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# BLENDED LEARNING IN ESL/EFL CLASS

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## Abstract

Blended learning requires digital technology transformation for lecturers and students, up-to-date teaching methods, flexible learning processes, the effectiveness of time, space, budget, learning motivation, learning autonomy, all of which contribute to improving student learning achievement. However, current empirical research results do not support the claim that blended learning improves students' English proficiency and learning autonomy. Evidence shows that the blended learning has an effect on students' English competence, learning autonomy, motivation, and ICT literacy. For this article, the effect of blended learning in ESL/EFL was investigated and defined. This study is a quantitative explanatory research type with a pre-test and post-test design. The research participants were 198 students from the Department of Primary School Teacher Education, Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng. Seventy-four participants were chosen as samples using a random sampling method. Data was taken by test and non-test, and data was then analysed by a software program called SPSS 22.0. Twelve blended learning sessions, including six sessions in face-to-face settings and six sessions, are done virtually through the Zoom application. The results show that blended learning strengthens English student competence (the mean score on the post-test = 82.57), learning autonomy (88.57%), learning motivation (80%), and ICT literacy (71.43%).

Keywords: blended learning, EFL, English course, ESL, teaching

## Introduction

Students still need the assistance of all stakeholders in the learning process. Through this learning process, academic achievement and humanistic values are continually strengthened for enhancing students' better bright future. Educators are continuously expected to display creative learning approaches in promoting academic and non-academic outcomes for students. This concept is in line with the main task, namely, educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students' learning progress in each academic unit (Makovec, 2018; Syarifuddin, 2015; www.jdih.kemenkeu.go.id, 2005).

The educator's main task is to facilitate the teacher to display four competencies inherent in the teaching profession, namely pedagogical

competence, personality, social competence, and professional competence. Professional competence reflects the mastery of teaching material comprehensively, including its assessment. Pedagogical competence, which focuses on educators' ability to apply pedagogical knowledge in teaching. Social competence highlights encouraging students to become character persons who can live in harmony with others (Bautista & Ortega-Ruíz, 2015; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). These four competencies are the key factors that lead to excellence in educational values and students' character (Hindun et al., 2020; Juniantari, Dewi, & Devi, 2017).

All education stakeholders do not expect stagnation in a learning process; instead, they want all students to excel and become individuals who excel in every area of life. Teachers are continually encouraged to present innovative English learning methods that are appropriate to meet student achievement goals (Darong., 2021). The learning method innovation is an adaptive and solution step from the English teacher to support each competency's learning outcomes (Intarapanich, 2012; Lakshmi, Devi, & Aparna, 2020; Munzaki, Suadah, & Risdaneva, 2016).

These learning methods are mostly in line with student learning styles and modern digital technology advancement. Teachers mainly consider three types of student learning styles in implementing learning methods: visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic learning styles (Awla, 2014; Gilakjani, 2012; Widayanti, 2013). Visual learning styles rely solely on visual abilities, auditory focuses on hearing, and kinaesthetic expects direct demonstrations to understand the issue.

Learning interactions are very often adapted to the demands of developments in digital technology. The result of this technology has driven the presence of a digital-based learning paradigm. This paradigm transforms the perspective and methodology of learning, giving students the largest possible space to access information sources individually, without time and space limitations (Al-Maqtri, 2014; Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2014; Mathew, Sreehari, & Al-Rubaat, 2019). Digital-based learning is an ideal option for learning English today. Learners are central to the learning process, a source of knowledge information, greater accessibility, and improved digital skills (Cai, 2012; Kim, 2014; Menggo, Midun, & Pandor, 2021). Based on this argument, blended learning is an excellent solution as it can accommodate variations of student learning styles and the demands of advancing digital technology.

In reality, blended learning is evolving in line with advancements in information technology, computers, audio, audio-visual, and mobile learning. It emerges as a form of constructive criticism of the monotony of students whose learning process is still conventional, that is, face-to-face in classrooms. However, this conventional learning is still required in the development of a student's affection. In addition, blended learning is a learning innovation that adapts to shifting patterns of human interaction and the advancement of information, communication, and technology (ICT) (Abdullah, 2018; Zhang & Zhu, 2017).

