

**T.C.  
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**



**EFL LEARNERS' VIEWS ON BLENDED LEARNING AND  
THEIR SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE ITS USE IN LANGUAGE  
CLASSES**

**MASTER'S THESIS**

**Şirvan ATAC**

**Foreign Languages Education Department  
English Language Education Program**

**AUGUST, 2023**



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English Language Education Program**

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**AUGUST, 2023**

**APPROVAL PAGE**

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare with respect that the study “Efl Learners’ Views On Blended Learning and Their Suggestions to Improve its Use in Language Classes”, which I submitted as a Master thesis, is written without any assistance in violation of scientific ethics and traditions in all the processes from the Project phase to the conclusion of the thesis and that the works I have benefited are from those shown in the Bibliography. (09/08/2023)

Şirvan ATAC

## **FOREWORD**

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis advisor, Assist. Prof. Dr. Hülya YUMRU. Having the opportunity to both learn from and collaborate with her was an honor and a delightful experience. Her support surpassed the mere supervision of this research, as I gained valuable insights from her regarding the academic journey and the qualities that define a dedicated researcher and educator.

I also would like to thank my friends and colleagues who supported me whenever I needed it throughout my academic journey. Finally, I am grateful to my dearest friend Mert AKBULUT for his endless support from the very beginning.

August, 2023

Şirvan ATAC

# **EFL LEARNERS' VIEWS ON BLENDED LEARNING AND THEIR SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE ITS USE IN LANGUAGE CLASSES**

## **ABSTRACT**

There has been a rapid expansion in the use of technology in education in recent years with the COVID-19 pandemic has furthered this trend. While a substantial body of research has been done on educators' views on blended learning there is still a need for more research on learners' views in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) preparatory schools, particularly after the restrictions were lifted. By studying how EFL preparatory school students perceive blended learning following the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, this study seeks to close this gap in knowledge. By exploring students' opinions and experiences, contributing to the improvement of the educational process on blended learning and English language teaching course designs is possible. This study was carried out at an English Preparatory Program at a foundation university in Istanbul, Turkey. A mixed-methods research design was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. To gain quantitative data, the Scale for Effectiveness of Blended Learning Environments by Gülbahar & Cabı (2013) was carried out on 63 students. The scale consists of 55 Likert-scale questions and is divided into four sections which are face-to-face learning environments, online learning environments, blended learning environments, and technical dimensions. To analyze the data, IBM SPSS v. 26 was used for descriptive statistics. The findings from the quantitative data revealed that the students place high importance on face-to-face instruction. Communication with peers was found to be the most crucial component, followed by placing a high value on academic success. However, we also discovered some degree of dissatisfaction with online learning-related issues. Learning through online classes ( $\bar{x}=2.02$ ), communicating with peers ( $\bar{x}=2.14$ ), and using technology to increase interest ( $\bar{x}=2.32$ ) are some of the aforementioned low values. Students perceive blended learning positively and scores related to appropriate content delivery in both environments and the instructors' skills in combining face-to-face and online

learning are high. The findings from the qualitative data revealed that students place a high priority on face-to-face learning, emphasizing its value for fostering social bonds and academic performance. They seemed to benefit from flexibility, time savings, and better access to learning materials through blended learning, whereas raised concerns about prolonged screen time and lack of social connection. Students suggest getting instructions on how to use computer-related skills and resources effectively and having more balanced online and face-to-face instruction, a solution to excessive screen time, and using flexible online class hours and break schedules.

**Keywords:** blended learning, English language learning, student views, student suggestions, student perceptions



# İNGİLİZCEYİ YABANCI DİL OLARAK ÖĞRENEN ÖĞRENCİLERİN HARMANLANMIŞ ÖĞRENME HAKKINDAKİ GÖRÜŞLERİ VE DİL DERSLERİNDE KULLANIMINI İYİLEŞTİRMEK İÇİN ÖNERİLERİ

## ÖZET

Son yıllarda teknolojinin eğitimde hızlı bir şekilde yaygınlaşmasıyla birlikte, COVID-19 salgını bu trendi daha da ileriye taşımıştır. Harmanlanmış öğrenme (blended learning) konusunda öğretmenlerin görüşleri üzerine önemli araştırmalar yapılmasına rağmen, İngilizceyi Yabancı Dil olarak (EFL) öğrenenlerin görüşleri hakkında, özellikle kısıtlamaların kalkmasından sonra, daha fazla araştırmaya ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır. Bu çalışma, COVID-19 kısıtlamalarının kaldırılmasını takip eden süreçte EFL hazırlık okullarında öğrencilerin harmanlanmış öğrenmeyi nasıl algıladıklarını inceleyerek bu bilgi açığını kapatmayı amaçlamaktadır. Öğrencilerin görüşlerini ve deneyimlerini araştırarak, harmanlanmış öğrenme ve İngilizce dil öğretimi ders tasarımlarının geliştirilmesine katkıda bulunmak mümkündür. Bu çalışma, İstanbul, Türkiye'de bir vakıf üniversitesine bağlı bir İngilizce Hazırlık Programında gerçekleştirilmiştir. Karma yöntemler araştırma tasarımı kullanılarak hem nicel hem de nitel veriler toplanmıştır. Nicel veri elde etmek için Gülbahar ve Cabı (2013) tarafından geliştirilen Harmanlanmış Öğrenme Ortamlarının Etkililiği Ölçeği 63 öğrenci üzerinde uygulanmıştır. Ölçek, 55 Likert tipi sorudan oluşmakta ve yüz yüze öğrenme ortamları, çevrimiçi öğrenme ortamları, harmanlanmış öğrenme ortamları ve teknik boyutlar olmak üzere dört bölüme ayrılmaktadır. Verilerin analizi için betimsel istatistikler için IBM SPSS v. 26 kullanılmıştır. Nicel verilerden elde edilen bulgular, öğrencilerin yüz yüze öğretimi büyük önem verdiğini göstermektedir. Akranlarla iletişimin en önemli bileşen olduğu ve akademik başarıya büyük değer atfedildiği saptanmıştır. Ancak, çevrimiçi öğrenme ile ilgili sorunlar konusunda da belirli bir seviyede memnuniyetsizlik olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Çevrimiçi derslerle öğrenme ( $\bar{x}=2.02$ ), akranlarla iletişim ( $\bar{x}=2.14$ ) ve ilgiyi artırmak için teknoloji kullanımı ( $\bar{x}=2.32$ ) söz konusu düşük değerler arasındadır. Öğrenciler harmanlanmış öğrenmeyi olumlu bir şekilde algılamaktadırlar ve her iki ortamda

uygun ierik sunumu ve eđitmenlerin yz yze ve evrimii đrenmeyi birleřtirmedeki becerileriyle ilgili puanlar yksektir. Nitel verilerden elde edilen bulgular, đrencilerin yz yze đrenmeye byk nem verdiklerini ve bu yntemin sosyal bađların ve akademik bařarının geliřtirilmesindeki deđerine vurgu yaptıklarını gstermektedir. Ayrıca đrenciler, harmanlanmış đrenme sayesinde esneklik, zaman tasarrufu ve đrenme materyallerine daha iyi eriřimin sađlandıđından faydalandıklarını belirtirken, uzun sreli ekran karřısında kalmanın ve sosyal bađların eksikliđinin endiřesini dile getirmişlerdir. đrenciler, bilgisayarla ilgili beceri ve kaynakların etkin kullanımı konusunda đretim almayı, evrimii ve yz yze eđitimin daha dengeli bir řekilde birleřtirilmesini, ařırı ekran sresine bir zm bulunmasını ve esnek evrimii ders saatleri ve mola programları kullanılmasını nermektedirler.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** harmanlanmış đrenme, đrenci bakıř aısı, İngilizce eđitimi, yabancı dil eđitimi

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>BL</b>	: Blended Learning
<b>CEFR</b>	: Common European Framework Reference
<b>EFL</b>	: English as a Foreign Language
<b>ESL</b>	: English as a Second Language
<b>ICT</b>	: Information and Communications Technology
<b>SPSS</b>	: Statistical Package for Social Sciences
<b>TOEIC</b>	: Test of English for International Communication

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# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. Background of the Study**

Education is an ever-changing area that requires being adaptive to continuous advancements. The concept of teaching and learning had always been linked solely with actual brick-mortar school buildings, and classes with teachers in them. Traditional face-to-face education had been the dominant mode of teaching, whereas the development of radio and television led to new ways of delivering instructions to distant places. Fast forward to the twenty-first century, improvements in technology and Internet Communication Technology (ICT) have changed people's lives as well as the way they receive education. Especially in the last couple of years, with the impact of the Coronavirus outbreak, the majority of educational institutions have implemented online education systems as the lockdowns limited the use of face-to-face teaching. It has been claimed that blended learning is the most practical way to maintain education throughout unsafe situations (Mackey et al., 2012).

Among numerous definitions of blended learning, one of the simplest is “combining online and face-to-face instruction” (Graham, 2006, p.41). A more detailed definition by Christensen, Horn, & Staker (2013), is as follows: an instructional program in which students are taught at least partly by online teaching with a few components of learner control over time, location, method, and/or pace and partly, at a controlled brick-and-mortar location away from their houses. With the Covid 19 pandemic breakout, traditional face-to-face teaching was replaced by emergency remote teaching. As in 192 nations around the world, schools had to close due to the pandemic, and for more than 90 percent of students in these countries, education had to be discontinued (UNESCO, 2020). After the reduction of restrictions, learners in blended learning have been taught both in the traditional classroom environment and online, with any available electronic device that can connect to the Internet and online learning management systems and video communication tools from anywhere they like. The integration of these two modes in education has helped the continuity of uninterrupted education worldwide with the



minimum risk of being exposed to the virus in schools. As blended learning (BL) is seen as “the new normal” by so many scholars, there have been so many studies to explore educators’ views of BL, but there isn’t enough research on students’ views regarding BL in the literature.

## **B. Statement of Problem and Purpose**

Because of the advances in technology and their effect on education, almost all educational institutions have been trying to adapt to this new era in the past two decades, but it reached an unprecedented pace along with the Coronavirus outbreak. The accessibility of e-learning tools and resources, and the necessity to integrate them into all educational institutions all over the world have led to several uncertainties and therefore, a lot of research has been made on this matter in the literature. However, these studies mostly focus on the views and experiences of educators. What is more, most of the studies related to blended learning analyzed the situation during Covid-19 lockdowns. The current learners of the new generation are digital natives and they are able to adapt to all digital innovations and challenges. They are born into the technology age and expected absolute acceptance in all aspects of their lives. However, their views on using technology in their education, in other words having English language instruction in blended learning is another aspect. There is a gap in the literature on how students feel about having online learning in their lives and the results of this study might shed some light on future design and implementation of BL classes in preparatory classes. Using blended learning instead of the traditional face-to-face model is relatively a new model in preparatory schools in Turkiye, and it was implemented abruptly in all course designs without learners being ready for such a radical change. The aim of this study was to learn how EFL preparatory school students perceived Blended Learning after the Covid restrictions were lifted. It also strove to uncover the reasons why they felt that way and what experiences constructed their views of the blended learning environment in order to get some hints to improve the educational process and English language teaching course designs.

### **C. Research Questions**

The main aim of this study was to understand EFL preparatory school students' views of blended learning after the COVID-19 restrictions were lifted and life got back to normal. The following research questions guided the study:

**Q1.** What are EFL preparatory school students' views of blended language learning?

**Q2.** What are the factors that have shaped EFL preparatory school students' blended learning experiences?

**Q3.** What are EFL preparatory school students' suggestions on how to improve blended learning design?

### **D. Significance of the Study**

When the entire education system was overturned unexpectedly in March 2020, almost all the parties in the system suffered at first. Transforming the traditional face-to-face approach and curriculum designs into an online version, and getting used to minimizing all the social and educational interaction to a computer screen was the only option in the beginning. Now that the restrictions are lifted, it is crucial to get all stakeholders' views on blended learning. A blend of in-person classes and online learning is regarded as a future-oriented teaching strategy as technology-assisted classrooms continue to develop. COVID-19 is now a major factor in why blended learning is being used at international universities and it is a fact that it is here to stay.

As there have been many researchers working on the teachers' and institutions' views, there are few studies on the views of learners in specific departments such as medicine, nursing, or accounting. However, when we look at the literature, there is a gap in language learners' views in Turkish preparatory schools. It is vital to have some insights into those students' opinions and feelings on the matter as well. There are several essential significances of this, but the most prominent ones are to be ready for similar disaster scenarios and to improve the blended learning system by getting students' views.

Blended learning offers foreign language teachers and students at higher education institutions various opportunities to improve their language education. It provides a chance to fulfill objectives about sustainable education and it is more appealing and easily accessible to adult learners (Alvarez et al, 2022). Also, combining face-to-face and online education, assessing the effectiveness of it and improving it, reevaluating and redesigning the current education system so that it can keep up with the fast-pacing technology, exploit it to create a life-long education standard.

