

# Students' Perception on the Effectiveness of Blended Learning: Efforts in the Mastery of English

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## ABSTRACT

Blended learning is a combination (or combinations) of face-to-face learning processes using the online English learning applications. Learning English should develop and integrate with technology advancements in the current era of digitalization. The purpose of this study was to analyze the perceptions of students when they try to master English using blended learning. The subjects in the study were 100 students of semester 1 in academic year 2018/2019, majoring in management and accountancy at the Faculty of Economy, University of Pembangunan Panca Budi. The research was qualitative using questionnaires as the instruments and the data analysis techniques involved descriptive. The results showed that blended learning would be more effective if there were available more face-to-face methods, compared to the online systems supported by a relatively small proportion of students so that the learning environment would be more comfortable; moreover, they more freely ask for questions and discuss the materials by themselves. This application greatly helped the process of learning English, but the application only became the supporting media, not the subject of learning, because such application had many obstacles and weaknesses, such as, the availability of internet networks and application systems did not support and there is no social interaction among students and between students and lecturers.

**Keywords:** Perception, Effectiveness, Blended Learning, English

## INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a foreign language is always a challenge. <sup>[1]</sup> The current teaching and learning process has rapidly developed by the help of technology and information progress. Learning a field of science is not limited to only space and time so that the learning process can be done anytime and anywhere. Learning English can be taught by face-to-face, using technology-based learning media. The concept of *e-learning* and *e-teaching* play important roles in the world of education and technology is applied by teachers at different levels for educational contexts. Facing the millennial generation who are accustomed to the use of multi-media in their family environment, teachers should be

ready to use the positive aspects of using these tools of technology.

The development of science and technology makes multimedia useful in every aspect of life, especially in the learning of English. As part of computer science, multimedia is a combination of two or more two types of media. The use of multimedia in the teaching of English makes English no longer boring but more enjoyable. <sup>[2]</sup> In one side, multimedia as a tool in the teaching of English can build learners' enthusiasm in English and optimism in the learning environment. On the other hand, it also improves learners' abilities, like listening, speaking, reading, and writing, develops ideas, and increases enthusiasm in communication. Learners get knowledge and skills from good

environment and multimedia can create such environment.

The use of multimedia in the learning of English can be viewed from the perspectives of constructivism learning theory, cognitive psychology, and humanist psychology. Based on constructivism learning theory, learning environment should be a place where learners can work together, support each other, and use a variety of tools and sources of information to achieve learning goals and to solve problems. The use of multimedia allows learners to work together in the learning process that can form an effective stimulation so that they can improve the quality of their learning. By cognitive psychology, a long process is required in the learning of English and instructors become the leaders. The humanist psychology explores the teaching of language in terms of psychology which emphasizes the dignity and value of humans, pays attention to the development of learners, and supports the learning process and the importance of the learning process. The task of language educators is not to decide what learners must do but to find and create a learning atmosphere that is good for them. They should transfer positive emotional factors and encourage them to learn actively.

Taking into account of the great benefits of multimedia-based learning, especially *e-learning*, to support the realization of the dream of becoming a World Class University in 2033, Pembangunan Panca Budi University implements blended learning especially in English courses for all new students in semester 1 for the academic year 2018/2019. This is done in the hope that it can improve English skills. Constraints (or difficulties) in the learning of English by students always occur due to students' internal and external factors. The correct method of learning helps minimize students' difficulties in the learning of English.

### **Literary studies**

#### ***Perception***

Perception can be interpreted as a direct response (acceptance) from something and in the process a person knows several things through his five senses. In addition, perception can also be defined as 1) the way a person responds or understands someone or something, 2) the ability to understand or pay attention to something easily, and 3) the way someone observes and understands something using his five senses. Perception is a series of sensational and internal cognitive processes in the brain, that are located in the subconscious layer of cognitive function that senses, connects, interprets, and seeks internal cognitive information in his mind. [3] Perception means the process by which someone organizes and interprets his impressions to give meaning to his environment. [4]

#### ***Learning***

Learning is an effort to influence students to learn or efforts to teach students. Learning brings one of the following impacts on students, namely i) learning something learners will not learn without their acts, or ii) learning something in a more efficient way. The term *teaching* is different from *learning* where the first (or instructional) is more directed to give knowledge from instructors to students while the second refers to an activity that seeks to educate students in an integrated manner by taking into account the learning environment factors, characteristics of students, characteristics of study domain, and learning strategies, including delivery, management, and organization of learning. This happens because the learning science is a discipline that is still relatively easy, pays attention to efforts to improve understanding, and improves the learning process.

