Students' Perceptions of Blended Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Insights from across Indonesia[1]

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Abstract

Despite the high coverage of blended learning in English language teaching, little attention has been paid to its influence on English classrooms within three geo-zones: West Indonesia, Central Indonesia, and East Indonesia during the worldwide pandemic. This study presents the results of a mixed-methods approach in finding students' perceptions of the implementation of blended learning in English language teaching from students of various study programs across Indonesia. One hundred ninety students were involved in quantitative data collection in the form of a questionnaire, while six students participated in a focus group discussion for qualitative data collection. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS to find means and standard deviations, while the qualitative data was analyzed through the theory offered by Miles et al. (2014). The results showed that the general students' perceptions of the implementation of blended learning across Indonesia are neutral with a strong inclination to agreement. The students' perceptions were further explored through the semi-structured interview within focus group discussion and then analyzed by utilizing thematic analysis, through which the participants' perceptions were coded and categorized. The findings revealed that half of the participants showed positive perceptions of blended learning, especially those from West Indonesia, while those from Central and East Indonesia showed negative perceptions. The pedagogical implication of blended learning implementation and the limitation of this study are further discussed.

Resumen

A pesar de la alta cobertura del aprendizaje combinado en la enseñanza del inglés, se ha prestado poca atención a su influencia en las aulas de inglés en tres zonas geográficas: Indonesia Occidental, Indonesia Central e Indonesia Oriental durante la pandemia mundial. Este estudio presenta los resultados de un enfoque de métodos mixtos para conocer las percepciones de los estudiantes sobre la implementación del aprendizaje combinado en la enseñanza del inglés, provenientes de estudiantes de diversos programas de estudio en toda Indonesia. Ciento noventa estudiantes participaron en la recopilación de datos cuantitativos mediante un cuestionario, mientras que seis estudiantes participaron en una discusión grupal para la recopilación de datos cualitativos. Los datos cuantitativos se analizaron utilizando SPSS para encontrar medias y desviaciones típicas, mientras que los datos cualitativos se analizaron a través de la teoría ofrecida por Miles et al. (2014). Los resultados mostraron que las percepciones generales de los estudiantes sobre la implementación del aprendizaje combinado en Indonesia son neutrales, con una fuerte inclinación al acuerdo. Las percepciones de los estudiantes se exploraron más a fondo mediante una entrevista semiestructurada dentro de una discusión grupal y luego se analizaron utilizando un análisis temático, a través del cual se codificaron y categorizaron las percepciones de los participantes. Los resultados revelaron que la mitad de los participantes, especialmente los de Indonesia Occidental, mostraron una percepción positiva del aprendizaje combinado, mientras que los de Indonesia Central y Oriental mostraron una percepción negativa. Se analizan con más detalle las implicaciones pedagógicas de la implementación del aprendizaje combinado y las limitaciones de este estudio.

Introduction

When the outbreak of Covid-19 began, the Indonesian the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) took action to mitigate its impact on education by issuing a mandate for online learning at all schooling levels, including tertiary education level (Cohen & Kupferschmidt, 2020; Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020). The mode of teaching and learning activity, particularly in English language teaching (ELT), was changed to being held online which resulted in much change and adjustment. Such a sudden teaching mode resulted in disruption of classroom instruction since students were only used to onsite or face-to-face classrooms (Azzahra, 2020). As the infection rate of Covid-19 started flattening, schools and universities began to reopen and employ blended learning to continue lessening physical contact. Engaging online classes, as well as a number of communication applications for texting and video-calling, such as *WhatsApp, Telegram*, and *Line*, were used to keep the learning going well.

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The combination of onsite and online (blended learning) provides flexibility in the teaching and learning process (Thorne, 2003), and it further improves students' motivation and self-paced learning through integrating onsite learning into online learning (Boelens et al., 2015; El-Zeftawy & Hassan, 2016; Lalima & Dangwal, 2017; Made et al., 2016; Nurmasitah et al., 2019; Zhang & Hang, 2012). Kaur (2013) states that blended learning is a learning model that implements both online learning and onsite learning by utilizing available resources to develop student learning results. Similarly, blended learning can enhance student learning effectiveness (Dziuban et al., 2018; Keshta & Harb, 2013). In blended learning, teachers assume the role of a facilitator, motivator, mentor, and consultant who is also a classmate in the sense that they can share ideas and knowledge with their students (Zainuddin & Attaran, 2016). Through blended learning, teachers can give feedback to their students directly so that their skills will develop optimally (Wilson & Smilanich). Further, blended learning provides good benefits for instructors and students in teaching and learning activities, including increasing social interaction, improving communication, and collaboration, offering flexibility and efficiency, expanding reach and mobility, and optimizing development costs and time (Azizan, 2010; Graham, 2006; Hande, 2014; Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003).

Several studies have been undertaken to investigate students' perceptions of blended learning. Pardede (2012) found that many ELT lecturers see students as having little opportunity to develop English language skills learned in different contexts due to limited time in the classroom. It is possible, however, that students could benefit from having a little bit extra time to connect with their teachers and their classmates in order to improve their social skills and have a understanding of what they are being taught. Blended learning encouraged students' engagement in the classroom (Ali & Sofa, 2018; Mulyadi et al., 2019). Learning could make students feel more useful, motivated, engaged, and happier in the classroom. When technology is used in the classroom, students are more likely to be interested, focused, and excited about their learning. This is because they can connect with what they are learning more naturally. When technology is used, students are more likely to stay focused, and be enthusiastic about what they are learnng.

Nurmasitah et al. (2019) indicated that blended learning encouraged students and instructors to exchange learning resources, engage in autonomous study, and save time and money. Blended learning materials help students set realistic goals and take responsibility for their education and these are transferrable across academic subjects as they take ownership of their learning.

Additionally, Ariyanti (2020) and Rosayanti and Hardiana (2021) investigated higher education students' perceptions of the use of blended learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Their research results are identical: students encountered a problem with access to the online platform and the internet connection. Students majoring in English education were part of these studies. However, they found it interesting to have online and offline learning activities. Despite the challenges, effective communication plays a crucial role in facilitating an online classroom environment that fosters student engagement and motivation towards learning. The students acquired knowledge pertaining to technology and were able to readily receive feedback from their instructors in the virtual classroom setting.

