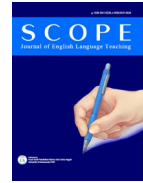




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Research Article

English Teaching and Learning in the Post-Covid-19 Era: Students' Preferences and Perceptions

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KEYWORDS

Language Teaching and Learning,
 Post-Pandemic,
 Students' preference and perception.

A B S T R A C T

In the new era, several changes occurred in language teaching and learning. Some educators employ traditional classrooms, while others use online learning and blended learning. This study aimed to investigate students' preferences and perceptions about language teaching and learning. This study utilizes a qualitative design and involves 80 students from the English Education Department of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra. The students were given a closed-ended questionnaire to evaluate their preferences for the language teaching and learning process. The researcher then interviewed various students to learn about their thoughts on the language teaching and learning process. The students were selected based on their questionnaire responses. The percentages were used to analyze the questionnaire data, while thematic content analysis was used to analyze the interview data. The questionnaire results showed that 40% of students preferred face-to-face classrooms, 30% chose online learning, and 30% chose blended learning. In the interview, students stated that face-to-face, online, and blended learning positively impacted their language learning, though they also had negative perceptions of online learning. This study suggests that the teachers use in-person meetings because most students have positive perceptions of the implementation of face-to-face in EFL classrooms.

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INTRODUCTION

Before the Covid-19 era, the traditional learning environment (TLE) developed the teaching and learning process. The teaching and learning process uses face-to-face interactions. Traditional learning is characterized by physical classrooms where students/teachers have to participate in campus/school classes; teacher-based learning, where teachers impart knowledge, many materials and books in print, knowledge communication

approach, and many ICT tools are part of it (Syarofi et al., 2018). The main tools are boards, books, and other printed and interactive boards. Face-to-face systems require the learners and instructors to simultaneously be in the same place.

Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the teaching system in education has fundamentally changed. The explosion of the Covid-19 pandemic has caused fundamental changes worldwide, including in education (Santosa et al., 2022). Teaching in Indonesia has also changed online learning, including at the university level.

Face-to-face (F2F) classes have shifted to online learning to prevent the spread of the pandemic. This phase presents approaches and techniques in an online learning environment (OLE) during the Covid-19 pandemic. Key features of this phase include home learning, online instruction, student-based learning, student-teacher interaction environments, e-learning books and materials, and the creation of knowledge approaches (Syarofi et al., 2018). The technology used for communication also supports the educational process. Many researchers have discussed teachers' and students' perceptions of online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Negative perceptions are adversely affected by the loss of direct communication between teachers and students, the enormous amount of online assignments, and the problems of using e-learning (Saputra et al., 2022; Sugara, R., 2023; Taman, P., et al., 2021; Laili & Nashir, 2021). Students regarded the flexibility of online learning styles as one of the potential advantages during the pandemic (Laili & Nashir, 2021).

After the Covid-19 pandemic, the schools opened, but with some restrictions. Many schools and colleges have rules regarding teaching and learning. The mix of F2F and online learning is utilized in schools, therefore, most schools and universities utilize blended learning. Blended learning, which combines Learning management system (LMS) instruction with F2F learning in the classroom, is a modern method of learning that enables students to learn English from anywhere and at any time (Suriaman et al., 2022). Blended learning can enable more flexible learning experiences by integrating new forms of online instruction, learning management systems, and richer device experiences (Siregar et al., 2002)

Nowadays, many lecturers choose different modes of teaching language. Some prefer to use in-person meetings because they can explain directly in the classroom, but others prefer to use online meetings because of the flexibility of time and place. Some research discussed teachers' perceptions of challenges in online learning. EFL teachers in Indonesia reported medium-level challenges in teaching EFL online in terms of technology use, instruction, assessment, and students, whilst challenges in assessing students in online learning (Saputra et al., 2022; Rapanta et al., 2020; Alolaywi, 2021). On the other hand, lecturers mix in-person meetings and online classes depending on the situation. The previous study also found that three key differences between face-to-face (F2F) and online learning include (1) space and presence, (2) self-presentation, and (3) interaction (Rapanta et al., 2020). Based on the previous research, it was important to explore the students' points of view about English teaching and learning in post-pandemic. The researcher investigated the students' preference for learning systems and their perceptions of the learning systems used in the university

during Post Covid-19 Pandemic; therefore, the lecturers have some consideration about how they teach the students.