Blended learning provides a range of benefits that contribute to the innovation of teaching methods and improvements in student learning patterns. The strengths of blended learning include improving the digital literacy skills of lecturers and students, composing content of teaching materials that are in line with current standards, unlimited sources of information, responsible and enthusiastic students, accommodating differences in educational learning styles

and flexibility in space and time (Jeffrey, Milne, Suddaby, & Higgins, 2014; Khan, Qayyum, Shaik, Ali, & Bebi, 2012). This advantage can promote the improvement of students' academic and non-academic achievements.

In the context of studying English as a Second Language (ESL) or a Foreign Language (EFL), it is also proven and the use of blended learning may enhance students' English proficiency (Damayanti & Sari, 2017; Ginaya, Rejeki, & Astuti, 2018). These researchers explain that the implementation of blended learning in English courses could boost language and non-language skills. The English language skills referred to include listening, speaking, reading, and writing, while non-language skills are related to a more engaging and meaningful classroom atmosphere, strengthening students' critical thinking skills and developing students' digital literacy skills.

Indeed, problem-solving is one of the requirements of 21$^{st}$-century education. Educators aim to teach critical thinking, communication, and collaboration among students to help students manage the challenges of competing in an increasingly complex world (Ndiung, Sariyasa, Jehadus, & Apsari, 2021; Zubaidah, Fuad, Mahanal, & Suarsini, 2017). Critical thinking skills enable students to use complex thinking systems in interaction, make correct decisions, and overcome several problems in the learning process (Kızıltoprak & Köse, 2017; Runisah, Herman, & Dahlan, 2016).

However, it does not mean that blended learning does not encounter a number of challenges in its application. Lecturer digital skills, understanding the substance of blended learning, student initiative, policies for implementing blended learning by the government or university management, and the availability of information, communication, and technology infrastructure are issues that are urgently addressed by all higher education stakeholders (Apandi & Raman, 2020; Daud & Ghani, 2019).

The data findings from the above studies focus on the effect of applying blended learning to certain language skills or language components. Latest empirical studies have not confirmed the study data related to the effect of blended learning on the improvement of integrative English language skills and the challenges of implementing blended learning at certain educational levels. This gap prompted researchers to undertake this study.

Learning English for non-English students department in the Indonesian context is still integrative, namely the introduction of English learning geared towards achieving four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The achievement of these basics English skills must be supported by the knowledge of language components, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. In order to achieve these integrated English language skills, students are expected to acquire four skills and three language components in a reasonable manner (Masson, 2013; Menggo, 2021; Sadiku, 2015). For these demands, it is necessary to innovate teaching methods, such as blended learning.

Referring to the descriptions, research findings, and gaps above, the analysis of the effect of blended learning in English courses is quite interesting to study.

## Review of Literature

### *Concept of blended learning and ICT literacy*

Blended learning is a technique that many educational practitioners have recently explored due to the adaptation of a massive digital transformation in the learning process amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Digital technology empowers English-language lecturers to continue learning in circumstances of covid-19 spread. In reality, blended learning is also known as a hybrid learning concept that combines face-to-face learning with online learning. However, several researchers have recently changed the term blended learning. Blended means a mix or combination, while learning is instruction. Thus, blended learning is a learning activity that combines or combines face-to-face learning and online learning (Colis & Moonen, 2001; Graham, 2006).

Other experts define blended learning as not a combination of two pure methods. Blended learning is only a combination of student-centred learning methods and online education as a supplement to face-to-face learning, not a full learning approach (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Moreover, Stracke (2007) explained that blended learning is a method used by utilizing advances in computer technology in a learning process.

Face-to-face meetings are considered conventional learning since learning activities take place directly in the classroom. In contrast, online learning takes place outside the school with the use of advancements in digital technology. The combination of these two learning concepts can be shown in Figure 1 below.




Figure 1. A Conceptual Model of Blended Learning (Adapted from Graham, 2006)

Figure 1 confirms that blended learning allows lecturers to learn in two different forms, i.e. offline or face-to-face learning in the classroom and online learning or face-to-face learning in cyberspace. English lecturers are challenged to understand blended learning, so there is no stagnation in the implementation process.

