Perceptions and Attitudes towards Blended Learning for English Courses: A Case Study of English-majored Students at Thu Dau Mot University

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Abstract

During the COVID-19 pandemic, blended learning (BL) has become the new normal for higher education. This study conducts a detailed review of the literature and benefits of BL in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, exploring the perceptions of English-majored students towards BL courses in English courses at Thu Dau Mot University and analyzing the negative attitudes towards BL from the learners' viewpoints. The respondents of this study are 165 undergraduate students majoring in English at Thu Dau Mot University's Faculty of Foreign Languages. The data are collected using a questionnaire to assess students' opinions and unfavorable attitudes towards BL in two principal domains. The writers use both statistical and content analyses to get a deeper comprehension of students' responses. The findings imply that students appreciate the convenience and flexibility of BL, which is more beneficial than one direction delivering knowledge as conventional learning or virtual learning. The results also indicate the improvement of students' English language abilities regarding BL mode in English courses. In the other domain, there are also unfavorable attitudes, mainly about cheating, a lack of interaction between lecturers and learners, and slow internet connection.

Introduction

When people all over the world are banding together to fight against COVID-19, the educational system in Vietnam is in the process of experiencing a huge transition. People involved in education are attempting to find a way to deal with this newly established scenario. As a part of this process, it has become essential to carry out social experiments to discover a new adaptation to the current education situation, which combines offline and online approaches to teaching and learning.

Vietnam's educational system must conform to official guidelines in light of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak. On the contrary, challenges may arise from integrating digital and in-person learning in the classroom. Blended learning, also known as hybrid learning, is a teaching method that combines face-to-face instruction with digital resources. BL is both a necessity and a tendency for teachers and students in Vietnam, especially in Thu Dau Mot City, as they adapt

to the new normal phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. This trend calls for the expansion of digital pedagogical media and tools, including online platforms and other digital resources.

Despite being campus-oriented, higher education institutions are attempting to integrate BL into conventional course delivery methods to better prepare both their students and the institution for the future trend in education. This is due to the fact that education is becoming an all-pervasive service that can be provided at any time and from any location via the global network (Bonk, 2009 & McCradie, 2003)

Support and evaluation of the process quality have been ongoing but have been limited to the viewpoints of the institution, the instructors, and the support services. In the case of Thu Dau Mot University's case, many complaint letters from English-majored students expressed their negative attitude towards BL. In line with the current situation, the writers carried out the research on students' viewpoints, assuming that it is crucial to constantly and thoroughly assess learner satisfaction to ensure BL's success, practicality, and profitability. Understanding students' feelings about the learning approach are essential to creating a thriving hybrid learning environment.

The purpose of this paper is to: 1) investigate perceptions and attitudes of English-majored students towards English coursed delivered by the BL approach and 2) identify the negative emotions of students towards BL approaches.

The significance of the study comes from the desire that the writers hope to help students and lecturers assess and improve the teaching-learning procedure effectively by recognizing students' perceptions and attitudes regarding BL. Learner satisfaction is defined as the number of students who have a favorable attitude toward the various advantages of BL settings. Following Willging and Johnson (2009), it is the most critical factor in deciding whether or not an online course is successful. As shown by Chang and Fisher (2003), ensuring that students are pleased with the experience is one of the most influential components of implementing a BL program since it is one of the most crucial features of hybrid learning. In accordance with a body of academic research, the degree to which students feel satisfied with their educational experiences has a substantial bearing on their desire to learn, their level of involvement in their coursework, as well as their level of overall productivity and academic achievement (Wickersham & McGee, 2008).

The combination of traditional and virtual teaching and learning is considered to bring many benefits. In Ghazizadeh and Fatemipour's (2017) view, the results indicate that BL can assist EFL students in enhancing their reading abilities. This is due to the fact that BL gives EFL students the opportunity to take advantage of English language instruction whenever and wherever it is most convenient for them, without having to sacrifice access to their teacher's guidance or time spent in a conventional classroom setting. In line with the results, there is a notable difference between the performance of students in conventional classrooms and those in mixed learning environments, with the latter having a more beneficial effect.

As claimed by Rahim (2019), the conclusions from his research indicate that a BL strategy that mixes online and conventional forms of instruction may be used to its full potential in improving EFL programs. To improve students' academic performance, it encourages EFL

students to adopt more effective language-learning strategies by giving them a platform for adaptable learning. Besides, it emphasized the usefulness of a combined approach to teaching EFL by demonstrating how its use improves students' abilities to communicate with one another and use the language. The study also revealed the perspectives of EFL students and educators on the BL strategy, extending support for its effective implementation.

Literature review

Definition of blended learning

A blended learning system is a hybrid approach to education that combines traditional classroom learning with online resources, as described by Bonk and Graham (2012). BL systems are a pedagogical approach that encourages students to study in an interactive and collaborative context, as well as at their own pace and in their own time.

