

Chapter One

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher explains the implementation of blended learning to support EFL students' learning in one of the private universities in Yogyakarta. The first part is background of the research, identification of the problem, delimitation of the research, the research questions, research objectives and the significance of the research. Furthermore, the organization of the chapters in the final of section.

Background of the Research

In this era of ever-developing education, the use of technology as a learning aid is becoming increasingly important. In the context of a Learning Management System (LMS), blended learning often involves a combination of asynchronous and synchronous learning. Asynchronous learning allows students to access materials, assignments, and discussion forums at any time, giving them the freedom to study on their own schedule. This is very beneficial for students who have limited time or a busy schedule, because they can manage their study time independently. According to Ezziane (2007), information technology is highly suggested for colleges or higher education levels because students are required to use it in the world of education or in daily life. Along with its development, technology also infiltrates learning resulting in an education that seeks for learning achievement combined with digital literacies as means of the 21st Century skills.

Online learning gives students more control over how they study, when they learn, and what activities they undertake while being taught and monitored by teachers. According to Cahyani et al. (2021) online learning is technology-based learning which has been revolutionizing teaching and learning strategies in such a way that Computer Assisted Language Learning and Mobile Assisted Language Learning are recognized and well-developed in education. They can explore more materials from the internet which the school did not provide, continue the study from home or distance learning for those who were dropped out, and help students who cannot attend face-to-face classroom.

The concept of blended learning is defined as the effective mix of various means of delivery, instructional models, and learning styles used in an engaging and relevant learning environment. According to Staker and Horn (as cited in Bryan and Volchenkova 2016), blended learning is a type of formal education where students receive teaching and content online, with some control over their own schedule, location, direction, and or speed, and receive parts of their education at a supervised in-person venue away from home. There are some people who believe that the implementation of blended learning provides some privilege for students. The media used in blended learning is not limited to technology and can include by asynchronous by self-paced learning with web learning modules, video and audio, online self-assessment, or synchronous by virtual collaboration/synchronous live e-learning classes such as MS Teams and ZOOM.

Some studies have been done by previous studies. The first study that conducted by Fitri and Zahari, (2019) argued that students who are taught with blended learning feel happier and attractive not easily bored during the lesson because blended learning can improve student activity, understanding concepts and student learning outcomes. The second study was conducted by Vonti and Rahmah (2019) who stated that blended learning is a combination of various methods that effectively achieve learning objectives in complex times. It is compatible with technological developments, such as rapid internet usage, and allows students to access lecture material freely without attending face-to-face lectures. This method allows for a more flexible and effective learning experience. The third was study conducted by Ali and Sofa (2018), who stated that learning model also motivates students to take responsibility for their own learning process and decide when and how to use the learning resources provided. They can discuss and share materials with their peers. Not to mention, the students receive useful feedback from their teacher in both face-to face and online learning.

However, although there are many studies concerning the implementation of blended learning, most of them focus on the advantages and disadvantages in the implementation blended learning. In this current study, the researcher focuses on the implementation of blended learning to support EFL students' learning as perceived by students of English Language Education Department (ELED) at one of Islamic private university.

There are several reasons why this research was conducted. First, blended learning is almost widely used at every level of education. In higher education,

blended learning is widely used as a learning method in achieving success in learning courses. In fact, blended learning is a crucial technique for improving student learning effectiveness, efficiency, and appeal using technology (Vonti and Rahmah, 2019). Through this research, the researcher hope to be able to identify how students understand course content well through asynchronous or synchronous. The results of this research can be used as a reference for students to evaluate the role of asynchronous and synchronous learning in LMS to understanding of course content.

Second, students feel comfortable and enjoy the process learn English by demonstrating their skills in English through profitable learning in the form of integrated learning implemented well. For students, mixed learning via asynchronous and synchronous is very flexible, students do not need to come to the learning place directly, which saved time and money. Furthermore, students can access the material at any time when the student needs it. All material is available in e-learning form. According to Andriyani et al. (2022) who stated that students agree that blended learning promotes learning effectiveness and efficiency. In the field of education, the usage of blended learning is growing in popularity. Students responded positively and with curiosity in the mixed learning styles. Apart from offline (face-to-face) learning, students' also respond well to the online learning process through e-learning or online meetings with Ms Teams or ZOOM. So, this research aims to examine the asynchronous material in LMS support students' blended learning and to explore the video conference as synchronous platform support students' learning.

English Language Education Department (ELED) at one of the private Islamic universities in Yogyakarta had implemented blended learning since 2018. According to Chew, Jones, and Tuner (as cited in Bryan and Volchenkova, 2016) argued that blended learning system is a combination between education and technology. Blended learning combines the learning process in the classroom and learning through the instructions from the lecture in e-learning.

