The Impact of Blended Learning on EFL Students' Perception of Autonomy and Writing Achievement

Dwi Fita Heriyawati[1] (ID), Febti Ismiatun[2] (ID), and Like Raskova Octaberlina[3] (ID)

[1,2] English Education Department, Universitas Islam Malang, East Java, Indonesia
[3] English Department, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, East Java, Indonesia
`dwifitaheriyawati@unisma.ac.id`

Abstract. This study seeks to investigate the perceptions of EFL students regarding the use of blended learning to promote autonomous learning in English language teaching, particularly in the writing class, and the extent to which teachers foster students' autonomy. Twenty students were given a questionnaire as participants in this investigation, and the participants were chosen based on their performance the writing class. In addition, two students from the class were interviewed in order to collect the supplementary data related to the autonomy enhancement. According to the findings, although students held positive beliefs about autonomous learning, they still lacked an adequate understanding of autonomous learning concepts. Regarding exposing students to autonomous learning, teachers are extremely motivated. When enrolled in an online class, students feel free to explore their ideas in writing, whereas they feel at ease engaging in discussion with the teachers and classmates in offline classes. This study concludes with recommendations for teachers and programs of teacher education. In addition, the study elaborates on the value of implementing blended learning to improve learning autonomy and achievement, particularly in writing classes.

Keywords: Blended Learning, Autonomy Learning, Learning Achievement.

1   Introduction

The increased focus on learner autonomy and their writing achievement through blended learning [1], [2] has made it more difficult for scholars to contribute and conduct studies in this area. When self-directed learning, learner-centered learning, and self-managed learning are underlined, learner autonomy unquestionably becomes one of the crucial factors in language learning success [3], [4]. It provides a starting point for subsequent lifelong learning opportunities.

Moreover, the use of blended learning is now a common practice in today's educational system as more and more educational institutions compete to embrace and apply the methodology in order to create an environment that is engaging and interesting

for students to study in [5], [6]. [7] conducted the research about blended learning and found that Students had a favorable impression of blended learning; participants found that the online platform was beneficial not just because of its accessibility and adaptability but also because it boosted their motivation, autonomy, and technical and information literacy. However, they believed that in-person education was superior since it was more realistic because of things like direct connection, instant feedback, and the availability of printed materials. Although many institutions in Indonesia have at least partially incorporated blended learning in order to capitalize on its benefits, online learning is still in its infancy in the country, and it is only used as an aid to enhance learning and teaching in conventional classroom settings. Blended learning is one of the most popular forms of education in Indonesia [8], [9]. However, faculty members are being strongly encouraged by the university to make significant progress toward incorporating online learning into their regularly scheduled classes. Figure 1 displays how traditional (face-to-face) and online learning work together in a blended learning setting.
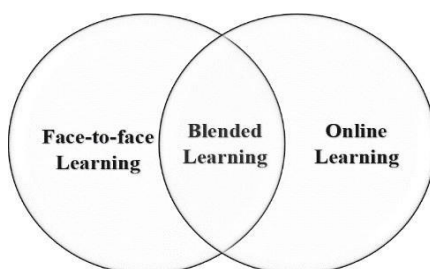

Figure 1. Blended Learning Setting [10]

Regarding to this situation, the researchers try to use blended learning in writing class to promote the students autonomous learning and their writing achievement [11]. Blended learning has been defined as a distinction between this form of teaching and learning and traditional or online learning [10]. Being aware of the significance of autonomy level and its effect on learning, students should make extra efforts to investigate what, how, and why they learn. Additionally, students should be taught to be independent English language learners using appropriate strategies [12].

There has been some research conducted on learner autonomy, either in Indonesia or in other nations [13], [14], [15]. However, the researchers conduct a study with specific reference to the context of Indonesia about learners' perceptions and practices in autonomous language learning [16] and their writing achievement when using blended learning as the strategies in the teaching and learning process. Learners can control their behavior and change their learning methods through autonomous learning. They can also get feedback on their learning activities, review their results, and reach their expected learning goals [17]. This study would have focused on understanding teachers' teaching objectives and requirements related to autonomous language learning [18], setting up learners' objectives and study plans for autonomous language learning [19], and determining learners' practices in writing class on their

own. In summary, perception is one of the most important factors to consider while doing an analysis of the learners' circumstances and emotions. It is not something that ought to be taken for granted, and it cannot be confined or constrained in any way. To put it another way, learners' perceptions are such a significant factor that they can serve as useful energy sources for imparting information and realizing the learners' goals. The art of perception makes it far easier for them to understand the problems or conditions than an objective approach would.

