



EFL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARD BLENDED TEACHING

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Abstract:

While blended teaching is increasingly becoming popular in higher education all over the world, the concept has recently been paid attention to in Vietnam's context. However, under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic online teaching and blended teaching suddenly become a popular trend in Vietnamese higher education. Few studies have been conducted to explore topics related to blended learning in Vietnam and the current study was conducted to fill such a gap. This study focuses on exploring English-majored students' perceptions toward the benefits and challenges of blended teaching in EFL classes. Participants included 440 English-majored students ranging from 18 to 22 years old coming from three study majors namely English Teacher Education, English Language Studies and English Interpretation and Translation in a multi-disciplinary university of 56 years old in Vietnam. Findings reveal that students perceived that blended learning offers them various benefits as well as some challenges. Suggestions are proposed to enhance blended learning for English-majored students in Vietnam and elsewhere.

Keywords: blended teaching, English as a foreign language, English-majored students, perceptions

1. Introduction

Along with the rapid development of information technology (IT), the modalities of education and training have been continually changing and improving with the advent of many learning forms such as online or blended learning and teaching. Lameris, Paraskakis and Webber (2012) stated that the increased prevalence of digital technologies in education and academic investigations leads to the concentration of educational institutions on blended teaching (BT) in educational evolution initiatives. Blended

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forms of teaching have become increasingly popular (Garrison & Kanuka [2004](#); Garrison & Vaughan [2008](#); Graham [2006](#); Spanjers *et al.* [2015](#)).

Despite various definitions of BT, it is commonly considered as an instructional model that employs different media and takes place on different time scales (synchronous, asynchronous) with the face-to-face (f2f) method of instruction (Roseth, Akcaoglu, & Zellner, [2013](#)). BT combines f2f learning with an online learning style, where 30–79% of the content is delivered online (Graham, 2006). Pereira *et al.* (2007) defined blended teaching as a teaching modality which is the synergic combination between attendance-based distance teaching or traditional classroom-based teaching and non-attendance-based distance teaching or e-learning. Meanwhile, Garrison and Vaughn (2008, p.148) state that blended teaching “*is the organic integration of thoughtfully selected and complementary face-to-face and online approaches and technologies*”. Alternatively, BT can also be considered a useful mixture of technology-based and classroom-based teaching methods that allow students to gain complementary experiences through being proficient in using IT tools for study purposes and to acquire more helpful knowledge by doubling the instructions of teachers from online to f2f classes, and it is simply understood as Figure 1.

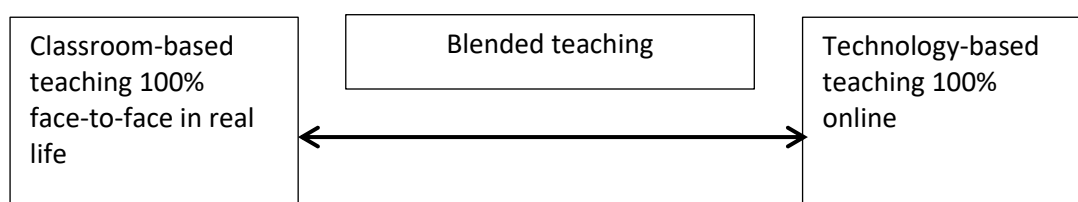


Figure 1: Overview of blended teaching

Porter, Graham, Spring, and Welch ([2014](#)) state that higher education institutions are adopting blended learning in high numbers and referred to BT as the combination of technology-supported learning and face-to-face learning methods. Moreover, the editor of the journal of synchronous learning networks forecasted that 80-90% of higher education courses would become blended in the future, and at the time of this statement, scholars have started to note the “explosive growth of blended learning” and have mentioned that BT will become the “new normal” way of learning in higher education (Porter *et al.*, [2014](#), p.185).