As defined by Williams, Bland, and Christie (2008), BL combines in-person classroom teaching with online, asynchronous resources. Additionally, it is a method of education that enables students, teachers, and materials to be located in multiple places simultaneously. One of the main features of distributive learning is that it considers that each student has their own specific needs. As a result, the classroom has been designed to maximize students' preferred learning styles and environments.

Ju and Mei (2018) defined BL, in its broader context, as the process of mixing conventional in-class education with the use of digital tools, techniques, and content. In a blended course, students use online tools like virtual environments for learning and online classrooms to interact with their instructors and classmates, watch lectures, study assigned materials, submit questions, and finish their work. This allows students to have more time for class discussions, hands-on activities, and traditional lecture formats in more conventional classroom environments. Mixed learning, hybrid learning, and integrated learning are all terms that relate to the same pedagogical strategy. BL is any formal education program incorporating at least some online learning where the student has some control over their education's pace, schedule, and/or location. The classroom is not the only possible location for BL. Some of the pupils' instructional activities include using the Internet. Online learning resources and classes are a more radical departure from traditional classroom education than online courses.

According to a review of the relevant literature by Bliuc, Goodyear, and Ellis (2007), BL is defined as a mix of co-present and technologically-mediated interactions between students, instructors, and learning materials." This definition proposed by the authors is bridging the gap between the works of literature on BL and research on methodology. Garrison and Kanuka (2004) noted that the virtually unlimited designing and conducting of mixed methods and suitability to many contexts make defining BL challenging. They settled on an experiential focus, citing "integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences" as their definition. In other words, BL is mixing conventional classroom-based face-to-face instruction with online instruction in a virtual environment.

As specified by Pappas (2018), BL is an approach that combines traditional techniques of

language teaching and learning. In actuality, it is a combination of traditional face-to-face education with technological methodologies that, to provide vast quantities of online educational resources, benefits both instructors and students. Since the 1980s, BL has been extensively used by schools and universities as an additional component of education.

The term' blended learning' to Šafranj (2013) refers to the mixing of many educational environments. Depending on the statement's context, it may have a range of distinct meanings. Blended learning allows students and educators to take advantage of a possibly more productive setting. This kind of education may combine conventional in-person training with current computer-based learning.

Blended learning in English as a foreign language education

Blended learning as a platform is a demanding teaching and learning module for the modern classroom, which enhances learning at any time and place. Due to the limited time available during the school week, Ju and Mei (2018) argue that technology-based education methods enable lifelong education. In light of this, the BL approach allows English as a Second Language (ESL) educators to make the most of this window of opportunity by facilitating students' in-class and extracurricular language development.

Rahim (2019) stated that BL and the adaptable learning platform provide a demanding educational tool for the modern classroom. Due to the increasing demands put on education on a worldwide basis, it also has the potential to serve as a vital technique for learning a foreign language. Another benefit is the ability to use one's cognitive skills in a more natural context for practicing a language.

In Tosun's (2015) journal article, it is of great importance to language instructors throughout the globe since many modern universities are employing BL as an additional way of increasing students' competence in learning English. Therefore, there has been a lot of consideration about using a BL strategy to instruct students to acquire a second language.

Regarding the individual differences between learners and classroom instructions, Lightbown and Spada (2021) believe that teachers are in a position to assist students in developing a greater degree of flexibility in their methods for approaching the process of language acquisition by assisting students in expanding their repertoire of learning strategies. Utilizing a number of teaching materials, students have the chance to practice the language outside of the classroom. These assets include films, blogs, online forums, and digital resources.

As stated by Bielawska (2012), the use of BL in teaching and learning English is an effort to assist students in acquiring knowledge more expediently. Students may learn more contextually due to the use of BL in the English classroom. This is due to the fact that content found on the Internet may aid students in understanding how native speakers of the language use it in daily scenarios. Bielawska (2012) notes that the implementation of BL may improve students' test results, which shows an increase in learning English vocabulary.

Nowadays, students may benefit most from adopting a BL approach, in which they use both online and in-person resources while also receiving teacher assistance, as Throne (2003) suggested. Modern students may find success with a blended approach to higher education.

On the contrary, the inclusion of technology into English teaching and learning, as Rachman et al. (2021) continues to show a variety of shortcomings, each of which has the potential to impede teachers' attempts to give students a satisfactory and efficient education. In order to compensate for the limitations of either conventional classroom instruction or online teaching, several educational institutions are using hybrid teaching approaches that mix traditional classroom instruction with online learning.

Perceptions and attitudes of students toward blended learning

In the general education context

Following the research conducted by Ahmad (2008), students have an optimistic opinion of blended education. Consequently, using technology to motivate and inspire students to study, BL may be used as an alternative method in mathematics education. It is recommended that the materials be released online and that larger-scale research be done to confirm the encouraging results.

