

Chapter One

Introduction

This chapter covers seven subchapters, namely the background of the study, statement of the problem, delimitation of the study, research question, objective of the study, significances of the study, and the last one is organization of the chapters.

Background of the Study

In an effort to suppress the spread of the COVID-19, the Ministry of Education and Culture has taken a policy to temporarily close schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. All schools initially carried out Study From Home (SFH) method to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in schools. During that time, teaching and learning activities were assisted using several applications such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, BigBlueButton, Google Meet, and other free applications that can be utilized as Learning Management System (LMS). The application of e-learning that is accessed through the internet and supported by electronic devices is sometimes referred to as online learning (Thakkar & Joshi, 2017). Research conducted by Male (2020) noted that the COVID-19 pandemic rose the attitude of students who felt bored in online learning and preferred traditional learning over online learning. When repeated for an extended period of time, such situations can lead to boring activities because learning success is not dependent on a single factor (Male, 2017). Other similar study conducted by Faiqoh (2020) reported some of the participants to enjoy learning with the blended method yet there were

also several students who experienced boredom during their learning with the blended learning method.

However, according to Khaerunnisa (2019), the use of technology in online learning will not be fully successful due to the different learning styles of students. According to Porter and Hernacki (as cited in Khaerunnisa, 2019, p. 2), learning styles are grouped into three, namely visual learning styles, audio learning styles, and kinesthetic learning styles. Students with visual and audio learning styles may be successful in participating the e-learning; however, students with kinesthetic learning styles may have a lower chance of learning success. This viewpoint is supported by Wildavsky (as cited in Wena, 2014, p. 214) that inferred the main weakness of e-learning is the low intensity of meetings between teachers and students leading to ineffective socialization between students.

Therefore, effective communication between teachers and students, as well as students with students, are believed to be crucial. Wardani et al. (2018) mentioned that face-to-face learning is crucial and should be conducted; however, with the rapid advancement of technology, teachers must also be able to conduct online learning to stimulate students' interest in the process of learning and following their lesson. Thus, one approach to address this issue is to implement blended learning which encourages students to participate in the learning process.

In addition, blended learning has become an educational issue recently. As supported by Aladwan et al. (2018), blended learning is an educational approach that combines learning with the participation of a teacher (face-to-face) and online

learning. Aladwan et al. (2018) also added that through blended learning method, teachers can demonstrate the patterns of behaviour and thinking, ways of building relationship where teenager and adult are believed to likely need a tutor, adviser, and specialist.

Based on the survey at one private university in Yogyakarta regarding the use of online learning in 2020, the results of the evaluation of student competency achievement showed unsatisfactory results with a maximum achievement of 60% and an average of 50% due to the culture of students who were not familiar with full online lectures. Meanwhile, the lecturers of the university were also shown as unprepared. As stated by the authority of this private university in Yogyakarta, teaching and learning meeting management at private university in Yogyakarta was carried out using a blended system.

Therefore, there were arrangements for the distribution of the number of face-to-face meetings, online, or in an odd-even way. The distribution was also carried out in stages and adjusts to the situation of the spread of COVID-19. He explained the comparison of the number of online and offline lectures. Each course consisted of 16 meetings; therefore, according to the current pandemic condition, the allowed face-to-face meetings were around 8 to 10 times in a semester. "We just divide one course into 16 face-to-face meetings; thus, there will be 8 to 10 times face-to-face meetings in class which are still acceptable," stated <https://covid-19.umy.ac.id>. However, there were also special cases to the lecture meetings for lecturers with comorbidities resulting in risks to conduct face-to-face lectures; therefore, they were allowed to conduct face-to-face lectures

for only 6 times. Based on the evaluation of blended learning in July 2021, the results showed improvement on students' competency and achievement. This has become one of the plausible reasons for private university in Yogyakarta to consistently apply the blended system. In July 2021, the competence of students showed better performance that reached 70% to 75%. Therefore, if the lectures cannot continue to be conducted online, especially for practicums, the lectures may be conducted face-to-face at the university.

