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# Using Blended Learning in the EFL Classroom During the Covid-19 Pandemic in Indonesia: A Narrative Inquiry

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**Abstract.** With the rapid development of information and communication technologies, some learning platforms have been used in the educational setting, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. This paper reports on blended learning or online and face-to-face learning practices viewed from lecturers and students' perspectives at an Indonesian higher education institution. To capture the participants' experiences, a narrative inquiry approach was adopted to the scope of blended learning in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. In gathering the data, narrative interviews were used with four lecturers and four students. The findings reveal that the EFL lecturers used various online learning platforms in blended learning classes. Furthermore, both the EFL lecturers and students provided positive responses regarding blended learning. However, challenges were highlighted in the process of its implementation. These challenges include limited time allocation, poor internet connection, and students' self-study unawareness. This paper highlights the need to reschedule proper time allocation, design the best teaching methods and materials in blended learning, provide the best internet connection, and encourage student motivation in blended learning.

**Keywords:** blended learning; Covid-19; EFL classroom; Indonesian higher education; narrative inquiry

## 1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic changed the way educational fields operate throughout the world, including in Indonesia. Data have shown that around 91,3% of students globally or 1.5 billion were not able to go to school because of the Covid-19 outbreak as of 17 April 2020 (UNESCO, 2020). To combat Covid-19, the

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Indonesian Government adopted distance learning. Nadiem Makarim, the Indonesian Minister of Education, explained in Letter No.4/2020 that during the Covid-19 pandemic, educational institutions in Indonesia were supposed to conduct learning from home through online learning and to collaborate with local governments to implement it simultaneously (Makarim, 2020). As a result, in the Indonesian context, teachers should change their full face-to-face learning mode into blended learning (Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2021). Consequently, online learning is used in teaching and learning and relies on technology and the internet (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). In this sense, online learning platforms, including Google Meet, Zoom, Edmodo, Google Classroom, and others, were used to teach English in blended learning classes.

In this crisis, a policy of implementing face-to-face learning for green zone schools and universities (areas with no cases of Covid-19) was made by the Indonesian Government. In dealing with the policy of implementing face-to-face learning in the higher education context, several requirements should be fulfilled by universities in terms of preparation, implementation, and face-to-face learning monitoring and evaluation (Indonesia. Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020). Amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, blended learning (online and face-to-face learning) was the best method to apply for the sake of meeting students' needs in education. Blended learning is described as the combination of face-to-face learning in the classroom and online learning (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Nanclares & Rodríguez, 2015). Even though the introduction of blended learning gave rise to many challenges in some countries, it is still regarded as the best learning approach (Kintu et al., 2017). Moreover, it provides a better learning atmosphere (Dziuban et al., 2018). Importantly, blended learning is considerably effective since it offers both face-to-face and online learning both for lecturers and students, particularly amidst the Covid-19 pandemic considering that they can access technology and solve the problems in line with the technology by themselves.

A number of studies in line with blended learning have been undertaken. For instance, a study conducted by Mendieta and Barkhuizen (2020) investigated blended learning from teachers' point of view, revealing that blended learning is a complicated matter due to a number of factors influencing teachers' practice. Similarly, narrative inquiry was done by other scholars viewed from the teachers' perspective, mainly investigating numerous ways in shaping the curriculum-making in higher education (Farani, 2021; Kükner & Orr, 2013; Xiaoxiao, 2020). Yet other scholars investigated narrative inquiry with emphasis on the experience of blended learning before the Covid-19 pandemic from students' point of view (Andujar & Nadif, 2020; Bueno-Alastuey & López Pérez, 2014). The chance of creating cooperation between facilitators and other universities has increased to create a fruitful understanding, especially in challenges during the Covid-19 crisis concerning online teaching (Hashemi, 2021). In addition, such collaborations between the peer contributor and universities will offer opportunities especially for flexible and effective online teaching (Dhawan, 2020).

