



**STUDENTS' PERCEPTION
OF BLENDED LEARNING ACTIVITY DURING POST COVID-19**

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 played a major role in changing the education system in Indonesia. One of the changes caused by Covid-19 is the use of blended learning during the transition period after the pandemic. This study aims to investigate how students' perceptions of blended learning are enforced. As many as 6 students from the Department of English Applied Linguistics, Medan State University were involved in this study. The results of this study indicate that students show a positive attitude towards blended learning such as continuing to attend lectures that are held online or offline. In addition, students also feel happy and enthusiastic when learning online and offline. From the cognitive aspect, students show positive perceptions as long as they carry out lectures with blended learning activities. Students get a lot of new experiences in learning using a combination of face-to-face and online learning which is carried out for 16 meetings. The researcher concludes that, blended learning has an impact on behavioral aspects, emotional aspects and cognitive aspects in the English language teaching learning process. Researchers suggest further research on the effectiveness of blended learning activities.

***Keywords:** Blended Learning, Covid-19, Students' Perception, Positive Perception*

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INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on almost every sector of life. Covid-19 also has a very large long-term impact on the world economic sector (World Bank Group, 2020). Not only in the economic sector, Covid-19 has also directly had a significant impact on the world of education. Indonesia is also unavoidable from pandemic conditions that affect various aspects of human life such as aspects of health, the economy, to education (Suripah & Susanti, 2022). Following the Covid-19 outbreak, the Indonesian government represented by the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia issued government regulation number 21 of 2020 which is technically described in the regulation of the minister of health number 9 of 2020 concerning Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) in the context of accelerating the prevention of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Kep. HK.01.07/Menkes/413/2020) which resulted in a decision regarding the lockdown and restrictions on social interaction in order to break the chain of the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Thus, the government's policy does not escape the impact on the sustainability of learning activities in Indonesia. Restrictions on these activities are also enforced in the field of education where teaching and learning activities cannot be carried out directly and are transferred online (Sadikin & Hamidah, 2020). Learning that was originally conducted face-to-face (F2F), must be replaced by using other alternatives as an effort to overcome the pandemic that occurred. Online learning then becomes an effort to limit students' social interactions in order to break the chain of virus spread that occurs, since this method is the only way for learning activities to continue during the pandemic and are in the appropriate protocol. Over time, the decline in the number of COVID-19 transmissions then again had an impact on the education sector. Learning, which was originally conducted entirely online since pandemic, has begun to enter a transition period so that it can be carried out again face-to-face (F2F). In this transition period, most educational institutions apply learning using a blended learning approach. The traditional face-to-face classroom meetings combined with online learning was carried out and known as blended learning that is perceived to be the most productive type of learning (Lubkov et al., 2020). Until now, there have been many studies regarding students' perceptions of fully online learning, but regarding students' perceptions of blended learning are still insufficient. Using a qualitative approach, this study will add to empirical data on this subject, exploring the perceptions of students of blended learning.

During the transition period, educational institutions again remodeled the learning model used while adapting to the post-pandemic conditions that occurred. Although some educational

institutions still implement online education or even full in face-to-face, there are still educational institutions that implement blended learning before actually implementing face-to-face learning, in order to maintain the stability of learning. Blended learning is a new approach in teaching that use various instruments that also use technological foundations in instruction (Sakina et al., 2020). Blended learning is also defined as a variation of learning that combines face-to-face learning and online learning (Chew at al., 2010). Blended learning aims to make learning activities more optimal and better, facilitating the characteristics and independence of student learning (Wahyuni & Nurhayati, 2019). Blended learning is an interesting learning because it applies conventional and modern learning in terms of learning at the same time. Furthermore, using technology digital tools can resulted students to degrade their nature of living as human beings (Lubkov et al., 2020). Implementation of blended learning activities can help teachers and students to know that learning can be done remotely without having to meet face to face with the aim of getting a good understanding when learning English.