Blended learning is closely linked to the digital literacy skills of lecturers and students since it is in line with the demands of Industrial Revolution 4.0. Digital literacy skills, including information literacy, media, and information and communication technology literacy (Trilling & Fadel, 2009, p. 45). Information literacy is the ability of students to access information accurately (sources of information) and efficiently (in time), assess information before forwarding it to others (Bury, Craig, & Shujah, 2017; Nizam, Musa, & Wahi, 2010). Media literacy is linked to students being able to choose and expand media to help them communicate effectively.

Moreover, ICT literacy can evaluate and identify digital media suitable for English learning (Bahadorfar & Omidvar, 2014). As part of this review, it only addresses digital media in education, specifically the Zoom application. ICT has played a vital role in the English teaching context. ICT offers endless solutions for

learners and educators to access authentic resources to assist their English learning outcomes. Several digital technology media can be used in enhancing English competence, namely Zoom, Skype, Youtube, and many more (Hariry, 2015; Hennessy, Ruthven, & Brindley, 2005).

***Blended learning in ESL/EFL class***

The characteristics of blended learning should be entirely comprehended by the lecturers so that there is no stagnation in its implementation. The attributes of blended learning include: (1) lecturers are capable of carrying out the learning process in two modes, lecture directly in the classroom as well as provide additional explanations through online learning; (2) instruction can be done face-to-face learning and online learning; (3) students are offered two forms of learning (offline and online); (4) lecturers are already competent in two different modes of the learning process; (5) students are taught in advance about the use of such applications in online learning; (6) the availability of ICT infrastructure in educational institutions; and (7) student-centred learning processes (Medina, 2018; Lalima & Dangwal, 2017).

These characteristics highlight that blended learning cannot be carried out holistically at all levels of education based on various arguments. In other words, blended learning has several requirements in its implementation, such as the ability of lecturers to apply two learning models; the motivation of lecturers to adapt to advances in digital technology; the availability of ICT equipment owned by universities, lecturers and students; the willingness of students to accept the burden of the two models; as well as a flexible schedule of learning activities (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019; Ma'arop & Embi, 2016). This prerequisite is not that complicated if there is a common commitment between stakeholders to execute it. As a result of this commitment, until now (especially in the situation of the Covid-19 pandemic), blended learning has become the dominant learning method applied at all levels of education, including higher education.

Using blended learning has multiple benefits, all of which lead to student language acquisition and affective values (Adas & Bakir, 2013; Ghazizadeh & Fatemipour, 2017; Sheerah, 2020; Shivam & Singh, 2015). Researchers argue that (1) enhancing the digital literacy skills of lecturers and students; (2) students have two knowledge transformation spaces (offline and online); (3) promoting increased student affective values (learning motivation, responsibility, discipline and autonomy); (4) up-to-date teaching material; and (5) students can practice communicating in English with native English speakers from various countries. Those benefits are a positive influence of blended learning in English as a Second Language (ESL) or a Foreign Language (EFL) class.

These advantages encourage English lecturers to pay careful attention to implementing blended learning in their educational process. A variety of steps may well be implemented by a lecturer in the implementation of blended learning, as follows:

1. Discuss with students the concept of blended learning.
2. Discuss with students the types of applications used in online learning.
3. Negotiate with students on the amount of classroom meetings and online learning sessions.

4. Communicate with students to set a timetable for classroom instruction and online learning.
5. Determine which materials used in classroom learning and online learning.
6. Define the material content of each language skill taught in classroom setting and online learning.
7. Compromise on the roles of lecturers and students for classroom instruction and online instruction.
8. Decide the form of assessment to be carried out in accordance with the objective of each language skill learned.

A number of advantages above encourage lecturers to apply blended learning in ESL / EFL classes. The EFL is known, English as a Foreign Language, and the ESL is referred to as English as a Second Language. Before determining between EFL and ESL, it is necessary that there are distinctions between the Foreign Language and the Second Language. In the sense of studying the language, EFL belongs to all those who study English in non-English speaking countries, and ESL references all who learn English in countries where English is used as an everyday form of communication and is officially used (Harmer, 2007; Peng, 2019). The data in this study were taken from the EFL context but still contributed to the ESL perspective.

