

Exploring Students' Perceptions in English Blended (Online and Offline) Learning to Foster Listening Skills

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Abstract

This research aimed to investigate students' perceptions, difficulties and learning experiences in a blended listening class situation. In the present qualitative study, thirty (30) English Language Teaching (ELT) undergraduate students were selected using a purposeful sampling to be the research participants. Open-ended questionnaires were distributed for data collection. Then, the data collected were analyzed through reflexive thematic analysis, so as to interpret the findings and further understand students' experiences. Results indicated that students appreciated the independence that was afforded online, such as being able to pause audio and access transcripts, but they enjoyed face-to-face sessions for the feedback they could obtain and the questions they could ask. Though faced with issues like technical problems and struggling to focus on learning, it is concluded that a blended approach can be both effective and efficient if the online and offline components are well-integrated and supported by an appropriate system, which makes it also highly applicable in EFL.

Keywords: *blended learning, listening skills, student perception*

Introduction

The use of technology in higher education as a means to address the limitations of the traditional approach to teaching language skills in the context of the complexity of their acquisition has recently been noted. Consequently, the concept of blended learning (the integration of online and face-to-face instruction) is being implemented to derive a synergy of independent and collaborative learning. This approach has been proven to be extremely beneficial when applied to EFL instruction. Online facilities provide an opportunity for flexible, virtually unlimited access to a variety of materials for the repetition that is a crucial component of language acquisition, whereas face-to-face communication creates a learning environment for the practice of listening and speaking skills in real time. The connection between blended learning and listening skill improvement is logical as well. As a challenging language skill requiring more than mere practice, it also involves the need for comprehending the material and having opportunities for asking questions and live communication.

Listening skills are one skill where ESL and EFL learners face some of the biggest difficulties. This skill needs learners to be able to understand what the person speaking is conveying, show them effectively that they understand what they are speaking, and respond properly (Hasani et al., 2022; Qiu & Luo, 2022). During online lessons, learners can face difficulties such as poor audio quality, speaking fast, and being unable to get quick answers. There comes blended learning as a promising solution. This type of learning packs together the strengths of face-to-face lessons, such as socialization and online

lessons where learners can learn at their own pace. There have been studies related to blended learning. Some have suggested that blended lessons can make learners feel properly motivated and take control of their own lessons (Tran & Ma, 2021; Wahyuni & Soeparto, 2023). Some have argued that poor technology and a lack of fruitful interaction might stop blended lessons from bearing fruit (Afiyattena et al., 2024; Silviana et al., 2025.). Hence, for such varying reports, there has to be a close examination regarding how learners generally feel about online-blended lessons, and it can be determined how well students are given better improvement.

Blended learning and classes combine digital and face-to-face learning, and this model actually has many advantages for learning listening skills. Theoretically, blended e-learning features an ecosystem of digital and face-to-face, where both environment supports artery of listening skills, but there continues to be a peculiar lack in the literature on the effectiveness of this approach. The digital component allows students to pause and slow down text, access transcripts or repeat questions so they can manage their pace of learning, a feature that has been shown to reduce anxiety and improve understanding. In contrast, in-person classes provide invaluable moments for students to get instant feedback, ask for clarification and interact spontaneously with the teacher and other classmates.

Also, with this kind of physical interaction students can understand real type body language and the face expressions. Although the benefits of these are clear, previous investigation provides conflicting evidence. Some academicians underscore the rise in student motivation and self-regulation (Tran & Ma, 2021; Wahyuni & Soeparto, 2023), while others argue that its success is frequently hampered by technical problems lack of meaningful interaction (Afiyattena et al., 2024; Silviana et al., 2025). This lack of agreement shows that hybrids are not self-evident and indicates the necessity to explore how students themselves personally experience and deal with the interfacing environments.

However, there are some studies which have indicated that blended learning can be less effective than a traditional classroom model. Problems with technology, including Internet connectivity failures, limited digital skills, and inattentiveness without direct monitoring, are also common (Each & Suppasetseree, 2021; Silviana et al., 2025). What is crucial here is that learners do enjoy technology in learning, but still, they lack the personal, live, spontaneous interactions with it that take place (Afiyattena et al., 2024). In theory, successful blended learning should not focus on the technology alone but on developing students' metacognitive awareness and autonomy, as well as on achieving pedagogical consistency through strong instructional design. Research on the use of blended modes in listening and oracy. The literature reports robust quantitative results regarding the potential for blended modes to enhance both L2 listening proficiency, as well as broader oral skills, but there is very little qualitative research that actually examines students' experiences via their own language and 'voice', with respect to this intermodal integration. In particular, the subtlety of how students manage their own psychological state in relation to online self- pacing and a social willingness to communicate in face-to-face settings is not thoroughly investigated.

