

EXPLORING STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF BLENDED LEARNING MODALITIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper explores how blended learning interventions in English Language Teaching (ELT) serve as strategies to address educational inequity in resource constrained areas of Pakistan. Employing a quantitative methodology, this research examines the perceptions of 350 university students towards blended learning with respect to skill development, learner engagement, and accessibility challenges. Findings reveal improvements in speaking skills and writing development, alongside challenges including digital literacy gaps, limited internet access, and reduced student engagement. This research underscores the need to reconceptualize blended ELT beyond mere hybrid delivery toward inclusive, context-responsive pedagogical frameworks that address infrastructure barriers and promote equity in English education.

KEYWORDS: *Blended learning, students' perception, digital literacy, learner engagement, ELT.*

1. Introduction

In today's modern world English language acts as a common platform for communication among different cultures and professional sectors. As Rogerson-Revell (2007) explains that English as lingua franca not only highlights its importance in intercultural communication but also its importance for global business, science, technology and diplomacy. Therefore, it is crucial to learn English for academic as well as professional development. Ahmad (2020) stated that today's technological development has also greatly revolutionized the field of education by introducing new pathways through which learners can learn as well as share information. Conventional English language teaching methods, however, are now being increasingly supplemented by newer models that incorporate these technological advancements such as blended learning. Afandi et al. (2019) also emphasized the use of modern digital tools in the field of education as they enhance the students' engagement, their ability to work as a team and their overall learning experience as they will learn according to their needs.

Rovai and Jordan (2004) described blended learning as a combination of online and traditional classroom learning to give a balanced and flexible learning experience by giving them access to course material, assignments, and discussions online so that they can learn at their own pace but at the same time they will also have to attend physical classes so their interaction with teachers and peers, asking questions, getting involved in group discussion and the other hands-on activities will not be compromised. Blended learning has a transformative potential in higher education as it merges the strengths of both settings by providing direct contact with teachers along with using digital tools and materials for enhancing learning outside the classroom. This approach seeks to achieve the highest benefits of both online and offline teaching in order to accommodate different learning needs (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004).

Smith and Hill (2019) define blended learning as an approach that mixes the traditional face-to-face teaching with online instructions. It includes all those environments in which blend of both teachings is encouraged. Kumar et al. (2021) highlighted its importance for the time of crises like COVID-19 pandemic. Their findings also showed that blended learning promotes flexibility, helps in effective teaching, and ensures learning continuity in challenging situations.

Given the context, this study aims to achieve the following research objectives in resource-constrained Pakistani context.

1.1 Research Objectives

The main objectives of this research are as follow:

1. To investigate students' perceptions of blended learning modalities in the context of ELT in Pakistan.
2. To identify challenges in blended English language teaching and learning in Pakistan.
3. To recommend strategies for improving the effectiveness of blended learning in English language education.

1.2 Research Questions

This research will focus on answering the following questions:

4. How do students perceive blended learning modalities in the context of English language teaching?
5. What are the challenges in the application of blended ELT in Pakistan?
6. What strategies do students suggest for improving the usability and convenience of blended learning?

1.3 Problem Statement

In the current educational framework, both types of pedagogical techniques are very essential to provide a standard learning environment for learners. Each type of approach has its distinctive advantages, limitations and learning outcomes depending on the context, accessibility and implementation. Rani and Vidhi (2025) emphasized that E-learning advancements have greatly revolutionized the infrastructure of higher education by providing new pathways to make learning more accessible to a wide range of students and to customize teaching according to students needs and have also made learning process more engaging and interactive through the use of digital tools, multimedia content and virtual collaboration. Likewise, Hrastinski (2008) explained that the use of digital technologies like virtual classrooms, digital discussion spaces and shared digital workspaces motivates learners to exchange their views, take part in discussions and to work together on different group projects. In this way, their overall quality of learning experience will be enhanced.