In addition, according to Tang and Chaw (2013), there are six blended learning factors towards English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, namely classroom learning, online classroom, technology, online interaction, learning management, and learning flexibility which provide positive impacts on the adaptation of blended learning. This research selected these six blended learning factors for the EFL class because they were considered as relevant to the international class. Therefore, this topic or phenomenon was required to be investigated further, especially in relation to students' attitudes towards the blended learning at International Program of Islamic Communication (IPICOM) major of a private Islamic university in Yogyakarta because Attitudes toward blended learning never been researched on IPICOM.

Statement of the Problem

There were various issues regarding the blended learning conducted at the IPICOM major of a private Islamic university in Yogyakarta; for instance, students without prior experience on blended learning struggled during the learning process due to the different components displayed in online learning

resulting in confusion on how to access the lesson. As mentioned in the study background, there were some students who felt bored with blended learning method; however, there were also students who liked and enjoyed the blended learning method. Additionally, in conducting blended learning, lecturers will set a time limit for the distribution of assignments to a group of students; therefore, the students are expected to not miss the notification of the submission date.

However, when the students were outside the campus, they may experience problems with the internet connections or their devices; such as laptops and gadgets. This may lead to time management issues, as well as the absence of evaluation notices or updates from the site as the common mistakes made by students. As a result, students must keep the site up-to-date and actively participate in discussions to represent responsibility for their work. Furthermore, with blended learning, students may face difficulty regarding their understanding competencies; however, students' attitude can help them achieve better results. Finally, lecturers and students may also face difficulties in effectively utilizing technology through blended learning.

Therefore, studies are believed to be necessary to find answers to mentioned problems; however, there were only a small number of studies that focused on the implementation of blended learning. Therefore, this intrigued the researcher to look deeper into said phenomena that was currently taking place, namely the implementation of blended learning at other majors.

Delimitation of the Study

Based on the identification of the problem discussed in the preceding section, this study focused on students' attitudes, especially EFL students in terms of their attitude towards the factors in blended learning. Furthermore, among the several research designs available, this study selected the quantitative approach using questionnaires as the data collection method.

Research Question

Based on the statement of the problem, the research question formulated for this research is as follows:

1. How is the attitude of the students of IPICOM at a private university in Yogyakarta towards blended learning?

Objective of the Research

Based on the research question, the objective of the research is as follows:

1. To identify students' attitude toward each factor of blended learning.

Significances of the Research

This research is expected to give positive contribution for several parties such as the teachers, the future researchers, and the institution.

For the Teachers

This research is expected to become additional information for English teachers to consider blended learning implementation for all EFL course or to consider which courses should not implement the blended learning. By being aware of this research result, the teachers can understand their students' problem

regarding the blended learning and they are also able to give their students more exposure on how to apply appropriate blended learning for an effective teaching and learning process.

For Future Researchers

The benefit obtained from this research aimed for other researchers is regarding to additional information about the perception of International Program of Islamic Communication (IPICOM) students at the private university in Yogyakarta on the blended learning system during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the Institution

This research is beneficial for the institution which implements blended learning to improve students' learning outcomes. Moreover, the institution can facilitate more internet-based instruments, such as stable internet connection, wider internet connection areas, and up-to-date computers in the laboratory to support the teaching and learning process.

Organization of the Chapters

To facilitate the preparation, this research was divided into several chapters. Chapter one consists of general information regarding the research implementation, namely the background of the problem, problem identification, problem boundaries, research objective, research benefits, and writing systematics. Meanwhile, chapter two explains the theoretical basis that becomes a reference in writing, starting from an explanation of theories related to the

research theme and discussion of relevant previous researches and research hypotheses.

Moreover, chapter three discusses the research method which contains the research type and design, research location and time, population and sample, research variables, research instruments, data collection techniques, research instrument tests, and data analysis techniques. Chapter four describes the findings and analysis of descriptive statistical data from the perceptions of International Program of Islamic Communication (IPICOM) students towards online learning at the privat University in Yogyakarta Last but not least, chapter five presents the conclusions drawn from the research and the suggestions provided for several parties.