As to the lack of social interaction, Sari and Wahyudin (2019) state that a lack of direct social interaction may cause students to misunderstand what they are learning when they ask teachers about the subject. Students may feel isolated due to the lack of interaction that comes with blended learning. Offline learning involves the instructor developing face-to-face and anywhere and anytime learning choices that bridge the gap between the traditional classroom setting and the online environment. Unlike blended learning, offline learning offers students greater chance for direct social interaction. The only thing that remains the same is learning; the only variable is time. This provides students with enough opportunities for social engagement. blended learning however reduces the face-to-face time teachers spend with their classes, which may leave some students feeling isolated.

In sum, the advantages and disadvantages of blended learning are comparable to those of any other instructional approach. It is possible to reap the benefits of combining in-person instruction with education completed at one's speed online, but doing so successfully requires careful planning and execution. As not all students are prepared to study independently, there are occasions when the dangers outweigh the advantages. This is due to the nature of the learning experience. This contemporary educational setting has the potential to inspire some of them while leaving others feeling bewildered by it. On the other hand, this method's perceived drawbacks may still be resolvable. There might be a significant increase in the number of high-quality classes offered if instructors keep a close watch on their students and provide them with plenty of assistance.

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However, little has been done to address the implementation of blended learning in English language teaching across various regions of Indonesia. Thus, the current study is intended to investigate students' perceptions of the implementation of blended learning in various universities of various study fields across Indonesia during the pandemic. The expected results can provide a bigger picture of the quality, opportunities, and challenges associated with course delivery and assessment through blended learning. Thus, this study in the current post-pandemic world in which blended learning has not been abandoned may give lecturers insight on how to adjust their teaching methods in their English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. Further, this study may also help expand the body of knowledge in the context of blended learning in English language teaching (ELT). To achieve its aim, the study will focus on answering the following research question:

> *What are students' perceptions of the implementation of blended learning in tertiary education during the Covid-19 pandemic?*

By finding an answer to this research question might help understanding the participants´ perceptions of learning, learning assessment, and motivation during blended learning implementation. This study can contribute to lecturers' consideration on the selection of teaching strategies. The results of the study may also give related stakeholders some considerations pertaining certain facilities to support the success of blended learning implementation.

Literature Review

Blended Learning is defined by Graham (2006) as learning systems that incorporate face-to-face instruction with computer-mediated instruction. It is defined by Garrison and Kanuka (2004) as the integration of face-to-face classroom experiences with online learning experiences. Thus, there is widespread consensus that the essential components of blended learning are face-to-face instruction or and online instruction or learning. In this study, blended learning is implemented in English language classroom at tertiary education, both online and offline.

Combining the benefits of online learning with traditional classroom learning environments has resulted in a new learning environment known as blended (Kharb & Samanta, 2016). Blended learning has been generally acknowledged as a "new normal" educational method, although efforts to find the optimal mix formula are still ongoing through continual quality review. This method can provide EFL educators with a variety of interactive language activities considering it is a dual component, combining face-to-face teaching with technology-generated ways (Rahim, 2019). Teachers must exert considerable effort in order for these techniques to be successful.

According to Thalib (2010), the perception-forming process begins with observing the situation and behavior. Observation is the first step in the formation of perceptions, followed by the process of attribution and disposition or regulation of the factors that influence the formation of these perceptions to form an impression of the object of perceptions. In this study, perceptions are focused on students' observational experiences as they attended a blended learning class, especially when learning English.

Students' perceptions of blended learning

Previous research has examined students' perceptions of blended learning as a mode of delivery in ELT. These perceptions are focused on flexibility, engagement, autonomy and collaboration. Negative perceptions such as internet access issues and lack of social classroom interaction have also been discussed.

Blended learning offers flexibility. Aldosemani et al., (2018) reported that it could provide flexibility and real-time access to course materials. Sari and Wahyudin (2019) found that by using *Instagram* students could be provided with pleasant and accessible learning activities – and, thus, it was a beneficial instrument for EFL learners in the educational field. Pitaloka et al. (2020) confirmed that blended learning had certain benefits, such as ease of use, demanding learning, flexibility, simple materials, and learning variants. Its availability may also be tailored to meet various needs.

To put it another way, blended learning allows students to access the course materials at any time and from any location while still allowing them to reap the advantages of in-person assistance and teaching. Access to worldwide resources and materials appropriate for the level of knowledge and interest the students possess. Students can study at their own pace because of the adaptability of blended learning and the

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availability of online materials. This means that teachers can help students accelerate their learning or provide more advanced resources.

Blended learning also bolsters student engagement. Friatin et al., (2017) found that blended learning could boost students' usefulness, motivation, engagement, and pleasure in the classroom. Learners become more likely to be engaged in, focused on, and passionate about the topics they are studying when technology is incorporated into classroom sessions since they can more easily interact with the content they are learning.

Moreover, student autonomy also increases with blended learning. Kosar (2016) found that it was adaptable and enhanced learners' motivation and autonomy. Warman (2018) reported that utilizing blended learning can assist students in learning English independently. Students who used this resource are better able to establish realistic objectives and to take responsibility for their own education, both of which contribute to the development of transferable skills across all academic fields. Because of the emphasis on individual responsibility inherent in a blended learning environment, students develop a strong sense of ownership over learning, which may serve as a powerful force accelerating the learning process.

As students are given occasional group work online and offline, they tend to enjoy collaboration. Ja'ashan (2015) said that blended learning could help them learn English in a collaborative, dynamic, and engaging manner, hence increasing their English language abilities. Students can work together utilizing various information and communication technologies to interact with one another and with other parties. (e.g., social media). In addition, students can take turns being responsible for the task or project they do together.

Despite all these benefits, blended learning has some drawbacks, including possible weak internet access and a lack of face-to-face interaction (Ja'ashan, 2015; Pitaloka et al., 2020; Rombe, 2014). The availability of broadband connections is the most significant element in non-metropolitan regions. In metropolitan areas, family income and educational level play a more significant influence in determining broadband adoption rates.