On the other hand, depending on a single mode might confine the overall learning process. An integrated model that combines the best of both, however, emerges as a more inclusive and sustainable pedagogical model. To support this argument, Tiene (2000) noted that while graduate students reacted well to online discussions, they still remained more comfortable with face-to-face interactions, viewing the online setting as an enriching supplement but not a substitute. This is an important observation that reiterates the pedagogical merit of combining conventional and digital learning approaches in order to achieve a better balanced, interactive, and inclusive learning process.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research is crucial because it identifies the real obstacles that students encounter in blended learning while studying English language. As the number of universities trying to adopt this

method is growing rapidly, it is very essential to understand students' perception on what is facilitating their success, what is hindering them, their motivation and their satisfaction level in order to know the overall quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning process (Ginns & Ellis, 2009).

The findings of this research will not only list the issues but will also provide practical evidence-based recommendations for teachers, policy-makers, and curriculum planners. For educators, it will equip them with ways of making students more comfortable using digital tools and better supported in blended environments. At a broader level, the study will inform discussions on how blended learning can not only be made available but also effective for learners.

2. Literature Review

Blended learning is defined as the art of mixing different learning environments together in order to try and deliver your message in the best possible way. It is a methodology that is used all over the world and is said to improve one's learning and teaching environments by providing a mixture of different e-learning events and activities which are mixed with the traditional ways of teaching using different pedagogic strategies in the process (Bersin & Associates, 2022). The aim of this method is to unite the strengths of both in a single, coherent learning experience (Hrastinski, 2019). Blended learning effectively develops language skills, enhances English learning environment, and promotes student motivation (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019). It has been increasingly regarded as a "new normal" in higher education and professional training, and was accelerated by digitalization and COVID-19 pandemic (Kumar et al., 2021).

Blended learning is generally effective in improving educational outcomes in both developed and underdeveloped countries, but the scale and consistency of these benefits are highly context-dependent (Ashraf et al., 2021). In Cao's (2023) view, the application of blended modality in developed countries can be related to better academic outcomes, flexibility, and student satisfaction, provided the appropriate infrastructure in terms of technology is available. However, a report presented by Nyathi (2024) said that in the case of low-income universities and developing regions of Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Latin America, there is significant infrastructural and equity barrier impeding blended learning. Such issues are yet to be addressed if the full benefits of blended learning are to be realized. So, it basically highlights two things firstly its potential and secondly the need for context-sensitive implementation strategies. Gaol and Hutagalung (2020) said that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are likely to be lacking resources required to participate fully in blended learning environments.

2.1 Theoretical Foundation of Blended Learning

Blended learning supports different educational theories which discuss active learning, technology incorporation, and student involvement in the teaching process.

2.1.1 TPACK Model

The Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework that was proposed by Mishra and Koehler (2006) serves as the theoretical foundation for this study. Building upon Lee Shulman's concept of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), the TPACK model conceptualizes teacher knowledge as an integration of three primary domains: Content Knowledge (CK), Pedagogical Knowledge (PK), and Technological Knowledge (TK), along with their dynamic intersections. The strategic implementation of digital tools by teachers in blended ELT serves the purpose of language education improvement instead of making technology an extra feature. Educators need the necessary skills to create a successful blended learning experience.

In the context of this study, TPACK provides a lens to examine how technology is not merely added to instruction but meaningfully integrated with pedagogy and subject content. By adopting TPACK as a theoretical framework, this study situates blended learning within a holistic model of teacher knowledge that emphasizes coherence, intentionality, and pedagogical alignment in digital and face-to-face instructional contexts.

2.1.2 SAMR Model

The SAMR Model (Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, Redefinition), developed by Ruben Puentedura, provides a structured framework for understanding how technology integration transforms teaching and learning processes. Within the context of this study on students' perceptions of blended learning modalities, the SAMR model serves as a theoretical lens to examine the depth and quality of digital integration in instructional design. By applying the SAMR framework, this study explores how students perceive not only the presence of technology in blended learning but also the extent to which it enhances engagement, interaction, autonomy, and meaningful learning transformation across different instructional modalities.