Almost all digital natives, especially students from Generation Z, have access to the Internet and smart devices. They use technology in almost everything they do. Many students like to use technology to learn, which has caused universities to provide education in this way. Now, the designs tend to be more on the student and less on the teacher. Nowadays, students can choose to learn in a different way called blended learning. With blended learning, they can learn at their own speed, work together with classmates, and make their own study schedule. As this has become a really popular way of learning internationally, it is vital to catch up with the trend and take all the necessary actions. Therefore, it is important to know what students think about blended learning, especially after the COVID-19 outbreak restrictions were lifted and life went back to normal, in order to recognize its pros and cons. Since the pandemic began many studies have been done around the world to see if blended learning is effective in terms of instructors' views. whereas there aren't many studies on learners' opinions in Turkey, especially for people who are learning English as a foreign language and for students who are in university. This study aimed to shed some light on these aspects on a small scale.

#### **E. Limitations of the Study**

The aim of this mixed-method research design was to investigate how students perceive blended learning after all the restrictions of the COVID-19 Pandemic were over. However, it must be admitted that there were some inevitable limitations that make it hard to apply this to other situations. To begin with, the study was conducted on English Preparatory Department students of a foundation university in İstanbul, Türkiye, so it only reflects the opinions of EFL learners. Secondly, there are 63 participants who answered the scale in the study and seven

students participated in the interview. As the number of participants was limited, it is difficult to make generalizations from the results. Moreover, the students who participated in the scale and interview were taught one semester (14 weeks) of blended EFL classes, so the results were based on a limited time. Lastly, the interviews were conducted fully online as regular education was halted due to the massive earthquake that hit the country on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2023, and this might have changed students' original opinions prior to the earthquake.

## **F. Key Concepts and Definitions**

**1) Blended Learning (BL):** This phrase refers to the method of instructing learners that combines online and face-to-face learning experiences when teaching students.

**2) Information and Communications Technology (ICT):** The term refers to the infrastructure that people and organizations can engage in the digital world thanks to a combination of devices, networking elements, applications, and systems.

**3) Learning Efficacy:** The term "learning efficacy" describes a person's level of confidence in their ability to apply the skills and knowledge they have learned in a training session or in a classroom.

**4) English Preparatory Program:** This program seeks to give students with low levels of English proficiency the fundamental language skills they need to successfully complete their undergraduate degrees at university. Most of the departments at universities in Turkiye require a B1 level of English before they admit students to undergraduate programs, so the first year of university education is dedicated to an English language education if necessary.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **A. Introduction**

As technology claims its rightful place in modern life, the integration of technology has gained popularity in the education field in recent years. The abrupt transition from traditional education to online version due to the effects of the Covid 19 epidemic brought the term “blended learning” into action all over the world. Although the term BL has been used for more than two decades by scholars, it is now a trending topic in the field. Claypole (2003) states that the concept of BL is not new; in fact, it is the logical progression of earlier attempts to combine different teaching methods.

Undoubtedly, the world's technological improvements require a paradigm shift in how we approach our educational purposes and goals. Also, the findings show that learners are very connected to mobile technology and anticipate learning that is integrated with technology (Ali, 2020). Among various definitions of blended learning, the idea at the core is integrating online and face-to-face modes of education. Learners' views of blended learning, which includes their attitudes, preferences, expectations, and learning styles, is one of the common topics among the different sub-areas of BL study. In this study, BL is characterized as a combined instructional system in which online and face-to-face learning are incorporated into one unified instructional environment.

As Graham puts it (2006), blended learning is a way of learning that combines the best features of two different types of teaching: traditional face-to-face learning, and distributed learning, which uses computers and other technology to help students learn together. Technology can be enhanced in a variety of ways, with traditional onsite technology (where you are physically present) on the left, and fully online technology on the right. (Fig. 1) A blended approach could be somewhere in the middle, where you use both traditional and online technology so that it combines “effective, efficient, and flexible learning” (Stein & Graham, 2014).



Figure 1. A spectrum of technology-enhanced teaching or learning

Source: (Stein & Graham, 2014)

According to Garrison and Kanuka (2004), blended learning is a way of teaching where both face-to-face and Internet technologies are used in an efficient combination which allows teachers and learners to create a learning experience that is different from either of the methods so that it is more than simply adding on the dominant method. It's a way of restructuring the way teachers and students interact, starting from the specific needs of the situation. This means that no two blended learning experiences are exactly the same. As blended learning pedagogies promote active learning opportunities to domains outside the physical classroom environment, additional problems, such as encouraging involvement in live events and curricular activities outside of the classroom, will become more common. Students may connect, interact, and work on important projects in online and in-person settings thanks to blended learning environments (Riel et al., 2016). Teachers can arrange their instruction more effectively when teaching approaches are combined with technology. This results in new learning environments. For instance, classroom time can be used to teach material suited for face-to-face interactions, and technology-based activities and supplemental materials are supported by tools chosen to match the course subject (Kara, 2018). It can be argued that not having reached a clear consensus on the definition of BL, teachers, schools, or institutions may have their own tailored methods appropriate for their students. As Sharpe et al. (2006) put forward, institutions can customize and utilize the phrase any way they see fit and take ownership of it because there is no absolute definition for it. There seems to be broad agreement that BL should integrate face-to-face and online instruction. In addition, researchers and educational institutions have different limitations on the further definition of BL. They may either prefer less face-to-face time or determine the level of online or face-to-face learning (Graham, 2019).

Instead of giving an inadequate, oversimplified definition, Sharpe et al. (2006, p.18), incorporated eight dimensions that cover the possibilities of BL:

- Delivery: a variety of teaching modes which include face-to-face and online education
- Technology: blending web-based tools
- Chronology: blending synchronous and asynchronous learning
- Locus: authentic, efficient learning, practice-based vs. traditional theoretical classroom-based teaching environment
- Roles: categorizing learners and instructors in multi-disciplinary or professional groups
- Pedagogy: including a variety of pedagogical approaches
- Focus: accepting the different aims, recognizing that the goals of the learners are as important as those of their institutions
- Direction: deciding on the mode of teaching, instructor-directed or learner-directed (autonomous)

## **B. Blended Learning and Learners**

There have been studies on students' views of BL before and during Covid-19 by scholars in the education field. Some of the prominent studies are mentioned below.

The findings of research by Buhari et al. (2019), support BL, according to the learners' views. Therefore, BL integration is advised to raise student engagement, interaction, and autonomy. In another study that targets English for general academic purposes learners, in spite of the technical issues, the course largely achieved its predefined goals, i.e. practicing four language skills in an integrated way, and improving their practical language (Alizadeh et al., 2019). Also, course management is made easier with BL, and it gives learners and teachers chances to communicate while they are studying. As a result, students are more likely to be satisfied with blended learning, which in turn improves their outcomes. BL facilitates the publication of resources, manages student independent work, and manages and organizes courses, all of which contribute to learners' satisfaction with BL and an improvement in their outcomes. The key result of another research is that BL enhances student performance and satisfaction (Zeqiri et al., 2021). As Chapman

(2019) explains in his research, the majority of participants seemed to like the BL intervention, thought their language skills had improved throughout the sessions, and responded favorably to the feedback of the BL setting. Many learners in the study liked the activities and liked studying online. Some learners found using the necessary computer skills, which would have added to their negative opinions of the BL in English language education. Technical problems during English language education are one of the major problems during online sessions of BL, as it provides schools with the opportunity “to meet ever-changing interests and needs of the modern web-conscious and internet-minded students” (Ivanova et al., 2022, p 11).

Students' writing performance was improved by the BL approach. It might be because using technology and simulation to teach the same content in various ways boosts their motivation to learn (Sheet, 2018), and they like and enjoy learning English writing through BL (Farih & Karimata, 2022). BL helped them become more fluent in English and it gave them more confidence in their writing skills. By using peer feedback, students were able to concentrate on global errors, comment on linguistic problems, recognize and consciously foresee their own errors in their writing, and boost their self-confidence as writers and reviewers (Hojeij & Baroudi, 2018). The positive impact of BL on students' reading ability is statistically significant (Ghazizadeh & Fatemipour, 2017), and it develops a sense of achievement, self-confidence, and facilitates autonomous learning (Li et al., 2021). According to a recent study by AlManafi et al. (2023), BL is positively associated with the improvement of EFL learners' reading comprehension grades. Both inside and outside of the classroom, BL carries the potential to help students learn to read in ESL or EFL. It can maximize learning opportunities by taking place at the learner's preferred location and time. Therefore, it can lead to learner autonomy as it gives students more responsibility and moves learning away from traditional teacher-centered classes. Upon reviewing the most recent research on listening skills in BL mode, perception can be considered positive. According to a study by Kolbuniah et al., (2022), the respondents had a positive perception of the use of blended learning in the subject of public listening during COVID-19 in ELT. The findings of another research (Hasani et al., 2022) showed that the students who took the blended learning-based instructional course succeeded in improving their listening abilities, which significantly altered their views on learning English listening skills and



eliminated feelings of fear and anxiety related to learning. It became clear that blended learning was successful in helping post-basic learners improve their EFL listening skills. In another specific study, the analysis of the data showed that the blended TOEIC listening course had a big impact on how much students' TOEIC listening scores improved. Additionally, the majority of the research participants are happy about the curriculum and acknowledge how it has improved their interaction with both their teachers and their peers (Minh & Ngan, 2019). As for speaking skills, according to the study by Mortaji (2022), students highly valued the effect of BL on public speaking. Both online learner interaction and face-to-face lessons with teachers were highly appreciated by the students in the study. They agreed that both components of BL worked well together. In one of the survey questions in the MA study by Nihal (2022), participants were asked if their speaking abilities had improved or remained unchanged as a result of the BL technique used. The results demonstrated that 94 percent of them agreed that combining blended learning with oral expression was a successful way to improve their public speaking skills.

### **C. Advantages of Blended Learning**

Blended learning has so many advantages to educational institutions, learners, and teachers with successful planning. Driscoll (2002) stated that with BL, organizations can gradually transition learners from traditional classrooms to e-learning, making them more receptive to change. As it is now in every part of our daily life as it provides greater access and convenience, lowers costs, and improves learning (Graham & Stein, 2014) It will be more common in the education field according to so many scholars. As stated by Ghimire (2022), numerous countries made technology a fundamental part of their education, and some nations have worked hard to integrate it in different ways. According to a review of relevant data, students were generally favorable to the blended learning environment (Drysdale et al, 2013). Another study's findings suggest that students value online courses and want to take advantage of them even if there is no threat of pandemics. Students with a higher ICT (Information and Communications Technology) perception, can more effectively profit from online material (Reinhold et al., 2021). Learning efficacy is positively linked to engagement in a virtual learning setting. Put simply, while online education does not provide the chance for in-person interaction, successful traditional

collaborative programs may be used to improve graduate engineering degree education through efficient and meaningful learner engagement (Qui, 2019). It is possible that successful integration of education frameworks in online teaching settings to improve both teachers' and learners' experiences for better engagement. However, there are some important key points to implementing effective blended learning at schools. Namely, prior to establishing a blended learning setting, a thorough needs analysis should be conducted to determine the institution's outputs and support systems, and the most appropriate blended learning system should be implemented for the institution (Ma'arop & Embi, 2016). Besides, a support system is crucial not only for instructors but also for students in every aspect to promote a smooth delivery of the blended learning program.

The views of ESL students are quite important in the success of related educational programs, and it is the same for BL. If learners perceive BL as a good fit for their learning goals, their satisfaction and retention rates will improve (Shohel et al., 2020). Students have higher success rates when they have a positive attitude and are highly motivated by the technology-enhanced mix of instruction. Learners in BL tend to be autonomous and free to learn anywhere, at any available time, according to Nguyen (2021) and Medina (2018). There are several important advantages of BL worth analyzing under separate headings.

## **1. Flexibility**

Blended learning provides students with more flexibility than traditional classroom-only methods. Students can access course materials and submit homework online, giving them the flexibility to study when and how they want. For language learners in particular, this flexibility can be advantageous who need to balance their studies with work or other responsibilities. It makes learners' schedules more flexible, delivers learning benefits through automated, asynchronous online technologies, and can take advantage of the modern social web to support learners outside of the conventional constraints of the traditional classroom (Stein & Graham, 2014). According to a study conducted by Karaaslan & Kılıç (2019), learners' ratings to a survey for the BL aspects in terms of percentage distribution, the learning flexibility subscale received the highest ratings from the students (89,8%). Therefore, all the participants from different English levels were in favor of BL learning flexibility. A review by Müller & Mildemberger (2021), states that institutions of

higher education should provide learners with more flexible programs to study with regard to time and place, so as to make higher education more accessible to a wider range of people.