Miyazoe and Anderson (2010) used a blended approach to investigate the efficacy of three distinct online writing activities in the context of formal university education. For the purpose of this investigation, triangulation was accomplished using a combination of surveys, interviews, and text analysis. The results of the study showed that students had good impressions of the blended course format that included digital writing. Wikis were seen as the most effective form of online writing, followed by blogs and forums. The ability to differentiate between distinct kinds of English writing was shown through qualitative text analysis of forum and wiki writings.

The study by Zhu, Au, and Yates (2013) was to examine the factors that influence initial attitudes about online learning and subsequent changes in those views among a cohort of college students enrolled in a blended course. At the completion of the course, the students' opinions about online education were demonstrated to have greatly improved. Students who successfully finish the course may get a firmer grasp of the subject matter, acquire proficiency with a range of online learning tools, and be better equipped to apply their knowledge in the classroom. One of social psychology's most reliably replicated results is that mere exposure may alter people's perspectives for the better.

Studies conducted by Al-Shaer (2013) and Lin, Tseng, and Chiang (2016) showed similar conclusions that implementing the BL technique in the activities taking place in the classroom has a significant positive impact on the attitudes that students have toward this approach to education.

In the study of Maio and Haddock (2018), strong attitudes may influence performance, and positive attitudes toward learning can help with the optimal application of instructional practices. The attitude of students concerning online education is a crucial element of the learning environment afforded by web-based learning technology. What defines a person's attitude toward an attitude object is that person's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors with respect to the object.

Almasaeid (2014) discovered that instructing students in science via the use of a BL approach

had a positive impact not only on the student's attainment abilities but also on their attitudes. The study showed a high level of overall performance after the installation of the BL approach was completed, which was proven on the achievement test.

In the EFL context

A study was carried out by Banditvilai (2016) at an Asian institution to investigate the usage of combined learning to improve English abilities and the level of self-studying experienced by English language learners. This research aimed to investigate students' perspectives on BL in the context of English language instruction. In order to gather information for his study, the researcher relied on e-lessons, a questionnaire, and accomplishment exams. Following the results of the research, enhancing language abilities in language learners may be accomplished via an online instructional method coordinated with traditional classroom training. Additionally, it was shown that mixed learning might be used successfully to boost learners' independent understanding and motivation levels. The findings of the study indicate that BL is an important idea that can be used to attain educational objectives more effectively. The fact that learners may study and review the language whenever and wherever they wish, as Banditvilai pointed out, makes the BL method better for students attempting to acquire a language.

Liu (2013) investigated the efficacy of BL in an English composition class taught at a prestigious school in Beijing, China. The study aimed to investigate some facets of BL, including course organization, material delivery, student interaction, and teacher evaluation. Students valued the use of BL strategies due to their many benefits, which include encouraging students to take responsibility for their own education, fostering greater collaboration among classmates, reducing students' fear of public speaking, and enhancing students' ability to write effectively for academic purposes. Teacher observation and feedback indicated that students valued using BL strategies due to these benefits. Since BL involves in-person and online training for students of foreign languages, the author concluded that BL is more motivating and encouraging for EFL students.

Yoon and Lee (2010) analyzed how students felt about BL and its usefulness as an instructional procedure in an ESL writing class. The data suggests that students had a favorable opinion of the BL technique used in second-language writing courses. This kind of education is booming, inspirational, and engaging among most pupils. Students' writing skills improved due to exposure to BL methodologies. Using a mixed approach, the researchers discovered that students were more involved and that it aided in the development of essential abilities for learning a foreign language, such as independence, responsibility, and collaboration.

Zhang and Zhu (2018) found that students in BL environments scored more in English courses than in traditional settings. In particular, the researchers compared the efficacy of BL to conventional approaches used in China to teach English as a second language. Compared to students taught in a face-to-face setting, BL students demonstrated higher academic accomplishments in ESL classes. BL has a favorable effect on the learning outcomes of students.

Following Akbarov, Gönen, and Aydoan's (2018) findings, most EFL students choose BL over conventional English instruction since it increases their willingness to study, enhancing the

learning process. The data also indicated that the participants considered the utilization of BL contributed to their English proficiency level increasing. Therefore, the researchers conclude that BL is an effective learning mode that may be utilized to improve the teaching and learning process as well as students' attitudes in an EFL environment.

In a study about BL, Ja'ashan (2015) concludes one of the drawbacks of BL is that it requires a considerable amount of time to plan and carry out English courses using the BL approach. The instructors are required to apply two distinct pedagogical approaches and learning activities: face-to-face and online. In his conclusion, the participants reported that BL is more suitable than in-person instruction and increases students' desire to study, but the study also reflects the students' negative impressions in some points as a waste of time, easy cheating, and social isolation…etc.