In the COVID 19 context, Vietnam is now adapting its educational, economic and social activities to the “new normal”. Educational institutions are paying more attention to the application of blended teaching in education, by incorporating the use of IT applications, electronic devices from the online format to support the students’ learning in many ways and many fields of study including teaching English as a foreign language (EFL).

In fact, the popularity as well as the application rate of blended teaching in EFL education is very high both in Vietnam and the world. On the one hand, BT provides many benefits such as helping students enhancing their language skills and improving their IT skills as well. On the other hand, there are various challenges that students need

to face when applying BT into their classrooms. Understanding these benefits and challenges, students and teachers can come up with practical solutions to increase students' ability of acquiring and improving English knowledge. To our knowledge, no studies have yet been conducted to explore Vietnamese students' perceptions of BL benefits and challenges. Therefore, the current study has been conducted to answer the two following research questions:

- 1) What are EFL students' perceptions of the benefits of blended teaching?
- 2) What are EFL students' perceptions of the challenges of blended teaching?

2. Literature review

2.1 Benefits of blended teaching

Pereira *et al.* (2007) claims that blended education is more effective than the traditional f2f method. Correspondingly, students gain various benefits from blended teaching (Gilbert & Flores-Zambada, 2011). Some typical ones include improving students' learning achievement, enhancing their learning motivation, providing better access to learning resources, increasing interpersonal communication, boosting students' self-confidence, developing students' self-directed learning, critical thinking, and IT skills.

A. Learning achievement

Ellis, Steed & Applebee (2006) noticed that e-learning has been evaluated as an essential method of assisting university students in learning. The technology application from e-learning associated with traditional f2f teaching has brought significant learning efficiency for students at universities. According to Gilbert and Flores-Zambada (2011), using the blended model, instructors play a roles of a coach, a facilitator, and a cheerleader and their teaching becomes student-centered, which is considered as the most effective approach for language education. Specifically, blended teaching has been proved to be effective for teaching listening (Aji, 2017), speaking (Kırkgöz, 2011), reading (Szymańska & Kaczmarek, 2011), and writing (Adas & Bakir, 2013). BT is an effective method that assists students to acquire more knowledge thanks to the combined benefits of both online and traditional f2f teaching. Online education encourages students to study independently and also engages them in English language to improve their language skills (Banditvilai, 2016), while classroom-based method helps them with more real-life interactions. The result of this blended situation, especially in the EFL setting, is to increase language skills along with students' self-learning abilities.

B. Learning motivation

With BT, teachers can personalize learning by adjusting their pedagogy and online environment to the motivation of the students, which helps them perform at more personal levels (Hegarty, 2011). Sucaromana's (2013) found that students had significantly higher intrinsic motivation for learning English after they were taught, using blended learning. Wlodkowski (1985) defined motivation in the learning process as a force that determines the direction to be taken and the choice of a particular attitude to

learning. Students' motivation increased during certain experiments in which BL was implemented. The possibility of having more types of interaction has proved to be a factor that increases motivation, creating positive attitudes towards learning and leading to higher marks being awarded (Donnelly, 2010; Woltering *et al.*, 2009). Additional learning materials provide reinforcement to the understanding acquired in class and motivate students, improving and supporting their learning process (Lei, 2010).

C. Resource access

Internet and computers, mostly used to access the internet in studies on blended learning, offer opportunities to include more authentic, varied and different instructional materials and innovative learning activities (Pereira *et al.*, 2007). It is, for example, easier to incorporate frequent quizzes or self-tests in a blended learning environment than in a more traditional learning environment. Moreover, the computer can automatically score the answers of the students on those quizzes or self-tests and provide the students with feedback (Cole & Robertson, 2006; Jia, Chen, Ding, & Ruan, 2012; Riffell & Sibley, 2005). Furthermore, learners, to some extent, have control over their learning in a BT environment. They learn how to work on their own pace, choose to revisit materials and/or choose when to study (Feist *et al.*, 2013; Salyers, 2007; Yapici & Akbayin, 2012; Yang, 2012). This control might give them the possibility to adapt the learning materials to their individual needs or preferences (Cole & Robertson, 2006; Kavadella, Tsiklakis, Vougiouklakis, & Lionarakis, 2012). Examples of such capabilities are the choice between a variety of learning materials explaining concepts (Chandra & Watters, 2012) or the choice to use e-mail and discussion fora (e.g., Cole & Robertson, 2006).