According to Ginns and Ellis (2009), one of the most important parts of learning and teaching is students' impressions of their own experiences. Previous research on blended learning has investigated learners' perceptions of the use of some ICT for the development of the four skills in various languages, finding positive perceptions of their usefulness, particularly in the areas of spelling and grammar (Ayres, 2002), communicative skills development (Lee, 2002; Yanguas, 2010), listening (Ramírez Verdugo & Alonso Belmonte, 2007), writing (Byrne, 2007; Chao & Lo, 2011) and in all the skills and areas of language in an EFL blended course in Spain (Bueno-Alastuey & Lopez Perez, 2014). Previous research, however, has seldom addressed EFL learners' perceptions in different blended learning settings (Şahin-Kızıl, 2014).

Opportunities and challenges in blended learning

Blended learning is a pedagogical approach that integrates both conventional face-to-face instruction and online learning modalities. The utilization of humanistic components in education persists due to the students' direct engagement with instructors, which serves as a means of psychological assistance, and the necessity to provide direct explanations for certain aspects, particularly in affective and psychomotor proficiencies (Oktaria et al., 2023). Blended learning, as an educational approach, affords learners the flexibility to determine the time and location of their lesson engagement. The delivery of e-learning is not geographically constrained, allowing students to engage in their studies from any location and at any time, without the need for extensive travel (Boghian et al., 2023).

Blended learning is perceived by students as a potential strategy to enhance their motivation to learn (Abdillah & Sueb, 2022). The individuals exhibited a greater level of interest in the topic at hand and experienced a more streamlined process in accessing relevant online resources. In addition, a range of instructional strategies, such as group and paired activities, collaborative learning, and individualized instruction, can be employed to enhance student engagement and motivation in communicative language practice. A study by Hoerudin (2022) found that blended learning approach in Indonesian language education offers several advantages. Firstly, learners are able to engage with course content independently by leveraging online resources. Secondly, learners can communicate and collaborate with instructors and peers beyond the confines of the classroom. Thirdly, educators can supplement their teaching with multimedia resources. Fourthly, learners can be held accountable for their learning by being required to complete readings or assessments prior to class. Lastly, instructors can administer quizzes and utilize test results to enhance the learning experience.

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Hayati et al. (2021) argued that one potential strategy for optimizing students' use of technology is to limit their recreational screen time and instead encourage them to engage in activities that can enhance their academic performance. For instance, students could utilize their devices to complete school assignments and expand their knowledge and skills through online learning and training opportunities. This approach has the potential to improve the efficacy and efficiency of students' educational experiences. Teachers can utilize diverse platforms to actively involve students and capture their focus during instructional sessions. Suriaman et al. (2022) mentions blended learning using Moodle-based instruction and traditional classroom instruction as a contemporary approach to language acquisition that offers learners the flexibility to study English at their own pace and convenience. As per the majority of the participants, the implementation of blended learning has the potential to augment their self-directed learning (Lu et al., 2023).

Similarly, *Zoom* offers different functions that can facilitate educators and learners engage in small-group discussions, exchange multimedia content, communicate via messaging, manage attendees, permit students to vocalize their thoughts, and request permission to speak (Mandasari et al., 2022). *Google Meet* is also a highly efficient tool due to its accessibility, as it can be used remotely and at any time, provided that there is an active internet connection and access to a compatible device such as a cell phone, computer, or laptop (Yuliana, 2022).

Recently, two challenges to higher education have been identified (Wanner & Palmer, 2015): students cannot focus on traditional face-to-face instruction, and online learning generates fewer contacts between the teacher and students or between peers. As a result, students' willingness to ask questions and the chance for in-depth conversation has lessened (Graham, Woodfield, & Harrison, 2013). As a result, blended learning courses that combine the benefits of traditional face-to-face learning with online learning have become popular (Kent et al., 2016; Uwes et al., 2018). These courses encourage social engagement through both face-to-face and online collaborative learning and social networking made possible by digital technology. As a result, the transition from traditional to online courses makes blended learning increasingly vital (Eagleton, 2017; Wanner & Palmer, 2015).

The quality of e-learning programs, however, presents significant problems. The pandemic had huge and long-term effects such as efficacy, adaptability, cost-efficiency, time savings, and simplicity of learning (Dhawma, 2020; Sharma, 2020;). Virtual classrooms may never replace physical learning, but they may combine the two learning settings. Although technology does not appear to be capable of replacing instructors or face-to-face classrooms (Kerres & De Witt, 2003), teachers may make extensive use of technology to improve education.

Some research has discovered some difficulties encountered by instructors when using the blended learning paradigm. According to Bryan and Volchenkova (2016), blended learning is not a homogeneous notion since it signifies different things to different people. According to Mulyono et al. (2021), insufficient training and support in blended learning were the key hurdles that prevented instructors from planning and managing activities, preventing them from addressing technological concerns that arose during the practices. However, because conventional teaching and learning techniques continue to exist, blended learning has included technological benefits. Continuous quality evaluation is still done to determine the best blended recipe.

Blended learning in Indonesia

Many studies carried out in Indonesia with university-level students from varying economic backgrounds stated that they could understand better through a traditional way of learning which provided direct access to their professors' advice and guidance (Alaidarous & Madini, 2016; Annamalai, 2019; Çırak Kurt & Yıldırım, 2018; Gyamfi & Gyaase, 2015; Gyamfi & Sukseemuang, 2017; Huang, 2016; Ja'ashan, 2015; Wright, 2017)

A few studies in Indonesia (Rerung, 2018; Rianto, 2020) have revealed students' views toward blended learning. Using a questionnaire to obtain his students' feedback on e-learning, Rianto (2020) found that blended learning was beneficial to his students' learning process despite technical issues and a poor internet connection. After analyzing her students' perceptions of blended learning, particularly in listening and speaking, Rerung (2018) revealed that the majority of her students were in favor of it. However, research has shown both favorable and negative results about the use of online learning. Blended learning has been suggested to have improved students' performance in ELT and boosted their autonomy (Cakrawati, 2017; Mudra, 2018). Similarly, other students welcomed the innovation of blended learning as it they enjoyed it and had more flexibility for scheduling study sessions (Atmio & Nugroho, 2020; Basri & Paramma, 2019).

