and more colleges are promoting digital learning cultures that are new and different, such as blended learning. Blended learning is an alternative form of learning model that combines the conventional learning model (face-to-face learning) with the e-learning learning model. This study examined how students felt about their blended learning experiences during pandemic COVID-19. Five EFL students at the University of Swadaya Gunung Jati, Cirebon, participated in photovoice and interview sessions. Thematic analysis identified three themes, which are the benefits and challenges of blended learning; online and offline learning; and the future of blended learning. The use of photovoice was successful in capturing details of blended learning implementation on EFL students. The result of this study represents blended learning has many benefits for students. Two benefits, in particular, are its versatility and accessibility. The majority of students think that online education will significantly help them learn and improve their academic performance. However, an important advance needed for the implementation of blended learning is better internet access.

Keywords: *Self-Regulated Learning, Listening skill, Youtube. Autonomous Learning, Independent Learning*

Sari

Blended learning merupakan alternatif bentuk model pembelajaran yang menggabungkan model pembelajaran konvensional (pembelajaran tatap muka) dengan model pembelajaran *e-learning*. Studi ini meneliti bagaimana perasaan siswa tentang pengalaman *blended learning* mereka selama pandemi COVID-19. Lima mahasiswa EFL Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, Cirebon, mengikuti sesi pemotretan dan

wawancara. Analisis tematik mengidentifikasi tiga tema, yaitu manfaat dan tantangan *blended learning*; pembelajaran *online* dan *offline*; dan masa depan *blended learning*. Penggunaan *photovoice* berhasil menangkap detail implementasi *blended learning* pada siswa *EFL*. Hasil penelitian ini merupakan *blended learning* memiliki banyak manfaat bagi siswa. Dua manfaat, khususnya, adalah keserbagunaan dan aksesibilitasnya. Mayoritas siswa berpikir bahwa pendidikan *online* akan secara signifikan membantu mereka belajar dan meningkatkan kinerja akademik mereka. Namun, kemajuan penting yang diperlukan untuk implementasi *blended learning* adalah akses internet yang lebih baik.

Kata kunci: *Blended learning, photovoice, siswa EFL, pengalaman siswa*

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Introduction

The education area is always changing to keep up with the fast-paced world, such as the phenomenon of Industry 4.0, which has ushered in massive changes in the world of education. The traditional teacher-centered approach has replaced a student-centered approach, which is assisted by more advanced learning methods such as digital learning through the use of ICT and the internet (Eryansyah et al., 2019; Prasajo et al., 2019). Because of this trend, more and more colleges are promoting digital learning cultures that are new and different, such as blended learning. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the advancement of education everywhere and has accelerated the growth of online learning. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, learning was done offline. Learning strategies using the blended learning model are becoming increasingly popular as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Blended Learning learning model is an innovation that has a major role in changing learning.

Blended learning is a hybrid of face-to-face and online learning that takes advantage of the benefits of online classes without sacrificing the benefits of face-to-face instruction (Hadiyanto, H., Failasofah, F., Armiwati, A., et al. 2019). The implementation of the Blended Learning model should be the right solution for various criticisms regarding the teaching process that are considered lacking or weak, both in conventional learning models and in E-Learning. As long as educators keep in mind that the learning program has to be relevant and respond to the learning gap, the program

will be successful. But, to implement blended learning requires solutions tailored specifically to the contextual needs of students. This can be achieved when policymakers in education understand the experience of students when studying with a blended learning system. Although there are some research results on blended learning, research on blended learning using photovoice perspectives that explore the student learning experience has not been done much. Researchers will explore students' blended learning experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic through a photovoice approach. The research question in this study is “How did students’ feel about their blended learning experiences during pandemic covid-19?”. This research aimed to determine EFL students' experience in blended learning during pandemic covid-19.