D. Interpersonal interaction

With traditional f2f teaching, it is unlikely that teachers can exchange or communicate one-by-one with all students in one lesson. Meanwhile, online learning provides an environment that allows all students to interact both synchronously and asynchronously. In language learning, regular interaction is very important. More interactions will result in better learning. Interacting, exchanging among friends and exchanging between teachers and students increase the ability to absorb lessons, and to practice students' initiative. The application of BT can facilitate learner-centered interaction to happen. With asynchronous interactions, students can construct knowledge through collaboration in groups by the no limit of time and space. This increases participation among students because it permits all students an equal opportunity to respond to a topic (Birch & Volkov, 2007; Branon & Essex, 2001; Ortega, 1997). Associated with classroom-based communication, BT environment is able to augment the interaction among students and between students and teachers within the EFL context.

E. Confidence enhancement

Participating in blended classes, EFL students have more opportunities to express their opinions on online forums through making comments and freely practicing exercises. Thanks to technology devices, students can feel more comfortable when not being

noticed directly by everyone. Subsequently, students' confidence increases, and they begin not to hesitate to give opinions, feedback and discussions even when facing the teachers in the classroom. Studies by Selinas *et al.* (1999) and McClure (2007) reveal that students' self-confidence level increases when learning in BT environment.

F. Self-directed learning

In a BT environment, teachers play the role of a facilitator to guide, suggest, and challenge students to reach their own learning goals. At the same time, students play a significant role in their own learning by employing their own self-directed learning characteristics. Thus, Moore (2005) has stated that blended learning is related to self-regulation and self-directed learning. In addition, Sriarunrasmee, Techataweewan, & Mebusaya (2015) proved that using BT in the Information Literacy classroom could enhance students' self-directed learning.

G. Critical thinking

With the assistance of blended courses, students evolve their critical thinking skills and become self-supporting thinkers (Masalela, 2009). Once working in groups, students need the ability of judging to produce coherent and high-quality documents. Mutual evaluation creates success for the students in collaborating with different people, and then enhances the competence of challenging their theories and providing a rationale for their rejoinders (Gilbert & Flores-Zambada, 2011). Through the available IT in blended language education, students can get a great amount of useful information related to English language learning to give feedback on others' assignments and correct their own works both at online classes and classrooms to develop critical thinking and collaboration abilities.

H. IT skills

When it comes to blended teaching, of course, online tools used in this format must be mentioned. Learning online means that students as well as teachers must know how to use technological devices in proper way and be proficient in using tools to support learning. Greer, Hudson and Paugh (1998) noted that peer encouragement assisted new learners in computer use and applications. Since the use of blended learning applies high usage of computers, computer competence is necessary (Abubakar & Adetimirin, 2015) to avoid failure in applying technology in education for learning effectiveness. Rovai (2003) noted that learners' computer literacy and time management are crucial in distance learning contexts and concluded that such factors are meaningful in online classes. This is supported by Selim (2007) that learners need to possess time management skills and computer skills necessary for effectiveness in e-learning and blended learning.

Thanks to the advantages mentioned above, blended teaching can be considered as the most effective teaching method together with the outstanding development of technology today.

2.2 Challenges of blended teaching

Beside the positive sides of BT, there are five challenges that students need to encounter namely difficulties in group discussion, technical problems, cheating, device dependence, and issues related to students' self-regulated learning.