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Many colleges in Indonesia responded to the pandemic by adjusting or even revising their curriculum by incorporating digital gadgets into the learning process (Sindo, 2018). The first step in getting ready was building the necessary infrastructure since attending online courses required access to the internet. In addition, there was a need for collaboration with educational institutions that were already using online courses in order to recognize the value of courses that employed a credit transfer system, in which academic credits earned at one institution were officially recognized and transferred to another institution within the Indonesian higher education system. The Indonesian government recommended university officials incorporate hybrid online learning into their curricula (Bramasta & Wedhaswarty, 2020; Zainuddin & Keumala, 2018). Prior to instituting persistent distance education, research should have been conducted. However, these were not optimal circumstances. If distance learning were used as the sole method of instruction, this would deprive students of access to multiple learning methods that have been shown to be effective.

Taken together, these studies suggest that while many university students continue to appreciate traditional face-to-face instruction for its direct interaction and immediate guidance, blended learning has gained considerable acceptance in Indonesian higher education. The findings indicate that blended learning can enhance students' academic performance, autonomy, flexibility, and overall satisfaction, despite challenges such as technological limitations and uneven internet access. At the same time, successful implementation depends heavily on institutional readiness, including adequate infrastructure, curriculum adaptation, and clear credit transfer policies. These insights highlight both the potential and the necessary conditions for the effective integration of blended learning in higher education.

Methodology

This section describes the methodological framework employed in this study. It outlines the research design, participant selection, instruments used for data collection, research procedures, and data analysis techniques. These components were carefully structured to ensure the validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of the findings.

Design

This paper used an explanatory mixed-method design (Creswell & Plano, 2017) through a *Google Form*-based questionnaire consisting of twenty close-ended statements regarding three significant aspects of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects and adapted from Akkoyunlu and Yılmaz-Soylu (2008a), A qualitative research method was also used to support the quantitative findings. This technique was used to interpret the participants' experiences (Miles et al., 2014).

A semi-structured open-ended interview was used in the focus group discussion (FGD). The FGD facilitated the exchange of ideas among participants, ultimately resulting in the innovative insights. Through the exchange of ideas and personal experiences, participants gained a deeper understanding and broader perspectives.

Participants

A questionnaire consisting of four questions (See Appendix 1) was given to 190 students chosen purposively (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2017) and six were later chosen based on their ability to communicate clearly and to have experienced blended learning for at least one semester. They were also chosen to represent each part of Indonesia: West, Central, and East Indonesia, and there was mixed gender participation to avoid gender bias. (Hankore, 2021; Hu and Naka, 2022; Pelzang & Hutchinson, 2018; Saldaña, 2021). The universities the students attended were both state- and private-run. Table 1 shows the general participants' profiles for the questionnaire survey while Table 2 displays the FGD session. The names of students and universities are pseudonyms, to protect the participants involved.

Number of participants	Number of Universities	Number of Fields of Study	Number of parts of Indonesia
190	28	10	3

Table 1: Participants' profiles for survey

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Student	Gender	Field of Study	University Location
Ava	Female	English Education	West Indonesia
Barbara	Female	Hotel Management	West Indonesia
Catalina	Female	Nursing	Central Indonesia
Dalton	Male	Civil Engineering	East Indonesia
Evan	Male	Business Administration	West Indonesia
Finley	Male	Travel and Tourism	Central Indonesia

Table 2: Participants' profile for focus group discussion

Instrument

An adapted questionnaire (Akkoyunlu & Yılmaz-Soylu, 2008b) containing 20 items was employed to capture the general perceptions of students regarding the implementation of blended learning at the university level (Appendix 2). These 20 items were divided into three themes: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects. The Likert's scale with five options, including Totally Agree (5 points), Agree (4 points), Neutral (3 points), Disagree (2 points), and Totally Disagree (1 point), was used. For qualitative data, during an FGD, an open-ended interview guideline containing four questions was used to stimulate participants to share their perceptions of the implementation of blended learning. The questions included: (1) During the Covid-19 pandemic, what was English-learning like?, (2) Which of these study methods do you like the most? Why?, (a) Learning online (b) Learning onsite/ face-to-face (c) blended learning (online and face-to-face), (3) What were the obstacles and inconveniences that you experienced while learning English through blended learning?, (4) What are your hopes for the government so that blended learning can run more smoothly on your campus?

Procedures

The authors requested and received ethical approval and a research permission letter from the English Department of Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia. Then, the permission letter was sent and approved by the target universities, giving the authors legal access to the target population. After getting permission from the lecturers, the researchers shared the questionnaire through *Google Forms*. Then, the data was retrieved and analyzed statistically. For the qualitative data collection, the researchers used a *Zoom* meeting to record the interview conducted in Indonesian in the form of an open-ended semi structured FGD. Indonesian was used to limit problems related to the understanding of the target language, shyness, or a lack of confidence in the group discussions (Hankore, 2021) since Hu and Naka (2022) found that there was a greater quantity of precise information delivered when using the participants' native language compared to their second language. Moreover, it is important to make sure that the participants' experiences are understood in their proper context. (Pelzang & Hutchinson, 2018; Saldaña, 2021

During the interview session, some note-taking was carried out and follow-up questions were asked. The recording and notes helped the researchers to transcribe with higher accuracy. Pseudonyms were employed for participants and universities for confidentiality.

Data analysis

For the quantitative data analysis, the SPSS Version 22 was used to find the mean and standard deviation. For the qualitative data analysis, by Miles et al.'s (2014) theory which includes data condensation, categorization, display, interpretation, and conclusion drawing or verification was employed. The transcribed interview data were sent back to the interviewees by email for verification purposes. After receiving their approval, the researchers reread the data while coding important information thematically using a table. This categorization stage led to three main themes: behavior, emotions, and cognition. In the questionnaire used, the behavioral aspects were numbered 7, 8, 9, the emotional 10, 11, 12, and the cognitive 13, 14, 15, 16, 17. Questions number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 18, 19, and 20 were used to elicit students' perceptions. For a more accurate analysis, the categories from each transcript were constantly compared to find a comprehensive pattern so that each could be appropriately interpreted.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, peer-debriefing and double crosscheck were conducted by sharing the analysis result with all co-researchers for deeper data interpretation and sending the information back to the participants again for verification. First, the authors discussed the results until a common

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analysis was found. Second, the results of the analysis were read again so that emerging themes could be identified. Finally, a unification of perceptions was carried out to complete the analysis. The participants justified the results of the analysis and interpretation. In this case, they added, removed, and corrected information that was not quite right. After their approval, a conclusion was drawn for each question in the form of a table to facilitate further explanatory claims.