These collaborations show that blended learning was used by educators in some countries before the Covid-19 outbreak and was mostly used in education sectors. Many researchers have focused on the study of blended learning from one point of view. However, there has been limited research on blended learning viewed from multiple perspectives. Therefore, this study investigated teaching and learning experiences viewed from two perspectives, particularly English lecturers and students of an English Language Department at one Indonesian university, in implementing blended learning using narrative inquiry. Therefore, this paper aims to report on the experiences of teaching and learning among English language lecturers and students, especially their views and challenges regarding blended learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **2. Method**

The present study explored the experiences and challenges of lecturers and students in implementing blended learning in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom in the higher education Indonesian context during the Covid-19 outbreak. Using qualitative methodology, the narrative inquiry approach was adopted in this study. In this sense, the narrative study emphasizes exploring participants' perspectives and gathering data from participants' stories and experiences (Ford, 2020). Narrative inquiry was regarded as the best approach for this study, since it investigates human experiences through narrative interviews, photovoice, biography, and other narrative methods (Siriboe & Harfitt, 2018). Finally, the narrative inquiry approach was used to provide sufficient data related to views of lecturers and students about blended learning practices in English teaching amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **2.1 Study Sample and Participants**

The study used purposive sampling involving four English language lecturers and four students participating in blended learning during the Covid-19 pandemic in the EFL classroom at an Indonesian higher education institution. In this paper, pseudonyms are used to identify participants in order to maintain confidentiality.

#### *2.1.1 Gender*

In more details, of the four English language lecturers who participated, two were male (categorized as L1 and L2) and two were female (L3 and L4). The four English language lecturers were selected due to their openness and availability in sharing their teaching experience using blended learning. Furthermore, of the four students who participated, two were male (S1 and S2) and two were female (S3 and S4). These students were selected because of their openness and willingness to participate and provide data. In addition, they represented the data from four EFL classes.

#### *2.1.2 Age*

S1 and S2 were 18 years old, while S3 and S4 were 19 years old. Meanwhile, L1 and L2 were around 32 years old, L3 was 34 years old and L4 was 42 years old.

### 2.1.3 Lecturers' teaching experience

In terms of teaching experience, L1 and L2 had teaching experience in English language of about six years. Meanwhile, L3 and L4 had teaching experience in English language of 10 years.

## 2.2 Research Instruments

We employed semi-structured interviews to garner the data. Using semi-structured interviews, we could obtain in-depth information from participants through their open-ended responses. An interview guide questionnaire was used as instrument in the study for the purpose of listing some information associated with the data collection. In addition, the guide provided an outline for the interviews in the form of lists of questions used during the interviews. We made lists of questions and points in line with the study of the narrative inquiry about the participants' narratives of using blended learning in the EFL classroom. These included what online platforms they used, the management of teaching schedules, and teaching materials. In addition, their views and challenges regarding blended learning practices were explored.

## 2.3 Data Collection Procedure

Data were gathered from 15 to 18 December 2021. Furthermore, additional data were gathered on 2 March 2023. The confidentiality of the participants was maintained during the interview process. Regarding data collection, we firstly conducted interviews on campus regarding lecturers' experiences in teaching English using blended learning. Furthermore, we described the main purpose of this study and interviewed the lecturers and students. Additionally, the students were interviewed regarding their experiences of blended learning practices and its challenges. Finally, we asked for further information via WhatsApp when unclear information was found from the interviews. For the process of interviewing the participants, author 1 interviewed L1, L2, S1, and S2. Meanwhile, author 2 interviewed L3, L4, S3, and S4. The length of the interviews was about 45 minutes for each participant.

## 2.4 Data Analysis

The study adopted a narrative inquiry approach to obtain relevant and sufficient data of the blended learning implementation in the EFL classroom during the Covid-19 pandemic by engaging the stories and experiences of lecturers and students. Some steps were taken in conducting the narrative approach in this study. The first involved determining the topics to be explored; the second, choosing the participants of the study, and the third, listening to the experiences and stories of the participants. The fourth step involved retelling the experiences of the participants; the fifth, building cooperation with the participants; the sixth, writing the narratives about the participants' experiences; and the seventh, validating the accuracy of the study (Creswell, 2012).