A. Group discussion

Blended teaching is divided into online and on-ground delivery formats. In fact, students often have some online discussions before going to class to understand the lessons more deeply. Although working offline will not have enough materials to support the English learning process, it facilitates students to interact directly with each other at synchronous time once operating group discussions, and online forums cannot afford it. When working online, the discussions can hardly take place in a synchronous manner in terms of time due to a couple of reasons. The first is the disagreement about meeting time. The second is being in an awkward situation when talking to others through a screen. Therefore, online discussion is often in the form of asynchronous time, i.e. exchanging ideas, finishing exercises via text messages at different times of the day, and it can be flexible according to the students' free time. Moreover, online activities cannot substitute for human interaction and f2f communication (Sadeghi, Sedaghat & Ahmadi, 2014), and also the students could not show or feel more interesting or attracting about the discussed topics.

B. Technical problems

Once blended teaching method applied to teaching, the use of technology devices is required. Therefore, the use of information technology is not only beneficial but also challenging for those who use it for learning and teaching purposes, typically in English. Masalela (2009) mentioned technology infrastructure as the most frequently challenge for teachers and students in both physical and human forms. As for physical infrastructure, it depends on the provision of IT equipment from the school, including personal possession of students. There will be cases where students or teachers do not have the technology equipment to work online. Therefore, it is extremely necessary to have a full range of equipment and tools to support the online English teaching and learning process. Additionally, connection breakdown is also a challenge to online English education that must be overcome. Besides, the lack of IT skill is also inevitable for both students and teachers. This is maybe a big problem if they cannot use the online tools properly due to the lack of training time.

C. Cheating

Once the online exams are taken, the percentage of correct results due to cheating may be higher with the help of ITs such as Google and related websites. In fact, there is a widespread concern about increasing levels of academic cheating in which technology and the use of the internet are blamed (Pérez-Peña, 2012; Mostrous & Kenber, 2016), and Marsh (2017).

D. Device dependence

Inadequate technological resources, or more specifically, the lack of adequate computers for use by students makes it very difficult for the proper practice of BT (Tshabalala, Ndeya-Ndereya, C., & van der Merwe, 2014). Dotong, De Castro, Dolot and Prenda (2016) illustrated some limitations of ICT integration like shortage of ICT facilities, poor maintenance of available or existing ICT resources, and lack of ICT budget (e.g., Lorenzo, 2016; Tomaro, 2018; Vergel de Dios, 2016).

E. Self-regulated learning

Students are basically required to self-regulate their learning activities out of their face-to-face sessions. Though, due to flexibility and autonomy offered in blended learning, students usually organize their learning activities by devoting a relatively small portion of their time to learning tasks (e.g. revision of learning materials) and assignments right before the due date/time. In this way, learners use most of the time intended for studying in the online environment for other activities. The studies of (Chuang, Weng, & Chen, 2018; Lightner & Lightner-Laws, 2016; Çakiroglu & Öztürk, 2017) offered a more general description of self-regulation in describing 'self-regulation' as a challenge, while other studies were more specific in clearly defining the type of self-regulation challenge in the form of procrastination (AlJarrah, Thomas, & Shehab, 2018; Broadbent, 2017; Maycock, Lambert, & Bane, 2018), improper time management (Broadbent, 2017; Zacharis, 2015) and improper utilization of online peer learning (Broadbent, 2017).

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants include 440 students (111 males, 329 females) majoring in English Language Studies. About half of the participants (212 students) are in their first year at the university while the others are from the second year (178 students), third year (23 students), and final year (27 students). All students are from a faculty of foreign languages in the biggest multi-disciplinary university in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam. Being the most prestigious and innovative one in the region, the university has always been fostering and promoting digitalization of teaching and learning in all its faculties. Therefore, the participants in the study have experienced blended teaching from their first semester of entering the university. Since the participants were invited to participate in the study in a voluntary manner, it is difficult to find an equivalent number of students from each group.