Results

Quantitative data

Aspect	Mean	Standard Deviation
Behavioral	4.01	0.78
Emotional	3.78	0.76
Cognitive	3.63	0.87
Overall mean	3.81	-

Table 3: Participants' perceptions on the implementation of blended learning

The data above shows that the three means of the perceptions of blended learning are rather similar and the overall results of the perceptions suggests that the students seemed to stand on neutral ground with the tendency to say 'yes' or 'agree' to the questions asked. The behavioral category was higher than the three with a mean value of 4.01 and a standard deviation 0.78, suggesting the students involved in the study generally agreed with the statements, including (1) *I always attend the class to learn English using blended learning, both in face-to-face class and in online platforms; (2) By using blended learning, I always submit assignments on time, both in face-to-face classes and on online platforms; (3) I always follow the lecturer's orders to participate in learning English both in face-to-face class andon online platforms.* The emotional aspect had a mean of 3.78 with a standard deviation of 0.76 . This implies that the students expressed their position neurally, but leaned towards agreeing with the statements given. In a similar fashion, the cognitive aspect indicates the same with the mean value 3.63 and standard deviation, 0.87. When calculated in numerical form, the behavioral aspect scored the most while the cognitive aspect scored the least. On the other hand, the mean score of the general view was obtained from combining the mean of the three aspects and dividing the result by three, resulting 3.81. It can be inferred that the general perceptions of the students of the implementation of blended learning across Indonesia was neutral with a strong inclination to agreement.

Qualitative data

Behavioral aspect

From behavioral aspect, the perceptions vary from region to region. Some enjoyed blended learning while others did not. From the west of Indonesia, Barbara and Evan had a good time studying through blended learning despite minor challenges.

> *I loved studying through blended learning due to its convenience, allowing us to learn a lot from the internet, journals, YouTube and so on. That way, the source for learning is not always only from the lecturer. When faced with difficult learning material, I need a more detailed explanation through a face-to-face meeting. As face-to-face meeting is restricted, we are left with exploring the material ourselves.* (Barbara)

Similarly, Evan stated that blended learning gave him some satisfaction in learning English at college.:

> *I always enjoyed studying through blended learning and almost never had any problems when I studied online because the network was good. In addition, the lecturers were also more creative in delivering learning material, such as by using videos and providing Q & A sessions. The obstacle I faced in learning through blended learning is time because I live a bit far from campus. For offline learning, I had the chance to interact more with my friends and lecturers.* (Evan)

Both Barbara and Evan expressed enjoyment in studying English with blended learning. Particularly, Evan shared a similar thought as Barbara's, saying that face-to-face meetings were needed when a more serious or complex subject is being taught. It could be that the interaction and lecturing that take place in class are more efficient for students than online learning. They do not get fixated with the delayed communication through *Zoom* or *Google Meet,* boosting their confidence in asking questions and expressing their ideas and thoughts.

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On the contrary, Finley from central Indonesia and Dalton from east Indonesia expressed that they did not entirely like blended learning since the quality of the network connection was poor in their areas.

> *There is always a network problem. Sometimes the internet network is good and sometimes it is bad. There are also obstacles in using Zoom, Google Meeting and Google Classroom platform. Therefore, our lecturers use the WhatsApp application, especially for listening courses. I find it easier when I use the application.* (Finley)

Dalton also said that the didn't like blended learning was for learning English.

> *The internet network in my area is still bad so that blended learning becomes less effective, especially when receiving learning material. I often struggled to Zoom and Google Meeting technology for online classes as I was new to them at the time, which resulted in non-optimal learning experiences.* (Dalton)

Finley and Dalton were still new to online learning platforms and thus lacked skills in using them. In addition, the combination of poor network connection with a lack of skills in operating video-conference tools such as *Zoom* and *Google Me*et made them to struggle to enter the virtual classroom and engage in the lessons. They seemed to not receive learning material sent by their lecturers. The problems caused by the technology, poor network quality, and the lack of knowledge or skills for using an online platform for learning might need special attention from the government.

When all the participants of the FGD were asked for more information, they realized that the easy access to the internet tested their honesty, considering that it was easy for them to commit plagiarism online. Some were tempted to do so while others were not as seen in the following confessions. Ava and Catalina stated that they could not commit plagiarism despite easy access to the internet.

> *We are required to do our work with an emphasis on originality. We use Google Scholar, journals and so on in doing assignments, for example, when making an outline for a paper. And because of that, I can't cheat using copy-paste.* (Ava)

Similarly, Catalinas tressed that she might cheat by using copy-and-paste, but she realized that it might put her at risk of being caught cheating:

> *I was tempted to commit copy-paste cheating like that. But I also realized that my lecturer was much smarter than me. So, I usually paraphrased the text I copied so as not to be caught in the act of plagiarism*. (Catalina)

In contrast, Dalton claimed that he was sometimes dishonest when completing his assignments.

> *We are required to have originality in completing our assignments. Even so, as a student, I feel that sometimes there are times when we commit copy-paste cheating for convenience. Sometimes we just don't want to be bothered to do the given tasks. Yes, to be honest, I've also done this kind of cheating.* (Dalton)

From the statement above, it can be inferred that whether Dalton wishes to cheat or not depends on the situation he is in. He might want to do so when his laziness trumps his motivation to complete his assignments.

<u>Emotional aspect</u>

For the emotional aspect, the participants showed varying perceptions. Ava and Finley stated that they like studying through blended learning.

> *I prefer blended learning with the provision that the initial meeting starts face-to-face and the next meeting is online. However, if there are practical activities, there must be face-to-face meetings. In this way, our studies will be easier.* (Ava)

> *I prefer blended learning. However, the area where I live has poor facilities – and therefore does not support online learning.* (Finley)

On the contrary, Dalton maintained that fully onsite learning is better than blended learning.

> *I prefer face-to-face classes because we can immediately ask questions when we don't understand what the lecturer has said. Asking in person like that is hard to do online.* (Dalton)

From the statement above, Dalton needs a quick question-and-response session directly due to the fact that online Q&A sessions may be disrupted and or delayed by the online connection. In addition to that, he might also want some good rapport and psychological connection with the lecturer as well.