Hence, this study attempts to address that void by examining students' individual perceptions and affective components in a BL listening context. While previous research projects had concentrated on achievement metrics, this experiment put the situation of people at the center of attention. How do they use online tools in a superior and calculated manner? Does the use of offline sessions yield any effect except for carrying its weight on one's conscience? A different kettle of fish altogether. This research will furnish a

foundation for sections that satisfy three requirements: able to be carried out with ease, of use and helpful, while also enabling students, policy advocates, educators and designers to better understand the listening skill part of blended learning. How many times have your students asked that question after going through all the information and still not being able to move.

Method

Study Design

This study employed a qualitative research design grounded in a constructivist and learner-centered perspective, which views learning as a process shaped by individuals' experiences, reflections, and social interactions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Rather than measuring variables quantitatively, this approach aimed to explore how students construct meaning from their experiences in a blended learning environment, particularly in the context of developing English listening skills.

This study lies in its focus on students' subjective and affective experiences of blended listening instruction in an EFL context, an area that has received less attention compared to studies emphasizing test scores or learning outcomes. By examining how students perceive, reflect on, and emotionally respond to the integration of online and face-to-face listening activities, this research offers deeper insight into the pedagogical value of blended learning beyond performance-based measures.

This qualitative design allows for an in-depth exploration of how online and face-to-face learning modes interact in students' daily academic experiences, the challenges they encounter, and the factors that support effective listening development in a blended learning setting.

Research Questions:

1. How do students in the English Language Teaching Study Program perceive the effectiveness of blended learning in developing their listening skills?
2. What are the key challenges and opportunities students face as they develop listening skills in a blended learning environment?

Sample Population

Every student in the English Language Education Study Program participating in blended learning constitutes this research population. The number of the participants is 30 students. This study used purposive sampling to select the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The primary requirement is that the participants must have actively participated and completed at least one semester in which listening skills were the primary focus of a blended class.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

The data collection process was carried out through structured and ethical procedures, beginning with administrative preparation to obtain formal permission and informed consent from participants to ensure understanding of the research objectives and data confidentiality. The research instrument was distributed online using Google Forms to respondents who met the selection criteria. Participants completed the survey independently (self-administered) within the specified time limit, with all narrative data automatically recorded by the system to ensure accuracy and efficiency of data archiving.

This study used an open-ended essay survey format designed to allow students to express their thoughts in depth, beyond the limitations of binary "yes" or "no" answers. This qualitative approach was chosen to explore students' authentic experiences

regarding the implementation of blended learning, specifically how the combination of online and offline methods impacted their English communication skills. This method enabled researchers to capture a richer range of nuanced perceptions than standard quantitative surveys.

The questionnaire included a comparative evaluation of the flexibility of online learning and face-to-face interaction in the context of improving listening skills, as well as identifying the most effective activities, such as the use of podcasts or group discussions. The survey also investigated key barriers, both technical and psychological, as well as the coherence or interconnectedness of the material between online and offline sessions. Finally, participants were asked to provide constructive feedback on ideal class designs, including time allocation and technology usage that maximize their learning potential.

Data Analysis Techniques

The Reflexive Thematic Analysis proposed by Braun & Clarke (2019) was selected because it aligns with a constructivist epistemology, emphasizing meaning-making and researcher reflexivity in interpreting participants' narratives. This approach is particularly suitable for exploring students' perceptions of listening development, as it allows patterns of experience, emotion, and cognition to emerge from qualitative data rather than being predetermined by theoretical categories. In this technique, the writer explored the meaning in each writing or comment expressed through a Google Form with open-ended questions.

The steps began with reading the data intensively in order to understand the feelings expressed in the data; next, the writers created codes by underlining several sentences or keywords that contained interesting perceptions. The writers then collected similar codes or ideas from the highlighting results and arranged them into appropriate themes. The next step, the writers reviewed the themes that had been created and corrected themes that were not suitable. Lastly, the writers assembled them into a narrative in the findings that presented the perceptions, ideas, experiences, and feelings of each respondent.

Results

This section presents the findings derived from the thematic analysis of students' responses regarding their experiences in a blended listening class. To maintain participants' confidentiality, each student is referred to using an initial (S), followed by a number (e.g., S1, S2, S3), in accordance with the research data. In addition, the label "Q" is used to refer to the thematic grouping of questionnaire items, in which several related questions are synthesized into a single overarching theme for analytical purposes. Overall, the results indicate that students perceived blended learning as a beneficial approach for developing English listening skills, as it combines the flexibility of online learning with the authenticity of face-to-face interaction. The analysis revealed several key themes related to students' perceived effectiveness of blended learning, the challenges they encountered in both learning modes, and their expectations of an ideal blended learning model. These findings are organized according to the research questions and presented through thematic descriptions supported by students' excerpts.