The information shared by the participants during the interviews was transcribed. In conducting a deeper analysis, the transcriptions of the interview data were read several times to obtain the main data. In analyzing the data, specific procedures were used, such as transcribing in proper format to obtain insights from the participants' narratives, interpreting statements of participants, and building

interaction with the participants to ensure the credibility of data by probing some feedback regarding the interview results (Widodo, 2014).

Since narrative inquiry is relational in nature, we asked the participants to review the obtained data. Furthermore, we asked them to add and clarify some information. Thus, we further analyzed the stories of the participants by reading the transcripts carefully. Through a thorough analysis of the data and some reflections, some key themes were developed in this study, as are displayed in the findings section. To maintain the validity of the data, we used source triangulation by comparing experiences, narratives, and information from the lecturers and students in the implementation of blended learning in the EFL classroom.

### 3. Findings

Narrative threads were used to describe the findings of the study. The narrative threads elaborate how participants in this study reported their experiences and understanding on the implementation of blended learning in the EFL setting and its challenges. Furthermore, the threads provide opportunity to comprehend the stories and experiences of the participants in accordance with the teaching method, teaching media, and material design.

#### 3.1 Thread 1: Lecturers' experiences in implementing blended learning in the EFL classroom

The Indonesian government officially implemented blended learning in July 2020. The policy of allowing teaching and learning practices in offline learning in educational settings was announced by the government for green zone places. Nevertheless, the health protocols were to be taken into account for the sake of safety. In this regard, educational institutions have applied blended learning combining offline and online learning. In this sense, L1, L2, L3, and L4 gave their opinions regarding the practices of blended learning in the EFL classroom.

*"In fact, I have already been familiar with blended learning before the pandemic. However, I started using it mostly during the Covid-19 pandemic in teaching English. Regarding the process of blended learning implementation, I divided my classes into offline learning and online learning. In online learning, I used synchronous instruction, including Google Meet, Zoom. I also used asynchronous instruction, like WhatsApp, YouTube, video, and so on. For me, teaching English using blended learning is better than full online class. English courses like reading, writing, listening, and speaking need more practices and feedback in offline learning. Therefore, blended learning can be considered as the best method in teaching English in this Covid-19 outbreak." (L1)*

The above narrative of L1 shows that he had actually already known the blended learning concept well and used it before the pandemic in the EFL classroom. Furthermore, he practiced a combination of asynchronous and synchronous learning. In more detail, he managed the EFL classroom using both offline and online learning. L1 responded positively regarding blended learning practices in the EFL classroom. In this regard, blended learning could be regarded as one of the best learning methods amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. In promoting successful blended learning, L1 made use of technology and online learning

platforms, including Zoom, Google Meet, and YouTube. He also added that feedback of EFL courses, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking, were provided completely in offline classes.

*“I sometimes applied blended learning in EFL classroom before the pandemic. In fact, I started to apply blended learning regularly since there is a policy from campus to use blended learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. I provided English materials, particularly reading subject in online learning, and gave additional feedback and evaluation in face-to-face learning. The combination between offline and online class can be the best method in teaching English. When the students have not understood well about the materials I gave in online class, I can reexplain it in offline class as a feedback and evaluation. In line with the technology utilization, I used various learning platforms, including Zoom, Google Meet, YouTube, English videos, Edmodo and so on.” (L2)*

L2 had been using blended learning in the EFL classroom before the pandemic. However, he adopted blended learning in an EFL setting regularly since there was a policy from his university stipulating thus, particularly during the Covid-19 outbreak. For instance, in teaching reading, he asked the students to find literature, including novels, English stories, news, and so on, in online classes. Then, he provided feedback and discussion in detail through offline classes. Dealing with the schedule of blended learning in an EFL classroom, L2 argued that the university allocated limited time of 60 minutes only in blended learning during the Covid-19 outbreak. In terms of technology usage, L2 also used YouTube as medium to upload his learning videos, WhatsApp to establish communication with his students, and Google Meet. In addition, he used learning platforms designed by the university.