## **2. Personalization**

Blended learning can be personalized to meet the needs of individual learners. Online learning platforms can provide students with adaptive materials and activities that are tailored to their skill level, learning style, and interests. This personalized approach can be more engaging and effective than a one-size-fits-all approach in a traditional classroom. As pointed out by Graham et al. (2019) Although certain outcomes may be non-negotiable, students have the opportunity to set personal goals related to their area of interests, which they can pursue in their own time. Numerous academics state that BL settings give chances to provide personalized feedback and differentiate instruction for learners with special needs and other targeted learners, i.e. ESL learners (Oliver & Stallings, 2014). BL provides students with the possibility to assess their own learning and the chance to receive more individualized and focused feedback in the areas they need (Lee, 2005). According to Macdonald (2008), online learning technologies allow students to become more self-directed, do independent research, and avoid a teacher-centered method of instruction. Digital resources are available to students at any time they feel the need. Stein and Graham (2014) claim that using the automated assessment tools that are frequently utilized in online environments, enabled students to take control of their own learning activities and receive immediate remedial feedback.

## **3. Cost-effectiveness**

Blended learning can be more cost-effective than traditional classroom-only methods. Online materials and activities can be less expensive than textbooks and other classroom resources, and online classes can reduce the need for expensive classroom space and equipment. For a variety of expenses, including accommodation, food, and commuting students needed money. With BL, these costs could be minimized for them (Stein and Graham (2014; Gültekin, 2022). King (2009) points out that students have fewer face-to-face classes, therefore, it reduces the need for classroom space and enables institutions to provide more courses or activities. Moreover, as stated by Stein & Graham (2013), utilization of the physical

campus resources can be decreased from an institutional standpoint. For universities that struggle to make the most of physical classroom space, a blended course can save considerable amounts of money when its in-class time is reduced by at least 50%. (Fig.3)

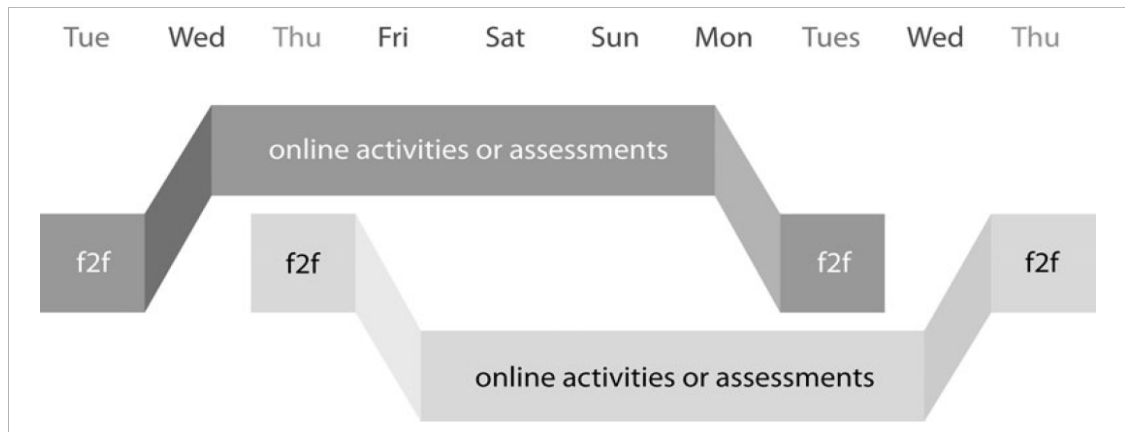


Figure 2. Two blended courses maximizing a single classroom

Source (Stein & Graham, 2013)

#### 4. Accessibility

Most of the learners are accustomed to utilizing computers for educational purposes and have no problems operating digital tools (Chen et al., 2018). Therefore, BL provides students with a lot of opportunities in terms of accessing all the materials they need. The use of software and hardware tools for foreign language education (FLE) allows students to access course materials whenever they need them, use them repeatedly, and purchase them for free or at least at a low cost (Gunuc & Babacan, 2017). BL's flexibility both increases accessibility and keeps the advantages of face-to-face education, which has a direct impact on teachers and learners (Kaur, 2013). For students to receive performance feedback and track their development, BL offers conveniently accessible, low-cost, high-functioning online learning options (Hill et al., 2016) with the flexibility to meet specific student needs that accommodate individual learner preferences effectively (Chen et al., 2018). Also, Mirriahi et al., (2015) stated that the resources that are made accessible through BL platforms provide learners with equitable access constantly.

## **D. Challenges of Blended Learning**

Blended learning has many benefits for language learners, some of which are mentioned above. However, there are also some challenges to this approach. BL concept is still new considering the history of education and there is always room for improvement. Further study is required, according to Graham and Allen (2009), in determining the best blend of the two learning environments and in comprehending their advantages and disadvantages. When reviewing the relevant literature, there are a few challenges that will be mentioned separately below as there are adequate findings related to them. However, there are some other issues that are faced throughout online sessions of BL, and not enough research to support them elaborately. One of them is pointed out by Medina (2018), it is difficult to make students aware of the available online materials and to train learners and teachers on how to use them. Besides, Celestino & Noronha (2021) point out that, students have difficulties accessing virtual classes, and materials, they might have insufficient knowledge of the platforms used in institutions, and they find online communication inefficient. They also put forward learners' perception of information overload, which leads to confusion in online classes. Another challenge of BL perception is getting over the misconception BL is not as effective as face-to-face classroom training (Kaur, 2013).

### **1. Lack of Personal Interaction**

One of the most discussed challenges in the field is the lack of personal interaction between the students and instructors and communication problems among peers as the online component of BL reduces the amount of face-to-face interaction. According to a review article by Buhl-Wiggers et al. (2022), it is apparent how crucial it is for learners to engage in person with lecturers and other students in higher education. The two approaches could be combined through blended learning to give students new learning opportunities. Although the face-to-face component of blended learning has received less attention than the online components, there is a risk that students will miss out on significant learning opportunities if face-to-face activities are not given priority when designing for better student learning. Based on the results of the interview data analysis in her MA thesis, Karakoyunlu (2022) concludes that differences in student engagement are focused on active participation.

The EFL teachers disputed the assertion that while in face-to-face courses, students were more engaged in answering teacher questions and taking part in cooperative learning activities, this engagement was reduced in online lessons. Another study by İstifci (2016) found that students preferred face-to-face communication with their instructors even though they appreciated the flexibility of BL. They also preferred face-to-face sessions due to the feedback they received from their instructor and the function of the instructor. Limited amount of in-person communication between students can be shown as a prominent challenge of BL (Heinze & Procter, 2004). To put it simply, while the BL method provides some real face-to-face classes, the amount of time given for socialization may not be enough, leading to several other issues (Hos et al., 2016), such as low motivation in less autonomous learners as they typically get motivated through their social relations and network in regular environments. As Ahn (2017) also agrees that, because of the decreased social connection, learners may feel alone, have low expectations for their academic performance, have poor time management skills, and lack a sense of responsibility. This situation leads to another challenge, as Liu (2019) argues that without further supervision and support from teachers, learners' lack of self-regulated learning abilities may constitute a barrier.

## **2. Motivation and Self-regulation:**

Students in BL environments may struggle with managing their time effectively and regulating their learning pace. According to Yen et al. (2019), one challenge of BL is that a lot of students lack the ability to self-regulate their learning process, which means that few students can use the self-regulated or autonomous learning styles in BL, which is essential to know for being independent learners to choose the correct learning steps, to assess their pace, and to reorganize the learning process (Launer, 2010). This can be especially challenging in language learning, where consistent practice is crucial for progress. Due to the considerable demands of self-discipline, motivation, and time management in blended learning, students must be able to balance their online and offline activities, manage their time effectively, and stay motivated to complete their coursework. Therefore, students must be more self-regulated when learning in BL environments (Bosch et al., 2020). Students' active online participation was determined to be insufficient according to the results of the study by Johnson & Marsh (2014). The paradigm of teaching and learning has

changed in the BL environment, which requires the development of new abilities both by teachers and students. Self-directed learning on the part of the students is crucial for effective BL outcomes. One of the biggest challenges for learners is that they lack the motivation to attend to self-directed learning. Despite the fact that blended language learning meets their needs, students preferred face-to-face instruction, according to Tosun's (2015) study and the reason for this choice was a lack of motivation and self-discipline on behalf of the students. Moreover, Karaaslan & Kılıç (2019) point out that, while low-achieving students needed more face-to-face time in class, interaction, and learning support, high achievers typically had positive attitudes toward all aspects of learning. This study suggests possible connections between factors like language proficiency, learner autonomy, and attitudes toward BL and emphasizes how crucial student traits and attitudes may prove in the implementation process.

### **3. Technical Issues**

Online learning has received attention after the abrupt transition due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, a large number of digital tools and online learning platforms have emerged to meet the needs. There were so many technical issues during the lockdown. Due to inadequate technical support and frustration brought on by technical issues, student satisfaction with online learning was low according to Firdoussi et al. (2020). In addition to other challenges presented by the online mode of blended learning that may cause problems in learning a language effectively, there are some additional technical issues, such as a lack of computer expertise and internet connection problems (Rianto, 2020).

Even though there have been a lot of improvements in technology, there seem to be some issues worth mentioning. Karakoyunlu (2022) reports that some students had to deal with technical issues and also lacked access to technological gadgets, even though the majority of the teachers thought that integrating technology was a successful technique for online education. Because some students had recurrent technological issues, the teachers had difficulty delivering engaging online lectures. Bulut (2022) points out that it was obvious that there would be some negative aspects to online instruction. The foremost essential of these drawbacks are Internet connectivity issues and infrastructure inadequacies.

Unfortunately, a lasting solution to this issue cannot currently be provided by educational institutions due to the fact that it is entirely dependent on the technological infrastructure of the countries.

### **E. Blended Learning in the Future**

Blended learning has emerged as a transformative tool in language education. A study by Wang and Vasquez (2012) highlighted the positive impact of blended learning on language acquisition and proficiency more than ten years ago, emphasizing the potential for future developments in this area. As technology continues to advance at an unimaginable pace, it is crucial to explore the future prospects of blended learning specifically in the context of language learning. It opens up new avenues for language learners by providing enhanced opportunities for practice, interaction, and exposure to authentic language materials. The integration of online resources, multimedia platforms, and social networking tools allows students to engage in self-paced learning, authentic communication with peers and native speakers, and access to a wide range of language resources.

The findings of the research by Du et al. (2022) indicate that blended learning has the potential to be a successful instructional approach and shows promising prospects for long-term development. Although the initial implementation of blended learning may require dedicated investment to enhance teaching resources and establish standardized designs, in the long run, this innovative teaching strategy can enhance students' professional skills, satisfaction, and optimize the allocation of educational resources, fostering a more balanced educational system.

According to Kucher et al. (2022), the sense of being part of the community and responsibility for the learning process has risen with distance learning. At the same time, the student-centered aspect of this style of learning should be recognized, because the teacher receives immediate feedback and can make adjustments in the organization and content of the educational process. The incorporation of various modes of delivering content significantly enhances the educational and methodological support for the course. As a result, the utilization of information and communication technology is an essential component of contemporary educational process. The possibility of additional research on the subject is linked to the development of an interdisciplinary approach used to create a blended learning



system.

A comprehensive analysis of multiple systematic reviews on blended learning by Ashraf et al. (2021) shows a fast-increasing number of blended learning reviews over the years, indicating significant interest in BL. This means that students can do better and feel good about themselves when they have more control over their learning in different subjects. Regarding psychological outcomes, students will be happy and interested while learning with blended learning. Furthermore, in terms of behavioral outcomes, BL showed support for students' academic performance in different subject areas and therefore, BL may help students do better in school and this study can guide future research about it. The findings of this study can serve as a guide for future research in the field of BL, facilitating its global adoption and contributing to the goal of providing high-quality education for all.

Another study by Brown et al (2022) shows an interesting future insight regarding blended learning. Although online education has benefits, it was primarily viewed as a contingency plan for situations like a pandemic. Generally, there was a clear preference for traditional in-person teaching and learning. Online education was mostly considered a solution for emergencies or situations that hindered face-to-face education. Additionally, the research findings suggest that the negative experience of abrupt remote teaching has overshadowed the potential advantages of blended learning. The authors state that There are various views regarding the definition of effective teaching and learning within schools. Similarly, when it comes to blended teaching and learning, diverse viewpoints emerge. In the absence of clearly established standards and frameworks for quality, history seems to repeat itself, with similar issues and questions arising as schools did before the development of teaching and learning standards. As a consequence, Brown et al (2022) assert that many schools may be unaware of what constitutes or is expected of blended teaching and learning. They may question whether they are on the right path, and inquire about the professional development opportunities required for effective implementation of blended teaching and learning. Despite being emphasized in policy, the actual implementation of effective blended teaching and learning may not be as widespread. Furthermore, it is necessary to employ the BL model once more in an actual blended learning setting, rather than solely relying on the experience of emergency online learning. This would help eliminate the potential influence of other

factors such as gender, health issues, depression, panic, and stress induced by the pandemic (Bamoallem & Altarteer, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic has presented a formidable challenge for both educational institutions and students and it has compelled the education sector to embark on a different path, thereby indirectly creating new possibilities accompanied by fresh obstacles. This transformative experience holds the potential to significantly reshape the future of higher education by enhancing its adaptability, fostering resilience, and promoting proactive approaches. These qualities are anticipated to be of utmost importance in the education sector during these times.