Q1: Students' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Blended Learning in Supporting the Improvement of Listening Skills

Theme 1: Flexibility and Independent Pacing in Online Learning

Most students emphasized the importance of flexibility in online learning, particularly the ability to control their own learning pace during listening activities. Many respondents highlighted that features such as replaying, pausing, or slowing down audio materials allowed them to process spoken input more comfortably without feeling rushed. S2 stated, "*Online enak karena bisa ulang materi kalau belum paham*," indicating that repeated exposure helped improve understanding. Other participants, such as S3, S4, and S11, explained that this independence supported their comprehension of pronunciation and vocabulary while reducing anxiety during listening practice. Technical features such as subtitles and transcripts were also perceived as helpful. As S2 shared, "*kita bisa pakai fitur pause di YouTube atau podcast buat mencerna detail dan kosakata baru dengan tenang*." These responses show that online learning enabled students to engage in self-paced listening practice, allowing them to monitor their understanding and build confidence through repeated and controlled exposure to listening materials.

Theme 2: The authenticity of Direct Interaction in Face-to-face Learning

While students acknowledged the convenience of online learning, many considered face-to-face sessions irreplaceable for developing authentic listening and communication skills. Direct classroom interaction was perceived as particularly helpful for understanding context and receiving immediate feedback. S4 explained, "*Diskusi langsung di kelas membantu saya memahami konteks percakapan dengan lebih baik*." In addition, face-to-face learning encouraged students to practice active listening and spontaneous responses, which they felt were difficult to achieve in online settings (S5, S6). Several participants also emphasized the importance of interpreting non-verbal cues during in-person communication. As S2 noted, "*Disini juga kita belajar baca ekspresi wajah dan emosi orang, yang mana ini kunci komunikasi asli*." These responses indicate that students perceived face-to-face learning as a crucial space for experiencing real-world communication, where listening skills are practiced in authentic and interactive contexts.

Q2: Students' Challenges and Opportunities in Developing Listening Skills in a Blended Learning Environment

Theme 1: Distractions and Technical Barriers in Online Sessions

A significant number of respondents reported that the main challenges occurred during online learning sessions. Many students described difficulties in maintaining focus due to environmental distractions, such as studying from home, along with technical problems including unstable internet connections and poor audio quality. S2 mentioned, "*Tantangan terbesar saya itu susah fokus saat belajar online*," while S1 highlighted connectivity issues by stating, "*Kendalanya lebih sering saat online karena sinyal jelek dan suara kadang tidak jelas*." These responses, which were also echoed by S7 and S9, indicate that external distractions and technical instability frequently disrupted students' listening practice during online sessions, making it difficult for them to concentrate fully on listening tasks and comprehend spoken input effectively.

Theme 2: Difficulty Processing Real-Time Speech in Face-to-face Settings

Although online challenges were mentioned more frequently, several students also reported difficulties related to the immediate demands of face-to-face listening activities. The primary difficulty involved understanding spoken English delivered at a natural speed without the option to pause or replay the input. S3 acknowledged this challenge by stating, "*Lebih sering ketika tatap muka*," referring to the pressure of understanding spoken English in real time. S3 explained, "*Sementara di kelas tatap muka, tantangan yang*

muncul adalah kesulitan menangkap ucapan teman atau dosen yang berbicara dengan cepat. Kadang saya juga merasa gugup untuk bertanya atau mengulang bagian yang tidak saya pahami.

In addition to processing speed, S12 also mentioned difficulties in maintaining concentration during extended listening activities. S12 noted, *"Kalo untuk pembelajaran offline biasanya saya tidak fokus ketika mendengarkan audio yang terlalu panjang dengan basic conversation."* Taken together, these responses show that real-time listening in face-to-face settings requires sustained attention and confidence, which some students found challenging when dealing with fast-paced speech or lengthy listening materials.

Theme 3: Fostering Learner Autonomy and Self-Regulation

Despite the challenges encountered in both online and face-to-face learning modes, respondents identified a clear opportunity within blended learning, particularly in fostering learner autonomy and self-regulation. Some students (S3, S10) described how the online component allowed them to manage their learning time more flexibly and revisit listening materials according to their individual pace. S10 explained that this learning format *"membantu saya melatih diri untuk belajar mandiri dan lebih bertanggung jawab terhadap hasil belajar."* These responses indicate that blended learning encouraged students to take a more active role in managing their listening practice. By allowing repeated exposure to listening materials and independent review, students became more aware of their learning needs and progress, suggesting that blended learning supports not only the development of listening skills but also greater responsibility in the learning process.