METHOD

This study method used a qualitative technique that focus on the case study approach. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social human problem. This study examined the phenomenon that some classrooms have various teaching-learning styles nowadays, such as face-to-face, online, and blended. This research investigates students' language learning preferences after the pandemic. The 80 students of the English Education Department of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra were the participants of this study.

A closed questionnaire in Google Forms consisting of ten statements was created to investigate the students' preferences in the post-pandemic. Then, an interview was designed to explore the students' perceptions of the learning style. The questionnaire data were analyzed using percentages, while the interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Firstly, the researcher began to listen to the recordings of interviews, transcribe the interviews, and read the transcripts. Then, the researcher began to classify the data and code the data. The data was organized into main themes. The researcher should start focusing on the connections between codes, subthemes, and themes. The next step is to concentrate on and define the data's themes and subthemes. Finally, researchers must interpret their analysis into interpretable results findings. A member check was used to ensure the credibility of this study. The researcher shared the results of the transcript analyses with the participants of this study and either ensured or disproved any claims.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Preference for Learning Systems in the New Era

The first finding in this study presented the students' preference for English language learning systems used in the New era. The results from the questionnaires described that students prefer to use face-to-face than blended learning, and online learning.

In the post covid-19 era, which learning system do you prefer to use in learning?

80 jawaban

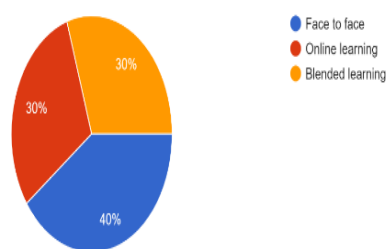


Figure 1. Students’ Preference in Learning Systems in the Post COVID-19 Era

Figure 1 represented that most of the student’s preference for language learning systems was face-to-face learning systems (40%). The other learning systems that students decided to prefer are online and blended, with the exact percentages (30%). The results of study indicated that students predominantly preferred face-to-face learning, followed by blended learning, and then online learning. In line with this study, the other study presented 38.9% of students chose face-to-face learning systems, 26.3% wanted to utilize online learning systems, and 34.7% recommended blended learning systems (Roswani, 2022). In addition, other survey results show that students prefer face-to-face learning over blended learning by as much as 75% to 25% (Nasution et al., 2021). Furthermore, most students (91%) prefer face to face learning to online learning (Laili & Nashir, 2021). Conversely, other research found that 62.2% of respondents favoured blended learning, while 22.7% preferred distance learning and 15.1% opted for traditional learning methods (Bordoloi et al., 2021).

Students have different reasons for choosing learning systems based on their perceptions. The second objective of this study was to describe the students’ perceptions of learning systems used in the teaching-learning process during a post-COVID-19 pandemic. Face-to-face (F2F) learning, online, and blended learning were discussed from the student’s perceptions. The themes of the students’ perceptions were derived from the transcripts of interviews.

Students’ Perceptions of the Use of Face-to-Face in Post-Covid-19 Pandemic

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, F2F learning was utilized in many classrooms. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the classroom was changed from traditional classrooms to online classrooms. Now, after the Covid-19 pandemic, most students choose in-person rather than virtual meetings. According to the questionnaire results, students have a generally positive attitude about face-to-face learning. A considerable majority, 67%, believe face-to-

face learning is effective, implying that in-person contacts are valued for accomplishing educational goals. Similarly, 73% of respondents prefer face-to-face learning, indicating that the in-person approach is widely accepted and engaging. In terms of personal learning styles, 62% of respondents believe that face-to-face learning is best for them, while 22% believe it is less compatible, and 16% have neutral opinions. Overall, these findings indicate a significant preference for face-to-face learning, stressing its effectiveness and enjoyment while acknowledging that it may not suit everyone’s learning style exactly. Notably, there is no major negative feedback or neutrality, which highlights a general consensus.