Methods

Research Design

In this research, the researcher uses qualitative research methods since this study is about determining students’ blended-learning experiences. Creswell (2014: 194) states that qualitative research is a methodology to explore and understand the meaning of individuals or groups that are considered social or human problems. Researchers use qualitative methods because they allow researchers to investigate experiences in blended learning. The research design that is used in this study is the photovoice study. This is a qualitative study that collected data through a slightly modified photovoice and interviews. A Photovoice is a photo that has meaning that can tell the photographer's portrait to describe a phenomenon (Wang, 1999). Photovoice itself is a method of using photographic media created by the subjects as the main data source. Sampling was carried out by a purposive sampling technique, which is a way of taking samples based on certain considerations. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling using three main criteria: (a) Male/Female, (b) English for Foreign Learner students, and (c) had blended learning experience.

Pseudonym	Age (years old)	Gender	Batch	Occupation
Alice	20	Female	2020	Undergraduate student
Handy	20	Male	2020	Undergraduate student
Harry	20	Male	2020	Undergraduate student

Noura	21	Female	2019	Undergraduate student
Tio	23	Male	2018	Undergraduate student

Table 1. Demographic data of participants

Participants

In this study, the participants are EFL students from the English education Department of the Faculty of Education and Sciences in UGJ Cirebon. Data obtained using an interview, 5 EFL students interviewed to ask for approval to participate in the research and consent to use photos in research articles after receiving complete information about the research. Participants were asked to take photos related to the topic of study, which is their experience in blended learning.

Data Collection

In this research, data collected by using photovoice, participants took photos independently and discussed them in interview sessions to generate narratives that were used as primary data (Wang & Burris, 1997). The interview that was conducted by the writer is interviews with EFL students. The researcher collects data by means of face-to-face contact and the data recorded while interviewing the participant. Then, the author can rehearse the result of the interview to avoid any missed material while transcribing it into a written form.

The researcher used Photovoice to discover issues or concerns of interest, then select participants who are associated with the subject and invite them to willingly participate in research. In the next step, researchers talk about the goals of the study and how to use the camera and photography techniques safely and ethically. The instruction for participants is "Please take photos that are relevant and can be used to explain your experience in blended learning." Following the taking of photographs by participants, each photograph is discussed and analyzed through interviews. As a result of photos, researchers asked about the reasons for choosing photos as well as their feelings and emotions: 1. "Why did you take this picture and what does it mean for you?"

Data Analysis

In this research, the researcher used an inductive thematic analysis. An inductive thematic analysis, often used in qualitative studies, was performed to analyze the

collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Latz (2017) traditional qualitative research techniques, like inductive theme analysis are frequently used to analyze Photovoice data. In the first stage, the researcher collected the photos sent by 5 participants into one file. The second stage, the researcher transcribed every interview after the session was over. Furthermore, after getting photos and interview transcripts, Researchers represent photos to represent ideas, emotions, or facts felt by participants related to the learning experience using the blended learning model. After that, the researcher made the initial codes and then constructed them into several themes. The themes are then defined. So, the theme is obtained from the results of the Photovoice representation. This process of coming up with themes was done manually, without using a qualitative research program. Participants provided feedback on the themes to confirm that they accurately reflect their experience.

Results and Discussion

Three themes resulting from inductive thematic analysis, are the benefits and challenges of blended learning, online and offline learning, and the future of blended learning.

1. Benefits and Challenges of Blended Learning

Blended learning is one of the learning models that has recently received more attention, especially in the world of education. However, the transition from offline or face-to-face learning to online learning needs adaptation and certainly has a significant impact. The blended learning model combines a learning implementation approach. So, this model is thought to be one of the best ways to get access to different sources of knowledge.

Based on the results of interviews with research respondents, it was found that through the blended learning model, they can access and participate in the learning process whenever they want and from any location. This provides a truly flexible learning experience. Furthermore, they can participate in the learning process without having to be on campus. Blended learning is an appropriate learning method that is able to explore the abilities of students.

“I think blended learning is the right learning method for me. When I learn in an online class, I feel I can explore myself to take part in internships and take part in other activities in places that are actually online. Then, in this offline class, I can meet friends and get to know my lecturer in person. The bottom line is my feeling. I really like this blended learning method because it allows me to be able to explore other things that I couldn't do before using only traditional methods (Alice, female, 20 y.o, 06 July 2022).