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

This chapter discusses the procedures and the methods that were used to analyze the study. Research design, settings and participants, procedures and data collection, and instruments and data analysis procedure were introduced in detail.

#### **A. Research Design**

The purpose of this study was to have an insight into preparatory class students' views and their overall satisfaction with blended learning after the COVID-19 restrictions, and their suggestions on how to improve blended learning design.

The mixed-method research design was used, both quantitative and qualitative methods, to gather reliable data. According to Dörnyei (2007), a quantitative method in research is not always sufficient, and it is limited in measuring the subjective variety of human life. As a result, he advised combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Also, Anderson (2016) agreed with the same method, stating that using a mixed-methods research design may boost the validity and reliability of a research's conclusions or findings. As a quantitative method, a scale developed by Gülbahar & Cabı (2013) was conducted to address research questions one and two. Mackey and Gass (2005) stated that when the goal is to investigate the perspectives, opinions, or views of a large population, surveys are commonly utilized as a quantitative research method. Surveys, typically in the form of questionnaires, are widely employed for this purpose.

The scale was conducted in its original version, Turkish to avoid any kind of language barrier that students might face. As for the qualitative method, a set of semi-structured interview questions were included in the study to have an analysis of learners' views and opinions on how to improve blended learning and answer research question three. The researcher made certain that participants had sufficient time and experience with the blended learning environment to make sound decisions. Therefore, the scale was conducted towards the end of the first semester, and the

interviews at the end of the second, both were fifteen weeks of blended language instruction in the preparatory program.

## **B. Setting and Participants**

This research was conducted at an English Preparatory Program of a foundation university in the 2022-2023 academic year in Istanbul, Turkiye. In the mentioned preparatory program, students have three days of face-to-face and two days of online learning per week. Twenty-six hours of English classes are required of every student. The Participants' proficiency level of English was A1 according to the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR) for languages. The hours of each skill that are taught in the program are distributed evenly between the face-to-face and online classes so that all students can benefit from both methods fairly. The school uses the Zoom communication platform for online classes and Learning Management System (LMS) to share materials. Instructors also use different types of interactive software and tools as learning technologies to communicate with students in every possible way during classes. These interactive software and tools include TED-ed, YouTube, Kahoot, Quizlet, Quizizz, Riseup Pad, Padlet, Jeopardy Labs, and Achieve3000 to improve all skills.

The study was conducted in three classes of the researcher and 63 students answered the scale by Gülbahar & Cabı (2013) voluntarily. As the classes were A1 level English language proficiency, the scale was used in their native language, Turkish. The age range of the students was between 18-20. For the semi-structured interview, systematic random sampling was used to select 10 percent of the total number of students. The researcher asked three open-ended interview questions, which can be seen in the Materials section, to the participants and record their answers. All the interviews took place online. They were recorded, transcribed, and translated. All the participants received a clear explanation of the study's purposes and their roles within it. Additionally, they were made aware that their involvement would be voluntary to address ethical concerns.

## **C. Data Collection Instruments**

This section provides a detailed examination of the tools used to collect data during the research process. As mentioned before, a mixed-method research design was used in this study, including two data collection instruments: a scale and semi-structured interviews with the students.

### **1. Scale for Effectiveness of Blended Learning Environments**

The first data collection instrument used in the study was a scale developed by Gülbahar & Cabı (2013) (Appendix B). The aim of the scale was to analyze the success of blended learning environments based on the characteristics of both face-to-face and online learning settings and to make recommendations.

The scale consists of 55 Likert-scale questions and is divided into four sections. The options for each item are 1=Always, 2=Frequently, 3=Sometimes, 4=Rarely, and 5=Never. The four sections in the scale are face-to-face learning environments (items F1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10), online learning environments (O1,2,3,4,5,6,7,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,17,18,19,20,21,22), blended learning environments (B1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20), and technical dimensions (8,16,23,24,25).

The face-to-face learning environments section aims to measure the experiences and perspectives of participants in traditional face-to-face learning contexts to those in online and blended learning environments. It contains questions about their interactions with instructors, communication with peers, motivation, learning results, and the significance of achieving their goals.

The online learning environments section aims to analyze students' experiences and perceptions of online learning settings in particular. It includes questions about the effectiveness of interactive presentations, the impact of technology on interest and learning, communication with peers and instructors, the use of communication tools, study enjoyment, access to resources, and satisfaction with online resources.

The purpose of the blended learning environments section is to assess students' experiences and perceptions of blended learning settings, which integrate face-to-face and online components. It includes questions about the instructor's

efficacy in managing both environments, the suitability of course content, the use of various teaching methods, the integrity of content delivery, evaluation methods, time management, and the autonomy of students in learning choices.

The technical aspects section tries to identify technical concerns that students may have faced while participating in the blended learning experience. It includes questions concerning emotions of loneliness or dissatisfaction, difficulty completing tasks on time, concerns with technological infrastructure, technical difficulties encountered, and problems with internet connections.

The scale's overall goal is to collect students' thoughts on the efficiency and efficacy of blended learning environments. The responses may provide significant insights into the blended learning approach's strengths and flaws, as well as possibilities for improvement. Table 1 presents categories, frequency of items, and the number of items for each section in the scale.

**Table 1.**Correspondence of Scale Items to Blended Learning Categories

Categories	Frequency of Items	Number of Items
face-to-face learning environments	10	F1,F2,F3,F4,F5,F6,F7,F8,F9,F10
Online learning environments	20	O1,O2,O3,O4,O5,O6,O7,O9,O10,O11,O12, O13,O14, O15,O17,O18, O19, O20,O21,O22
Blended learning environments	20	B1,B2,B3,B4,B5,B6,B7,B8,B9,B10, B11,B12,B13,B14,B15,B16,B17,B18,B19,B20
Technical aspects	5	O8,O16,O23,O24,O25

In this study, a Turkish version of the scale was used to avoid any kind of language barrier and make students feel relaxed to be able to get clear and honest answers (Appendix A).

The scale by Cabı and Gülbahar (2013) to collect quantitative data was proven to be reliable and valid. After the scale was conducted, the researcher checked the general reliability of it as well through IBM SPSS Statistics v. 26. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient results were within satisfactory reliability levels, which can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
,887	,889	55

## 2. Semi-Structured Interviews

The second data collection instrument of the study was a semi-structured interview. Many professionals and academics in the field advocate the use of semi-structured interviews in educational research. For example, according to Boyce and Neale (2006), in-depth interviews give significantly more information than other data-gathering methods such as surveys or questionnaires. Bogdan and Biklen (2007), also agree that interviews can be utilized as the primary method or strategy for data collection, or they can be used in conjunction with other approaches such as surveys and document analysis.

Before the interviews, each participant was asked and verbally consented to the recording of the interview. The number of participants for the survey was 63, therefore the researcher invited ten percent of the participants to attend the interviews. She used convenience sampling to select the participants.

Regardless of how the interview data is used, respondents should be informed that the material shared during the interview will be kept confidential. In a similar manner, at the conclusion of the study, interviews were performed privately with each participant individually and were transcribed and evaluated anonymously. Therefore, the researcher initiated the conversation with the following introduction:

*"I appreciate your willingness to take part in this interview. You are here because you have experienced BL education for 14 weeks now and I am interested in hearing your valuable opinion about it. I will ask three open-ended questions, and please remember that there are no right or wrong answers. I value both positive and negative feedback equally, as negative comments can often provide valuable insights. Rest assured that your identity will remain anonymous in my report, and there will be no video recording."*

As the aim of the study was to get a basic perception of students on blended learning, the questions were quite straightforward and not related to any specific

skills. Each interview session took about five minutes, as there were only three questions and students mostly kept their answers short and simple. The interviews were conducted in their native language in order to get their clear opinions and to surmount the language barrier. After the interviews were completed, the researchers transcribed, and translated to sessions into English. The questions are as follows:

What is the most beneficial aspect of blended learning? Why?

What is the least beneficial aspect of blended learning? Why?

What suggestions can you provide to help improve the blended learning approach?

#### **D. Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher got thesis proposal acceptance from İstanbul Aydın University Institute of Graduate Study, contacted the university administration where she works, and got permission to conduct the scale on her assigned preparatory students of 2022-2023 registered students. The researcher conducted the scale and the interviews after the students got enough experience to share opinions based on their experiences. To use the scale, the researcher contacted Gülbahar and Cabı (2013), the owners of the scale, and got the necessary permission to use it in the study. After all the permissions were granted, the scale was prepared on Google Forms and the link to the scale was shared with the students during the class hours. The received answers were exported to an Excel sheet and the data was analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics v. 26. For the interview, the researcher invited seven volunteer students and the sessions were conducted after class hours via Zoom online platform. After the interviews were completed, the recordings were transcribed and analyzed.

#### **E. Data Analysis Procedure**

As a mixed-methods research design, both quantitative and qualitative data analyses were used in this study. For the quantitative data, the Scale for the Effectiveness of Blended Learning Environments by Gülbahar and Cabı (2013) was used. The data was transferred to IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 26 for analysis. As there are four sections in the scale, they were analyzed separately starting from the highest-scored item by the students. These sections include face-to-



face, online, blended learning environments, and technical aspects. For the semi-structured interviews as qualitative data, systematic qualitative content analysis was used for analysis. Students' answers to interview questions were recorded online via the Zoom platform in their mother language. Then, the data was transcribed and translated into English, and then grouped under common themes to be able to create organized data which makes the analysis process easier. Also, themes helped group similar answers to find if there are patterns and simplify the interpretation process. The themes were grouped under each interview question. The first question was "What is the most beneficial aspect of blended learning?" and the themes include flexibility, convenience through saving time, the significance of technology in blended learning, and the financial benefits of blended learning. The second question was "What is the least beneficial aspect of blended learning?" and the themes were technology problems and poor internet connectivity, lack of communication and face-to-face interaction, the psychological effects of switching between face-to-face and online learning, and the negative impact of prolonged screen time. The last question was "What suggestions can you provide to help improve the blended learning approach?" and the themes that came forward were flexibility in class hours and breaks, the importance of face-to-face interaction, supporting student well-being and engagement in classes, assessment issues in the online component of blended learning.

## IV. FINDINGS

This section comprises two primary parts: quantitative findings (Section 4.1) and qualitative findings (Section 4.2). The first part includes the examination of the scale-based questionnaire's quantitative data, while the second part focuses on the analysis of the qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews.

### A. Findings from Quantitative Data

The quantitative data were grouped under four sections. The sections involved the responses about students' perceptions on face-to-face learning environments, online learning environments, blended learning environments, and technical aspects of blended learning environments respectively.

Table 3 reveals the mean and standard deviation values for each item under the scale's first section —Face-to-Face learning. The section is made up of 10 items that are related to the face-to-face learning model. The data are arranged in descending order, beginning with the highest mean and moving down to the lowest.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Face-to-face Learning

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
F4. I communicated more easily with my friends.	63	4,62	,771
F5. It is important for me to reach the goals I have set.	63	4,41	,796
F3. I think I learned better.	63	4,41	,854
F1. I was able to benefit from the instructor more than I was in the online environment.	63	4,30	,733
F2. I was able to get more help from the instructor compared to the online environment.	63	4,25	,740
F7. I was able to communicate more easily with the instructor.	63	4,13	,924
F8. I feel a greater sense of responsibility compared to online environments.	63	4,10	1,043
F9. The instructor encouraged me to attend the class.	63	4,06	1,030
F6. Learning under the guidance of an instructor increased my motivation.	63	4,02	1,129
F10. The homework and research I did was enough for me to understand the subject.	63	3,75	,967

The mean average of the face-to-face section in the scale is the highest among the others. There are ten items in this section and almost all of them have a value above  $\bar{x}=4.0$ . This can be interpreted as students preferring face-to-face education when they have the chance. The highest item in the set and the whole scale was the fourth item ( $\bar{x}=4.62$ ), which asked whether students communicated more easily with their peers. It can be said that the most important issue for students is communication with their peers. As isolation was one of the problems of learners during the COVID-19 distance education period, the scale result might point out that their priority is communication. The second highest item in the section is the fifth item asking about the importance of reaching the goals that students set for themselves. It can be interpreted from this item that students also prioritize their academic achievements. This indicates that they may have the motivation to accomplish these goals. The result reflects a sense of determination and commitment toward reaching their desired outcomes when they think of face-to-face education. Item 3, which has the lowest value ( $\bar{x}=3.75$ ), in this section was related to the homework and research students were assigned were enough for them to understand the subject they were taught. The relatively low value for this item may reflect that the students do not have high confidence in their own study methods and that they may not feel fully prepared. What is more, the values given by the students for the items related to the instructors indicate their satisfaction regarding benefiting from the instructor (Item 1) ( $\bar{x}=4.30$ ), getting more help (Item 2) ( $\bar{x}=4.25$ ), and easier communication with the instructor (Item 7) ( $\bar{x}=4.13$ ) in face-to-face learning environments compared to online learning environments. Overall, the results show that students have favorable opinions of their instructors in face-to-face learning settings. The students prefer this style of instruction and may emphasize the perceived importance of in-person interactions with instructors in facilitating their learning experiences. They may feel that in-person interactions with instructors offer them greater benefits, assistance, and ease of communication.