*“I used blended learning before the pandemic. Meanwhile, it was advised to use it by the university in July 2020. This is in line with the policy of the campus. I gave the English course in the form of videos and PowerPoint through WhatsApp. I provided explanations and discussion in offline class. This blended learning could be applied well in my EFL classroom. In my view, blended learning could be used to teach English amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. In online class, students tend to be more passive when I ask them, while in offline learning, they are more active. Therefore, I used both online and offline learning or blended learning to promote English. Regarding the learning platforms usage, I used Google Meet in my synchronous classes and WhatsApp for my asynchronous classes.” (L3)*

*“I used blended learning in my writing class. I rarely used the blended learning before the pandemic. In the process of implementation, I used online and face-to-face learning. In online learning, I utilized both synchronous learning platforms, such as Zoom and Google Meet, and asynchronous learning platforms, like WhatsApp. In addition, I usually provide writing materials, task, and discussion. Meanwhile, in offline learning, I provide feedback toward the students’ work and discuss some questions raised by the students.” (L4)*

L3 started using blended learning in the EFL classroom since there is a university policy for its use. This may be different from L1 and L2, who somehow adopted blended learning before the Covid-19 pandemic. L3 explained that blended learning could be an alternative method in English courses. She used videos and PowerPoint and WhatsApp for asynchronous instruction and Google Meet for synchronous instruction in online classes. Then, she provided explanations and discussion in offline classes.

Likewise, L4 implemented blended learning in the writing course during the Covid-19 pandemic. Similar to L3, L4 used both synchronous and asynchronous learning platforms in online meetings, including Zoom, Google Meet, and WhatsApp. This seems different, however, from L1 and L2's explanation, who used various online learning platforms through their innovation in technology use.

Interestingly, students are supported to have better motivation in studying English by themselves in blended learning. Likewise, the English lecturers are motivated to improve their teaching professional development by taking part in some trainings of technology use, workshops, and seminars in accordance with English materials. In short, from the lecturers' experiences, it can be deduced that the role and the awareness of both lecturers and students are greatly needed to create a successful blended learning in the EFL classroom. Furthermore, the combination of face-to-face and online learning was preferred by lecturers and students, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **3.2 Thread 2: Lecturers' challenges in implementing blended learning in the EFL classroom**

Although blended learning was regarded as a proper method in the EFL classroom amidst the Covid-19 outbreak, various challenges were encountered by both the English lecturers and students in its implementation. For instance, regarding the challenges of online meeting, some students are less active in the learning process. It is different from asynchronous meetings, in which the lecturers can monitor and involve the students' participation in the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, the time schedule for blended learning may also be one of the challenges in the EFL classroom, since the time duration in online and offline learning was limited during the Covid-19 pandemic. Other challenges include poor internet connection encountered by the students, particularly those living in rural areas. Moreover, some students have lack of motivation awareness in online meetings.

*"I lacked time in delivering English materials in blended learning since the teaching duration was limited by the university during the pandemic. Moreover, poor internet problem became the main barrier in online class."*

(L1)

L1 pinpointed that he lacked time explaining materials in his synchronous class since the campus limited the time allocation to one hour during the pandemic. This is different from the time allocation of the English class before the pandemic, which was more than one hour (one and a half hours), providing more time for the lecturer in explaining the materials for each meeting. More importantly, the

lecturers need to be prepared for conducting online classes, including checking the internet connection, teaching media, and English materials to meet students' needs. Moreover, some students have different self-awareness in following the process of teaching and learning activities.

*"I had challenges in teaching grammar, since some of the students had low motivation and poor internet connection. In this matter, I have a solution to teaching grammar to attract the students' interest in my class. I tried to incorporate reading skills and grammar by asking them to find English stories and literature. Then, we discuss grammar from the text and literature that the students accessed."* (L2)

L2 had challenges in teaching grammar, particularly in online classes. He found that some students had low motivation in learning grammar. Moreover, an unstable internet connection has become the main challenge in online classes. Therefore, he had a strategy in teaching grammar to enhance students' motivation by incorporating it with reading skills using literature, English text, stories, and so on. In the online class, he gave several topics of reading for the students. Then, in the offline class, he explained and discussed matters related to grammar.