On the other hand, several studies have revealed that students experience worry and perplexity while dealing with the BL model in English classes(Burgess, 2008; Baharun & Porter, 2009).

The studies cited above suggest that students learning a foreign language could benefit from a more integrated educational strategy. The majority of English language learners have a favorable impression of the BL approach when it is used to instruct them in the English language. These positive perspectives originate from a wide variety of sources, including encouraging children to engage in self-directed learning and strengthening their linguistic talents in both sociable and exciting settings.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the survey sought to answer the following research questions: (1) What are students' perceptions of blended learning for English courses?

(2) What are students' negative attitudes toward blended learning for English courses?

Methods

BL approach has been adopted and implemented at Thu Dau Mot University since 2015, but it has not been working effectively in the Faculty of Foreign Languages when it comes to complaints from English-majored students.

Participants

The study was conducted at Thu Dau Mot University, Faculty of Foreign Languages, English major. One hundred and sixty-five students majoring in English from a cohort of 500 first-year students, who enrolled in the second semester of the academic year 2021/2022, joined this study. All the participants have spent one semester experiencing the BL approach with different subjects, which is the first semester in the academic year 2021/2022.

Design of the Study

The research's emphasis is on students' perceptions and attitudes toward the usage of BL in English classes, and the mixed method is used to explore these attitudes. The mixed technique developed by Malik and Hamid (2014) has been modified to include both quantitative and

qualitative approaches to the data gathering and analysis processes. The research made use of a psychometric response scale called the Likert scale to determine whether respondents agreed or disagreed with a particular statement included in the questionnaire. The researchers will combine the Likert scale questionnaire, which was collected and evaluated objectively, with the usage of interviews, which were gathered and analyzed subjectively. The data received from the questionnaire may be validated with the use of an interview that is derived from Rachman (2015), Lee (1997), and Susikaran (2013). The use of interviews was also intended to achieve the goal of obtaining more information, which may also be obtained via the use of questionnaires (Harris & Brown, 2009).

The perspectives of students on BL are often studied using questionnaires, a typical kind of research instrument (Akkoyunlu & Soylu, 2008; Kember, McNaught, Chong, Lam & Cheng, 2010; Blankson & Kyei-Blankson, 2008). The questionnaires included statements based on a closed-ended Likert scale (quantitative data). The results of the questionnaire received a score of five on the Likert scale (Strongly Agree- Agree- Undecided- Disagree- Strongly Disagree). Two sets of questionnaires were developed after conducting an in-depth analysis of students' perceptions and their negative emotions toward English courses delivered by BL approaches, which are adapted from Ja'ashan's (2015) study, as follows:

- Items (1-10) allow for the identification of the perceptions held by the students on the BL for English courses.

- Items (11-21) highlight students' negative attitudes about BL in relation to the English courses they are enrolled in.

Interviews using a semi-structured format were used to acquire qualitative data for the qualitative approach. Three open-ended questions are provided to study students' perspectives on BL in English courses: 1) Do you prefer BL to one-way learning (face-to-face or online learning)? 2) What is the most favorable perception regarding BL, in your opinion? 3) Do you have any suggestions to improve the BL experience? Adapting from Ja'ashan's (2015) study, the semi-structured interview is employed because it supports the sets of questionnaires by its qualitative results and suggests more recommendations that improve BL courses in the future. The interview results will be utilized as supporting reasons for the questionnaire results. Thus they will be included in the findings/results section in response to the study questions.

Data collection

In order to gather data from students located in various regions, an online questionnaire in English only was employed, and students were given the option to administer it to themselves. It was suitable for the scope of the study since the project needed to be completed in a limited period of time (about four months) and by a research team member (with supervisor support).

Clarifications were provided to students who filled out the questionnaire; questionnaires were filled out during English classes at Thu Dau Mot University that used the BL technique for sophomores majoring in English and enrolled in BL classes. To arrive at a final result and draw appropriate conclusions, the findings of the questionnaire were analyzed using the SPSS software.

From Chisnall's (1997) viewpoint, the non-response is a significant limitation of a research study; therefore, to minimize a non-response rate, the researchers were available when disseminating to the sample, and the students filled out the online questionnaire. This was done in order to reduce the non-response rate.

After obtaining the sample's questionnaire data, the results were statistically analyzed using SPSS version 20; reliability analysis and mean and standard deviation estimates were included in the statistical analysis.

The researchers randomly selected five individuals from the pool of 165 respondents who had previously shared their opinions in the interview sections that used the English language only. Due to the fact that several participants who joined the interview sections had their own personal business and certain scheduling difficulties, they were each questioned separately regarding the three interview questions at a time that was convenient for them. The researchers assured the respondents that their responses would not be used in any way other than for the purpose of the study, and they made it very apparent that the data would not be used for any other reason. Additionally, to efficiently conduct the finding outcomes during the interview, the researchers recorded the meeting to examine it afterward with the participants' agreement. After completing the interview, the researchers re-listened to the audio, input the data into Microsoft Excel, and then began to analyze and contrast the various participants' comments.