Table 4 shows the mean and standard deviation values for the section related to online learning environments, and it has 20 items. The data for the second section are arranged in descending order as well, beginning with the highest mean and moving down to the lowest.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Online Learning

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
O14. I was able to get immediate feedback from the instructor.	63	4,02	0,992
O12. I was able to get help from the instructor whenever I wanted.	63	3,83	1,086
O4. The instructor encouraged me to attend the lesson.	63	3,43	1,103
O13. While studying, I tried to find answers to my questions using communication tools.	63	3,37	0,972
O15. I made good use of the time to carry out activities.	63	3,35	1,05
O20. I could easily access the teaching materials whenever I wanted.	63	3,35	1,019
O1. The interactive presentation of the course content increased my interest in the course.	63	3,32	1,133
O3. I think that the different timed (discussion, etc.) events organized helped me learn better.	63	3,1	1,16
O18. I usually solved the problems I had while studying.	63	3,03	1,15
O2. I think that the simultaneous speaking activities enable me to learn better.	63	3,02	1,211
O11. I enjoyed participating in collaborative activities.	63	2,98	1,211
O22. The course content was prepared taking into account individual differences.	63	2,92	1,067
O19. I communicated more easily with the instructor.	63	2,65	1,019
O10. Using communication tools (internet, e-mail, discussion lists, etc.) made me feel that I was not alone.	63	2,52	1,229
O7. Using technology increased my interest in the course.	63	2,32	1,162
O6. I enjoyed studying very much.	63	2,29	1,113
O5. I communicated more easily with my friends.	63	2,14	1,075
O9. I felt a greater sense of responsibility than in the face-to-face environment.	63	2,05	1,054
O17. I think I learned better.	63	2,02	1,055

The highest received value in the online learning environments section belongs to item 14, ( $\bar{x}=4,02$ ) which stated that learners can get immediate feedback from their teachers. This indicates that the instructors provide quick responses, assessments, or comments on the students' work. The chance to get immediate feedback in an online learning environment can be beneficial as it allows for timely clarification of their questions in mind, and help them improve. It may be interpreted that they feel a sense of ongoing support and engagement with their instructors. It reflects a positive aspect of the online learning experience, where the instructor's responsiveness contributes to effective communication and progress in the online

part of the learning experience. However, the other items which received quite low values indicate problems related to students' views on online learning. Looking closely, nine out of 20 items received lower than  $\bar{x}=3.0$ , and there is only one item that reached the  $\bar{x}=4.0$  value. This indicates that students are not content with so many aspects of the online learning environment. For example, the lowest value, ( $\bar{x}=2,02$ ) belongs to the statement 17, "I think I learned better." The low value indicates that a significant number of students do not strongly believe that their learning experience has not been improved significantly through online learning compared to other modes of instruction. It might imply that these students encounter challenges or limitations that hinder their learning progress or prefer a different learning environment for optimal learning outcomes. The rating suggests a negative assessment of the effectiveness of online learning from the students' view. Also, item 4 related to students' communication with their friends received quite a low value ( $\bar{x}=2,14$ ) and that can be interpreted as students do not prefer online communication with their peers compared to face-to-face communication item which received the highest value in the whole scale. What is more, prominent aspects of online learning such as item 7, "Using technology increased my interest in the course." ( $\bar{x}=2,32$ ) and item 10, "Using communication tools (internet, e-mail, discussion lists, etc.) made me feel that I was not alone." ( $\bar{x}=2,52$ ) may be interpreted as the majority of students having a low level of agreement or satisfaction with them. It could be said that they do not strongly feel that the use of technology in the online learning environment significantly enhanced their interest in the course. This suggests that the technology tools may not have effectively captured their attention or motivated them to actively engage with the course content.

Also, communication tools used in online learning may not successfully foster a sense of connectivity and support. This could show that during the online learning process, students might feel detached or alone due to a lack of meaningful engagement or connection with their peers and teachers. Overall, these low values may suggest that the students feel that these important features of online learning are less effective in terms of capturing their interest in the courses and creating a feeling of connection.

Table 5 puts forward the mean and standard deviation values for the third section in the scale, which is related to the students' perception on blended learning

environments. This section has 20 items and they are arranged in descending order from the highest mean to the lowest.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Blended Learning

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
B11. The content we saw face-to-face and online was appropriate for the chosen medium.	63	4,54	0,618
B2. The instructor used face-to-face and online environments effectively.	63	4,43	0,689
B10. The course content was presented in a planned manner in blended environment.	63	4,32	0,82
B6. The instructor was successful in managing face-to-face and online environments.	63	4,17	0,794
B15. There was integrity in the content transmitted in both environments in blended environment.	63	4,16	0,787
B5. I think this experience is important.	63	4,14	1,045
B9. The course content was clear and understandable in blended environments.	63	4,11	0,805
B11. The content we saw face-to-face and online was appropriate for the chosen medium in blended environments.	63	4,11	0,863
B17. I would like different evaluation techniques to be used to evaluate my performance in blended environments.	63	4,08	1,097
B16. The criteria by which I will be evaluated have been specified in advance.	63	4,02	0,852
B8. The content of the course was suitable for my level.	63	4,00	1,032
B12. The superior properties of both environments were used.	63	3,98	0,889
B14. Different teaching methods and techniques used were suitable for transferring the content.	63	3,90	0,856
B18. If I need to, I try to meet my classmates face to face.	63	3,86	1,242
B3. The advisory support I received from the instructor was sufficient.	63	3,83	0,925
B13. The learning materials presented were sufficient for me.	63	3,76	0,893
B7. The time devoted to online and face-to-face environments was convenient for me.	63	3,65	1,31
B19. I was able to manage time well while performing teaching activities.	63	3,63	1,021
B20. I decided what to learn and how.	63	3,51	1,061
B4. I think I learned better.	63	3,24	1,279

The highest ranked item in the blended learning environments section was number 11 ( $\bar{x}=4,54$ ), the statement tried to measure the appropriateness of the content they are given face-to-face and online for the chosen medium implying that

students think that the content delivered in both face-to-face and online situations is appropriate for the chosen medium of distribution. This suggests that the learning activities and instructional materials were carefully thought out and matched to the individual learning environments in students' views, creating a cohesive and efficient learning experience. The second highest item (Item 2) is again related to using face-to-face and online environments effectively, highlighting the students' recognition of the instructors' success in using both learning environments. This may indicate that the instructors effectively utilize the strengths of each environment to create engaging and meaningful learning experiences for the students. It suggests the successful integration of instructional strategies and technologies to optimize the learning outcomes in both settings. Another statement (Item 10) that students valued highly was whether in the blended setting, the course material was delivered in a planned manner or not ( $\bar{x}=4,32$ ) might be inferred as it captured the students' opinion of how well-structured and arranged the course material was in the blended learning environment. The structure and delivery of the course may have ensured a logical progression of the information, enabling students to move through it without difficulty and successfully understand the subject matter.

Also, the interpretation of the items regarding advisory support, learning materials, and time allocation received moderate ratings from the students. In terms of advisory support (Item 3) which received  $\bar{x}=3.83$ , it may suggest that even though they think that some support was provided, there may be room for improvement or extra assistance to better meet their needs. For the learning materials, there may be areas where additional or more comprehensive materials could have been beneficial to improve their blended learning experience. Item 7, "The time devoted to online and face-to-face environments was convenient for me" received a value of  $\bar{x}=3.65$ . This may put forward that students find the time allocation between online and face-to-face classes to be moderately convenient. However, some students stated that they feel that the timing could have been adjusted or made more flexible to better accommodate their schedules and preferences. The responses given to item 20 may suggest that students feel a moderate level of autonomy in choosing their preferences in the blended learning environment, however, they may also believe that there are limitations that constrain their autonomy to a certain extent ( $\bar{x}=3,51$ ). The lowest valued item (Item 4) was trying to measure if students thought they learn better

( $\bar{x}$ =3.24). This indicates that students show a moderate level of confidence that they have improved learning outcomes in the blended learning environment. While they acknowledged some improvement or benefits in their learning, there may be areas where they feel their learning could have been further enhanced.

Table 6 is the last section of the scale, it is related to the technical aspect of blended learning environments and it has five items. The items are arranged in descending order from the highest mean to the lowest.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for Technical Aspects

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
O25. I had problems with the internet connection.	63	2,78	1,17
O23. I had problems because of the technological infrastructure.	63	2,63	1,182
O24. I had technical difficulties.	63	2,57	0,979
O16. I had difficulty in submitting the given assignments on time.	63	2,52	1,229
O8. I felt lonely and unhappy in terms of technical aspects.	63	2,38	1,128

All the items in this section received values less than  $\bar{x}$ =3.0 which may indicate that there are not serious problems in this area. Item number 8 which indicated students' feeling lonely and unhappy with regard to technical aspects receiving a score of  $\bar{x}$ =2.38 may suggest that students experience a low sense of isolation specifically related to technical aspects. Also, difficulty in submitting the assignments on time (Item 16) does not seem to be a serious issue when looking at the low score ( $\bar{x}$ =2.52). With an  $\bar{x}$ =2.78 rating, the statement that asked if they had issues with the internet connection (Item 25) suggests that students have moderate levels of issues with their internet access. It may be interpreted that online parts of the blended learning experience do not have significant hindrances in terms of their internet connectivity. Overall, these scores indicate that students face moderate to low levels of technical challenges in the blended learning environment. These issues may not have affected their overall experience remarkably. However, these results may put out that there is always a need for addressing technical support and infrastructure improvements to enhance the overall blended learning experience for students.



## 1. Summary of Quantitative Data

The scale reveals that students place high importance on face-to-face instruction, with the mean average score for the majority of items exceeding  $\bar{x}=4.0$ . Students rank communication with friends as the most crucial component, indicating a need for social connection. Additionally, they place a high value on academic success and are persistent in pursuing their objectives. They do, however, appear less confident in their research techniques. Students are very satisfied with their lecturers in person and value the advantages, assistance, and simplicity of contact. Overall, the findings show that students prefer in-person instruction and stress the value of close relationships with teachers. However, their attitudes toward online learning environments are mixed. Most other features received low marks, with the exception of the value and benefit of receiving fast feedback from teachers, which showed continued support and participation. Nine out of the twenty items received scores below  $\bar{x}=3.0$ , indicating a substantial lack of satisfaction with a number of online learning-related issues. Students prefer face-to-face communication with peers over online communication, and they may not firmly believe that online learning has improved their learning experience. With low involvement, motivation, and contentment with different parts of the online learning environment, students often gave unfavorable views of the effectiveness of online learning. Students' opinions of blended learning are positive in the third category of the scale. They commend good content delivery and acknowledge instructors' skills in combining in-person and online learning. The way the course material has been presented in a systematic way is highly accepted. The reasonable grades given to advisory help, learning resources, and time allocation, however, indicate an opportunity for growth. Although they find the class schedule to be somewhat convenient, they may prefer more flexibility. They may feel certain restrictions, but they have a moderate amount of freedom in choosing their learning preferences. The moderate level of confidence in improved learning outcomes in the blended environment shows potential improvement areas. All items obtained scores below 3.0 in the scale's final section, which focused on the technical elements of blended learning. No significant issues were brought up by students in this regard. Regarding technical issues, they feel somewhat isolated but have no trouble turning in assignments on time. Technical difficulties are generally moderate to low for students, indicating that they do not have a significant impact on

their learning. The findings may, however, emphasize the necessity of continual technical assistance and infrastructure upgrades to optimize blended learning.

## **B. Findings from Qualitative Data**

It is essential in the English language teaching field to continuously assess and enhance instructional strategies in order to meet the changing needs of students in the digital age. The researcher conducted interviews with the students and asked questions in order to acquire a deeper understanding of the benefits and difficulties of blended learning in ELT. As interviews enable researchers to thoroughly examine participants' experiences, beliefs, challenges, and perspectives, they offer a valuable, comprehensive source of data Ramanathan & Atkinson (1999), Dörnyei (2007), Berg (2009). In order to fully grasp the students' experiences and opinions, the interview questions were created to elicit their thoughts on blended learning. The researcher wanted to seek possibilities of empowering students as co-creators of the new normal education system and advance a student-centered approach to ELT by actively including them in the study process. Their responses offer insightful firsthand views of the advantages and difficulties of blended learning, illuminating both of which can help with curriculum creation, instructional design, and implementation techniques. To avoid a language barrier and obtain clear responses, the interview was conducted in their own language. Also, the interview questions were kept simple and clear as well as few in number to be able to get the basic insights on the topic without making it too complicated for the students who had gone through many challenges and difficulties.