The main objective of learning science is to describe optimal learning strategies to encourage initiatives and to facilitate students when they learn. This science is more appropriately seen as an applied science that bridges learning theory and learning practices, so that the learning

science pays attention to efforts to improve understanding and learning process. Efforts to improve the learning process require a variety of learning models in accordance with the conditions of learning, including goals and constraints in the field of study and characteristics of students. Usually the characteristics of different fields of study and students require different learning models.

Methods (or learning) in the language science, especially English, are also closely related to the goals, constraints of the field of study, and characteristics of students. The methods used in the learning of English might include: <sup>[5]</sup> i) the grammar-translation method, ii) the direct method, iii) the audio-visual method, iv) the silent way, v) suggestopedia, vi) community language learning, vii) total physical response, viii) content-based, task-based, and participatory approaches, and ix) learning strategy training, cooperative learning, and multiple intelligences

### **Learning media**

The word *media* comes from Latin's *medius* literally meaning 'middle' or 'intermediary', and broadly the learning media is human beings, materials, or events that build conditions that make learners able to obtain knowledge, skills, or attitudes. More specifically, media in the teaching and learning process tends to be interpreted as graphical tools, photography, or electronic to capture, process, and reconstruct visual or verbal information.

The development of science and technology increasingly encourages efforts to renew the use of technological results in the learning process. Teachers should be able to use technology-based learning media so that the learning process will be more effective and efficient. Teachers must also have sufficient knowledge and understanding of learning media which includes: i) media as a communication tool to make the teaching and learning process more effective, ii) media functions in order to achieve educational goals, iii) the ins and outs of the learning process, iv) relationship

between teaching methods and educational media, v) value or benefits of educational media in teaching, vi) selection and use of educational media, vii) various types of educational media tools and techniques, viii) media education in each subject, and ix) business innovation in educational media

Learning media and technology are communication tools such as print media, graphic, animation, audio and audio visual that are used by teachers and students to transfer knowledge and technology. In addition, learning media and multi-media technology are information transmission channels in the teaching and learning process such as computers, microphones, cell phones, interactive whiteboards, digital videos, online media, digital games etc. The supporting factors for the use of technology in the class are as follows: i) technology is not space-bound, ii) technology does not care about the economic status of students and greatly helps increase students' abilities, iii) technology provides equal opportunities for everyone to learn, iv) technology is more in line with the way students learn in the present, and v) technology is a part of life which if restricted in use in the classroom can be interpreted as limiting the ability of students to compete in the world.

The use of media is the key to move students to a higher level of thinking because they are accustomed to using the internet and software programs that require a higher level of thinking skills such as creativity (problem solving), comparison and contrast, as well as evaluation. Teachers must guide students to be the best in media use and provide bait.

### **Blended Learning**

Blended learning is an integration between face-to-face learning and the use of technology. <sup>[6]</sup> It is an effective combination of learning delivery, learning models and styles that are practiced in interesting and meaningful learning environments. Blended learning combines online and learning activities in the classroom and uses learning resources optimally to improve student learning outcomes. <sup>[7]</sup> In general, blended

learning combines the delivery of teaching materials online with interesting interactions in the classroom and revives the learning atmosphere in such a way according to the learning material, giving students the opportunity to express their thoughts, and distinguish the instructions given by each learner who has diversity of abilities and mastery of the material learned.

Blended learning provides a change from passive to active learning and the focus of learning in the classroom shifts from the current form of learning to active learning. This learning involves learners in situations that encourage them to read, speak, listen and think. This learning provides opportunities for learners to learn together or independently. The blended learning model emphasizes the integration between online learning and the components of face-to-face meetings in class.