2.2 Research Gap and Contribution of the Study

The studies concerning blended learning have increased at a high rate within the higher education context. However, most of the existing research mainly focuses on technologically advanced institutions or online learning processes in their entirety. The empirical data that are related to under-resourced state universities and, specifically, in the developing world of Pakistan, is sparse. Besides, a significant percentage of existing studies focus on academic performance over the life experience of students, their perceptions, and situational obstacles, such as digital illiteracy, poor internet connectivity, and a lack of technological infrastructure. Therefore, there is a lack of adequate knowledge on the practical aspects of blended learning in low resource environments.

The present study attempts to fill this gap by systematically reviewing the perception of students towards blended learning in various state universities in the Hazara region. The focus on aspects of accessibility, engagement, and the development of language skills brings about context-sensitive evidence, which can be used to implement blended ELT practices in realistic and inclusive ways. The results provide empirical-based information of a small-represented group and introduce viable advice to teachers, curriculum designers, and policy-makers of similar settings.

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative descriptive research approach, that uses survey-based data as it provides an objective, measurable, and generalizable understanding of students' perceptions of Blended learning.

3.1 Data

The data for this study was taken from undergraduate students from all public and private sector universities in Hazara division, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These undergraduates constituted the population for this study. 350 participants were selected through proportionate random sampling in order to collect data from them. The table 1 below shows the target population profile.

Table 1

Demographic and Academic Profile of the Target Population

Variable	Description
Institution	Public sector universities in Hazara Division
Academic discipline	BS English
Academic year	First year to Final year
Total participants	350 students

Gender	Both Male and Female
Native Language	Non-English (Multilingual Background)
Sociocultural background	Diverse cultural and linguistic exposure with varied prior English proficiency
Sampling technique	Proportionate random sampling
Digital literacy level	Beginner to expert
Access to digital devices	Varying levels of access
Internet connectivity	Varying levels of stability

3.2 Data Collection

The data was collected in an organized and careful way. While collecting data, the ethical principles related to educational research were followed. The process of data collection took place in the months of October and November 2024. At first, students were approached through their respective institutions as well as through personal contact. The questionnaires were shared as Google Forms so that they could be filled by a wide range of students. Students were given the option to decide whether they wanted to respond or not. The respondents were assured of complete confidentiality and also told that their feedback would be used purely for academic purposes.

3.3 Research Instrument

The survey instrument was developed from available literature and also adapted to the Pakistani setting in particular, aiming at the technological, educational, and also the sociocultural conditions existing within the area. The questionnaire comprised closed-ended questions, largely using a 5-point Likert scale, apart from multiple-choice formats that enabled gathering quantitative responses. The format enabled effective data analysis of students' perception and experience towards blended learning (Cigliana et al., 2024; Oladokun et al., 2025).

The survey instrument was composed of various sections to best capture the experiences of the respondents when using blended learning. The initial section comprised demographic data (gender, academic year, institution type). The second section was aimed at the general learning environment that related to the availability of digital devices and internet accessibility as well as awareness of blended learning. The following section explored into how students participated such as engagement levels with online contents, frequency of interaction between student-teacher/peers, and utilization of different digital tools including Learning Management Systems (LMS), video conferencing, e-books, and language learning applications. Another important section dealt with various English language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) through the use of blended learning approaches. Also, it asked for their general perceptions regarding to the impact of blended learning on their knowledge, and what were the pedagogic approaches employed by their tutors. Furthermore, the last section of the survey assessed identified issues of blended learning such as technical problems, lack of engagement, and problems with time allocation.

4. Results and Findings

4.1 Awareness and Understanding of Blended Learning

The findings revealed that 68.6% of students are familiar with the concept of blended learning, while 31.4% lack a clear understanding of what blended learning entails. This substantial percentage of students without a solid understanding may struggle to navigate the unique challenges that characterize blended learning formats, such as managing time across both online and in-person coursework, independently navigating digital resources, or adequately balancing synchronous and asynchronous learning activities. Limited awareness about blended learning may

lead students to undervalue the role of online components, potentially leading to disengagement and suboptimal learning results.