3.2 Questionnaire

Rowley (2014) states that questionnaire is useful for researchers to get the frequency of beliefs, opinions, process, behaviors, experience or prediction. When the research method is quantitative, it seems perfect to use survey questionnaire for inquiry mode (Rahi, 2018a, 2018b; Zikmund, D'Alessandro, Winzar, Lowe, & Babin, 2000). For such reasons, a questionnaire (see Appendix) was designed to collect students' perceptions toward the

benefits and challenges of blended teaching in the current study. The items in the questionnaire have been designed basing on relevant literature of blended teaching reviewed above. The questionnaire consists of three parts in which Part 1 asks for demographic information from the participants, Part 2 includes 32 items grouped into 8 clusters on BT benefits, and Part 3 has 19 items grouped into 5 clusters of BT challenges. Table 1 below lists the items of each cluster.

Table 1: Items in the clusters of the questionnaire

Clusters	Items
Benefits	
Improving students' learning achievement	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Enhancing students' learning motivation	8, 9, 10
Providing better access to learning resources.	11, 12
Increasing students' interpersonal communication.	13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19
Boosting students' self-confidence	20, 21
Developing students' self-directed learning	22, 23, 24, 25
Developing students' critical thinking	26, 27
Developing students' IT skills	28, 29, 30, 31, 32
Challenges	
Problems with group discussion	33, 34, 35, 36, 37
Technological problems	38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44
Cheating	45, 46
Device dependence	47, 48
Students' low level of self-regulated learning	49, 50, 51

3.3 Data collection and analysis

The questionnaire had been piloted with 40 students before it was officially used to collect data. A reliability was run with the pilot group and revealed that the questionnaire was reliable to use (51 items; $\alpha = .86$). The printed copies of the questionnaire were then sent to students in various classrooms of the faculty being investigated during a period of three weeks from 4th to 24th of October, 2021. Students spent averagely 15 minutes on answering the questionnaire. Answered copies were then collected and data were input into the computer. Those that had incomplete answers on the items were excluded. Another reliability test was run with the data from 440 participants and reveal that it had high reliability level ($\alpha = .90$). The data were then analysed with SPSS version 20.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Benefits of blended teaching as perceived by EFL students

Data reveal that EFL students have high perceptions towards the benefits of blended teaching ($M = 4.00$, $SD = .53$). Details on each benefit cluster are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Benefits of blended teaching for EFL students

Cluster	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Providing better access to learning resources.	2.00	5.00	4.37	.60
Developing students' IT skills.	1.00	5.00	4.35	.59
Enhancing students' learning motivation.	1.00	5.00	4.06	.71
Improve students' learning achievement.	1.00	5.00	4.03	.64
Developing students' self-directed learning.	1.50	5.00	3.96	.70
Boosting students' self-confidence.	1.00	5.00	3.76	.84
Increasing interpersonal interactions.	1.00	5.00	3.73	.72
Developing students' critical thinking	1.00	5.00	3.71	.82

Among the various benefits that BT offers, the two clusters that received the highest agreement from the participants include providing better access to learning resources ($M = 4.37$, $SD = .60$), and developing students' IT skills ($M = 4.35$, $SD = .59$). More specifically, the EFL students in the current study highly agree that they can easily access English learning resources they need in their BT classes ($M = 4.52$, $SD = .64$) as well as the lectures they miss if they cannot go to school ($M = 4.22$, $SD = .83$). In addition, their IT skills develop in various ways in which the most noticing one is BT classes eventually help them find more effective online dictionary ($M = 4.49$, $SD = .65$). Other IT benefits gained from BT classes include finding useful English learning websites and applications (with $M = 4.46$, $SD = .75$ and $M = 4.41$, $SD = .78$ respectively); improving general IT skills ($M = 4.32$, $SD = .78$); and researching correct information ($M = 4.06$, $SD = .82$).