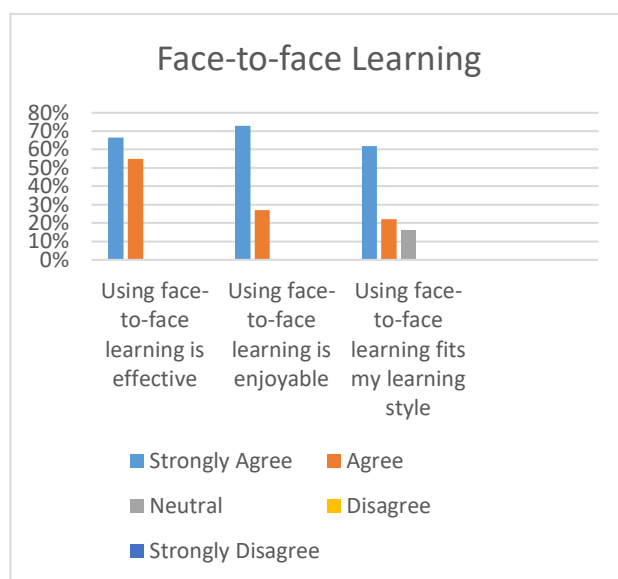


Figure 2. Students’ Perception of Face-to-Face Learning Systems in the New Era

The thematic analysis also represented that students have positive perceptions of face-to-face learning systems.

Theme 1: Effective learning system

The face-to-face learning system was practically effective because the students got the information more accessible and did not have network problems like in online classes. The students have many reasons to prefer face-to-face rather than online learning. Some students’ statements described that F2F was more effective because they can get easier interact with teachers and classmates.

MD stated: *“Face-to-face is easier to get information and to understand the material, while online learning faces many problems like bad signal”.*

MH stated: *“Because face-to-face communication and interaction with others becomes easier, the learning process becomes more focused and effective”.*

The students also stated that they faced challenges in using online meetings. Another researcher also found that 52.2% of students reported that online teaching is more complex than face-to-face teaching (Alqahtani, 2022). It meant that

they preferred to apply the in-person meeting in language learning.

Theme 2: Face to face learning system allow direct interaction

Students who chose the face-to-face method emphasized the value of having to interact with instructors and other students because these interactions gained their learning by providing immediate feedback. Face-to-face learning systems allow direct interaction between students and lecturers in the classroom.

MH stated, "Because *face-to-face communication and interaction with others becomes easier*".

SL stated: "*It is easy to practice English directly, for example, making dialogues*".

The students stated that face-to-face interaction facilitated some practice in the classroom, especially in speaking class. It was different when they used online learning. Online teaching was complex noted that pupils failed to pay attention when their teacher was not in front of them (Alqahtani, 2022).

Theme 3: The face-to-face learning system encourages students to understand the materials

Learners who used a face-to-face teaching-learning system praised their instructors' ability to present course materials in an engaging and easily understood manner. The use of a face-to-face learning system contributes to improving student understanding.

FL stated: "*I prefer to use face-to-face learning because the learning process can be delivered clearly, and more understanding about the learning material*".

NH stated: "*Because when I learn with the face-to-face system, I can easier to understand the material, and with the face-to-face system, we will get the knowledge easier with practice*".

They stated that face-to-face learning systems made it easy to understand the materials because the lecturers explained the material directly, and they asked the lecturers if they did not understand the materials. They also can discuss the topic with their classmates about the materials. The following reasons were given by postgraduate students who preferred to continue their education in a traditional or face-to-face setting: 1. Traditional study is more structured. 2. There is a greater emphasis on conventional education. 3. Attending a traditional classroom is preferable. (Alqahtani, 2022).

Students' Perceptions of the Use of Online Learning in Post-Covid-19 Pandemic

The data from the questionnaires represented that some students have positive perceptions on the use of online learning, though some students did not agree with the

statement that online learning is effective. After the getting the result of questionnaire, the students were interviewed about their positive and negative perception of online learning.