Because of this flexibility, students can access learning materials and do all learning tasks flexibly, which can be done anytime and anywhere.



Figure 1. A picture of a learning activity is used to express that blended learning helps students explore the use of technology and different tools or techniques for learning

In Figure 1, this photo represents how Blended Learning may help students explore the use of technology and different tools or techniques for learning. Nowadays, technology-based learning is becoming more and more accessible to students. At least this blended learning will motivate students to learn IT. And also, they will try hard to be able to operate with the use of technology. Because lecturers and students are encouraged to be more creative in providing and making learning more varied. However, this will be a challenge for lecturers and students themselves.

“In my opinion, blended learning is one of the most useful learning innovations in the midst of this pandemic. With the existence of blended learning, learning activities are still carried out even though physical and social distancing are required. Lecturers and students are required to master technology to be able to

follow the development of these learning innovations. At first it was a little difficult, but in my opinion, the results are very beneficial for all parties, both lecturers and students. " (Noura, female, 21 y.o, 06 July 2022).

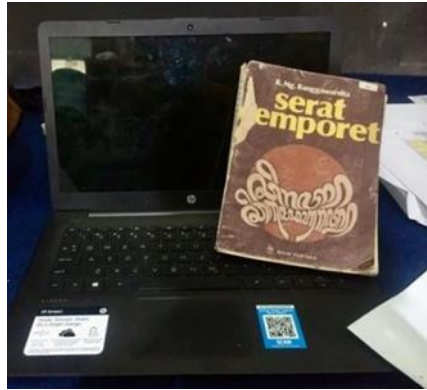


Figure 2. The picture of a laptop and a book represents more flexible access to instructional materials at any time, from any place.

The evolution and advancement of IT in the field of education are seen in Figure 2. In time, laptops will start to take the place of printed books. Students can more easily get the information they are looking for by using a laptop. Therefore, through this tool, students can learn more effectively in online and offline learning environments by having more flexible access to learning materials. While acknowledging the flexibility of blended learning, some respondents complained that there were problems with internet connectivity. This is especially true in areas where network connections are considered slow.

“Meeting with lecturers and friends is something I enjoy through the blended learning model, but I also don't like it when network problems occur when online learning makes learning ineffective.” (Harry, male, 20 y.o, 06 July 2022)

2. Online and Offline Learning

The comparison of the two online learning methods on this theme is based on the advantages and disadvantages of online and offline learning. Learners' experiences in online learning can also be divided into offline learning, which concentrates on learning processes that do not occur simultaneously, and online learning, which emphasizes the use of web conferencing facilities to facilitate concurrent learning processes. Students are required to use online learning tools.



Figure 3. A picture of a smartphone represents that blended learning cannot be separated from the use of gadgets to provide a comfortable learning process.

As mentioned earlier, blended learning is a type of learning model that combines online and offline modes. Devices such as smartphones are essential in blended learning to ensure an enjoyable learning experience. In addition, the use of smartphones is now an attractive learning tool used to improve teaching and learning in distance education. Its use makes course delivery flexible and lets students use online learning platforms, get to course materials, and talk to each other digitally.

The learning management system (LMS) run by universities is the main tool for online learning. Some participants liked online education because of its convenience and interactive features. In addition, they reported that it was easy for them to understand the material in online learning.

“In my opinion, this online class helps me understand the material because I like to write or take notes on the material explained by the lecturer. In addition, because in the online system I can record material or record classes that I attend, I can review it again. From there, I think it is very easy to comprehend the material.” (Alice, female, 20 y.o, 06 July 2022)

“I think most online assignments help me comprehend the material presented, but there are assignments that I think are less helpful for me in comprehending the material that the lecturer is trying to convey.” (Noura, female, 21 y.o, 06 July 2022)