The three benefit clusters that also receive relatively high agreement from the participants are enhancing students' learning motivation ($M = 4.06$, $SD = .71$), improving students' learning achievement ($M = 4.03$, $SD = .64$), and developing students' self-directed learning ($M = 3.96$, $SD = .70$). More specifically, students perceived different extrinsic motivation from BT classes because there are more interesting teaching activities ($M = 4.13$, $SD = .87$), better lesson content thanks to various media used ($M = 4.06$, $SD = .86$), and students' better concentration and comprehension ($M = 3.98$, $SD = .95$). Regarding learning achievement, all items in this cluster receive from 3.81 to 4.21 of mean values with the lowest mean is of the item "*English writing skill is improved in BT classes.*" and the highest one is of the item "*Blended teaching helps learners improve English language knowledge.*" Moreover, students perceived highly for Item 3 ($M = 4.16$, $SD = .81$), Item 4 ($M = 4.14$, $SD = .81$), Item 2 ($M = 4.01$, $SD = .88$), Item 6 ($M = 3.99$, $SD = .82$), and Item 5 ($M = 3.90$, $SD = .89$) respectively. With respect to self-directed learning, the participants highly agree that they are more active in searching for English learning materials in BT classes ($M = 4.17$, $SD = .88$), improve their self-study skills ($M = 4.00$, $SD = .89$), develop their note-taking skills ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .87$), and enhance their skills of self-discovering and correcting mistakes ($M = 3.77$, $SD = .89$).

The last three clusters in the rank include boosting students' self-confidence ($M = 3.76$, $SD = .84$), increasing interpersonal interaction ($M = 3.73$, $SD = .72$), and developing students' critical thinking ($M = 3.71$, $SD = .82$). Two aspects of confidence investigated in the current study is whether students are more confident in presenting their ideas in BT classes ($M = 3.85$, $SD = .88$) and giving feedback to their peer ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .96$).

Meanwhile, the seven items in the cluster of interpersonal interaction receive from $M = 3.64$ ($SD = .98$, Item 19) to $M = 3.84$ ($SD = .96$; Item 18) levels of agreement. Other items in this cluster (Items 13 to 17) receive approximately 3.70 of mean level. Regarding critical thinking, BT classes are perceived to improve students' overall critical thinking skills ($M = 3.85$, $SD = .88$) and evaluation skills ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .96$).

In short, BT are perceived highly by the student participants in the current study. Among the clusters, the impact of BT on providing better access to learning resources receives the highest agreement level while that on developing critical thinking skills receives the lowest one. Despite of that, the agreement levels of all clusters are from 3.71 and above.

4.2 Challenges of blended teaching as perceived by EFL students

Five clusters of BT challenges are ranked according the participants' level of agreement as in Table 3.

Table 3: Challenges of blended teaching for EFL students

	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Technological problems	1.00	5.00	3.86	.69
Cheating	1.00	5.00	3.78	.98
Problems with group discussion	1.00	5.00	3.69	.85
Students' low level of self-regulated learning	1.00	5.00	3.61	.85
Device dependence	1.00	5.00	3.52	1.19

Technological problems are listed first in the rank ($M = 3.86$, $SD = .69$). Among the seven items of this cluster, connection breakdown is the most challenging one to the participants ($M = 4.27$, $SD = .90$). Meanwhile, improper working IT devices and lack of devices receive the second highest agreement ($M = 4.04$, $SD = .93$ and $M = 3.95$, $SD = .96$ respectively). Other technical issues include limited free Wi-Fi on campus ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.17$), teachers and students' limited IT skills ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.01$), lack of IT facilities in the classrooms ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.04$), and boring lecture designs ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.05$).

Cheating shows to be the second drawback of blended classrooms ($M = 3.78$, $SD = .98$). Students perceive that online exams bring high risks of cheating ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.08$) and IT devices are misused in exams ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.08$).

Group discussion is another issue in BT classrooms ($M = 3.69$, $SD = .85$). More specifically, it is hard to set the meeting time convenient for all members ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.10$), and it is less interesting than f2f human interaction ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.13$). Other challenges in this cluster include the difficulty of arranging group discussion with all members synchronously in BT classes ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.12$), the awkwardness to have an online group discussion ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 1.12$), and time-consuming manner of having online group discussions at different time of a day ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.13$).