In addition, the integrated delivery system enables students to learn and access various forms of learning material or types of learning because they have different learning styles. Blended learning has several objectives, namely: i) increase the chances of student achievement compared to the overall learning online or face to face with the decline in the value of achievement and motivation of students, ii) add human touch to teaching, iii) interactive material allows the teacher to create a level of interest, high trust and a real task, iv) improve individual abilities, personality and relevance, and v) this learning allows the instructor to arrange learning material according to the needs of different levels of learner ability.

This learning model provides learners the best benefits of two methods because both the instructor and the learners have great flexibility and accessibility without sacrificing face-to-face meeting relationships. The blended learning approach is an effective and low-risk strategy aimed at facing the challenges of change in technological development in higher education.

Blended learning is a mixture of instructional forms to achieve teaching

goals<sup>[8]</sup> and combines classroom teaching with the use of online media, or different teaching delivery media to improve motivational and meaningful learning for students.<sup>[9]</sup> In addition, it can be interpreted as a learning method that combines the benefits of learning in the classroom and uses technology-based learning. Blended learning implies that language skills, such as writing and grammar should be done individually and the teacher should concentrate on speaking and explain learning materials that are quite difficult and held in the classroom. Understanding the main concepts in blended learning helps to choose the right learning material for class discussion and individual learning assignments. Teachers should better prepare themselves to create blended learning in learning English which focuses on listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, language, and pronunciation exercises.

Blended learning has many benefits compared to traditional learning, for instance, i) easy to adapt to learner needs, ii) creating opportunities for independent learning, and iii) reducing teacher's workload. In addition to the benefits obtained from blended learning, there are a variety of reasons that the blended learning process can not apply well, namely: i) limited electricity resources, ii) lack of response / response directly to learners compared to interactions in face-to-face learning, iii) learners cannot communicate with instructors through e-learning media, iv) learners do not feel the existence of togetherness and identity in the group, v) learners face difficulties in accessing learning materials online because of different socio-economic backgrounds, vi) teachers need to be trained and have an expert to provide information and technology support if problems occur, vii) learners do not want to learn independently due to social and cultural factors that hinder the success of blended learning, and viii) the lack of enthusiasm of the learners and not willing to take risks or engage in activities outside their comfortable zone.

The benefits of e-learning are: a) it is a teaching process focusing on the learner (learner-centered teaching process) and the role of the teacher as a guide or facilitator in the teaching and learning process, b) learners can access it anytime and anywhere, c) one type of cooperative learning, d) the use of e-learning is fast and dynamic and reduces costs (time and travel), e) helping the development of independent learning where learners can adjust the learning stage they like, f) the use of e-learning fosters the interaction between learners and instructors, g) comprehensive learning, h) all activities are carried out through the internet such as registration, supervision and scholarships, i) the material is prepared by the instructors differently from different places, j) learners can study more than one field of science, k) the use of e-learning can also increase motivation and attachment to foreign language learning, and l) learning through e-learning is very flexible and comfortable, and adjusts to the learner's abilities.

Instead of its benefits and advantages as mentioned above, the e-learning also has several disadvantages, namely: 1) learning through e-learning reduces social relations among learners, 2) some learners have little ability to use the internet and computers so they cannot use it properly, 3) learning using e-learning reduces the number of face-to-face meetings with teachers and the number of teacher supervision of students, 4) some teachers are less experienced and are not used to using the teaching and learning process using e-learning, 5) differences in language / culture, 6) expenditures that are excessive (wasteful) in the interests of universities, 7) technical limitations, and 8) lack of face-to-face interaction with teachers.

### **English and multimedia**

The main benefits of using technology for language learning are in-depth excavation of the original language, wide access to different sources of information and variations in language, opportunities to interact, to communicate,

and to intensify learner's participation. When learning foreign languages, especially English through multimedia technology, learners should be able to organize themselves and arrange new strategies in the learning process. Learning a language is usually done in a way that is not appropriate, such as learning in a large class and dominated by teachers and in the context of learning in the country not like the native language speakers so learning English using the internet and multimedia is a difficult activity. Internet use can help language learners communicate with native speakers using chat rooms and emails. Learners can also improve their communication skills, get used to different cultures and strengthen their language skills.