Therefore, the researcher was interested in investigating the students' perception of autonomous activities and the results of their writing achievement when blended learning is applied in the writing class. The learners only focus on exploring their activities in their writing in class and beyond the class by addressing the following questions: (1) what are learners' perceptions on the use of blended learning in a writing class? (2) What are learners' perceptions of setting up their learning objectives and study plans to encourage autonomous learning? (3) How do learners perceive autonomous learning?

2. Method

The researchers conducted qualitative descriptive research to investigate students' perceptions of the implementation of blended learning in writing classes to foster learner autonomy [20]. In addition, a descriptive method was employed because the research data were presented descriptively and organically described and interpreted the objects. This study was conducted a private university in Malang, Indonesia. This university was selected because the researcher had easy access and the respondents had experience with learner autonomy and blended learning. Twenty students from the first semester students of English Education department that focuses on writing class were surveyed for this study. The researcher collected data via an online questionnaire and in-person interview.

In this study, the questionnaire served as the primary source of data. There were one closed-ended questionnaire and three open-ended questionnaires, where responses were limited to the stated alternatives and respondents could convey their opinions. The researcher for several reasons, including the fact that it could be administered quickly, the preliminary analysis was straightforward, and it provided specific responses, utilized the questionnaire through online platform. There are 17 closed questions and 3 open queries relating to the problems. The purpose of the closed-ended questionnaire was to determine how students perceive learner autonomy in language learning. The researcher conducted an online survey using Google Form. Google forms were conceived and developed as web-based surveys. This Google form was disseminated online, and twenty students responded.

The researchers did a number of interviews with two learners who were chosen at random. The researcher made the schedule for the interviewees because they all had different times, they could do an interview. Also, the goal of this interview was to add to the qualitative data by getting more information about how well learners understood their instructors' teaching goals and requirements for self-directed language learning in blended learning, how they set their learning goals and study plans for self-directed language learning, and how they monitored and evaluated the English

learning process. The interview with the subjects went better because the researcher used both English and Bahasa Indonesia. The participants were also able to say what they thought without being bound by language. After the conversation was done, the transcriptions were also translated into English.

3. Results and Discussion

In the first section of the survey, participants were asked if they were able to generate a large number of writing topics during online English classes. The data analysis revealed that they benefited more from independent study. According to the results of questionnaire which conducted through Google forms most ESL students worry about expressing their thoughts clearly in writing during offline classes 45%, 30%, 20%, and 5% of the vote were cast for each option, accordingly. In addition, the majority of responses to questions 1 through 6 in the questionnaire form revealed that 60% of students agree when it comes to the benefits of doing writing classes online: they easily found numerous ideas and were able to easily put those thoughts into writing. When an online class was given, the students could readily describe many words and compose fluently into writing paragraphs. They would be working on a specific assignment in class that would help them with their English. Teachers need to know their students' strengths and weaknesses in order to assign appropriate work. Having the freedom to select, adapt, and direct an appropriate school activity could be beneficial. Media can help students learn more effectively while also reducing their stress and boredom. Below is a table with the actual score.
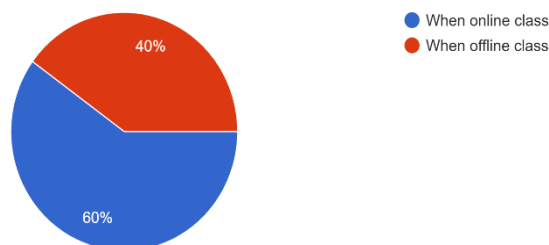

Figure 2. The student's opinion about writing during online or offline class

From Figure 2, it can be explained that most respondents (60%) concurred or strongly agreed that there are numerous benefits to utilizing an online platform. Many of them also realized that the online platform provides a variety of engaging media, such as images and videos, which aided their module study for writing tasks. However, they valued face-to-face instruction more because it provided more interaction that is realistic. Furthermore, the remaining 40% of students agree that the teaching and learning process of writing is conducted in the classroom or offline.

These findings, showing the participants' opinion of the use of blended learning in promoting their autonomous learning and the students' writing achievements, are good but not of a high degree, suggesting that the participants had genuinely gotten the benefits that were included in the instruction of writing through blended learning. On the other hand, the students' capacity to acquire writing skills did not yet reach its full potential. The conclusions that were gathered through the interview have shed light on this matter. Two of the people who were interviewed stated that they preferred using the online platform to learn in general. On the other hand, in order to make the most of it, they require additional time and practice.