The importance of students' perceptions should help investigate the quality of blended learning itself. Mismara (2019), in his research, suggests that perception is the recognition of understanding through individual senses information about how one reacts to that information, and one uses that information with the aim that one can communicate with the environment around them. Dzubian (2004) research results showed that students who use blended learning have better performance than students with fully face-to-face or fully online learning. In line with that, the results of research Nordin et al. (2013) found that students gave positive perceptions about learning using blended learning, and also that learning can be enjoyed when the course is well prepared. However, according to Garrison and Kanuka (2004), based on the results of a survey they conducted, it was found that students stated that they only felt a small and insignificant positive impact. Blended Learning Activity (BLA) itself is defined as a hybrid learning which combines classroom activities and online learning. Blended learning activity is a learning activity that does not let go of the existence of learning in the classroom as the school has been doing through face-to-face learning (F2F). Although blended learning models have been found for more than a decade, blended learning still relatively new “thing” especially in a developing country, blended learning models have not been widely applied in educational institutions in Indonesia before the COVID-19 pandemic.

To investigate students' perceptions of blended learning, researchers used three aspects of student engagement that were developed and defined according to (Trowler, 2010). According to Trowler, there are three aspects of involvement that can be used, namely: behavioral aspects, emotional aspects, and cognitive aspects. The behavioral aspect is related to student action. Pietarinen et al. (2014) said that the behavioral aspect requires several elements such as cooperation and active involvement of students during the learning process in social groups, class interaction, and the process of teaching and learning activities. The emotional aspect is the emotional reaction of students to learning. This can be seen from how students feel when the learning process takes place. Kristine (2017) says that emotional involvement includes enthusiasm, satisfaction, and interest. Cognitive aspects related to student psychology in learning. Pietarinen et al. (2014) said that the cognitive aspect refers to students' abilities in learning activities, including how students control themselves. This aspect is to measure student involvement in blended learning.

Though the current generation is familiar with technology, but sudden changes are of course important to know what impact it has on students, how students view the changes that occurred between before and after the pandemic, especially their perception of blended learning. It is possible that students find it difficult because of the sudden implementation, but there is also the possibility that students can explore more potential with learning that utilizes technology compared to face-to-face learning (F2F). This study aims to find various perceptions from students in order to conclude whether learning is more impactful if it is done in a blended way or students want learning to be done face-to-face as usual.

Tallent and Runnel at al. (2006) stated that research on reinforcing theory or even experimental research is still needed to improve the quality of research on the latest blended learning. Similar to Tallent and Runnel's statement, Bliuc at al. (2007) stated that research on blended learning should concentrate on the quality of student learning itself. Based on this, this study is expected to be useful for knowing students' perceptions of learning using the blended approach, and how students prefer the learning model they enjoy, through face-to-face or blended learning.

METHODOLOGY

All respondents are postgraduate students enrolled during the first semester when the transition from full online classes to blended learning occurred in a English Applied Linguistic

department at Medan State University, Indonesia. The data will be collected with an online open-ended questionnaire. Questionnaires are a common research instrument in studies of students' perspectives on blended learning. Participants were presented with several open-ended questions regarding the key variables of the study (Baker & Kim, 2019). Previous research supports that online-based surveys provide detailed and comprehensive information and researchers are increasingly using written data collection to gain rich, deep qualitative responses (Baker & Kim, 2018; K. Kim & Baker, 2020).

Based on the literature review, the researchers sought to examine student perceptions of blended learning activity. In addition, as teaching quality varies significantly, the researcher will ask the students' perceptions whether they are comfortable, enjoy, or even contradict. The open-ended responses will ask respondents to comment on the learning activity, engagement, and their challenges. Questions in an open-ended questionnaire will give the research participant the opportunity to respond based on their own experience and elaborate the answer with their own comprehension, as the need for qualitative data with resourcing and time constraints. Questions include "What do you think about blended learning activity? Would you prefer a blended learning activity or face-to-face learning activity?" The open-ended questionnaires then will be analyzed with content analysis. Content analysis is valuable as a systematic way to recognize data and identify recurring themes (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2020).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In applying the learning model, a person will have a variety of perceptions of a situation. Perception is a process that involves the entry of messages and information into the human brain through perception, humans continuously make contact with their environment, this relationship is carried out through the five senses, namely the senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell (Slameto, 2003).