<u>Cognitive aspect</u>

There are various perceptions regarding the effect of blended learning in the cognitive aspect. Some struggled to improve their cognitive aspect while others did it relatively successfully. For example, Ava stated that she had no problems with bettering her cognitive aspect.

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> *Blended learning allows me to come up with new ideas when studying/doing assignments. Lecturers sometimes give assignments that require fresh ideas from the topic being discussed. I try to generate new ideas that are able to encourage interest in digging deeper into the topic being discussed.* (Ava)

The demands and workloads given by her lecturer made her more motivated to explore her cognitive potential. She pushed herself to the limits by following what was instructed by her lecturer. On the contrary, Finley and Dalton had negative perceptions about the cognitive aspect.

> *Since the network coverage is terrible in my area, I often missed the messages that my lecturer was giving. The lecturer's voice or our* [students'] *voice is often disrupted when having online classes such as thru Zoom or Google Meet. That's why I believe I would obtain a better grasp of the material being taught if the class was done offline in its entirety.* (Finley)

She suggested that online classes did not contribute much to improving her cognitive aspect due to the disruption caused by the network issues and her peers' noise. She further maintained that this issue may be less likely to occur in offline classes. Thus, she insisted that she could gain more when studying onsite for a full semester. Similarly, Dalton complained about the unconducive and disruptive moments when having an online class.

> *Blended learning doesn't really accommodate me to understand the material well. I cannot directly ask my lecturer when in doubt, and the voice in Zoom often gets fuzzy. In addition, I get tired of staring at the laptop screen in a prolonged period and start losing focus on what's being conveyed. Thus, my comprehension of the material being taught often suffers. I like the fully onsite learning better that way.* (Dalton)

Just like Finley, Dalton also preferred onsite learning because he thinks he will be able to comprehend the material being taught better. Onsite class may likely be less chaotic or disruptive but more friendly for the Q & A session. Aside from it, he implied that the fatigue caused by staring at a laptop screen for a prolonged period makes him lose focus. This kind of fatigue further exacerbates the distraction, preventing him from exploring his comprehension of the material being taught.

General view of blended learning implementation

When asked for generic aspect, Ava and Catalina had the same perceptions about blended learning. They believed that it had potential to be implemented in the future even after the pandemic was over. They argued that blended learning was a way forward in classroom instruction.

> *I think it is quite efficient to learn online with various platforms such as Webex, Edmodo and Google Classroom. Maybe at the beginning, many friends did not understand using online meetings. But gradually, they got used to it. For practical activities such as listening, we still come to campus by taking turns or using shifts. Our microteaching activities are teaching practice on campus.* (Ava)

> *We had to attend classes onsite and online due to class shifts for social distancing. Online learning has been carried out through online platforms such as Zoom, WhatsApp and Google Meet. The combination of the two learning modes took place somewhat properly as expected despite some network issues.* (Catalina)

From the two perceptions above, it can be seen that Ava and Cataline agreed that blended learning would be implemented in the future if two circumstances came about. First, the first half semester had to be dedicated to onsite learning for delivering materials, while the second half semester would be for progress reports and follow-up classroom instructions. The teaching activities, such as teaching practice, were supposed to be done online so that the students will feel the real atmosphere of teaching activities. Second, the network coverage should be improved so that students from any region in Indonesia could have high-quality access to the internet.Dalton disagreed with Ava and Catalina that blended learning should be continued to be implemented for classroom instructions.

> *The internet network in my area is still bad so that blended learning becomes less effective, especially when receiving learning material. I often struggled with Zoom and Google Meeting technology for online classes as I was new to them at the time, which resulted in non-optimal learning experiences*. (Dalton)

From the excerpt above it can be seen that he believed that blended learning did not suit his situation. Two main reasons emerged from his statement. First, the internet connection was still poor in his area so using videoconferencing would still be a challenge for him as it requires wide bandwidths. Second, he reported that he was not well-versed in using video-conference media such as *Zoom* or *Google Meet*, which prevented him from keeping up and engaging in classroom activities. Thus, he preferred the onsite learning as a whole so that to make sure he would have no problem in direct communication with the lecturer and in social communication with his peers.

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Discussion

This study revealed several benefits of the implementation of blended learning from the students' perceptions. First, blended learning can be convenient for students since they can do the assignments anywhere and anytime. This is similar to Kosar (2016) who found that blended learning was adaptable and enhanced learners' motivation and autonomy. The current study also found that students can further explore the material being taught by looking for more sources from the internet, *YouTube* and other websites. Thus, they can get a better grasp of the material with a richer perspective without being only reliant on the lecturers. This is in agreement with previous studies (e.g., Cakrawati, 2017; Mudra, 2018) whose results suggested that blended learning can improve students' performance in EFL and boost their autonomy. Other studies (e.g., Atmio & Nugroho, 2020; Basri & Paramma, 2019) have found that students welcome the innovation blended learning has brought since it can heighten their learning satisfaction and gain flexibility for learning.

The present results also indicate that many of the students enjoyed the class since they were given new online material during the classroom activities and they engaged with it enthusiastically. The use of videos and Q & A sessions gave time for the students to express their ideas and listen to what their peers had to say. Ja'ashan (2015) and Friatin et al. (2017) found that blended learning could help them learn English in a collaborative, dynamic, and engaging manner, hence increasing their English language abilities.

The students expected the allocation for the blended learning to be balanced where the first half semester is intended for an online class for theoretical lessons while the other half is dedicated to a face-to-face meeting for practical lessons. Each course is divided into two segments, theoretical and practical. Students wanted that the first eight meetings are held face-to-face to explain theories as a foundation for doing the final project. This is done so that students can ask questions clearly when face to face and get a better feel for it. Then, the last eight meetings are used for online meetings if needed in making the final assignment where students can work alone at home and be submitted online. This finding reflects the principle of blended learning of Gruba and Hinkelman (2012), that it is a learning activity that uses 45% online learning and the rest face-to-face learning.

Blended learning was also reported to let students exercise their ability to come up with new ideas and become more creative when completing their assignments. In previous studies, Pitaloka et al. (2020) found that blended learning had certain benefits such as ease of use, demanding learning, flexibility, simple materials, and learning variants.