Q3: Students' Perception of the Connection between Online and Offline Components in the Listening Class

Theme 1: Synergy and Continuity between Sessions

Most students felt that online and face-to-face learning work in a continuous way. They sensed that online materials support classroom activities and help strengthen understanding. S2 wrote, *"Materi yang dipelajari online kemudian dibahas lagi di kelas, jadi terasa nyambung."* and another (S9) stated, *"keduanya saling melengkapi... materi online jadi dasar buat diskusi di kelas."* A third student (S10) added that online sessions provide the initial exposure, while the offline class serves as a place for clarification and simulation. This shows that students do not see blended learning as two separate things, but as a cycle. The online part acts as the foundation where they build their input (vocabulary and basic understanding), which then gives them the confidence to handle the "real-world" pressure of communicating in the offline classroom.

Theme 2: The Need for Material Synchronization

A small number of students pointed out that the sense of continuity only happens when the lecturer chooses relevant materials between online and offline sessions. S3 confirmed, *'iya berkesinambungan jika memang memilih materi yang sesuai.'* Another (S10) warned that it can feel disconnected if the online material is not integrated thematically or if there is no deep follow-up in class. Therefore, the success of blended learning depends heavily on instructional design. If the topics are not perfectly synced, students feel their independent study time is wasted. It is not just about having both modes; it is about making sure they actually talk to each other.

Q4: The Ideal Model of Blended Learning for Listening Skills

Theme 1: Balance in Proportion between Online and Offline Learning

Most respondents stressed the importance of keeping a balance between the two learning modes, with many suggesting a 50/50 or 60/49 split. One student (S10) suggested, "*Idealnya porsi online dan offline seimbang... online dipakai buat latihan mandiri (video/podcast), offline-nya fokus ke praktik langsung*", while another student (S3) pointed out "*Porsi 60% online untuk paparan intensif dan 40% offline untuk aplikasi dan klarifikasi mendalam.*" These suggestions show that students are leaning toward a Flipped Classroom model. They want full control over the audio materials, such as being able to pause and replay, in their own private space online, so they can really focus on bottom-up processing. Meanwhile, they expect the physical classroom to be the place where they test those skills in real-time situations. This shows that they value the efficiency of face-to-face meetings for things they simply cannot do on their own.

Theme 2: Utilization of Interactive and Authentic Technology

Students proposed using more engaging digital media rather than just standard audio files. Respondent (S9) suggested using podcasts because they feel more authentic and casual compared to textbook audio. Others (S6, S7, S11) suggested using platforms with auto-feedback features, AI speech recognition, or interactive quizzes like Quizizz to make learning less boring, "*Perlu lebih banyak media interaktif agar tidak monoton dan lebih menarik untuk belajar*" (S11). This suggests that students expected technology to be more than just a storage space for study files. They wanted smart tools that give them instant results so they can track their own progress. The desire for authentic content like podcasts also shows that they wanted to hear how English is actually spoken in the real world rather than just how it is taught in a controlled environment.

Theme 3: Relevance and Meaningfulness of Materials

Several respondents added that the topic should be "*menarik dan dekat dengan kehidupan siswa*". S6 elaborated the relevant materials, such as a video about "*percakapan di restoran*" is more effective for direct practices in the class during simulation. Other respondent (S9) mentioned that through movies and songs, they can learn to understand "*percakapan alami, aksen yang berbeda, dan ekspresi sehari-hari dalam konteks nyata.*" These suggestions prove that meaningful content is a major factor in effectiveness. When the content feels real or useful, students find it easier to process the language because they can relate to the context. This ultimately reduces the mental load of a difficult listening task and keeps their motivation high.

Discussion

The Findings of this study indicate that ELT students perceive blended learning as a transformative approach that balances the autonomy of digital tools with the necessity of human interaction. This is consistent with Wahyuni & Soeparto (2023), who argued that blended models significantly bolster student responsibility and listening achievement. However, while their research emphasizes quantitative gains, the present study highlights the psychological relief provided by "pause and repeat" functions, which mitigate the cognitive load often associated with real-time listening. This sentiment is echoed by Zebua et al. (2023) regarding post-pandemic motivation, yet this research further suggests that such motivation is fragile and highly dependent on the seamless integration between online preparation and offline execution.