*"In online meeting, students sometimes lost their internet connection so they cannot join it fully. Another challenge is I feel doubt whether or not the students watched the YouTube containing videos of English materials in online class. Additionally, some of them (five students) seem passive when they are in online class."* (L3)

L3 had challenges in implementing blended learning in the EFL classroom. Some students lost their internet connection, hindering their learning activities. In fact, some students were from different cities, which may have affected the stability of the internet connection, particularly for those living in remote rural areas. Moreover, she found that five students seemed passive in the online classes. Meanwhile, most students joined the online learning. Therefore, offline learning is still needed as a way of providing reinforcement and feedback. Some English language skills, such as writing and speaking, needed corrective feedback and evaluation from the lecturers considering these skills are surely categorized as productive skills.

Similar to L1, L2, and L3, L4 reported challenges in practicing blended learning in the EFL classroom, particularly in the writing course, as depicted below:

*"In my writing class, I have challenges in asynchronous online learning in which I cannot monitor my students' involvement during the teaching-learning process. I usually send writing materials to students via WhatsApp and ask them to do task of writing. However, I can foster students' motivation and monitor their participation in synchronous online learning using Zoom or Google Meet."*

### **3.3 Thread 3: Students' experiences in implementing blended learning in the EFL classroom**

Based on the students' narratives, all English language lecturers used blended learning in teaching English amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. The implementation



of blended learning received positive responses from the participating students, as evidenced in the following excerpts:

*"In my opinion, the method of blended learning consists of asynchronous and synchronous learning. Actually, I am familiar with this kind of learning model. However, my lecturers started using it since the Covid-19 pandemic. The lecturers used a variety of learning platforms, such as Zoom and Google Meet, for synchronous learning, and videos, YouTube, WhatsApp, PowerPoint for asynchronous learning. They also had face-to-face learning to provide feedback and evaluation of students' work. Therefore, I think blended learning could be regarded as the best method at this time. In addition, I think Google Meet is considerably more efficient and effective for the online meeting." (S1)*

*"... my lecturers have their own management in using blended learning. They used various learning platforms, like Google Meet, Zoom, videos, YouTube, Edmodo, PowerPoint, and so on. I think blended learning offers us to study in flexible ways. We can study everywhere as long as we have internet connection. In online learning, the lecturer presented English materials such as listening by asking us to listen to English movie. Then, he asked us to answer the questions related to the topics in English movies. In addition, in face-to-face learning, the lecturer provided feedback and evaluation of students' work." (S2)*

*"In speaking course, my lecturer gave English speaking materials in online learning using Google Meet. Meanwhile, we practiced speaking English in face-to-face learning. Furthermore, the lecturer gave feedback and evaluation of students' work by correcting our pronunciation, stress, intonation, and strategies in speaking English." (S3)*

*"The lecturers have their own rules in implementing blended learning. In writing class, for instance, the lecturer used both synchronous and asynchronous learning platforms in online learning. The schedule is flexible. In offline learning, the lecturer explained the material and gave feedback on our work." (S4)*

The four students (S1, S2, S3, and S4) elaborated on how they participated in blended learning in the EFL classroom. The schedule of blended learning is flexible depending on the agreement between students and lecturers. As pointed out by S1 and S2, the lecturers managed time well in online and face-to-face learning depending on the English subject they taught. For instance, in the speaking class, the lecturer gave materials in online learning. Then, some feedback and evaluation were provided in face-to-face learning to know the students' work and correct their pronunciation, stress, grammar, and intonation. Additionally, regarding the blended learning practice, the four student participants highlighted that the lecturers made one group into two classes using offline and online meetings to maintain social distance since there were forty students in a class. In addition, S3 and S4 pointed out that students were given a chance to choose an appropriate schedule in blended learning based on the agreement between students and lecturers.