## Method

### *Research type*

This study is a quantitative explanatory method of research with a pre-test and post-test design. This design was employed because the authors involved two different subject groups and compared the effect of the implementation of a particular learning method (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 276). In the context of this research, the researchers explored the effect of blended learning in two research groups. These two groups were randomly chosen from six classes, one as an experimental group and one as a control group (Bungin, 2005, p. 127).

### *Population and sample*

The study population was 198 first-year participants from six classes who participated in English subjects at the Elementary Educational Program, Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng. A random sampling technique was used to choose 74 students (two classes) as samples from the total population.

### *Research instruments*

The test is used to assess the English competence of the respondents. The test referred to refers to the concept of a test developed by Brown (2004, p.118), which accommodates four basic English skills. Each skill has a maximum score of 25 and a minimum score of 5. The final score is the accumulation of four basic English skills. Thus, each respondent receives a maximum score of 100 and a minimum score of 25.

Whereas, non-test in the form of a questionnaire created in Google form. This instrument aims to determine students' perceptions of the implementation of blended learning for 12 meetings, namely six times for face-to-face learning and

six times for virtually meetings through the Zoom application. Non-test in the form of a questionnaire created in Google form. This instrument aims to determine students' perceptions of the implementation of blended learning for 12 meetings, namely six times for face-to-face learning and six times for virtual meetings through the Zoom application. The authors created all of the questionnaire items and then validated for accuracy and constructed validity by three experts from Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng upon being administered to the participants. The questionnaire had 15 items in the form of a closed-ended question and used a five-point Likert scale-a higher score reflecting strong relationships. The scale ran from 1 to5, with 1 suggesting strong dissatisfaction and 5 indicating strong satisfaction.

### *Analysis of data*

The data were examined by the t-test, which was followed by the assumption test, which included the normality test and the variance homogeneity test, using the SPSS 22.0. These data are then interpreted and narrated by the researchers.

## Findings

In this part, the researchers focus only on the presentation of data from two research classes, both in the experimental class and in the control class, as well as data related to respondents' perceptions of the implementation of blended learning. The data from the two classes pointed to are described in detail in the Tables and Charts given.

Table1. Average scores of pre-tests

| Class | N | Mean | Median | SD | Variance | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental | 37 | 63.64 | 65 | 7.03 | 49.51 | 50 | 75 |
| Control | 37 | 62.70 | 60 | 6.19 | 38.32 | 50 | 75 |

Table 1 above shows that the two research classes are equivalent since the mean scores are almost the same, or there is no significant difference. The normality test results and the variance analysis confirmed the experimental group ($p = .083$) and the control group ($p = .072$). The data seem to be normally distributed based on these results. The variance homogeneity test ($p = .359$) shows that the two classes in this analysis have a homogeneity variant.

Blended learning is used for twelve meetings; six face-to-face learning sessions and six online sessions are conducted using the Zoom application. This division is based on an agreement at the beginning of the lecture between the lecturer and participants. After that, a post-test was administered. In table 2, the results of the post-test can be found.

Table 2. Post-test results

| Class | N | Mean | Median | Modus | SD | Variance | Range | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental | 37 | 82.57 | 85 | 90 | 6.83 | 46.69 | 25 | 65 | 90 |
| Control | 37 | 77.83 | 80 | 75 | 6.29 | 39.63 | 25 | 65 | 90 |

The data in Table 2 were checked for normality and variance homogeneity. Researchers used the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for data normality testing. The

significance value for the experimental and control groups' English competence is p = .167, *ns* and p = .084, *ns*, which indicates that the population sample data is normally distributed. The data homogeneity test findings reveal a significance value of p =.347, assuming that the classes are synonymous.

Furthermore, the hypothesis is tested using the t-test. The use of blended learning in English courses, first-year students in the Primary School Teacher Education Study Program, Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng, positively affected the experimental class. This argument is evidenced by the difference in the mean scores of the two groups on the post-test.

Table 3. Gain score results

| Class | N | Score | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Ideal | Min | Max | Average |
| Experimental | 37 | 100 | 0.29 | 0.75 | 0.35 |
| Control | 37 | 100 | 0.13 | 0.75 | 0.27 |

It can be shown in Table 3 that the findings of the experiment were better than those of the control group. The comparison between the two groups can be represented in Diagram 1 below.