4.2 Access to Digital Devices and Internet Connectivity

Table 2

Distribution of Participants by Academic Year

Academic Year	Number of Students	Percentage%
Final-Year	210	60%
Second-Year	62	18%
Third-Year	39	11%
First-Year	39	11%

The findings indicate that 47% of students use both laptops and smartphones, which provides them with greater flexibility and efficiency in engaging with blended learning content. About 31% rely exclusively on mobile devices. While smartphones offer portability and accessibility, they may limit students' ability to complete tasks requiring larger screens, such as writing assignments, detailed research, or multimedia presentations. Approximately 22% of students reported experiencing unstable internet connections, which significantly hindered their ability to access course content, participate in real-time discussions, and submit assignments on time. This connectivity issue highlighted the need for improved digital infrastructure and offline learning alternatives. These challenges have serious implications for equity and inclusion, particularly for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds or remote areas with inadequate digital infrastructure.

4.3 Challenges in Blended Learning

Table 3

Reported Challenges in Blended Learning

Challenge	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Lack of engagement	140	40%
Difficulty in understanding online content	86	25%
Poor internet connectivity	77	22%
Difficulty balancing online & in-person coursework	47	13%

Learners in blended classrooms are exposed to numerous obstacles that could suddenly dampen their interaction and performance. Such barriers include technical challenges, e.g. poor internet connectivity, and pedagogical challenges, e.g. the difficulty in perceiving online material without the teacher being present. These barriers need to be identified to ensure that specific strategies are developed to facilitate blended learning.

The lack of engagement and motivation in the online learning setting was the most widespread issue among the 40% of students, indicating that the students find online learning less involving and that they might not be able to sustain involvement in the online course material. Another 25% of the students complained that they had challenges in understanding online materials; this was due to the lack of direct teacher instructions. This highlights the need to have carefully designed digital support mechanisms that integrate interactive content, feedback and real time learning facilities.

Inconveniences caused by connectivity became an overarching issue and was reported in 22% of the respondents. Poor access to the internet has hindered the ability of students significantly to access course content, participate in discussion and complete their assignments and this has illustrated the need to have better digital infrastructure and offline learning options. Lastly, 13% of the students revealed that they were struggling with online versus in-person coursework. It indicates that there is room to design courses better and enhance the time-management techniques in order to support the students with the challenges of hybrid teaching.

4.4 Most Frequently Used Digital Tools for Blended Learning

Table 4

Most Frequently Used Digital Tools in Blended Learning

Online Learning Tool	Number of students	Percentage
LMS	101	28.9%
Video Conferencing Tools	93	26.6%
E-books & Online Databases	31	8.9%
Language Learning Apps	54	15.4%
Social Media Platforms	70	20%

In order to achieve effective outcomes of blending learning it requires substantial digital tool implementation in academics to achieve its objectives. The survey asked students which digital tools they most commonly use when learning English through blended teaching methods. The responses mirror the active usage and encounter of tools by students in their learning process.

The findings also indicated that 47 percent of the participants also felt that blended learning is as good in developing all four language skills. A large percentage (33%) said that speaking skills improved the most, which supports the effectiveness of interactive and technology-based activities. On the other hand, the proportion who rated listening skills as those that had improved most was only 9% and the same percentage rated reading skills as having improved. Interestingly, writing skills were considered to be the least advanced field since only 2% of students noticed any improvement. These results imply that although blended learning tends to facilitate the overall language development, instruction and more specific digital tasks are needed to reinforce the writing skills, which currently get a relatively little attention in the context of blended learning practices.

4.5 Effectiveness of Blended Learning in Developing Language Skills

Table 5

Perceived Effectiveness of Blended Learning in Developing Language Skills

Language Skill	Number of Students	Percentage
All equally	165	47%
Speaking	116	33%
listening	32	9%
Reading	32	9%
Writing	7	2%

The development of the four language skills reading, writing, listening, and speaking is very important for effective English language learning (ELL). Blended learning environments provide opportunities to develop these skills among learners and allows them to engage with language input and practice in varied and flexible ways. To examine students' perceptions of the effectiveness of blended learning in enhancing their language skills these participants were asked to evaluate how blended learning contributed to their reading, writing, listening, and speaking abilities.