In terms of the digital phase, the flexibility reported by participants aligns with Silviana et al. (2025), who noted the benefits of “anytime-anywhere” learning. Nevertheless, this study uncovers a deeper layer of “mental fatigue” during prolonged digital sessions, a challenge also identified by Afifyattena et al. (2024), who stressed the importance of well-structured blended environments to prevent student burnout. This is further supported by Zhou and Chayanuvat (2021), whose research on learner autonomy suggests that without proper guidance, the independence of blended learning can become overwhelming. The findings of this study contribute to this discourse by showing that students require not just flexible access, but also “micro-learning” segments to maintain focus.

From the perspective of self-regulated learning (SRL), the findings of this study demonstrate how students exercise agency by utilizing digital features, such as transcripts and audio controls, to manage their own learning pace. This aligns with the self-regulated learning framework mentioned, where students transition from passive recipients to active managers of their cognitive resources. Furthermore, the participants’ preference for offline interaction for immediate clarification reflects a constructivist perspective, where knowledge is co-constructed through social dialogue. As established in the constructivist theory of this study, the offline sessions provide the necessary social scaffold that complements the individual online preparation. This synergy proves that blended learning effectively fosters listening skills by bridging the gap between independent cognitive processing and social meaning-making.

The necessity of social presence and immediate feedback in the offline phase remains a cornerstone of this study’s findings, reinforcing the work of Khan & Khan (2024) on the vital role of teacher-student interaction. While Qiu and Luo (2022) highlight the efficiency of AI and digital platforms in providing feedback, participants in this research explicitly valued the “unreplaceable” nature of physical non-verbal cues. This preference for human-centric interaction is also central to the findings of Jiang et al. (2021) and Hassan et al. (2022), who observed that social engagement acts as a catalyst for communicative competence. Furthermore, the “readiness” to communicate reported by students after online preparation mirrors the results of Cheng (2025) and Lai (2025), who found that pre-class digital engagement significantly lowers the affective filter.

Moreover, the technical struggles identified in this study, such as unstable connections, are consistent with the barriers noted by Liu, Hamid, & Bao (2025). However, this research provides a nuanced view of the “frustration” and “lost momentum” caused by these glitches. This aligns with Rafiee and Gilakjani (2024), who argued that success is contingent upon infrastructure stability. Finally, while Al Abdali (2025) described the environment as “dynamic,” this study specifies that this dynamism is only achieved when there is a strong “connective thread” between the two modes.

The novelty of this research lies in its holistic focus on the ELT students’ voice regarding the affective and intermodal synergy of blended learning. Unlike previous studies that often isolate technological benefits or focus solely on achievement metrics, this study maps the internal psychological transition students undergo between different learning modes. The present research fills a significant gap in the literature by demonstrating that the effectiveness of blended learning for listening skills is not merely a matter of mixing modes, but of carefully managing the student’s cognitive focus and emotional comfort across the digital and physical divide. Consequently, this study offers a more humanized framework for developing blended ELT curricula.

Conclusions

This study sought to explore students' perceptions of blended learning in the development of English listening skills. The findings show that students perceive online learning as beneficial for supporting independent practice, particularly through features that allow repeated exposure to listening materials and flexible control over learning pace. In contrast, face-to-face learning remains highly valued because it enables direct interaction, immediate feedback, and authentic listening experiences. Students perceive these two modes as complementary rather than competing, provided that learning materials are designed in a coherent and relevant manner. Overall, blended learning is viewed as effective when both online and offline components are meaningfully integrated to support listening development.

Suggestions

Although this study provides valuable insights, several limitations should be acknowledged. Data were collected solely through open-ended questionnaires, which means that the depth of information depended on participants' written responses. Future research could employ additional methods such as interviews, focus group discussions, or classroom observations to gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' listening experiences. Furthermore, since the study was conducted within a single study program, the findings may not be generalizable to other institutional contexts. Comparative studies across different universities or learning environments are therefore recommended.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings highlight several important implications for English language teaching. Educators are encouraged to design blended listening courses that maintain a clear balance between online flexibility and face-to-face interaction. Online components should be used to support autonomous practice and repeated exposure to listening input, while classroom sessions should prioritize clarification, discussion, and interactive listening activities. In addition, the use of engaging and contextually relevant listening materials can help sustain students' motivation and concentration. Ensuring continuity between online and offline sessions is also essential so that students experience blended learning as a coherent and meaningful process rather than as disconnected activities.

In a broader sense, this study reinforces the importance of incorporating students' perspectives into the design and evaluation of blended learning. By understanding how learners experience different instructional modes, educators and curriculum designers can create learning environments that better support the development of listening skills and prepare students for real-world communication beyond the classroom.

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