Most students in the present study found that blended learning could be carried out effectively through various online platforms such as *Webex, Edmodo* and *Google Class*room. These platforms provide tools for the students to submit their assignments so the lecturer can check them later. Such a finding supports the results of the study conducted by Sari and Wahyudin (2019) which found that blended learning via *Instagram* provided students with pleasant and accessible learning activities, and was a beneficial instrument for EFL learners. The corrections from the lecturer can always be checked individually by the students so that they can track the progress of their study in real time. In a like manner, Aldosemani et al. (2018) reported that blended learning can provide real-time access to course materials as well as flexibility. Despite being unfamiliar to many students, the trend of using online learning platforms has been on the rise and students who are not well-versed in them may have to take time to get used to them. It must be done considering that many institutions, including colleges in Indonesia, are already responding to these changes by adjusting or even revising their curriculum to incorporate digital technology into the learning process (Sindo, 2018). The Indonesian government has also recommended that university officials incorporate hybrid online learning into their curricula (Bramasta & Wedhaswarty, 2020; Zainuddin & Keumala, 2018).

This current study has also showed that blended learning has some problems according to the perceptions of the students. For example, when taking online classes, students living in remote areas where the internet is poor may have difficulties receiving assigned material sent to them as assignments. This lack of connectivity hinders students from engaging in class since they cannot hear to the lecturers clearly or ask questions directly when they do not comprehend something. Missing online classes is common and there is the need to ask someone else to let them know what was just explained by the lecturer. This finding is similar to some previous studies. Students' reported unfavorable opinions of blended learning include sluggish internet access. According to Sari and Wahyudin (2019) a lack of interaction occurs when students wish to ask professors about the subject and are unable to do so due to poor connections, causing pupils to

not comprehend what they must learning. Another study, Rianto (2020), reported that students had some technical challenges and a poor internet connection.

Also found in this research was that students had issues when using online learning platforms such as *Webex* and *Google Classroom* and video-conference applications such as *Zoom* and *Google Mee*t. This comes about due to the requirement for a wide range of learning media. Inadequate facilities and infrastructure can pose a challenge to the implementation of this model (Purnomo et al., 2022). A case study (Hayati et al. 2021) revealed that a prevalent obstacle encountered by educators is the students lacked the devices and equipment needed for online classes. According to their findings, many educators expressed their discontent about this issue. For certain courses, *Zoom* meetings were reported to be advantageous (Mandasari et al., 2022). However, the utilization of *Zoom* may not prove to be useful in facilitating the instruction of microteaching, oral communication proficiency, and discourse-based curricula. The pedagogy of these courses necessitates a teaching approach that extends beyond a purely theoretical framework. Agustin et al. (2022) revealed that some issues that can arise when using *Zoom* are due to the limited time access and delays in the application's performance when the network or data usage allowance is inadequate. It can be concluded that utilising *Zoom* may result in inadequate transmission of learning material, leading to incomplete or partial comprehension among students.

Other problems mentioned in the present research that are also found in previous studies as well are a lack of face-to-face engagement, too much time consumed, and the ease with which they can cheat (Ja'ashan, 2015; Pitaloka et al. 2020; Rombe, 2014).

The classroom instruction reported by the participants of the current study was not always successful due to a lack of knowledge and skills of teachers while using technology. Mulyono et al. (2021) also mentioned that insufficient blended learning training and support were key hurdles that prevented instructors from planning and managing blended learning activities, preventing them from addressing the technological concerns that arose during classes.

Another issue reported by the participants was that became tired and bored easily when staring at the laptop screen for a prolonged period. Furthermore, they also suffered from *Zoom* fatigue so severely that they lost focus halfway through the class. Fauville et al. (2021) found that people who attended more and longer meetings were more fatigued than those who attended fewer and shorter sessions. Furthermore, people who are tired after a video conference can have negative opinions about the experience. Amponsah et al. (2021) reported a similar conclusion related video conferencing during the COVID-19 lockdown period which was a taxing experience according to the participants.

Finally, students reported that they were tempted to commit plagiarism by copy-pasting texts they have found on the internet. This occurred because limited face-to-face interaction and supervision in online learning lowered students' sense of accountability, making them more likely to copy material from the internet. They believe that as they are separated by space, they are not monitored by their lecturers . This behavior was revealed by the students during the interview.

Pedagogical implications

The pedagogical implications that can be drawn from this study are that in general students respond relatively positively to the implementation of blended learning. According to the results of the Emotional Aspect, students favored blended learning due to its adaptability with regard to time and location. However, digital literacy has to be mastered by students because this study found that they were not yet fully ready to use online learning platforms and online video-conferencing applications effectively and interactively. Students must master how to use online learning platforms such as *Zoom* or *Google Meet* so they can take part in lectures online. Furthermore, campuses should hold additional training seminars covering the use of online platforms for teachers.

Limitations

This study had some limitations that may be further researched. First, this study only investigates students' perceptions of blended learning without looking at the perceptions of the lecturers who taught them. Second, field observation was not conducted due to limitations caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and limited funds. The data from the FGD and questionnaire might be more complete if accompanied by direct observation. Third, this study only relies on students' self-reports, and therefore, their claims and statements cannot be

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crosschecked. Fourth, this study only examines students' perceptions of the implementation of blended learning at the undergraduate level so that the perceptions obtained are less varied. Therefore, future researchers can combine research participants by involving high school students, and graduate students so that the possible different perceptions could be revealed among these education tiers.

Conclusion

This study investigated university students' perceptions of blended learning in English language teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic by employing a mixed-methods design that combined quantitative survey data with qualitative insights to provide a broader and more contextualized understanding of students' experiences in higher education. The findings showed that students generally held neutral perceptions with a clear tendency toward agreement, indicating that blended learning was widely accepted. Many participants valued its flexibility, particularly the ability to access learning materials anytime and anywhere, as well as the greater autonomy it provided in managing their own learning pace. Students also reported that blended learning exposed them to diverse digital resources, which supported their language development and encouraged more independent study habits. However, several challenges were identified, including unstable internet connections, limited access to appropriate devices, insufficient digital skills, and reduced face-to-face interaction, which in some cases affected students' motivation, engagement, and opportunities to receive immediate feedback from lecturers. These challenges suggest that the effectiveness of blended learning depends not only on well-designed instructional strategies but also on adequate technological support, clear guidance from lecturers, and the development of students' digital competence. Despite its contributions, this study relied mainly on students' self-reported perceptions without incorporating lecturers' perspectives or classroom observations, which may limit the comprehensiveness of the findings. Furthermore, the focus on undergraduate students may restrict the generalizability of the results. Therefore, future research should involve participants from different educational levels, include educators' viewpoints, and employ multiple data collection methods to gain deeper and more balanced insights into blended learning implementation.