The ELT community may benefit from the review of the students' answers to the interview questions in a variety of ways. The knowledge it provides about how blended learning affects language acquisition from the viewpoints of students, student engagement, and overall learning outcomes is its first advantage. By modifying their teaching strategies, teachers may be better able to make use of the benefits of blended learning. By incorporating technology, enhancing learning opportunities, and extending access to resources, blended learning has the potential to revolutionize ELT practices. The evaluation of the students' responses to the questions might enable the development of efficient implementation methods and best practices for blended learning. This study might help educators to improve their

instructional methods, address issues, and modify the blended learning strategy to better match the different needs of language learners by highlighting the benefits and difficulties raised by the students. This part seeks to answer research questions 2 and 3: “What are the factors that have shaped EFL preparatory school students’ blended learning experiences?”, “What are EFL preparatory school students’ suggestions on how to improve blended learning design?”, respectively.

### **1. Findings from Interview Question 1**

The first question students answered in the interview sessions was “What is the most beneficial aspect of blended learning? Why?” The aim of the question was to investigate the particular advantages of blended learning from the viewpoint of the students. Their answers can assist institutions and educators better understand the critical elements that contribute to the implementation of blended learning successfully by putting forward the aspects that they find most useful. When their answers were analyzed, some common themes came forward. The first one was flexibility and according to several students, blended learning offers flexibility in terms of time and place. They can save time and avoid the anxiety and exhaustion that comes with making the commute to school. They value the freedom to manage their time and the opportunity to study in the convenience of their own homes.

Student 1: “I think the most beneficial aspect of blended learning is flexibility... Because my university is a bit far from my home, and it takes me almost one and a half to two hours to commute there, which wastes my time. If I had to go to school for 5 days straight, it would have exhausted me and I would have spent a lot of time on the road, which could have affected me negatively.”

Student 2: “So, having some days online is very good for me, both in terms of saving time, and sometimes when I go back home after these online classes, I feel like I’ve come back and refreshed myself. So, it’s very beneficial for me in that sense.”

Student 3: “The most beneficial aspect for me is the ability to participate in classes regardless of location, especially in situations where accessing school is difficult due to illness or natural disasters.”

Student 4: “...transportation can be a problem and cause stress. Not everyone lives close to school, so in terms of transportation, online learning can be more

reasonable these days. Being at home can be beneficial for many things like transportation, sleep, which can be a big problem for many students.”

Another theme was convenience through saving time. Students claimed that they save time and use it more effectively through blended learning. During the time that would have been spent on commuting, students cited the possibility to engage in other activities, such as getting more sleep, cooking meals at home, or performing personal responsibilities.

Student 2: I think the most important and beneficial aspect for me is that I don't live in Istanbul. I stay in a dormitory, and although my dormitory is not too far from my school, it still takes up my time, and you know how crowded Istanbul is. So, having some days online is very good for me, both in terms of saving time and sometimes when I go back home after these online classes, I feel like I've come back and refreshed myself. So, it's very beneficial for me in that sense.

Student 7: I think the most beneficial aspect is sleep. We can spend the time we would spend on the road by sleeping more in the morning, and when online classes are over, we don't have the trouble of commuting back home. We can directly study or sleep at home.

Some participants emphasized the significance of technology in blended learning. They recognize the advantages of using the internet and online education tools for learning and note that their generation has grown up with technology. For students to access educational resources, study at their own pace, and get over challenges connected with traditional classroom settings, blended learning offers a comfortable and familiar environment. Also, the fact that face-to-face and online interactions can be combined through blended learning to produce a balanced learning experience is accepted by the students. They understand that specific activities work well for each learning style. For instance, whereas face-to-face contacts allow for group work, conversations, and hands-on activities, online learning can offer opportunities for computer-based tasks and personalized learning. Through blended learning, students can gain from the advantages of both methods.

Student 4: We grew up with phones in our hands, and we realized that not only social media or taking photos but also learning new things and having many learning opportunities are possible through the internet and online education, as well

as face-to-face education. We learned to use the internet and technology accordingly.... Instead of the chaos and stress in a school environment, I learned how to learn everything I want in my comfort zone in the same structured way with just a click. It has been very beneficial for me to use technology more effectively.

Student 5: If we consider the most beneficial aspect of blended learning, from a logical perspective, combining two days of online learning with three days of face-to-face learning is beneficial. When we are at home, there are things we can't do face-to-face at school. For example, everyone needs to look at the computer screen at the same time, which is not possible in a physical classroom. But when we are at home, since everyone has access to a computer, we can take advantage of the opportunity to use the computer for subjects that require it on online learning days.

The financial benefits of blended learning were acknowledged by a few students. Some students pointed out that they can save money by lowering their transportation costs and their requirement for on-campus dining. They also emphasized the convenience of cooking meals at home, which can be less expensive and provide them with more control over their nutritional preferences.

Student 4: Both financially and mentally, in my personal opinion, it is quite efficient.

Student 6: I think it's beneficial for us in terms of transportation and money. Because we don't use bus fare, for example, when going to and from school, and we can prepare and eat our own meals at home instead of buying food at school.

Overall, the responses from the students show the beneficial effects of blended learning on different facets of their lives. Students may make the most of their time, relieve stress, and access educational resources from their chosen locations thanks to the flexibility and convenience provided by blended learning. Particularly valued points are the utilization of technology and the opportunity to study in a familiar and comfortable setting. Students also understand the advantages of a balanced strategy that mixes online and in-person interactions to offer better learning possibilities. The financial benefits, such as reduced costs for meals and transportation, are also noted as advantages.

## **2. Findings from Interview Question 2**

Understanding the potential challenges and difficulties connected with the adoption of blended learning in educational environments requires asking the question, "What is the least beneficial aspect of blended learning?" This question was posed by the researcher in an effort to learn more about the students' views on the limitations or drawbacks of blended learning. By examining these viewpoints, the researcher can acquire important details that can add to a thorough analysis of blended learning, influence instructional design, and point out areas that need improvement.

The responses obtained from the students may be beneficial in this study on blended learning in several ways. Particular aspects of blended learning that require improvement or modification by examining the students' replies can be identified. In order to improve the efficiency of the blended learning approach, educators and instructional designers may need to address some common themes or difficulties that the participants brought up. Also, an objective view of blended learning can be obtained from the answers to this question. Even though there are many advantages to this strategy, it is important to acknowledge its shortcomings. A thorough comprehension of blended learning was aimed to achieve by including its least advantageous elements in the research, which allows for discussion of its potential recommendations. Furthermore, the opinions of the participants can be a valuable guide for instructional design in blended learning settings. Teachers and instructional designers can foresee future difficulties and create measures to reduce them by understanding the least advantageous parts that students highlighted. In order to create a learning environment that is focused on students' needs and preferences, it is important to acknowledge and respond to their concerns. As a result, learners may be more engaged, motivated, and satisfied, which will ultimately increase the efficiency of blended learning implementations. Besides, the analysis of blended learning's least advantageous elements can add to the knowledge and literature already available on the subject in the field. The research may contribute empirical facts and insights to the continuing discussions on the benefits and difficulties of blended learning by looking at students' experiences and views. This aids in the general comprehension of the influence and efficiency of blended learning, facilitating additional study and improvements in the area.

In short, the analysis of the question regarding the least beneficial aspect of blended learning allows researchers to uncover valuable insights, inform instructional design, and contribute to the existing knowledge in the field. By recognizing the challenges experienced by students, recommendations and improvements can be made to improve the implementation and effectiveness of blended learning approaches. The answers were analyzed under some main themes and example responses are provided below.

Several students pointed out technology problems and poor internet connectivity. They mentioned online course interruptions brought on either a bad internet connection or device technical issues. Some participants also mentioned their inability to buy expensive technological equipment. These difficulties may interfere with efficient communication and participation in online classrooms as well as impair the learning process.

Student 1: Well, the aspect I dislike is that when we have online classes, a lot of technological problems arise. Internet connection, computers, they cause some problems for us. Because when the teacher is giving a lecture and our internet connection is not good, we can experience interruptions. Also, students cannot afford expensive technological devices, which is another difficulty

Student 2: ...sometimes I can experience problems with the internet connection. When the weather is bad, my connection is not very good. So, it becomes challenging for me.

Student 4: But personally, my negative aspect is the internet issues and connectivity problems.

Student 5: .... not everyone has the necessary equipment for online learning, such as internet access or a computer.

Student 7: I think the least beneficial aspect is internet problems. There can be frequent internet interruptions during the classes, which causes us to fall behind in our lessons.

From the responses, it can be said that blended learning might be affected by technological challenges and poor Internet connectivity. Students can become frustrated and disrupted by unstable internet connections, and a lack of necessary devices, and technologies. This may make it difficult for online classrooms to run

smoothly and have an adverse effect on students' ability to participate.

Another theme that came forward was a lack of communication and face-to-face interaction. Some students raised the issue of blended learning's limitations in terms of reduced communication and how it affects face-to-face contact. For certain subjects, such as speaking lessons, where face-to-face engagement and enthusiasm are seen as crucial by students, they stress the necessity of in-person interaction.

Student 3: It restricts students to their homes and reduces their communication power. Students may face difficulties in communicating with friends and teachers regarding lessons and assignments.

Student 4: Sometimes I prefer to have face-to-face interaction with the teacher for certain subjects, like speaking lessons or laboratory research lessons. When those lessons are conducted online, it becomes difficult to experience the same level of interaction and energy.

Student 7: We can't socialize with our friends during online classes, but when we come to school, we are constantly with our friends during classes and breaks. But that's not possible in online education.

With blended learning, there is less face-to-face interaction and fewer opportunities for communication according to the responses students delivered. It may be concluded that oral communication skills, language practice, and social ties can be fostered through direct interaction with teachers and peers. The lack of physical presence may restrict the immediateness and depth of interpersonal contact, which may have an impact on language development and socialization. Limited socializing is an important factor in blended learning to take into account. The development of relationships and a sense of belonging among students all depend heavily on social interaction. The natural social contacts and peer relationships that are frequently developed in physical classrooms may not be present in online classes.

The psychological effects of switching between face-to-face and online learning were brought up by a few students. When forced to switch to online learning, they indicated that some people can suffer through a psychological change, especially if they have a routine or anticipation of leaving the house. This may have a detrimental effect on motivation and mental health according to the responses.



Student 1: ...And at the beginning of blended learning, there can be some difficulties with adaptation. Because when you switch between 3 days of face-to-face classes and 2 days of online classes, it can get confusing.

Student 5: If we think about the least beneficial aspect, sometimes people can become accustomed to face-to-face interactions. When they have to switch to online learning for 1 or 2 days, they may feel a psychological change. Some people may have a mentality of going out in the morning but can be negatively affected by having to stay at home.

Student 6: ...not everyone's psychological state is stable. It can constantly change, and the combination of online and face-to-face learning can be challenging for some individuals. I have friends who face difficulties, and sometimes I do too. So, I would say this is the least beneficial aspect.

Blended learning can lead to adaptation problems, which might be an issue worth looking into. When their daily habits change and they are exposed to new learning environments, students may find it challenging to adjust. This may have an impact on their involvement, motivation, and general well-being.

A few participants put forward the negative impact of prolonged screen time on their eyes and overall exhaustion. They emphasized the physical stress brought on by spending a lot of time online in front of a computer. These elements may have an impact on their focus, engagement, and overall learning experience.

Student 2: The least beneficial aspect for me is sitting in front of the computer for long hours. It is especially difficult for people with eye problems. We constantly deal with eye strain and similar health issues.

Student 6: I think the issue is focusing because it's really difficult to wake up five minutes before the lessons and sit in front of the computer, and constantly looking at the computer is tiring for my eyes. I think this is a disadvantage for us.

The issue of eye strain and fatigue brought on by extended screen usage may be a legitimate concern in blended learning. Students' health and well-being may suffer from constant exposure to digital devices without appropriate breaks.

In conclusion, regarding the least beneficial features of blended learning include telecommunications issues and internet access, the lack of face-to-face

communication and interaction, psychological issues and difficulties adjusting, exhaustion and eye strain, and restricted sociability according to the participants' responses. Challenges may be eliminated to improve the blended learning experience and foster successful engagement and learning outcomes for students by being aware of and responding to these challenges.

### **3. Findings from Interview Question 3**

The third question in the interview "What suggestions can you provide to help improve the blended learning approach?" plays a crucial role in understanding the students' views and insights on how to enhance the design and implementation of blended learning in an EFL preparatory school context. This question is essential to the study since it directly addresses one of the main goals, which is to collect ideas from students to enhance the blended learning strategy. In order to acquire useful insights and draw on the students' experiential knowledge, the researcher asked this question in an effort to uncover students' views on how to improve blended learning models. The study may offer useful ideas and tips for teachers and instructional designers to maximize the effectiveness of blended learning in EFL settings by examining the participant replies.

The recommendations made by the students may help EFL preparation schools plan and offer blended learning more effectively. This research might highlight certain issues that need attention and suggest practical solutions by taking into account the viewpoints of the students. The responses to the interview can be used to identify recurring themes or patterns that highlight the types of activities, resources, or interactions that students value the most. Additionally, the suggestions made by the students might help to create a blended learning strategy that is student-centered. This study may help highlight the significance of including students as active participants in the design and implementation process by including their voices and views. Highlighting the value of using evidence-based strategies for creating blended learning experiences by connecting their recommendations with recognized pedagogical concepts and theories may be one of the outcomes of this study. The findings may also contribute to a further scholarly debate on successful instructional design in blended learning environments.