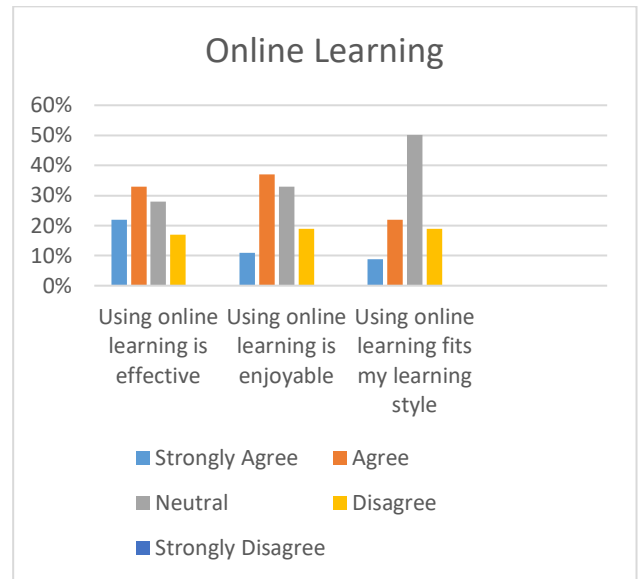


Figure 3. Students' Perception of Online Learning Systems in the New Era

The figure above illustrates many different responses to online learning across multiple aspects. In discussing to the effectiveness of online learning, 22% strongly agree and 33% agree, showing that the majority believe it is effective, with 28% neutral and 17% disagreeing. This indicates a generally positive assessment of online learning's effectiveness, albeit with some caution. Considering satisfaction, 11% strongly agree and 37% agree that online learning is fun, while 33% are indifferent and 19% disagree, indicating a modest level of enjoyment but also significant ambivalence and discontent. In terms of how well online learning matches individual learning styles, 8.8% strongly agree and 22% agree, indicating that only a small percentage finds it suitable for their needs. However, 50.2% are neutral, while 19% disagree.

Theme 1: Online learning reduces the spread of the Covid-19 Virus

Though most people got the vaccine for Covid-19, some still felt apprehensive about the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Some students prefer to use online learning systems to avoid spreading the virus. During the pandemic, students indicated that online learning was useful (Mahyoob, 2020).

AM stated: "*Because it probably prevents COVID's disease from spreading*".

SJ stated: "*Because in my opinion, the learning system is more effective in breaking the chain of the spread of covid 19, but on the one hand, it also has weaknesses in the aspect of student understanding*".

Theme 2: Online learning is flexible

Another advantage of using online learning was the flexible time and place. The students did not need to attend in the same place when teaching the learning process.

JH stated: *“Because online learning is flexible, and I have plenty of time to exercise.”*

KA stated: *“Since I have much work to do at home, my parents need me to help them find more money as an ordinary merchant, saving more money to prepare my last semester script or anything with the tuition fees. My house was far from the college, and my parents gave me 12k daily to refill transportation oil. In my opinion, online and face-to-face learning have the same purpose in studying to learn a new lesson from each subject. So, I can do my paper while helping my parents”.*

Theme 3: Online learning has the weakness

Online learning needs internet access; meanwhile, the students live in a rural area which does not have a good internet connection. The geographical aspect is one of the crucial things in distance learning. One of the problems in virtual learning is a bad internet connection (Syafri & Saude, 2022). Some students said that though online learning is flexible, they have problems with internet connection when they have virtual meetings, such as Zoom meetings. Online learning faced obstacles in the assessment domain (Saputra et al., 2022).

AR stated: *“Because if we use online learning is not conducive because, in my area, the signal is not good enough to use Zoom/G-Meet”.*

RS stated: *“Because this learning system is flexible although there is some weakness such as signal problems”.*

Those students found issues in using virtual learning due to low internet access. Several investigations have additionally identified challenges in the practice of online learning. The students’ challenges in the remote area were mainly related to the platforms and network connection (Santosa et al., 2022; Mahyoob, 2020; Octaberlina & Muslimin, 2020) discovered that the teacher experienced network problems while remote learning. Financial issues, inspiration, evaluation, detachment from peers, insufficient e-learning abilities and experience, warmth, and social space are also identified as e-learning barriers for students. E-learning barriers come in various forms, such as information constraints and evaluation challenges (Octaberlina & Muslimin, 2020).

Students’ Perceptions of the Use of Blended Learning in Post-Covid-19 Pandemic

The questionnaire results on blended learning are quite encouraging. 64% of respondents strongly agree and 56% agree that blended learning is effective, showing that many people believe it helps them achieve their

educational goals. When it comes to enjoyment, 71% strongly agree and 29% agree that blended learning is enjoyable, suggesting that most find it engaging and satisfying. Regarding whether blended learning suits individual learning styles, 51% strongly agree and 33% agree that it fits their needs, indicating that a solid majority feel it matches their learning preferences. Only 16% are neutral, and no one disagrees or strongly disagrees, which points to a widespread acceptance and positive view of blended learning. These results highlight a strong appreciation for blended learning’s effectiveness, enjoyment, and alignment with personal learning styles.