The development of multimedia technology helps that teaching English becomes an inevitable trend. In language learning, using computers or other multimedia is to facilitate learning English and using images or videos is meant to teach new knowledge and to learn more improved skills in a pleasant learning environment. In traditional English learning classes, learners cannot focus on the content of learning at all times and their behavior towards learning English is very bad. They realize that learning English is so boring that they are not diligent in learning it. However, multimedia provides a new learning method for overcoming setbacks in traditional language teaching. This method is expected to change the boring and abstract content of the lesson to be more interesting and clear. In addition, this method also offers a variety of real teaching and communication situations where learners can communicate each other in foreign languages so that the process of learning English becomes more natural.

Learning by the use of internet decreases students' worries and their comments spread rapidly since they believe in themselves (or they feel confident). Lecturers could integrate the use of internet with teaching materials as well as teaching strategy; all this create significant learning



atmosphere. Language learners have the autonomy to use internet which are influenced by several factors: i) by using the internet, learners are able to choose their learning methods, learning materials and the depth of learning, ii) self monitoring, iii) cooperation, iv) the website provides many learning materials such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, v) learning language magazines online, and vi) chat rooms.

Learning English using multimedia has the following benefits, for instance, a) this method can change abstract lessons to concrete so that learners can better understand difficult knowledge easily, b) this method provides a lot of information for learners with a short amount of time, c) this method stimulates the interest of students in learning, d) this method prioritizes these learners in the process of learning English. Developing social interaction and social-emotional relationships with friends and implementing cooperative learning will be more appropriate than blended learning. The diversity becomes the key role in blended

learning and gender and age factors influence the acceptance of the integration to online media usage in the world of education. Younger learners more understand the use of technology than older ones. Thus, it is very important to understand the learner's needs and priorities before lecturers plan their learning materials. They must think of factors such as socio-economic background and level of knowledge of the use of information and technology as well as gender and age before they technology-based media in the teaching and learning process.

## METHODS

This study used a qualitative descriptive design and aimed to analyze students' perceptions on the effectiveness of blended learning when they try to master English. The instrument of this research was the use of questionnaires; the subjects were 100 students from semester 1 from the study programmes of management and accounting and were enrolled in the academic year 2018/2019.

## RESULTS

Consider Table 1 to see the students' perceptions on blended learning.

Table 1. Students' perceptions on blended learning

No	Questionnaire items	Respondents' answers	
		Frequency	Percentage
1	Learning English previously	100	100%
2	Timing of learning English (12 years)	48	48%
3	Joining the English Course (ever)	43	43%
4	Learning English at Senior High School (face-to-face method)	100	100%
5	Learning English via online (not yet)	75	75%
6	The timing of blended learning at college (4 months)	38	38%
7	Frequency of giving critic (never)	57	57%
8	Frequency of using online English (seldom)	46	46%
9	The contents of online application (helpful in English learning)	66	66%
10	Face-to-face learning (understandable)	95	95%
11	Interaction in face-to-face learning (sometimes)	65	65%
12	The difficulties in face-to-face learning (translating and speaking)	58	58%
13	The advantages of using online learning (flexible to learn and easy to access)	92	92%
14	The difficulties in using online learning (the web, the application)	89	89%
15	The efforts to overcome the obstacles (learning)	60	60%

The Table 1 shows that all respondents have already studied English since they were in elementary school so they have known English for 12 years. The method of learning English at that time was that the instructor still used face-to-face methods and the respondents had almost

never used blended learning. Learners experienced many difficulties in the use of online media, especially the application for English learning; moreover, they were not accustomed due to networks or applications that often faced technical obstacles so that they found it difficult to take the access.

Learning English is still expected to be done by face-to-face methods where learners can directly interact with the instructor to solve the problems they face. The combination of face-to-face and online learning greatly helps mastery of English well but this process should be carried out continuously by increasing the frequency of face-to-face meetings. If only using online media is done without any guidance from the instructor, then the blended learning process is still less effective.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Blended learning will be more effective if the face-to-face method is used more frequently than the online system which is only supported by the less proportion of students so that the learning environment becomes more comfortable so that students are more free to ask for questions and to discuss the learning materials. The use of the application greatly helps the process of English learning, but the application only supports media, not the subject of the learning, because the use of the application as the learning media has many obstacles and weaknesses in internet networks and application systems that do

not support and there is no social interaction among students and between students and their lecturers.

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