In short, it is crucial for this study to analyze the students' recommendations

for enhancing the blended learning strategy in an environment of an EFL preparatory school. The paper may provide useful suggestions, views into learner preferences, and an instructional design strategy that is student-centered by looking at their responses. The students' recommendations can also aid in addressing problems and constraints while verifying current blended learning best practices and ideas. Overall, improving the design and implementation of blended learning in EFL preparatory school environments may be aided by the analysis of the students' comments, which offers insightful and helpful recommendations.

The first theme that came forward was flexibility in class hours and breaks. To give flexibility and variety in the learning environment, some students suggested modifying the length of the lessons and the break times separately for face-to-face and online classes. These recommendations are meant to ease anxiety, enhance physical health, and handle any potential drawbacks of excessive screen usage.

Student 4: ... instead of 40 minutes of class and 10 minutes of break, there should be an option for the student to choose. Sitting at the desk for 40 minutes and not doing anything during the 10-minute break only makes me feel trapped at home. This negatively affects my mental state and increases my anxiety. I sit for 40 minutes, and then what do I do for the next 10 minutes? I'm still sitting at the same desk. Instead, I think the class hours should be a bit longer, and breaks should be adjusted accordingly.

Student 5: We can present blended learning as an option by dividing students into multiple groups based on their preferences, such as those who prefer entirely face-to-face, those who prefer entirely blended, etc.

Student 6: Our breaks or class hours online may not be the same as in school. Our breaks can be shorter or we can have fewer class hours. Instead, I think it would be better to have more in-person classes.

It can be inferred from the responses that flexibility in break times and class schedules might help relieve the physical and mental exhaustion brought on by extended online learning. Giving students the flexibility they need to manage their time well and participate in other activities may enhance their well-being by giving options for longer class hours, altered breaks, or block scheduling.

Another theme worth analyzing was the importance of face-to-face

interaction for students. One student suggested focusing on verbal components such as speaking practice online while performing hands-on lectures and activities in person. This idea acknowledges the value of first-hand encounters for particular subjects while making use of online channels for spoken exchanges. Students who participate less can nevertheless gain from interactive learning events by finding the correct mix of in-person and online components. Another student made the point that less time should be spent online studying and more in-person classes. This recommendation considers the potential exhaustion and excessive screen time linked to online classes all day. Also, some students stressed the value of having more face-to-face classes. One student noted the necessity for face-to-face engagement in topics like writing, while another one expressly advised switching some of the online class hours to face-to-face classes. These recommendations show how important it is for students to engage with peers and teachers in person, especially when learning subjects that call for rapid feedback and advice. Some examples are provided below:

Student 3: Practical lessons and activities can be conducted face-to-face, while verbal aspects can be done online to support students who have decreased participation.

Student 5: ... we can reduce the time required for online learning when students come to school for face-to-face classes. Because this can cause us to spend too much time at home, and not everyone may want to spend so much time at home for online activities.

Student 6: I think it would be better to have more in-person classes.

Student 7: I think we definitely need to have some classes in person. For example, the writing class. This class is more about the teacher guiding us, and we write those paragraphs based on their guidance. Therefore, having face-to-face interaction with the teacher while writing those paragraphs would allow them to guide us better, and we can write better.

Overall, these recommendations emphasize the significance of striking the ideal blend between blended learning's face-to-face and online learning components. They emphasize the necessity of giving practical experience a top priority, cutting back on unnecessary online learning time, and boosting face-to-face engagement for subjects that benefit from one-on-one instruction. The qualities of both modes can be

combined in a blended learning environment by educators by putting these recommendations into practice.

Supporting student well-being and engagement in classes was another important theme to review. One student brought up the need for psychological support as a result of the prolonged periods of spending time at home in blended learning. They highlighted worries about the possible isolation and depression that students might encounter after several days of online instruction. This viewpoint highlights the significance of attending to students' mental health and offering sufficient assistance to lessen the adverse impacts of prolonged periods of distant learning. A different student, however, concentrated on the negative physical effects of prolonged screen usage and sitting at the same desk for a whole school day. They put forward the need for longer class times and longer breaks accordingly to allow for different activities and lessen the impacts of excessive technology use. This viewpoint shows the importance of balancing screen time with physical activities and personal preferences, suggesting that flexible scheduling and breaks can contribute to students' overall well-being and engagement.

Student 4: First of all, everyone has experienced a situation where they had to stay at home. This happened along with blended learning. They come to school for three days, and the remaining two days are conducted online. But during those three days, for example, I talk to some of my friends who don't even go to school because they don't want to leave their homes. So, I believe that everyone needs to receive psychological support because there can be situations of isolation and depression due to staying at home and not going to school for three days.

Student 5: I spend too much time sitting at the same desk, looking at the same screen, and it affects me negatively. Instead of adjusting the class hours accordingly, having options that suit our preferences and needs would be better because we are already immersed in technology so much... I suggest that the class hours should be longer, and breaks should be adjusted accordingly so that we can have time for activities like walking my dogs or getting a cup of coffee.

Student 6: As for face-to-face classes, some students may have certain conditions like anxiety or other conditions. Therefore, sometimes they need the choice of attending face-to-face classes or not. Therefore, I believe that providing options would be more beneficial for students.

The students stress the difficulties of blended learning, but they offer different solutions depending on which component they feel is most important. Student 5 prioritizes physical well-being and the need for breaks and activities other than screen time, while Student 4 prioritizes psychological support and addressing potential isolation and depression. These variations reflect the many worries and experiences that students could have while engaging in blended learning. Overall, these recommendations emphasize how varied student experiences can be in blended learning. They emphasize the significance of taking into account students' psychological and physical well-being as well as the requirement for a comprehensive strategy that takes these many factors into account.

Assessment issues in the online component of blended learning were brought up as another theme by two students. One student puts forward the lack of communication and engagement by some students during activities especially tasks that require group work in breakout rooms that cannot be actively observed throughout the lesson by the instructor. They put out the notion of classifying or dividing students according to their level of engagement and effort. In order to improve the learning experience by encouraging active involvement, it is suggested that students who actively participate and contribute should be distinguished from those who merely observe and teachers assess the active students accordingly.

Student 2: Some students simply do nothing, they don't participate in the class in any way, and they don't express their ideas. When we have meetings, they don't communicate properly with us. In this sense, it would be better to differentiate or separate the students who put effort into this learning method. Because one group will work continuously, and the other group will only observe and use the information themselves. So, I would prefer some sort of differentiation in this aspect."

Another student addressed the implementation of online exams in blended learning and suggested that the supervision of online assessment examinations be strengthened. The necessity of upholding assessment process integrity is acknowledged, despite the fact that no particular recommendations are made for improving blended learning in general.

#### **4. Summary of the Findings from the Qualitative Data**

Blended learning, according to the students' comments, has a number of advantages that help make learning more adaptable and effective. The flexibility it offers, which enables students to save time and energy on traveling, is the benefit that receives the most attention. The flexibility of blended learning is further highlighted by the ability for students to participate in lessons from anywhere, allowing them to do so even in trying situations like illness or natural disasters. Additionally, the developments in technology have been crucial to the application of blended learning. Students who grew up in the digital age have mastered the use of Internet resources, which has increased their access to learning possibilities outside of the traditional classroom. They value the ease of access to knowledge at their disposal, which enables them to investigate topics and study at their own pace.

However, it is important to recognize the difficulties with blended learning. Students raise a variety of issues they are worried about, including technological difficulties, eye strain from too much screen time, a lack of social interaction, and the need for flexibility throughout all-day classes. To create an effective blended learning experience, it seems to be important to pay attention to areas like dependable internet connections, access to necessary equipment, and providing the right support for students who are experiencing psychological challenges.

Students have offered insightful suggestions to enhance the blended learning strategy. It is suggested that throughout both face-to-face and online classes, teachers should give instructions on how to use particular abilities and resources effectively. Students highlighted that they may have the chance to balance screen time with physical activity or relaxation if online classes and break schedules were flexible.

As a significant educational strategy that provides adaptability, accessibility, and a variety of learning possibilities, blended learning seems to be valued by students. The effectiveness and student experience of blended learning can be further improved by resolving the issues and taking into consideration the recommendations made by students. Putting a balance between face-to-face and online learning is considered essential, taking into account students' comments and preferences. Blended learning has the ability to reinvent education and give students the tools they need to succeed in a digital world that is constantly changing.

## **V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

### **A. Introduction**

The current chapter covers what has been found in the research questions in this study. The study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate EFL learners' views on blended learning and their suggestions to improve its use in language classes at a private university in İstanbul, Türkiye after the COVID-19 pandemic. Quantitative data was collected through a 5-point Likert-type survey-based questionnaire. The collected data was then analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations). The results of the quantitative analysis were presented in tabular form and thoroughly interpreted.

Additionally, qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews to gain a deeper understanding of Turkish students' perception of blended learning. The responses from the interviews were carefully examined, analyzed, categorized, and translated into English. The findings of the qualitative data were then interpreted in detail, including sample statements from the student interviewees regarding their views on the BL method.

Finally, this section of the study discusses both the quantitative and qualitative findings based on the three research questions. Relevant literature is referenced to provide context and support for the discussion. In the end, suggestions for further research on the topics will be made.

### **B. Discussion of Research Question 1**

The first research question was “*What are EFL preparatory school students' views of blended language learning?*” in the study. As a start, the general views of EFL students about blended language learning (BL) were investigated in order to make a descriptive analysis of the student responses to the items under the categories of the BL questionnaire, using a 55-item questionnaire by Gülbahar & Cabı (2013). The gathered data was then analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. In this



regard, the following discussion of the first research question was conducted in light of both the descriptive and qualitative findings from the interview and questionnaire:

The quantitative data findings show that EFL preparation school students value relationships with teachers and place a high value on face-to-face instruction. They place a great priority on speaking with friends, demonstrating a need for social interaction. This result is consistent with the findings of the study by Wiggers et al. (2022), which put forward the importance of in-person interaction with lecturers and other students in higher education, and in another study by İstifci (2016), the obvious preference for face-to-face education although they liked the flexibility of BL. It can be said that BL is challenging for students because of the limited face-to-face interactions and these findings are in accordance with Heinze & Procter (2004), Hos et al. (2016), and Ahn (2017).

The opinions of students are mixed when it comes to online learning environments. Most other aspects of online learning received low marks, but students do recognize the value and advantage of getting quick responses from teachers and the result of the studies by Hill et al. (2016) and Lee, (2005) support this finding. According to the findings from the data, several aspects of online learning are unsatisfactory for students. They state a preference for in-person interactions with peers and may not be convinced that Internet learning enhances their learning process. Their negative opinions about the efficacy of online learning are influenced by their low involvement, motivation, and contentment with various components of the setting.

Findings from the qualitative data show that students think flexibility is the best feature of blended learning. They like having the autonomy to plan their schedule, avoid the problems of commuting, and study at their convenience. This finding is also consistent with the studies of Karaaslan & Kılıç (2019), and Mildemberger (2021), as they put forward how crucial flexibility is to students. The use of technology, learning in a comfortable environment, and financial advantages were all acknowledged. In the results of the studies of Stein and Graham (2014) and Gültekin (2022), the cost is lowered with BL as well. The participants of this study, however, mentioned some difficulties, including issues with technology, and bad internet connectivity, and these results are in line with Firdoussi et al. (2020), Rianto (2020), and Karakoyunlu (2022).

The findings of this study on students' opinions of blended language learning in EFL preparatory schools paint a complicated picture. Students enjoy close relationships with teachers and place a high value on in-person education, but their attitudes regarding online learning settings are mixed, with low levels of satisfaction and confidence in its efficacy. Blended learning's flexibility stands out as a key benefit, providing benefits like time management, convenience, and financial savings. But there are also clear technological difficulties, a lack of face-to-face communication, and stress on the body and mind.

It is critical to solve the issues raised by students, such as telecommunications problems, internet availability, and the requirement for face-to-face interaction, in order to improve the blended learning experience. Important factors to take into account include promoting psychological well-being, finding a solution for fatigue and eye strain that comes with excessive screen time, and improving sociability. Implementing blended learning more successfully can be achieved by using student-centered methods, that are supported by research, and taking into account their viewpoints in the design of the lesson.

Overall, the results show that there are opportunities to improve even if EFL preparatory school students are aware of the potential advantages of blended learning. The design and implementation of blended learning can be optimized by educational institutions and teachers by taking into account students' views, difficulties, and recommendations. This will ultimately improve students' engagement, motivation, satisfaction, and learning results in EFL environments.

### **C. Discussion of Research Question 2**

The second research question looked into the elements that had an impact on how EFL prep school students experienced blended learning. The question was "What are the factors that have shaped EFL preparatory school students' blended learning experiences?" The results from both the quantitative survey and the qualitative interviews offer insightful information about these elements and support a thorough analysis and resolution of the research topic. There are several factors that may have shaped students' blended learning experiences according to the findings.