Figure 2. Average Result of Gain Score

The results of the average gain score have been verified by t-tests. The result of the t-test shows that $t_{ob}$ = 19.00, while $t_{cv}$ = 1.684. Based on the predetermined criteria, these results indicate that blended learning has an effect on English competence.

The implementation of blended learning also has an impact on students' positive perceptions regarding learning autonomy, learning motivation, and increasing ICT literacy. Each of these points can be illustrated in Diagram 2 below.

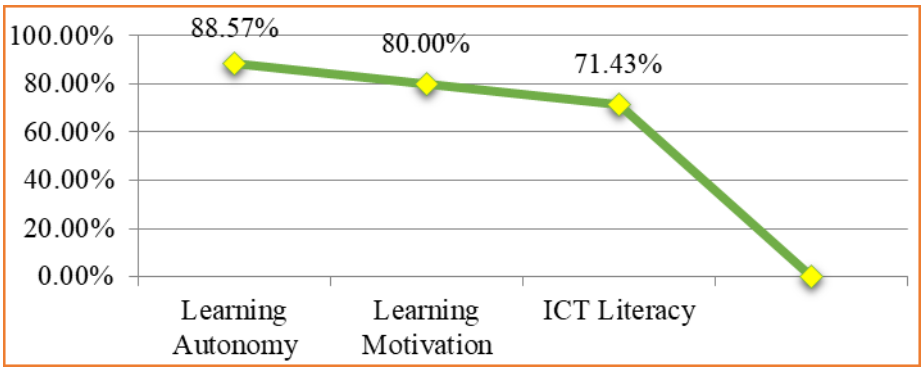



Figure 3. Students' Perception

## Discussion

Blended learning affects improving the English language skills of first-year students majoring in Primary School Teacher Education, Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng (Table 2). This finding affirms a number of previous researchers that blended learning can improve students' listening and speaking skills (Ehsanifard, Ghapanchi, & Afsharrad, 2020; Rahmawati, 2019; Sholihah, Permadi, & Umamah, 2018). Additionally, these researchers claim that the use of blended learning not only has an effect on improving listening and speaking skills but also other learning components that can enhance student learning progress, such as a more interactive and meaningful classroom atmosphere, exercises listening and speaking independently, increasing learning motivation, and improving students' ICT literacy.

In learning English as a second language or a foreign language, listening and speaking skills play an important role in real interactions. Speaking is the ability to convey thoughts, concepts, or views orally (Harmer, 2007; Larsen-Freeman, 2003), while listening is a skill that not only listens but also understands, interprets, and responds to the utterances it hears (Lindsay & Knight, 2006; Yavuz & Celik, 2017).

Students are more careful in understanding the text and discourse contents in a number of texts being taught. Reading comprehension is a skill that cannot be removed in learning English, and blended learning can facilitate students' reading comprehension (Lamri & Hamzaoui, 2018; Rahman & Iwan, 2019; Rombot, Boeriswati, & Suparman, 2020). These researchers highlight that blended learning promotes students to understand the contents of different forms of reading text. This positive effect is affected by blended learning, which has flexible learning times, digital and non-digital texts, and utilizes relevant digital media to understand certain texts' content fully.

Paragraph writing is the main focus of writing skills in the English courses of this study. Students are instructed to be able to develop three types of paragraph writing, such as narrative, descriptive, and persuasive. With blended learning, students can meet the accuracy of several assessment aspects for paragraph writing, such as ideas organization, structure, word choice, and mechanics (Alghammas, 2020; Mabuan & Ebron, 2017; Suastra & Menggo, 2020). The use of blended learning has been proven to improve writing skills in previous research (AlTameemy, Alrefaee, & Alalwi, 2020; Muhtia, Suparno, & Sumardi, 2018). They claim that blended learning encourages students to recognize and create paragraph writing that is suitable for writing skills assessment rubrics.

The use of blended learning is proven to be able to boost students' language skills. The four languages skills must be owned proportionally by students, and therefore lecturers are expected to be able to integrate them into a learning process (Ristati et al., 2019; Umar, 2021). Harmer (2007) also highlighted that students' English competence is assessed by four language skills and is supported by three language components (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation).