Validity and reliability

The reliability of the questionnaire has been determined using Cronbach's Alpha. The value of this questionnaire uses the calculation tool named Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 20 (SPSS 20). The reliability value of the questionnaire employed in this research varied from .787 to .791, suggesting that the instrument for collecting data is very trustworthy and reliable. The figures can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The Cronbach's Alpha for Each Category of the Questionnaire

Categories	Cronbach's Alpha	No of items
1. Students' perceptions of blended learning	.787	10
2. Students' negative attitudes toward blended learning	.791	11

Several scientific processes are described as follows:

+ Prepare the study's instrument with the aid of prior research.

+ Freshmen registering for the second semester of 2021/2022 were gathered.

+ The online questionnaire was delivered to students during class time and afterward collected.

+ Questionnaire data were gathered and evaluated for accuracy and clarity.

+ SPSS 20 was used to analyze the questionnaire responses for the final result and findings.

Results and discussion

Results from the questionnaires

Results from the questionnaires are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2. Highlights students' perception of BL for English courses.

Statements	SDA N	%	D N	%	NS N	%	A N	%	SA N	%	Mean
1. The combination of online and conventional classroom learning is more successful than delivering knowledge in one direction only	12	7	24	15	24	15	51	31	54	33	3.67
2. Blended learning incorporates dynamic, hands-on exercises	12	7	30	18	57	35	45	27	21	13	3.20
3. Blended learning improves my English language abilities	9	5	18	11	48	29	54	33	36	22	3.55
4. Blended learning allows me to be more engaged in the learning process	9	5	30	18	48	29	66	40	12	7	3.25
5. Blended learning involves collaborative participation and effort	27	16	42	25	48	29	36	22	12	7	2.78
6. Blended learning allows me to organize my study time effectively	15	9	30	18	36	22	54	33	30	18	3.33
7. Blended learning triggers my autonomous learning	15	9	30	18	45	27	57	35	18	11	3.20
8. Blended learning helps me more accessible to understand the materials	15	9	27	16	54	33	48	29	21	13	3.20
9. I can be motivated in English blended learning	21	13	27	16	42	25	51	31	24	15	3.18
10. I have fun and enjoy learning both online and offline	2	15	6	4	39	24	51	31	45	27	3.53

Question 1: 18 (33%) of the respondent marked (strongly agree) that combining online and traditional classroom learning works better than giving information in only one direction. Besides, some of them, around 17 (31%), agreed with the statement, but the percentages of those who were unsure and those who disagreed were equal at 8 (15%). With the descriptive statistics, the mean of this item was 3.67, which accounted for the highest one in the domain of students' perceptions of BL.

Question 2: The respondents of 15 (27%) agreed that BL includes active and hands-on exercises, and others (13%) strongly agreed with the statement. The majority of respondents, 19 (35%), were undecided, while 4 (7%) chose strongly disagree. The mean is (3.20) of BL incorporates practical, real-world experiences.

Question 3: The respondents 16 (29%) were undecided that their English language skills are enhanced via BL. Some respondents, 18 (33%), strongly agreed, while the minority of respondents, 3 (5%), strongly disagreed with the statement. The total mean of this item is (3.55) of students' English language skills benefit from BL, which ranked second highest.

Question 4: Almost half of the respondents, 22 (40%), agreed with the opinion that BL increases student engagement in the learning process, while a small percentage of 4 (7%) respondents strongly agreed with that. Furthermore, several respondents, 10 (18%), disagreed, but 16 (29%) of others were undecided about the statement. The mean of this item is (3.25).

Question 5: The highest percentage of the strongly disagree section in the domain of students' perceptions of BL is 9 (16%) of the opinion that BL requires joint effort and engagement. Some respondents, 14 (25%), reported disagreeing, whereas others, 12 (22%), did agree with the statement. The total mean of this item BL requires group work and participation is (2.78), which is the least significant.

Question 6: One-third of the respondents, 18 (33%), agreed with the view that BL helps students make good use of their study time, while some 10 (18%) disagreed with that. Additionally, 12 (22%) of the respondents were undecided. The mean of this item is (3.33)

Question 7: The statistics of those who strongly agreed and agreed with the statement that BL stimulates my independent study were 6 (11%) and 19 (35%), respectively. By contrast, the percentages of those who strongly disagreed and disagreed with the statement were 5 (9%) and 10 (18%) in that sequence. The total mean of this item is (3.20), which is the same as the item that BL incorporates dynamic, hands-on exercises

Question 8: In the view that BL makes it easier for students to comprehend the subject, one-third of respondents, 18 (33%), were undecided. Some of the respondents, 7 (13%), chose the strongly agree section, whereas others, 5 (9%), marked the strongly disagree one. The mean of this item that BL makes materials more accessible is (3.20), which shares the same value as the other two items that are in questions 2 and 7.