Regarding blended learning practice in the EFL classroom, students emphasized that blended learning can be considered as the proper teaching method, particularly amidst Covid-19. Moreover, they reported that it is better to practice blended learning that integrates online or offline classes fully during the pandemic, although they did encounter some challenges in its practice. In terms of technology usage, these students reported that their lecturers made use of Google Meet in online classes. Google Meet is in line with students' needs, as it is considerably more efficient and more effective in online meetings.

#### **3.4 Thread 4: Students' challenges in implementing blended learning in the EFL classroom**

The student participants reported that they had some challenges in implementing blended learning, as seen in the below excerpts. The first was the limited time allocated to the English course by the university during the pandemic. They were allowed to have English learning for an hour for the reason of maintaining social distance. The second challenge was poor internet connection, due to which some students could not participate in online learning maximally. A third challenge was lack of motivation to study English independently. Therefore, lecturers should monitor the students' participation in blended learning and motivate them to study independently by facilitating various English resources for them.

*"I think the major challenge in online learning is poor internet connection due to I lived in a rural area, causing the internet connection is not good enough. It disturbs me." (S1)*

*"The internet connection in my area is up and down. Therefore, I somehow cannot participate in online class successfully." (S2)*

*"At first, I lack motivation to study English independently, particularly in online learning. My lecturers had efforts to motivate us to study English independently to increase our English skills, like listening English songs, watching English movies, and singing English songs. The lecturers also gave some learning resources to facilitate English learning." (S3)*

*"The main challenge in blended learning is unstable internet connection in my rural area. Consequently, I somehow cannot join the online learning fully." (S4)*

#### **4. Discussion**

The study reported on lecturers and students' experiences in using blended learning in the EFL classroom. The results of this study reveal that blended learning in the EFL classroom is regarded as the proper teaching method. In the process of teaching, the four participating English language lecturers made use of technology, such as videos, YouTube, WhatsApp, Goggle Meet, Edmodo, Zoom, and others. Indeed, they tried to improve their teaching professional development to meet students' needs, especially amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. For lecturers' professional development, they can take part in training, workshops, and seminars about technology usage and how to use the relevant English materials in the EFL classroom (Widodo & Allamnakhrah, 2020). This is done to foster successful learning both in offline and online meetings. Technology indeed has a

crucial role in influencing successful online learning (Watson, 2020; Yang & Kuo, 2021).

In addition, the findings of the study also show that the four English language lecturers used Google Meet in online classes based on the students' wishes. They advocated that Google Meet is more effective and more efficient than other applications such as Zoom. However, to enhance English language teaching, they integrated the English materials using technological resources such as YouTube, videos, Facebook, and Instagram. In speaking classes, for instance, they asked their students to speak English and to then upload it onto YouTube. Furthermore, in writing classes, students were motivated to write about certain topics in English and to then upload it onto Facebook or Instagram. These innovative ways could be one of the solutions to avoid students being bored and to improve their creativity in the EFL classroom (Hu et al., 2022; Nithideechaiwarachok et al., 2023). The need of integrating technology with the process of English language teaching has been emphasized in many studies (Stewart, 2013; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020; Wahyuningsih & Dewi, 2019; Wahyuningsih & Wijayanti, 2021; Wahyuningsih, 2018; Yamauchi, 2009).

In addition, the study showed that there was a slight difference between the male (L1 and L2) and female lecturers (L3 and L4) in the use of some online learning platforms. L1 and L2 seemed to use various online platforms in enhancing their EFL classroom. Conversely, L3 and L4 tended to use only one online learning platform, namely Google Meet. The fact that the male lecturers were younger than the female ones may be why they were more creative in English language teaching, where they made use of more online learning platforms compared to the female lecturers who used only one online learning platform.

The results of the study also show that most student participants had positive responses towards the blended learning practice. Moreover, they added that blended learning could be the best teaching method compared to full synchronous or asynchronous instruction. This finding is strengthened by some studies arguing that blended learning could be the most effective method since it is able to enhance technology use in both online and offline classes (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008; Lalima & Lata Dangwal, 2017; Wang et al., 2015; Yang & Kuo, 2021; Yang, 2012). Interestingly, blended learning promotes students' global literacy through cross-cultural interaction and provides efficiency in English language teaching for media studies students (Kurucova et al., 2018; Yang & Kuo, 2021).