Language skills and language components should be taught in an integrated way, not separately. This definition is in line with the assessment of the English language skills of students who are not majoring in English, which should be carried out in an integrative way for the four basic English skills (Brown, 2004,

p.118; Mckay, 2006). This integrated assessment is in line with English competence measurement for students majoring in Primary School Teacher Education in Indonesia (Kemenristekdikti, 2012).

Data also indicate that the implementation of blended learning for the students of first-year at the Primary School Teacher Education Department has a positive impact on increasing learning autonomy (88.57%), learning motivation (80%), and ICT literacy (71.43%). These results are consistent with previous research, which found that implementing blended English learning improves both language and non-language skills, such as learning autonomy, learning motivation, and increasing ICT digital literacy (Derlina et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2018; Pardede, 2012; Sari, Rahayu, Apriliandari, & Sulisworo, 2018).

Autonomy and motivation are two variables that contribute to student learning success. These two variables are internal factors that allow students to change their learning patterns to achieve the expected learning targets (Phuong & Vo, 2019; Üstünlüoglu, 2009). Motivation is an essential attribute for learning English because it maximises students' learning effort and responsibility (Al-Qahtani, 2013; Long, Ming, & Chen, 2013; Hong & Ganapathy, 2017). Students' motivation should be taken into consideration in the teaching process. The learners are likely to have a strong encouragement for learning English, practising English independently, and being capable of critical thinkers (Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009; Anjomshoa & Sadighi, 2015).

Learning autonomy is also one of the implications for the use of blended learning. Students are regularly motivated to pursue the concept of independent learning in their fields actively. By having excellent learning autonomy, students can monitor and evaluate their learning outcomes. Students who have a high level of learning autonomy will try to complete tasks or assignments by relying on them according to their abilities. Thus, autonomous learning can be understood as learning practices based on motivation, preference, and responsibility to learn (Haris, 2011; Reinders, 2010).

ICT skills are also one of the issues that contribute to the orientation of 21$^{st}$-century education (Bahadorfar & Omidvar, 2014; Menggo, Suastra, Budiarsa, & Padmadewi, 2019). ICT literacy is students' ability to analyze and select the types of digital technology media applicable to help English learning outcomes. A variety of digital technology media in promoting English competence is Zoom, WhatsApp, Electronic Dictionary, Skype, Podcast, Youtube, Webex, and many more (Bicen & Kocakoyun, 2013; Koo, 2016; Mubarak, Wahdah, Ilmiani, & Hamidah, 2020). These modern technological platforms are much more fun and engaging, promoting student participation and learning in a meaningful way. Additionally, these resources foster and facilitate student autonomy, particularly on using the Zoom application.

ICT literacy is a skill that cannot be removed in blended learning. This skill assistance can ensure students' English competency, learning motivation, initiative, learning autonomy, and flexibility in implementation (Abbasova & Mammadova, 2019). As Gaballo (2019) noted, the role of ICT literacy is crucial to the achievement of English language learning. ICT literacy is the current language learning trend, both educators and students (Hockly & Dudeney, 2018). They claimed that digital media is very flexible, cost-effective, useable, and accessible to all stakeholders.

## Conclusion and Implication

This study focuses on the effect of blended learning in the English course of students majoring in Primary School Teacher Education. Relating to the effects of current data analysis, the researchers can conclude that blended learning positively affects students' English language skills. Additionally, blended learning also contributes to learning autonomy, motivation, and increasing students' ICT literacy.

Blended learning is applied in twelve meetings, consisting of six face-to-face learning sessions and six online learning sessions using Zoom. Although these findings are limited to English courses for first-year students majoring in Primary School Teacher Education, blended learning to other subjects is not excluded. It is recommended that lecturers apply this method by considering ICT infrastructure availability at their educational institutions.

Educational institutions are responsible for students' knowledge, English skills, and humanistic values to ensure that they meet super-complicated global competition. Educational institutions have an important place in transforming character education, knowledge and skills, and digital literacy for the broader society's life. The rapid advancement of technology provides extensive opportunities for all individuals to access various information, knowledge, and skills so that digital literacy mastery is a mandatory choice for students.

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