The results showed that 47% of the students perceived blended learning as equally effective in improving all four language skills. About a third of the respondents (33%) said speaking proficiencies had the highest improvements with blended learning, which supports the effectiveness of interactive technology-driven activities. On the other hand, listening was only mentioned by 9% of the participants as the most improved area, and the same percentage of respondents explained that reading had been improved. Proficiencies in writing were seen as the most underdeveloped, and only 2% of the respondents had observed any noticeable improvement. Such statistics suggest that in spite of the fact that blended learning facilitates the overall development of language, the increase in instructional attention and the use of digital interventions that are specifically designed should support the power of writing, which is currently a relatively underemphasized part of blended education.

5. Discussion and Recommendations

The results of the study show that there is a heterogeneous idea about the blended learning in the students of a university. Although a significant fraction of the participants claimed improvements in oral proficiency and overall flexibility, there were many structural and technological constraints which limited the effectiveness of the approach. The very high percentage of students who indicated reduced engagement suggests that the online element is not necessarily engaging active learners. This fact coincides with Hrastinski (2019), who hypothesizes that the digital environment requires a premeditated approach to interaction design in order to maintain engagement. Similarly, the challenges related to the internet connection and the availability of devices support the finding by Nyathi (2024) that infrastructural shortages are a most common obstacle in low-income environments.

Conceptually, the results indicate that the social and teaching presences, as the theories are developed within the Community of Inquiry framework, were below expectations. The descriptions provided by students about limited interaction and insufficient instructions indicate the lack of collaborative and instructing support. Without strong teaching presence, online learning will be broken, thus, diminishing cognitive interaction and learning results. It is therefore possible that the effectiveness of blended learning depends not only on technological provision but also is pedagogically organized.

5.1 Improvement in Engagement and Motivation

Blended learning is most effective when it meaningfully engages students across academic, behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions of learning. A recent systematic review by De Bruijn-Smolters and Prinsen (2024) emphasizes that student engagement is a critical factor in determining the success of blended learning environments. So, to overcome this challenge teachers should enhance online course interaction by enabling discussion boards, team projects and real-time group sessions. Moreover, institutes should introduce the concept of gamification as it will

motivate participants to achieve different badges and they can track their progress well and can have interactive quizzes inside the system. On students accord they should participate in flipped classrooms that make them study online materials before spending classroom time on detailed discussions.

5.2 Awareness and Understanding

As per the findings it is clear that although there are students who encounter blended learning concepts frequently but there still exist a massive group who remain unclear about the specific meaning. This lack of sufficient orientation will lead students to experience difficulties managing their time effectively and they may not use their online resources efficiently or view their online components as less important than their face-to-face learning. So, all universities must organize blended learning training workshops during the first semester for new students to teach essential competencies and mental perspectives. Universities also need to establish detailed protocols which guide students in their use of Learning Management Systems (LMS) alongside the procedures for virtual discussion engagement and academic work management in hybrid programs. On the secondary and higher secondary level, the educational institutions need to start digital awareness campaigns where they include success stories and testimonials from students who demonstrate positive blended learning outcomes so that they can make students prepared for the future use of blended learning in their higher studies.

5.3 Technology Access and Infrastructure Limitation

According to Kujur and Singh (2025) blended learning lets students access materials anytime, anywhere, helping those with work, family, or geographic constraints participate more easily. So, the whole essence of blended learning will fade away if there's accessibility issues and students are unable to get the desired outcomes. Our research findings revealed that 31 percent of students use mobile devices alone for their academic work yet this situation limits their learning potential mostly when writing tasks or investigative studies or multimedia presentations are involved and 22% of the sample population is unable to join real-time discussions or maintain consistent access to digital learning materials because they face unstable internet connections. So, the institution should establish laptop loan services to offer devices to students who require enhanced computer resource availability. Moreover, institutions must form alliances with internet service providers to build specific internet deals with reduced costs alongside mobile data offers for remote students. As far as LMS is concerned so students should have access to downloadable lecture notes together with recorded sessions and offline quizzes as part of their learning materials so they can learn when internet access is unavailable.