Likewise, the study findings coincided with that of studies of some scholars reporting that blended learning has received positive responses and was considered more beneficial and effective than full offline or online learning (Arifani et al., 2019; Bostanci & Çavuşoğlu, 2018; Bueno-Alastuey & López Pérez, 2014; Kurucova et al., 2018; Mendieta & Barkhuizen, 2020). This finding is strengthened by the study undertaken by Wang et al. (2015), reporting that students tend to be more active in blended learning practice compared to full offline or online classes. Furthermore, students could study better since blended learning is considerably able to facilitate communication with others both through

online and offline meetings. This is in line with some empirical studies emphasizing that blended learning is regarded to develop English students' skills, especially in communication, literacy, and creativity (Saleem & Masadeh, 2021). Regarding the practice of blended learning, it can be done using both synchronous and asynchronous modes (Namysova et al., 2019).

There were, however, a number of challenges in implementing blended learning in the EFL classroom. In interview sessions, L1, L2, L3, and L4 asserted that the main challenges in blended learning included poor internet connection, limited time allocated by the university, and lack of students' motivation to study independently.

Meanwhile, viewed from the students' perspective, the challenges included sudden schedule rearrangements made by the lecturers, limited time allocation, lack of students' motivation awareness, and an unstable internet network. Findings on these challenges are strengthened by some previous studies, which emphasized that blended learning had challenges in its practice (Kintu et al., 2017; Miles et al., 2018; Mostert & Townsend, 2018; Thanji & Vasantha, 2018). Additionally, another study reported that teachers felt challenged when using blended learning for the first time, whereafter they felt comfortable using it in teaching (Grgurovic, 2017).

This study has shown that blended learning was mostly used in higher education during the pandemic, especially in EFL classrooms in Indonesia. University students are considerably able to access the technology and adopt it by themselves (de George-Walker & Keeffe, 2010). Furthermore, they can manage the time or schedule set by the lecturers. In other words, they can make use of ICT in the EFL classroom to enhance their English skills, such as listening, reading, writing, and speaking (Pérez Cañado, 2010; Wahyuningsih & Dewi, 2019; Wahyuningsih, 2018, 2021). More specifically, in promoting oral presentation or speaking skills, blended learning could be used or adopted (Barrett & Liu, 2019). Besides, one's motivation and attitudes about blended learning, support, and ability are factors determining the success of blended learning (Afzali & Izadpanah, 2021; Kintu et al., 2017). Furthermore, many educational sectors in the world have adopted blended learning to ensure teaching and learning sustainability while maintaining social distancing (Dahmash, 2020).

Interestingly, blended learning offers an opportunity for lecturers to be facilitators for students and allows students to have independent learning. This finding is ratified by Simanjuntak (2023), who found that lecturers could adopt the role of mentors and partners for discussion in online learning. Importantly, this study promoted the implication for the need for lecturers to upgrade their knowledge on technological resources in blended learning, as emphasized by Ramaila and Mavuru (2023) that the provision of technological resources plays a pivotal role in online learning.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper highlights the experiences of using blended learning viewed from the perspectives of four English language lecturers and four students. The study revealed that blended learning received positive responses from both the lecturers and students. The participants argued that blended learning provides effective and efficient learning and offers creativity and collaboration, which can be achieved by both synchronous and asynchronous instruction. However, both the lecturers and students reported having encountered some challenges in using blended learning. These include limited duration or time in the teaching and learning process, unstable internet connection, the need of self-motivation awareness among students, development of proper English materials, and the need for improving lecturers' professional development. The results of the study promote the need for lecturers to upgrade their technology usage and for the design of appropriate English materials in enhancing successful English language teaching. Additionally, students need to develop their English language skills through various learning resources. It is recommended that future researchers conduct narrative inquiry studies from a wider perspective. By conducting this study, readers could gain insightful knowledge about blended learning implementation in educational settings.

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