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Appendix 1

List of Questions for Focus Group Discussion

No.	List of Questions
1	Seperti apa kegiatan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris selama pandemic Covid-19 ini? *During the Covid-19 pandemic, what were the English-learning activities like?*
2	Di antara metode belajar berikut ini, mana yang Saudara paling sukai? Mengapa? 1) Belajar secara daring 2) Belajar secara tatap muka 3) Belajar secara campuran (daring dan tatap muka) *Which of these study methods do you like the most? Why?* *1) Learning online* *2) Learning onsite/ face-to-face* *3) Blended learning (online and face-to-face)*
3	Apa kendala dan kemudahan yang Saudara alami selama kegiatan belajar bahasa Inggris melalui blended learning? *What were the obstacles and conveniences that you experienced while learning English through blended learning?*
4	Apa harapan Saudara kepada pemerintah agar pembelajaran blended learning lebih lancar di kampus saudara? *What are your hopes for the government so that blended learning can run more smoothly on your campus?*

Appendix 2

Questionnaire

No.	List of Statements
1	Blended learning yang dilakukan baik tatap muka maupun daring melalui platform daring (*Zoom, Google Meeting, Google Classroom, WhatsApp*, dll.) membuat pembelajaran bahasa Inggris menjadi efektif dan efisien. *Blended learning done both face-to-face and online through online platforms (Zoom, Google Meeting, Google Classroom, WhatsApp, etc.) makes English learning effective and efficient.*
2	Saya selalu memiliki pemahaman yang baik dan berpartisipasi aktif selama pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, baik tatap muka maupun daring melalui platform daring. *I always have good comprehension and active participation during English language learning, both face-to-face and online through online platform.*
3	Saya dapat menyelesaikan tugas bahasa Inggris, baik yang diberikan di kelas maupun yang diberikan di platform daring. *I can complete English assignments both given in classroom and given in online platforms*.
4	Saya dapat bekerja sama dengan teman jika ada tugas kelompok dalam kegiatan pembelajaran baik tatap muka maupun daring melalui platform daring. *I can work with friends if there are group assignments within the learning activity both face-to-face and online through online platforms.*
5	Dengan belajar melalui platform daring, saya bisa berdiskusi tentang apa saja, dimana saja dan kapan saja dengan teman, baik dari segi materi kuliah maupun tugas. *By learning through online platforms, I can discuss anything anywhere and at anytime with friends, both in terms of course materials and assignments.*
6	Dalam pembelajaran tatap muka, saya dapat bertanya kepada dosen dan teman-teman saya tentang materi atau tugas yang sebelumnya diberikan dalam platform daring yang belum saya pahami. *In face-to-face learning, I can ask my lecturer and friends about the material or assignments previously shared in online platforms that I have not yet comprehended.*
7	Saya selalu menghadiri kelas untuk belajar bahasa Inggris menggunakan blended learning, baik di kelas tatap muka maupun di platform daring. *I always attend the class to learn English using blended learning, both in face-to-face class and in online platforms.*
8	Dengan menggunakan blended learning, saya selalu mengumpulkan tugas tepat waktu, baik di kelas tatap muka maupun di platform daring. *By using blended learning, I always submit assignments on time, both in dace-to-face class and in online platforms.*
9	Saya selalu mematuhi perintah dosen untuk mengikuti pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, baik di kelas tatap muka maupun di platform daring. *I always follow the lecturer's orders to participate in learning English both in face-to-face class and in online platforms.*
10	Saya sangat antusias belajar bahasa Inggris menggunakan blended learning, baik di kelas tatap muka maupun di platform daring. *I am very enthusiastic about learning English using blended learning, both in face-to-face class and in online platforms.*
11	Saya merasa senang ketika belajar bahasa Inggris menggunakan blended learning, baik di kelas tatap muka maupun dalam platform daring. *I feel happy when learning English using blended learning both in face-to-face class and in online platforms.*
12	Belajar bahasa Inggris melalui blended learning tidak pernah membuat saya bosan, baik di kelas tatap muka maupun di platform daring. *Learning English through blended learning never makes me feel bored, be it in face-to-face class or in online platforms.*
13	Saya selalu mencoba untuk menjawab pertanyaan-pertanyaan yang dilemparkan oleh dosen, baik di kelas tatap muka maupun di platform daring. *I always try to respond to the lecturer's questions both in face-to-face class and in online platforms.*
14	Saya selalu mengerjakan tugas yang diberikan oleh dosen dengan baik, baik di kelas tatap muka maupun di platform daring. *I always do the assignments given by the lecturer well, both in face-to-face class and in online platforms.*
15	Saya selalu menyampaikan ide/gagasan saya di dalam kelas, baik di kelas tatap muka maupun di platform daring. *I always communicate my ideas to the classroom, both in face-to-face class and in online platforms.*
16	Saya selalu membantu teman saya dalam mengerjakan tugas, baik di kelas tatap muka maupun di platform daring. *I always help my friends to do the tasks, both in face-to-face class and in online platforms.*
17	Saya selalu menjawab pertanyaan dosen tentang materi kuliah yang lalu, baik di kelas tatap muka maupun di platform daring. *I always answer the lecturer's questions related to the last materials, both in face-to-face class and in online platforms.*
18	Belajar/kuliah secara daring melalui platform daring adalah cara belajar yang terbaik bagi saya. *Studying online through online platforms is the best learning mode for me.*
19	Belajar/kuliah secara luring atau tatap muka di kelas adalah cara belajar yang terbaik bagi saya. *Studying offline or face-to-face in the classroom is the best learning mode for me.*
20	Belajar/kuliah dengan cara belajar campuran, yakni secara luring atau tatap muka di kelas dan juga secara daring dengan platform daring adalah cara belajar yang terbaik bagi saya. *Studying through blended learning mode, which is offline/face-to-face and online through online platforms, is the best learning mode for me.*

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