"I love using blended learning in my writing class because it makes it easy to get to the tools and other information. While the class is held offline, I can ask the lecturer questions about tough topics and get clear answers from the readings. It also gives me access to a wide range of resources that I can use to learn more. While the class was online, I was able to focus on managing my time to write my text and do the tasks that the teacher gave me. When I was writing a literature review, I had no trouble finding many study articles online. Through the internet, I can also get to many sources that I can use as references for my project. As I try to write my line, I do not feel any stress. In short, using a mix of methods to teach and learn, as Blended learning, is fun. This is especially true in my writing class, where I can focus on finishing my writing assignment while the teacher explains how to solve my problems. However, because I am still learning how to use technology and do not have much experience with it, I could not yet make the best use of the online platform's features. I need more time to work on my skills". (Interviewee A)

"Blended learning is engaging. It helps me focus on coursework and other tasks. I can focus on writing projects and locate the right phrases outside of class. Online classes allow me to use many sources for writing assignments. I still need offline class to discuss my issues with the lecturer and friends. I think I can learn from my own experiences and finding many references online, but I need more precise rules and practices to optimize the online platform to study". (Interviewee B)

These results showed that, even though the participants liked using the online tool to learn, face-to-face learning was still very important to them. This was made clearer by the qualitative data from the conversation, as shown in the following excerpts:

"Some tasks for learning could be done better on the online platform. I can stay on task while writing my paragraph and finish my writing assignment. Even though an online tool can help me learn more on my own, face-to-face instruction is very important because I can ask my lecturer directly for help if I am having trouble. Even though I can ask the lecturer questions through the online discussion area, I might have to wait a moment or even hours for a response". (Interviewee A)

"I like combining online and face-to-face studies. Online meetings are best for some tasks. It can boost my autonomous learning, but classroom discussion, teacher explanation, and face-to-face writing classes are more helpful. Nonverbal languages

in interpersonal engagement help me understand my lecturer, and technology cannot replace them." (Interviewee B)

4. Conclusion and Suggestion

After a careful look at the data from the questionnaire and the discussion, it is clear that, even though some problems that arise in the implementation of blended learning in the writing class, the learners still gave more answers that are positive in the teaching and learning writing by implementing blended learning. Theoretically, they liked how blended learning affected their learner liberty, and most of them feel free to come up with their own ideas and use them as writing topics when writing is done online or outside of the classroom. It can be seen from the way they chose and built their paragraphs, which shows how well they understood the lecturer's instructions. Setting up their goals and plans for studying and finding out what they do to learn English on their own through online learning.

The above results show that students should get the most out of learning English, especially when it comes to writing. They can learn from sources both inside and outside of class. Blended learning strongly pushes students to do more on their own. The bond between teacher and student is also very important. With the teacher's help, students feel more aware and safer in the classroom. It also tells what the learner's goals and objectives are, which helps them do well as they learn.

Several recommendations are provided below for readers as well as stakeholders. To begin, the instructor might pay attention to what is going on in the classroom. Learners' enthusiasm for participating enthusiastically in English as a Foreign Language classroom is correlated to the teacher's provision of exciting classroom activities. Second, although students have the ability to select and modify the English materials, they use to study the language; teachers nevertheless play a crucial role in directing students towards the development of effective strategies for English language study. In addition, the research was carried out at a non-public university with a limited number of participants. Therefore, other researchers need to conduct the research in a variety of universities with many students in order to acquire a deeper and wider understanding of how learners perceive autonomous language learning, particularly when they have classes that using blended learning.

References

1.   M. N. Rahim, "The use of Blended Learning Approach in EFL Education," *Int. J. Eng. Adv. Technol.*, vol. 8, no. 5, pp. 1165–1168, 2019, doi: 10.35940/ijeat.E1163.0585C19.
2.   P. W. Sudewi, "Learning Experiences Using Blended Learning on Efl Learners At Sulawesi Barat University," *J. Basis*, vol. 7, no. 1, p. 121, 2020, doi: 10.33884/basisupb.v7i1.1787.
3.   S. M. R. Amirian and M. A. Noughabi, "An Investigation into Iranian EFL Teachers' Perception of Learner Autonomy," *J. Lang. Teach. Res.*, vol. 8, no.