Question 9: In terms of that motivation for English-language BL is within students' reach, the proportions of those who strongly agreed and agreed with the above statement were 8 (15%) and 17 (31%) in that order, while the percentages of those who strongly disagreed and disagreed with the view were 7 (13%) and 9 (16%) respectively. The total mean of this item is (3.18)

Question 10: The highest proportion of the strongly agree section in the domain of students' perceptions of BL is 15 (27%) of the statement that both online and offline, students do have fun and enjoy learning, whereas the mildest ratio of the disagree option in the same domain is 2 (4%) of the same view. 13 (24%) of the respondents were undecided. The mean of this section is (3.53) of the view that students like learning both in-person and online.

Table 3. Highlights students' negative attitudes about BL in relation to the English courses.

Statements	SDA N	%	D N	%	NS N	%	A N	%	SA N	%	Mean
11. Blended learning is challenged by the frustratingly slow internet access	3	2	18	11	54	33	60	36	30	18	3.58
12. I do not have an appropriate study space	18	11	39	24	60	36	45	27	3	2	2.85
13. A lack of learning facilities is an issue with blended learning (online learning devices are not guaranteed)	9	5	15	9	60	36	69	42	12	7	3.36
14. Lecturers have little/no interaction with students	9	5	24	15	39	24	54	33	39	24	3.55
15. Blended learning increases my demand for in-person encounters	18	11	36	22	63	38	42	25	6	4	2.89
16. Students' abilities to use information technology means and equipment are still inadequate	6	4	30	18	54	33	54	33	21	13	3.33
17. Blended learning may lead to cheating and other unethical behaviors among students	3	2	6	4	36	22	60	36	60	36	4.02
18. Blended learning materials lack organization	12	7	15	9	60	36	54	33	24	15	3.38
19. Students are frustrated and lack enthusiasm for blended learning	12	7	30	18	72	44	42	25	9	5	3.04
20. Less is learned in blended learning classes than in traditional classrooms	21	13	33	20	81	49	24	15	6	4	2.76
21. Blended learning makes me socially isolated	24	15	36	22	57	35	30	18	18	11	2.89

Question 11: In the view that BL is affected by infuriatingly sluggish internet connectivity, the figures of respondents who agreed and disagreed with the view were 20 (36%) and 6 (11%), respectively. Only 1 (2%) respondent strongly disagreed, whereas the other 10 (18%) respondents strongly agreed with the opinion. The total mean of this item is (3.58), which is considered the second highest.

Question 12: 1 (2%) of the respondents strongly agreed, while 6 (11%) strongly disagreed with the statement that students don't have a suitable study area. The majority of respondents, 20

(36%), were undecided. (2.85) is the total mean of this section.

Question 13: Regarding the domain of students' perceptions of BL, the most remarkable statistic in the agree section is 23 (42%) of the view that a shortage of learning resources is a problem with BL (online learning devices are not guaranteed). Furthermore, some respondents, 20 (36%), were undecided about the statement. The mean of this section is (3.36).

Question 14: In the opinion that instructors have little or no engagement with learners, the proportion of respondents who strongly agreed and were undecided about the view shared the same value at 13 (24%), while the majority of respondents, 18 (33%), agreed with the view. (3.55) is this item's total mean, which is also one of the highest.

Question 15: In the statement that BL boosts students' desire for face-to-face interactions, the percentage of respondents who disagreed was twice as noticeable as that of those who strongly disagreed, with 12 (22%) and 6 (11%) in that sequence. Besides, a small number of respondents, 2 (4%), strongly agreed with the view, while a large number of others, 21 (38%), were undecided. The mean of this section is (2.89).

Question 16: The data of respondents who were undecided and who agreed were equal at 18 (33%) in the opinion that students' ability to utilize information technology methods and equipment is still insufficient. Some respondents, 7 (13%), strongly agreed, whereas others, 2 (4%), strongly disagreed with the statement. (3.33) is the total mean of this item.

Question 17: In the statement that BL may lead to unethical conduct and dishonesty among learners, the ratios of respondents who strongly agreed and agreed shared the same value at 20 (36%). 1 (2%) and 2 (4%) of respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed with the view in that order. The total mean of this section is (4.02) which is the greatest in the domain of students' perceptions of BL.

Question 18: In terms of materials for BL lack organization, the percentages of respondents who strongly agreed and agreed with the term were 8 (15%) and 18 (33%) in that sequence, while the proportions of those who strongly disagreed and disagreed were 4 (7%) and 5 (9%) in that order. (3.38) is the mean of this section.