5.4 Strengthening Teachers' Digital Pedagogical Skills

In order to maximize the effectiveness of blended learning, it is recommended that teachers should receive continuous professional training that should be focused on the integration of modern educational technologies in their lectures. As such training programs will enhance their awareness and practical skills in using digital tools, including gamification strategies, interactive learning platforms, and online engagement tools and to support active student participation. If teachers have the right technology skills and teaching knowledge, they can teach better, motivate students more, and help them take part more actively in blended learning.

6. Research Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study shows important insights about how effective blended learning can be. However, it is also vital to address and emphasize the key limitations of the study as well as provide some serious

recommendations for future related studies. The following are some important points highlighting the limitations and future research recommendations.

6.1 Limited to Hazara Region

The study focused only on students from the Hazara region. While the findings may be insightful, they may not fully represent students from other regions. The implementation of blended learning varies across universities because each institution must match their characteristics to their available technology and faculty capabilities as well as student population makeup. Future researchers should analyze blended learning performance across institutions in both cities and rural areas as well as between institutions classified as public or private and between developed and developing nations.

6.2 Self-Reported Data

The data was collected through surveys so the responses rely on students' personal perceptions and honesty. Some participants may provide socially desirable answers rather than their true experiences about blended learning in their daily affairs. So, for future studies it is recommended that researchers should incorporate mixed-method approach for data collection such as interviews, focus group discussions, or classroom observations, to obtain deeper and more authentic insights into students' experiences with blended learning.

6.3 Quantitative Focus

The study mainly uses Likert scale and multiple-choice questions in survey for data collection which may limit deeper exploration of personal experiences and emotions related to Blended learning. Future research should include the qualitative aspects, which will examine the affective experiences and challenges met by students and their learning processes in more depth.

6.4 Generalization Limitations

The current research included 350 participants. Although this sample offers strong data, the results might not be quite applicable even to learners placed in different learning environments or those who have significantly different academic backgrounds. The future studies to be conducted should select students representing a wider sample geographically, as well as, institutions typologies, such as, private universities and educational settings- including universities outside of the Hazara region- to improve the generalizability of future studies. A comparative study involving a diversity of students will be a better measure of the effectiveness of blended learning in different settings.

6.5 Pedagogical Implications

The research has a number of practice implications. First, blended classes ought to be specifically structured to encourage interaction instead of moving the materials online. Social and teaching presence may be increased by use of structured discussion work, collaborative work, and commencement feedback. Second, the institutions must combat digital inequality through offering technical assistance on devices and affordable internet connectivity to underprivileged students. Third, the educational process should be sustained through continuous professional growth to provide educators with the required technological and pedagogic skills in blended instruction. In the absence of the systemic supports, blended learning will be more likely to replicate and not reduce inequities in education.

7. Conclusion

The perception of students towards blended learning in the teaching of English language reveals the possible advantages and the challenges associated with it. Students have already admitted that they have enjoyed benefits especially in their oral proficiency, though, they also noted various challenges such as lack of digital literacy, insufficient access to quality technology and struggles

with written assignments. The use of primitive digital resources further shows a lack of connection between existing advanced tools that can increase learning results and their usage. Moreover, disconnection and frustration are facilitated by connectivity issues as well as the lack of real-time interaction with instructors.

These results highlight the urgency of systematic scaffolding of writing, increasing the accessibility of digital resources, and more interactive and responsive, pedagogic practices. These problems must be addressed to make blended learning more accommodative, productive and engaging modality. Adoption of better instructional methods and equal distribution of learning facility will also define blended learning as learner-focused paradigm, hence, complete development of language improvement.

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