Device dependence ($M = 3.61$, $SD = .85$) and students' low level of self-regulated learning ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.19$) are the two last clusters in the rank. Regarding the former cluster, students' uncertain feeling when not using their e-dictionaries has more level of agreement ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.17$) than their perceived uncertainty when not using their

smart phones to find right information to do homework ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.18$). With respect to the latter cluster, students' laziness to work with online tools is the most common challenges ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.01$) while their playing games and internet surfing when feeling bored at class comes the second ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.07$) and their dislike of working in online group discussion is the last ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.14$).

5. Discussion

Findings from the current study are in line with those in available literature. Various benefits of blended teaching are perceived by English-majored students in the current study. The most noticing strengths of BT classes is providing students with better access to learning resources and improving their IT skills, the pros that are hard to find in traditional f2f classes. Thanks to these benefits, students can adapt their learning materials to their needs and preferences (Robertson, 2006; Chandra & Watter, 2012; Kavadella, Tsiklakis, Vougiouklakis, & Lionarakis, 2012). They can also choose to work on their own space, revisit materials and choose learning time whenever they want to (Feist et al., 2013; Salyers, 2007; Yapici & Akbayin, 2012; Yang, 2012). This is especially helpful to EFL students since language learners may have different learning styles and they will learn better when they are provided with more autonomy for their learning.

Similarly, students highly perceived other benefits of BT classes on students' learning motivation, learning achievement, self-directed learning, self-confidence, interpersonal interactions and critical thinking skills in the current research. Various researchers have proved these advantages (e.g. Woltering *et al.*, 2009; Donnelly, 2010; Kırkgöz, 2011; Szymańska & Kaczmarek, 2011; Adas & Bakir, 2013; Aji, 2017). For EFL students, these benefits should be noticed by teachers and school administrators so that they can design BT classes in a way that optimizes student learning and skill development.

However, EFL students also perceived various challenges that can commonly be found in literature namely technological problems, cheating risks, group discussion issues, students' low level of self-regulated learning, and device dependence. The findings are concurrent with those in the studies by Masalela (2009), Pérez-Peña (2012), Mostrous & Kenber (2016), Marsh (2017), Sadeghi, Sedaghat & Ahmadi (2014), AlJarrah, Thomas, and Shehab (2018), Broadbent (2017), Maycock, Lambert, & Bane (2018), and Zacharis (2015). On the one hand, these challenges inhibit EFL students from taking the most advantages of blended teaching as listed earlier. On the other hand, they help teachers and school administrators become more aware of their roles in creating favorable conditions for the students to learn as well as finding ways to minimize the issues related to testing, device dependence and group discussion.

6. Conclusion

With the rapid development of information technology, blended teaching is becoming popular all over the world. In Vietnam, it is regulated by the Ministry of Education and

Training that 30% of undergraduate courses can be taught online. This is a thriving force for school administrators to accelerate the implementation of blended teaching in their training programs. The current study provides evidence for EFL teachers all over the world that students highly perceive the benefits that blended teaching offers them as well as are well-aware of the challenges that they have to encounter. Therefore, teachers and school administrators can apply different measures to maximize the advantages and minimize the disadvantages of blended teaching.

Some suggestions to successfully implement blended teaching include (1) training teachers on how to teach effectively in blended classes, (2) shifting the roles of teachers to the facilitators and monitors of students' learning process, and (3) upgrading infrastructures and providing better services to optimize blended learning environment. Among the proposed solution, the first one should be accelerated as soon as possible since teachers are usually the utmost important factor to success for almost all education reforms. Further studies should be made with students from various educational levels and backgrounds to provide richer references for stakeholders so that they can accelerate the decision making on the implementation of blended teaching in their own context.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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