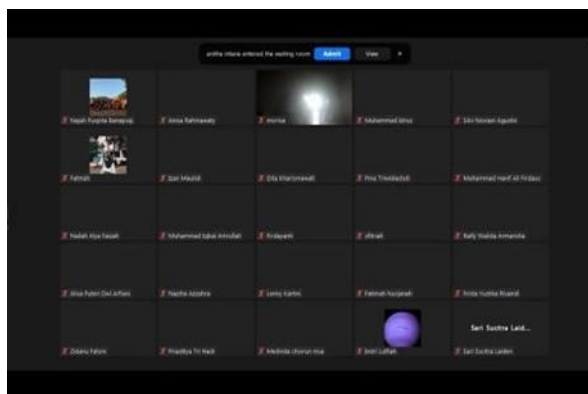


Figure 4. A picture of an online meeting is used to express the low level of social interaction between students and the lecturer and also between students and each other.

Figure 4 illustrates how the lack of social interaction between students and lecturers and between students and other students can make online learning inefficient. This challenges lecturers to track student progress and learning outcomes as the learning activity takes place. The smooth teaching and learning process can be hampered for both lecturers and students.

Learners also note that a significant problem in online learning is that it consumes a lot of data and relies heavily on signal strength. They note that online education is difficult for students, especially those who have to return to their homes that are not supported by a stable internet connection.

"I think online learning is different from offline classes where we can directly interact with the material being taught to maximize comprehension of the material. In online learning, there are obstacles such as the internet network, so maybe we need to be extra careful in comprehending the material being taught."
(Tio, male, 23 y.o, 06 July 2022)

"What I like is traditional or face-to-face learning because in this learning we can interact directly with lecturers, so that learning can be maximized without interference such as internet networks or anything. Not only that, we can also create emotional or chemical reactions in the classroom and create an interesting classroom atmosphere. (Handy, male, 20 y.o, 06 July 2022)

3. The Future of Blended Learning

This theme focuses on participants' long-term and short-term ideas on how to improve the Blended Learning experience.



Figure 5. Pen to represent Pedagogical Content Knowledge and Funds of Knowledge.

This photo shows that in blended learning, a lecturer must have Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), which will foster a positive learning environment among students. To maintain students' interest and desire in science, a lecturer must recognize certain information and use it to produce positive effects in the learning environment. The learning environment will be much better if students' and professors' wide ranges of knowledge are combined so that they complement each other.

Incorporating the concept of a "funds of knowledge" into the classroom shows that education actively advances the idea of the social relationship between home and school. This will foster trust between students and lecturers in the educational process (Barton, A.C., & Tan, E. 2009). Basu and Barton (2007) mention that the strategic partnership between the two must consider the method that will be used to achieve the learning objectives. In other words, having a good relationship between lecturers and students will encourage them to follow the learning process and increase their enthusiasm for learning. If there is no correlation between the two, there will be a shortage in the application of learning methods. This will certainly be an obstacle to the success of BL.

In its implementation, blended learning not only requires the readiness of infrastructure and lecturers but also of students and parents. Improved support for free internet access and/or Wi-Fi is required to improve online learning applications in the

future. The support offered by both the government and/or universities is not sufficient to enable them to successfully participate in online learning. To make learning more successful, it's important to make sure there are enough facilities to support blended learning.

"In my opinion, stakeholders in institutions should be able to complete learning media that support so that students' learning can be fulfilled without any difficulties that we encounter in improving infrastructure. In essence, the campus must be able to complete the necessary facilities to increase its effectiveness and comfort together. (Tio, male, 23 y.o, 06 July 2022)

"Perhaps I should suggest that the approach be modified to make it more interesting so that learners will listen to and comprehend what the speaker is saying. Lecturers should also allow more ways so that these students can comprehend what the lecturer is saying." (Handy, male, 21 y.o, 06 July 2022)

In blended learning, it is not only lecturers who need to prepare the right technology. Online learning is most effective when the tools work properly. In this mode, all users must ensure that the smartphone's speaker, camera, or other features work properly.