4, p. 807, 2017, doi: 10.17507/jltr.0804.22.

4.   K. Khotimah, U. Widiati, M. Mustofa, and M. Faruq Ubaidillah, "Autonomous English learning: Teachers' and students' perceptions," *Indones. J. Appl. Linguist.*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 371–381, 2019, doi: 10.17509/ijal.v9i2.20234.

5.   K. B. Al Bataineh, "The Effect of Blended Learning on EFL Students' Grammar Performance and Attitudes: An Investigation of Moodle Khaleel," vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 1–23, 2019, doi: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol10no1.27.

6.   C. Dziuban, C. R. Graham, P. D. Moskal, A. Norberg, and N. Sicilia, "Blended learning: the new normal and emerging technologies," *Int. J. Educ. Technol. High. Educ.*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 1–16, 2018, doi: 10.1186/s41239-017-0087-5.

7.   P. Pardede, "Pre-Service EFL Teachers' Perception of Blended Learning," *JET (Journal English Teaching)*, vol. 5, no. 1, p. 1, 2019, doi: 10.33541/jet.v5i1.955.

8.   H. Hadiyanto, U. Sulistiyo, A. Mukminin, E. Haryanto, and S. Syaiful, "the Effect of Blended Learning on Efl Students' Performance in Research Methodology and Practice of 21St Century Skills," *J. Educ. Online*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2022, doi: 10.9743/JEO.2022.19.3.8.

9.   M. Huang, F. Kuang, and Y. Ling, "EFL learners' engagement in different activities of blended learning environment," *Asian-Pacific J. Second Foreign Lang. Educ.*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2022, doi: 10.1186/s40862-022-00136-7.

10.   W. S. Albiladi and K. K. Alshareef, "Blended learning in English Teaching and Learning: A review of the Current Literature," *J. Lang. Teach. Res.*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 232–238, 2019, doi: 10.17507/jltr.1002.03.

11.   S. Zulaihah and R. Harida, "Autonomous Learning Strategy of the Successful Nontraditional Students," *ELTIN JOURNAL, J. English Lang. Teach. Indones.*, vol. 5, no. 2, p. 71, 2017, doi: 10.22460/eltin.v5i2.p71-84.

12.   N. S. Lengkanawati, "Learner autonomy in the indonesian efl settings," *Indones. J. Appl. Linguist.*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 222–231, 2017, doi: 10.17509/ijal.v6i2.4847.

13.   T. Ariebowo, "Autonomous Learning during COVID-19 Pandemic: Students' Objectives and Preferences," *J. Foreign Lang. Teach. Learn.*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 56–77, 2021, doi: 10.18196/ftl.v6i1.10079.

14.   H. Uswatun, "Autonomous Learning As Language Learning Strategy Based on Students Preferenced Learning Style," *IDEAS J. English Lang. Teach. Learn. Linguist. Lit.*, vol. 1(2), pp. 1–22, 2013, [Online]. Available: http://ejournal.iainpalopo.ac.id/index.php/ideas/article/view/163.

15.   A. Sholeh, "Promoting Autonomous Learning in Reading," *Jeels*, vol. vol, no 2, no. November, pp. 108–121, 2015.

16.   M. Marsevani, "Learners' Perception and Practices on Autonomous Language Learning in Efl Settings," *Int. J. Lang. Lit.*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 54–65, 2021, doi: 10.23887/ijll.v5i1.32598.

17.   P. Shi, "Research on the Strategy of Autonomous Learning under the Dual-

Class Model of Ideological and Political Courses Based on the Knowledge Map Route," *Wirel. Commun. Mob. Comput.*, vol. 2022, 2022, doi: 10.1155/2022/2854233.

18. E. C. Pondalos, N. E. Saputri, and T. L. Pratiwi, "Promoting Autonomous Learning Through Online Discussion," *J. English Acad. Specif. Purp.*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 303–310, 2022, doi: 10.18860/jeasp.v5i1.16582.

19. R. M. I. Khan, A. Ali, and A. Alourani, "Investigating Learners' Experience of Autonomous Learning in E-learning Context," *Int. J. Emerg. Technol. Learn.*, vol. 17, no. 8, pp. 4–17, 2022, doi: 10.3991/ijet.v17i08.29885.

20. J. W. Creswell and J. D. Creswell, *Mixed Methods Procedures*. 2018.