The implementation of blended learning at university was strengthened by *Keputusan Rektor No. 008 Tahun 2018* on the implementation of blended learning in the courses who stated that the learning process at the university can be implemented in a form of blended learning with the frequency of 60% face to face and 40% online meetings. After this regulation, all the lecturers at ELED of private university in Yogyakarta implemented blended learning in their courses. Blended learning is a learning approach that combines elements of online learning and face-to-face learning. In this learning, students can access some of their learning material online on a Moodle platform provided by the university or via MS Teams, while the other part is delivered through face-to-face interaction with the instructor in class. In brief, the problem of this research is that the university has implemented blended learning using asynchronous via MyKlass and synchronous learning via video conference. The problem that exists when using these two methods, namely asynchronous materials and synchronous learning, is that researcher know whether students really learn the material that has been provided by the teacher in MyKlass well, such as learning the material that the teacher has uploaded in MyKlass and how students to understand the material.

Therefore, the researcher is interested in researching the implementation of blended to support EFL students' learning in asynchronous material and the video conference as synchronous platform support students' learning.

Identification of the Problem

The private Islamic university has applied Moodle as the Learning Management System (LMS) that all lectures must use for their courses in the blended learning method during the learning activities. Based on the researcher's informal interviews with some students related to the topic, it was found that some students considered that the implementation of blended learning is not supported by adequate equipment.

Some students said that blended learning is flexible because it can be done by anywhere and anytime. Students and lectures who use blended learning as a learning model can do the learning and teaching process wherever they need. Also, for some students, blended learning can motivate them to learn the materials by themselves. It is because there are assignments on the Moodle that require the students to learn and understanding the material first before doing some assignment, quizzes or discussions forum.

The blended leaning carried out at this institution is carried out in two ways, namely synchronously via video conference in the form of Microsoft Teams and ZOOM and asynchronously via Moodle (MyKlass). The students usually use Microsoft Teams or ZOOM for meeting synchronous the teacher explain how about the course in the meeting sometimes also teacher make a breakoutroom for

doing a brainstorming. The asynchronous meeting the students using e-learning (MyKlass) that login with student emails that have given by campus to each student. Students can access material that has been prepared by each course lecturer, including several assignments or quizzes and there is a discussion form for conducting questions and answers with lecturers or other students. Therefore, this research aims to explore the role of asynchronous learning and synchronous learning in understanding of course content by perceived ELED students.

Delimitation of the Research

Research related to e-learning is wide in scope. Hence, to be focused, the current research is delimited to examine the asynchronous material in LMS support students' blended learning and to explore the video conference as synchronous platform support students' learning. The participants in this study are students from ELED 2020 cohort who had participated in blended learning during learning activities. The researcher only took 2020 cohort to be participants because 2020 cohort have more experiences and was adapted to blended learning earlier than other batch. Therefore, the research will delimit the participants so that the data will be broader.

Research Questions

The researcher develops two research questions considering the background information provided. The following are the research questions that have been developed:

1. How do asynchronous materials in LMS support students' blended learning?
2. How do the video conference as synchronous platform support students' learning?

Objectives of the Research

The researcher summarizes several objectives of this study:

1. To examine the asynchronous material in LMS support students' blended learning.
2. To explore the video conference as synchronous platform support students' learning.

Significance of the Research

The findings of the research are expected to provide benefit and knowledge for students, teachers, and future researcher:

For Students

This research provides information about general things that students do and get in LMS, especially in learning English. This information can be used as material for reflection when students use online learning management system. Students can better understand the role of material that supports students understanding of course material. This information becomes a reference for students be more creative through LMS features when they use LMS in learning English. Furthermore, the information in this research can be useful for other people student.

For Teachers

As teachers, they can use this research to evaluate the role of blended learning by combining asynchronous and synchronous learning in online learning that makes students familiar with the course material in the LMS. And the aim of this research is for teachers to to examine the asynchronous material in LMS support students' blended learning and to explore the video conference as synchronous platform support students' learning. In addition, teachers can use this research as a reflection on their teaching. From the results of this research, teachers can innovate asynchronous and synchronous learning in ways that are usually applied by students in order to understand the content of the subject.

For Future Researcher

Other researchers who are interested in delving into the same topic of study can make use of the study's findings. It is anticipated that the study's findings will serve as a point of reference for future researchers in the same subject, but from an alternative perspective.

Organization of the Chapters

This research consists of five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction which consists of background of the research, identification of the problem, delimitation of the research, research questions, objectives of the research, significance of the research. The second chapter is a literature review. This chapter provide some theories that support the overview of challenges and problem solving in implementing blended learning. The chapter three is the methodology. This chapter describe how the research was carried out by the

researcher. This chapter discusses methods, instruments, participants, settings, and data collection techniques. In this chapter, the researcher also explains how to analyze data. The chapter fourth chapter discusses the research findings and discussion. The fifth chapter contains conclusions and recommendations. In this chapter the researcher summarizes the findings and discussion then gives some suggestions for some parties related to this research.