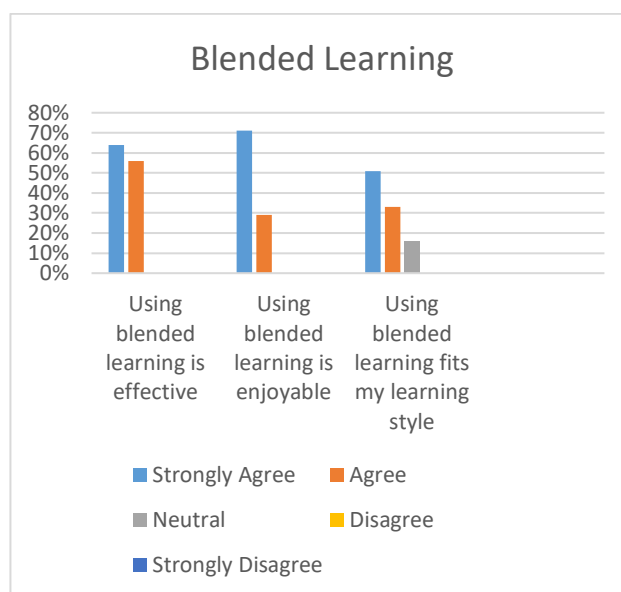


Figure 4. Students’ Perception of Blended Learning Systems in the New Era

The results of the interviews claimed that blended learning has some benefits for the students.

Theme 1: Blended learning is flexible

Blended learning gave students experience in both in-person meetings and virtual meetings. Flexibility is also one of the benefits of blended learning where the students do not have to attend the classroom every meeting when using the blended learning method. Blended learning can be done virtually, and then there are meetings with the teacher/lecturer in the classroom directly. The students need variations of the circumstances in the learning process, not always online meetings or only face-to-face.

RS stated: *“Because blended learning makes me more focused on learning, it is good to learn when it is not always online and offline (face to face)”.*

Theme 2: Blended learning is effective

Using the blended learning method allows you to save more money and time. By applying blended learning methods, students do not always attend the classroom so

students save money on transportation costs to get to the College several days. The virtual meeting material does not require a physical book because it is already available online and participants only need to download it.

IW stated: *“Because in my opinion blended learning system is more balanced because we can practice in class and get the material online”*.

Some lecturers used the learning management system (LMS) such as e-learning systems. The lecturer sent the materials in e-learning, so the students downloaded those materials. The teaching-learning process was done asynchronously, in which the students adjusted their time to learn from LMS.

AW stated: *“When using the blended learning system, we can adjust the time well; if it is the delivery of material, it is better to use online learning, and when it is practice, it is better to use face-to-face learning”*.

Theme 3: Blended learning facilitates better language learning

Blended learning is a good system which is used in learning to help students encourage their competence in learning English. The optimal integration of in-person meetings and online meetings was applied in blended learning. Using blended learning, students have the opportunity to learn about ITC and also to learn materials directly with the lecturers. Blended learning also allows students to learn autonomously simultaneously or at different places and times. In online meetings, it can be applied synchronous or asynchronous learning.

AN stated: *“Because we want to understand the topic of our material in the class, I want to use blended learning”*.

LN stated: *“Online learning is good because it can improve a student's ability to use IT, which is very suitable in today's digital era. However, face-to-face learning is one of the most efficient ways of learning because it can meet face to face and there are fewer obstacles during learning”*.

Some blended learning sometimes is transformed into interactive media. For example, interactive recordings, multimedia explanations from lecturers, podcasts, and an e-book. All of this is augmented by a variation of live sessions, online chats with lecturers, and other technological support. From the data above, the findings represented three advantages of blended learning: flexibility, effectiveness, and accommodate better language learning. In line with this, blended learning must focus on four factors: (1) promoting flexibility, (2) encouraging interaction, (3) assisting student learning processes, and (4) encouraging a positive learning climate. (Nasution et al., 2021). In addition, the application of blended learning uses adequate technology quality, tools utilised, and learning theory

(Suriaman et al., 2022). Additionally, another study revealed that students held positive perceptions towards the implementation of blended learning in English Language Teaching (ELT) (Sherli Novianti Talis et al., 2018).

CONCLUSION

This study represented that most students preferred to choose traditional classrooms rather than online learning and blended learning in post-Covid 19 era. Though the students have positive perceptions of face-to-face, online, and blended learning. Students stated that face-to-face is an effective learning which allowed them to have interaction between students and lecturer, students and students and they understand the materials. Then, the students perceive that online learning is flexible and reduce the spread of Covid-19 virus, though they also perceive that online learning has drawbacks such as low internet access. The students also perceive that blended learning is effective, flexible, and facilitate better learning process. The research findings are used by educators as a reflection before choosing the language teaching and learning styles. Future research could further explore the dynamics of traditional classroom and blended learning approaches, particularly in relation to advancements in technology in language teaching and learning.

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