Question 19: Some of the respondents, 14 (25%), agreed, but other respondents, 10 (18%), disagreed with the opinion that Students are dissatisfied with BL and lack motivation for it. Almost half of the respondents, 24 (44%), were undecided. (3.04) is the total mean of this item.

Question 20: Around half of the respondents, 27 (49%), were undecided about the view that BL courses teach less than regular classrooms. The proportion of respondents who strongly agreed and who agreed were 2 (4%) and 8 (15%), respectively, while the ratios of those who strongly disagreed and who disagreed were 7 (13%) and 11 (20%) in that sequence. The total mean of this item is (2.76), which is the most minimal in the domain of students' perceptions of BL.

Question 21: The responses in the strongly agree and agree sections accounted for 6 (11%) and 10 (18%), respectively, of the statement that BL isolates students socially, while the responses in the strongly disagree and disagree items occupied 8 (15%) and 12 (22%) in that order. The other respondents, 19 (35%), were undecided. The mean of this section is (2.89), which is equal to the mean of the view that BL increases my demand for in-person encounters.

Results from the interviews

The majority of participants in the interview to the first question, *Do you prefer BL to one-way learning (face-to-face or online learning)*, answered that they do prefer BL due to several reasons, as follows: "I have more time for studying and reading materials. Besides, it allows me not to go out much due to the widespread COVID-19 pandemic", and "BL helps me not to spend lots of money on transportation, and I can do more self-learning at home." In spite of that, only one student reported that "I like traditional learning because I do not feel motivated and I love to interact with other learners as well as lectures directly… I feel isolated somehow when it comes to combining these learning styles."

All interview results in the second question, *What is the most favorable perception regarding BL in your opinion*, were about the improvement of students' English proficiency in BL.

The last interview question, *Do you have any suggestions to improve the BL experience*, was asked of the interview participants. The qualitative results, however, include more fascinating recommendations. Responses to the idea that "I want the university to develop training sessions on utilizing virtual applications on computers before every BL course, so that I may learn how to utilize the online platform efficiently, which might be of great advantage to my studies." The provision of personal computers to the students was another option endorsed by a minority of respondents.

Discussion of results

In Table 2, the vast majority of respondents had a favorable opinion of BL when it comes to English courses. These findings demonstrate that the students are pleased with BL since it helped them develop their English language skills and assisted them in improving their English abilities. This lends credence to the results of a number of studies that discovered that students had favorable views about online teaching and learning. This is consistent with the findings of other earlier investigations, including Mohammed (2015), Aliweh (2011), Adas & Wafa (2011), Bendania (2011), Akkoyunlu & Soylu (2006), Tran & Nguyen (2022) and Dennis (2013). In contrast, there are some students who have presented their views as being opposed to the matter regarding collaborative participation and effort in BL. It can be explained that students and instructors may experience significant disruptions due to the implementation of distance learning. The incorporation of peer interaction into distance learning confronts both groups with an additional challenge, following Jacobs & Ivone (2020) and Miyashita (2021). One of the goals of BL is to offer learners chances for collaborative learning, which is believed to be a practical teaching approach in traditional classroom settings. Nevertheless, for some educators, a new problem arises when they are tasked with fostering peer contact as part of distance education.

Table 3 reveals that some students have adverse attitudes about BL when it comes to English classes, which come from the students themselves. The majority of the negative expressions of BL, in line with the responses of the participants, are statements of a lack of interaction between instructors and students, cheating or engagement in other unethical practices, and sluggish internet access. In accordance with the results of Taghizadeh and Hajhosseini (2020), the most

prevalent interaction pattern in BL classes was between students and teachers. This may be because the instructor answered all of the students' online queries and concerns, offered a timely and effective reply to their comments, and talked with them regarding course material through email, social networks, and in-person sessions. In line with the view that students' abilities to use information technology means and equipment are still inadequate, there is a lack of learning facilities, knowledge isn't any less than face-to-face knowledge, students are frustrated and lack enthusiasm, and these are the negative points that respondents are still primarily concerned about. Students' incapacity to employ information technology methods and equipment, a dearth of learning facilities, a lack of Internet connection, and a lack of competence to use information technology tools were recognized as the second most critical barriers in this study. These variables are related to the innate predisposition and desire of students to employ books rather than technology. Students are confused as to whether these limits provide a barrier or prohibit them from actively engaging in the usage of technology for educational reasons. This conclusion is consistent with what Alhawiti (2011) uncovered in his study when he concluded that low technological skills and infrastructure are the primary impediments that inhibit faculty members from embracing online education, and that does not even include the students. The findings also indicate that not having an appropriate study space is still a partial main problem in students' unfavorable attitudes. In line with the findings of Barrot, Llenares & Del Rosario (2021), the most difficult obstacle for students to overcome is the learning environment, specifically the distractions that they face at home (such as noise) and the restrictions that are placed on the amount of available learning space and facilities. In line with these findings, it seems that the difficulties associated with online education during the pandemic are distinct from the regular difficulties students had while participating in online education before the epidemic.