"In my opinion, campus facilities such as WiFi and computers should be more complete so that they can be used by many students, because I feel WiFi is still a challenge for all students to use when classes are offline. This is because the application of blended learning requires the use of technology, which requires a supporting internet network. " (Noura, female, 21 y.o, 06 July 2022)

This study has identified several significant themes related to the experience of EFL students in blended learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Discussion

1. Benefits and Challenges of Blended Learning

The results of the study illustrate that students provide varied responses regarding the benefits and challenges of using a blended learning approach. Through blended learning, students can participate in learning anytime and anywhere. Students

stated that blended learning allowed them to take more of the learning resources they wanted. They understand that it is their duty to absorb and understand the material in order to actively apply what they have learned. It is very important for students to practice what they have learned as per constructivism ideas put forward by Piaget and Vygotsky (Woo and Reeves, 2007).

However, the challenge felt by students is the asynchronous nature of online communication, which causes a lack of communication and social engagement between lecturers and students. This is where communication and social engagement are important in building and supporting online communities of learners. In addition, this study revealed that some participants considered the lack of access to internet network speed. According to McVeigh (2009), students who follow blended learning need more resources and support. When using the blended learning model, students need to know how important it is to have a reliable way to connect to the internet.

2. Online and Offline Learning

The results show that online learning is a more efficient learning method for students who live far from their campus or university. Students believe that using online learning resources will enable them to study more efficiently. This is in line with Richardson & Swan (2003) saying that online students can communicate with their lecturers, interact with classmates, access learning resources, and complete assignments from any location with Internet access. But on the other hand, online learning has various obstacles. The first is the lack of distance learning support in information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure. Second, the transfer of knowledge that takes place in the teaching and learning process and is carried out online between educators (lecturers) and students (students) does not work as it should. The third point is that because there is no face-to-face interaction, online learning has an effect on the lack of student supervision.

According to research findings, offline learning can be more effective in the classroom because it gives students the opportunity to interact directly with their lecturers and classmates. This is in addition to the fact that students will understand the material better when they are doing learning activities. The implementation of distance learning is currently one of the main goals to reduce and even break the chain of

transmission of COVID-19, although online learning does not always have a negative impact on the teaching and learning process. The government and schools must fully back online learning so that it can be done correctly and effectively.

3. The Future of Blended Learning

The results of this study reveal that a major concern in online classes is the infrastructure used in the learning process of blended learning, such as a lack of internet access. The Internet network connection is not stable or tends to slow, making the blended learning not run optimally. Not all students will have strong signal coverage, which is a very big learning barrier in remote areas. Better internet access is another important development needed for the spread of blended learning. Indonesia is an archipelagic country, and its economy is in a slump, so this is hard to understand right away. This makes it hard to put infrastructure in the right places.

The success of a program is supported by various parties in its implementation. The application of blended learning requires good cooperation in developing it. The competence of lecturers, facilities, learning resources, and student motivation are important components in the successful use of blended learning. With the cooperation of various parties, the learning objectives of the application of blended learning can be achieved optimally (Putri & Adha, 2020).

Conclusion & Recommendation

In conclusion, based on the data, students' views on blended learning provide insight into the benefits and challenges of this research methodology. This study found that blended learning has many benefits for students. Two benefits, in particular, are its versatility and accessibility. When it is convenient for them, students can participate in the program. Blended learning will be more effective in the future or during a pandemic. The majority of students think that blended learning will significantly help them learn more and improve their academic performance. Students seem to benefit from, enjoy, adapt to, and be motivated by blended learning. However, these components are not sufficient to create a learning environment. An important advance needed for the implementation of blended learning is better internet access. Educational institutions in Indonesia need to make sure that all students have equal access to online learning and learn the skills and knowledge they need to live in the modern world.

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Conflict of Interest

Potential conflict of interest, if any, should be reported here during data collection.

About Author

Efrilia Siska Damayanti is a student of English Education Department at Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, Cirebon, Indonesia. She can be contacted at efriliasiska@gmail.com.

I. Robia Khaerudin is a senior lecturer of English Education Department at Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, Cirebon, Indonesia. He can be contacted at irobiakhaerudin@gmail.com.

Misdi is a senior lecturer of English Education Department at Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, Cirebon, Indonesia. He can be contacted at misdirina@gmail.com.