Table 1. Students' Demographic Background

Aspect	Categories	Frequencies	Percentages
Gender	Male	2	67
	Female	4	33

Behaviorally, students' attitudes towards blended learning are considered to show a positive attitude. The students stated that they were happy to take part in face-to-face and offline learning. Although on several occasions, students prefer to carry out learning offline because it is considered more fun and encourages students to participate actively during the learning process. This can be seen in open-ended questionnaire result as follow :

“I can take part in lessons that are conducted both offline and online. Even though online learning is a bit inconvenient, I still try to attend lectures according to the lecturer's instructions. The difference is, I volunteer more to answer questions in face-to-face lectures than online lectures. But for me, I will definitely continue to attend lectures offline and online to the fullest.”-PSMS

It can be concluded that blended learning does not affect students' desire to receive learning from their lecturers. They are happy to follow learning instructions that are carried out face-to-face or online.

Emotionally, students still feel happy even though they have to accept a combination of face-to-face and online learning. Students still feel enthusiastic in participating in learning even though learning is through video conferencing.

“I enjoy and feel happy with blended learning activities. Because, each part between online and offline has its own advantages that make the learning process feel balanced. There are moments when learning can be done optimally using video conferencing, there are also moments that are better done offline. Both can be adjusted according to the convenience of lecturers and students, depending on the matters discussed. Submission of material is more effective if it is done face-to-face, but if the meeting only discusses the progress of the report, then online can also be considered.”-DRN

Students gave positive perceptions about their emotional feelings towards the learning process using the blended learning approach, especially in learning English. The representative statement above, it can be explained that more participants agree with the use of the blended learning approach in the learning process. Students as participants feel happy, enthusiastic and not bored during the teaching and learning process.

Meanwhile, on cognitive aspect, students as participants show a good perception so that motivation appears on themselves when participating in the process of teaching and learning activities. They show their positive perception so that they can motivate themselves when participating in the teaching and learning process using this blended learning model, both offline

(face to face) and online (via the video conference). This is also in line with Ali and Sofa (2018), that this blended learning style can motivate students so that each student can be responsible for their learning process. The results of the analysis from the open-ended questionnaire describe students' perceptions of learning through blended learning both offline (face to face), and also online.

“This is my first experience in participating in blended learning. Blended learning for me is an interesting model when learning. The students and the lecturers can discuss learning to be carried out face-to-face or online. I’m motivated to keep up with the learning process and a bit afraid of getting left especially in online session, that’s why I try to paid more attention when the class is being held. And this also minimizes my absence because when lecturers and students are unable to conduct face-to-face learning, we can discuss the learning that will be carried out, so that learning can continue.”-RFH

A blended learning environment is needed by students to get technological innovation in the learning process. Blended learning development can help create a more effective learning environment. Most of the characteristics of students and how students respond to learning using the blended learning method discussed in this study are important factors for the effectiveness of blended learning itself. This gap is open for further investigation to understand whether they can be a significant predictor of the effectiveness of blended learning in the same or different learning settings.

CONCLUSION

Students' perceptions of blended learning activities can be described through three aspects, namely behavioral aspects, emotional aspects and cognitive aspects. In the aspect of behavior, students show a good attitude during blended learning activities. When learning is done offline, students show an active attitude by participating more during the learning process. And when learning is done online via video conferencing, students follow the lessons in an orderly manner given by the lecturer but tend to be more passive because students are often in moments that make them uncomfortable such as connection interruptions and other things but still show a good attitude. On the emotional aspect, students tend to be more satisfied and happier to participate in learning when it is carried out offline. This is shown by the enthusiasm of students in conducting discussions with friends and lecturers in class. However, students are also happy to do online

learning when they are only asked to report the progress of the assignments they are doing. From the cognitive aspect, students show positive perceptions as long as they carry out lectures with blended learning activities. Students get a lot of new experiences in learning using a combination of face-to-face and online learning which is carried out for 16 meetings. Besides, cognitive involvement refers to the knowledge that students have in themselves in learning activities, including self-regulation and motivation to study (Pietarinen et al., 2014; Rasyiid et al., 2021; & Lar et al., 2022).

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