In the first interview question, Mohammad (2019) found that one of the challenges that BL faces is a lack of cooperation from students in order to finish a job that is based on the curriculum and uses the BL method, which indicates that learners must contend with the misunderstanding of their peers in order to finish an assignment. Following Vonderwell (2003) and Hoang et al. (2021), participants in online learning expressed a lack of connection with the instructor, particularly a "one-on-one" interaction with the teacher. In agreement with Yi and Cornelius (2004), learners who have participated in BL have indicated that a number of shortcomings, including an absence of a sense of online community and feelings of isolation, marred their experiences.

To explain why all interviews responded that BL improves students' English proficiency in the second interview question, in support of Banditvilai's (2016) assertion that BL may increase students' language abilities, the students who participated in the interview claimed that they might maximize their linguistic competency from their self-study activities by using online learning. This is due to the fact that offline classes often offer students with limited opportunities to practice their language skills, but the combination of offline and online classes typically provides students with more time to study on their own in order to improve their language skills.

In response to the third interview question, to maximize productivity and minimize wasted time throughout the educational process, it is essential that students attend computer classes to learn

how to utilize and operate programs like Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Even though the application of BL represents a much more significant change in basic technique than simply adding computers to classrooms, self-learning, understanding, and engagement can be enhanced through the implementation of BL. From the view of Beetham (2013), the use of technology allows for the efficient management of the teaching and learning of a foreign language.

Conclusion and recommendations

As has been presented earlier, the blended learning approach, which is a combination of online and conventional techniques, is a method that has the potential to be successfully implemented for the advancement of EFL education. It offers a flexible learning environment, encourages learners of EFL to engage in genuine language learning methods, and ultimately results in improved academic performance.

The results show that BL, which combines online class learning with traditional in-class learning, is more effective than using the traditional learning process. BL combines online class learning with conventional in-class learning. Additionally, it demonstrates that in BL, the information is obtained from more than one input. The results of this study also indicate that students admire BL due to the fact that it enhances their command of the English language and enables them to learn English in a more dynamic, effective, and exciting manner. The enjoyment of students in learning online and offline is expressed in the results.

The results also show that the students' unfavorable attitudes toward BL were principally cheating and other unethical behaviors among students. The findings demonstrated that the majority of students understood that examinations are designed to assess knowledge and that utilizing external resources while taking an online exam would be unethical. However, students believed that accessing external resources to do schoolwork outside of tests was permissible and ethical, which would be unfair to students who did not cheat, resulting in student dissatisfaction with BL. It was discovered that teacher-student disconnection or lack of engagement is one of the primary factors that affect the whole teaching and learning experience and ultimately determine the success or failure of the BL approach. In order to boost the use of online and offline channels by students and instructors, it is necessary to raise awareness and place emphasis on convenience and accessibility. In excess of that, internet connectivity and a lack of ability to use information technology are also significant problems. Since students' lack of technical abilities was the first obstacle to success from their viewpoint, this result is extremely important and should be carefully taken by institutions before and throughout the introduction of technology to EFL students. This conclusion should be considered by Thu Dau Mot University and other institutions before and during the introduction of technology to EFL students if they want EFL students to embrace technology in their education.

It is crucial to recognize that BL is still in its development at Thu Dau Mot University, especially in the faculty of foreign languages. It demands more study and advancement that addresses forms of BL from several perspectives, such as adequate infrastructure and training of teachers and students in successful instructional abilities.

The writers suggest resolving students' technical issues by having an online technician team support them, designing more appropriate training courses for students regarding the online software or learning platform used in English BL, and facilitating more structured group communication and collaboration via grouping and discussion forums capabilities such as Moodle, Edmodo, Google Classroom, and Canvas, etc., all of which should be translated into an action plan and a road map in order to increase the practicality of employing BL to generate supportive learning opportunities for language learners.

Irrespective of its contributions, limitations in this study can be listed as follows: 1) The study was conducted in only one semester in an academic year, 2) The study only focused on English-majored students, 3) Though the results are valid, they cannot be generalized to other institutions, 4) The study used an online questionnaire form which is limited in nature by the accuracy of the participant's response.

Towards these limitations mentioned above, future research in this field should: 1) spend at least one academic year to conduct similar research, 2) examine other different departments in the institution regarding students' perceptions and attitudes towards BL; 3) investigate distinct cases in the institution to make results more valid and reliable, 4) conduct a paper-based questionnaire for participants with researchers' observation to ensure the accuracy of responses.

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