First of all, the pedagogical strategy employed in blended learning, such as

including active learning and learner-centered strategies, using the two different methods adequately might have influenced students' preferences and satisfaction with the method. The questions in the survey related to blended learning aspects "*The instructor was successful in managing face-to-face and online environments.*", "*The content we saw face-to-face and online was appropriate for the chosen medium.*", "*The instructor used face-to-face and online environments effectively.*", "*The course content was presented in a planned manner in a blended environment.*" and "*There was integrity in the content transmitted in both environments in a blended environment.*" were rated above 4 out of 5, which supports the finding at hand. In line with a learner-centered strategy that enables students to study at their own speed and explore areas of interest, the qualitative findings revealed that students valued the flexibility and adaptability of blended learning.

Besides, the instructor's role is vital in encouraging learning, offering assistance, keeping in touch with students on a frequent basis, and giving personalized feedback whenever needed which is in line with the findings of Oliver & Stallings (2014). Also, students' experiences may be impacted by the efficiency of the technological tools and platforms employed in the blended learning environment. Students' engagement and happiness can be influenced by elements like user-friendliness, accessibility, and the capacity to facilitate interactive and collaborative learning. The research findings from Hill et al. (2016) with the flexibility to provide specific student needs to accommodate individual learner preferences effectively Chen et al. (2018) and Mirriahi et al. (2015) have verified that accessibility which creates flexibility has a crucial effect on students' experiences.

What is more, students' experiences may be impacted by the amount of social interaction and teamwork offered in the blended learning setting. Peer interaction opportunities, online debates, and group projects can improve student engagement and foster a feeling of community. As mentioned before, students have mixed feelings towards BL mostly because of limited social interaction between their peers and teachers due to the online instruction days and this finding is consistent with the research results by Heinze & Procter (2004), (Hos et al. (2016) and Ahn (2017). Students' experiences may be impacted by the dependability of technical infrastructure, including internet connectivity, device accessibility, and the usability of learning systems. In the study, it can be concluded that students had negative

experiences with technical issues and their motivation, interest, and happiness may be impacted by elements like the accessibility of technical support and the reliability of online materials. This is a common issue according to relevant studies such as Karakoyunlu (2022), Firdoussi et al. (2020), (Rianto, 2020), Bulut (2022).

In conclusion, the preference for face-to-face instruction and peer interaction, the confidence in instructors and their support in face-to-face settings, the mixed attitudes toward online learning, the effectiveness of blended learning in terms of appropriate content and integration of instructional strategies, and the mode of instruction are the factors that have shaped EFL preparatory school students' blended learning experiences. Educators and institutions may improve the use of blended learning and give students a more adaptive and successful learning experience in the digital era by addressing the mentioned problems and taking suggestions from the students into account.

#### **D. Discussion of Research Question 3**

The last research question in this study was “What are EFL preparatory school students’ suggestions on how to improve blended learning design?”. The research question recognizes the value of including the opinions and experiences of the major stakeholders—EFL preparatory school students—in the hope for the improvement of blended learning design by asking for student input. The researcher’s purpose was to find useful advice that can be used to get practical suggestions by concentrating on the viewpoints of the students that can guide curriculum development, instructional practices, and technology integration in EFL preparation schools. The results could have a favorable influence on how learners are taught and learn, which would ultimately result in better educational outcomes.

The significance of flexibility in class hours and breaks was the first theme to emerge. The need for flexibility in determining the length of lessons and breaks separately for face-to-face and online classes was stated by the students. This suggestion was intended to address the problems caused by prolonged screen time and offer chances for exercise and mental health. The students said they would have a better balanced and interesting learning experience if they were given the option of choosing the length of sessions and breaks. Although the students attend the online part of the lessons at the convenience of their homes, they have to follow the strict

schedule determined by the institution and they do not have the chance to follow recordings at any other time as it is not provided. Thus, they are obligated to attend most of the classes, namely a minimum of eighty percent, to be able to take the exams. Therefore, students cannot have flexible schedules which provide benefits with automated, asynchronous online technologies, and benefit from the modern social web to help students outside of the conventional limitations of the traditional classroom as Stein & Graham (2014) claim and the results contradict with one of the core reasons why blended learning is appreciated. A review by Müller & Mildenerger (2021), argues that in order to provide access to higher education for a larger spectrum of people, educational institutions should offer students more flexible study options with regard to time and location, yet, when time is strictly set for online classes, the students cannot benefit from it.

Another point raised by students was the significance of educational support in blended learning. They recommended that instructors teach students certain techniques and methods applicable to both in-person and online classes. This involves instructing students on how to utilize textbooks effectively in face-to-face classes and giving instructions on how to prepare and use online resources like Word and PowerPoint. Educators may guarantee a more seamless and effective blended learning experience by helping students better grasp the various techniques required for each learning environment. A systematic review study review on blended learning in health education was done by Vallée et al. (2020) from 1990 to 2019 to evaluate the efficiency of traditional learning with that of blended learning. A total of 56 studies were assessed evaluating various forms of learning support in blended learning. As a result, the pooled analysis comparing all blended learning to traditional learning showed significantly better. Also, strategies such as giving extra support during product development were effective in a blended learning context according to Boelens et al. (2018) which is in line with the findings in this study. Another study by McGuinness & Fulton (2019) suggests that knowledge of digital literacy is crucial in blended learning settings. To improve students' digital literacy abilities, interactive digital skills e-tutorials were created and these e-tutorials were included in undergraduate and graduate courses to enhance teamwork and innovation.

Some students emphasized the importance of group work differentiation and grading. Concerned about their peers' low participation, they proposed separating those who make less of an effort from those who take an active part in the learning process. It can be inferred that some students have difficulties in self-regulation and motivation to study. A similar conclusion was made by Yen et al. (2019), claiming one of the difficulties of BL is that a lot of students lack the necessary skills to self-regulate their learning process (Bosch et al., 2020) and this is an important issue to be resolved from the students' views. This can be accomplished by using grading and assessment systems that account for student initiative and participation. Fair grading procedures encourage students to participate actively, providing a more collaborative and exciting learning environment.

Finally, students underlined the value of face-to-face instruction, especially for areas that call for close supervision and instructor engagement. They specifically referred to the advantages of face-to-face writing classes, where students can sharpen their writing abilities under the instruction of a teacher. These findings contradict the literature review findings in this study. As an example, Sheet, (2018) concluded that BL helped learners improve their writing abilities, and Farih & Karimata (2022) concluded that they enjoyed writing classes through BL. Also, BL writing classes gave students confidence (Hojeij & Baroudi, 2018) and Ghazizadeh & Fatemipour (2017) believed that writing classes in BL provides learners with a sense of achievement. The quality of education and student learning outcomes can be improved by providing additional in-person classes for areas that need direct interaction and individualized guidance and training students for the benefits of online writing classes.

## **E. Conclusion**

The findings and insights from the research questions in this study on EFL learners' views on blended learning and their suggestions to improve its use in language classes were presented in the discussion and conclusion of this chapter. The study used a mixed-methods approach, collecting both qualitative and quantitative data via semi-structured interviews and a Likert scale questionnaire. According to the quantitative research, students place a high value on in-person interactions and social connection and have conflicting opinions about online learning, which emphasizes

the value of face-to-face interactions and immediate teacher response. At this point, as students can already interact with their peers and teachers in class and socialize on campus three days a week, some underlying reasons must cause students to have conflicting opinions about online teaching days. Although blended learning combines in-person and online learning, it might not give all the flexibility some students are looking for. They might find it more convenient to choose a totally online or fully face-to-face strategy because toggling between the two might be disrupting their routines or creating difficulty with getting used to their schedules. As blended learning require them to adapt to various learning settings (classroom vs. online), they might perceive this as inconsistency and this could make them feel uncomfortable or make it harder for them to adjust, and therefore it could have a negative effect on their entire learning experience. Another reason might be the trauma that was caused by the long Covid-19 lockdowns for these students as they were still teenagers when they had to deal with fully online classes and the serious social isolation that came with it. According to a study that was carried on in 16 countries to investigate the impact of lockdowns on the mental health of participants aged 18 by Sameer et al. (2020), participants from developing countries had severe depression due to the lockdowns. High levels of stress and anxiety, attention deficit problems, and psychosomatization are the key findings of the study done by Savarese et al. (2020) on university students. Several instances involved the revival of old traumas, and poor-quality sleep was discovered. Therefore, it is a possibility that participants may still have the effects of the psychological trauma they were exposed to.

On the other hand, flexibility has emerged as a major advantage of blended learning, allowing students to organize their time and study whenever they want. Students with varying schedules and obligations may find it very helpful to have the freedom to schedule their study time and decide when to engage with the course material. It gives students the option to customize their learning pace to suit their particular needs, which can improve time management and lessen stress. Flexibility becomes essential in a dynamic environment where students may have personal obligations, employment commitments, or other extracurricular activities. Blended learning enables students to manage their academic goals and other responsibilities by providing a combination of in-person and online components. However, every

institution has a different way of applying the BL method and this can lead to different results. The school where the researcher works does not provide recordings of the online lessons for students to attend at different times and has strict attendance rules for both online and face-to-face hours. This might cause students not to fully benefit from the freedom of online lessons and to have conflicting opinions on online teaching days. Also, pedagogical techniques, instructor support, technological resources, social interaction possibilities, and technical infrastructure all played a part in determining how students experienced blended learning. In order to accommodate various learning styles and preferences, instructors have already been using a variety of teaching techniques such as project-based learning, group discussions, interactive exercises, and multimedia materials in both face-to-face and online components. However, continuous improvement seems necessary in terms of pedagogical strategies to be able to provide learners with a more dynamic and satisfying learning experience. As Tütüniş & Yalman (2020) put it, pedagogy is making the entire class being engaged in meaningful communication and using the target language in real life. To be able to achieve that, continuous development of teachers is required to appeal to future generations in not only face-to-face classes but also online education, which is an inevitable result of modern times. As for social interaction possibilities, collaboration among students via group projects, pair work, group work, and interactive exercises and games that foster social interaction are already used and encouraged by the instructors in the preparatory program. However, there is always room for improvement in the educational process to help students feel like they are part of a community and motivated. Flexible class schedules, educational support in both in-person and online settings, varied group work and grading, and more face-to-face instruction for subjects requiring close supervision were among the suggestions made by students for enhancing blended learning design. The results highlight the importance of listening to students' concerns and taking their recommendations into account to improve blended learning experiences. In order to promote engagement, motivation, satisfaction, and learning outcomes for EFL learners in preparatory schools, educational institutions, and teachers should maximize the design and execution of blended learning by taking into account the views, challenges, and recommendations of the students.



## **F. Suggestions for Further Study**

Even though this study aimed to provide information about students' views on blended learning in EFL preparatory schools, there are still a number of directions for future research that could expand our knowledge and guide practice. It would be helpful to first investigate the efficacy of various educational practices in blended learning environments. The most efficient ways to achieve desired learning objectives may be revealed by conducting the survey and the interview on a greater scale of participants. As the number of learners who participated in this study was not high, it may not give a whole picture of the situation of post-pandemic blended learning views.

Second, it would be beneficial to carry out longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impacts of blended learning on the linguistic growth and academic achievement of EFL students. Monitoring students over an extended period of time would provide a more thorough review of their development and the viability of the advantages of blended learning.

Investigating the long-term psychological effects of Covid-19 lockdowns on students and teachers participating in blended learning through longitudinal studies would provide valuable input for all the parties in the education field. Examining the potential long-term effects of this type of education on students' mental health, general well-being, and academic achievement could be suggested. Besides, analyzing the connection between technology use in classes, particularly the digital tools and online resources utilized in blended learning, the effects of excessive screen time, and the results in terms of mental health could be another important area of study.

The effects of blended learning on students with diverse backgrounds, such as those with learning difficulties, mental problems, or those from other cultural contexts, such as international students, could also be the subject of future research. It would help to create inclusive and equitable educational settings to know how blended learning can be adapted to meet the unique needs of these learners.

We may improve our understanding of blended learning in EFL contexts and work toward optimizing its implementation by addressing these research recommendations. This may support good language learning outcomes for a variety

of student populations.

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## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix A** Harmanlanmıř Öğrenme Ortamlarının Etkililięi Ölçeęi

**Appendix B** The Efficiency Scale Of Blended Learning Environments

**Appendix C** İzin yazıřmaları

**Appendix D** etik kurul kararı

**Appendix A** Harmanlanmış Öğrenme Ortamlarının Etkililiği Ölçeği

**HARMANLANMIŞ ÖĞRENME ORTAMLARININ ETKİLİLİĞİ ÖLÇEĞİ**

**Yüz yüze öğrenme ortamlarında... Her Zaman Sık Sık Ara Sıra Nadiren  
Hiçbir Zaman**

Y01 Öğretim elemanından çevrimiçi ortama göre daha çok yararlanabildim.

Y02 Öğretim elemanından çevrimiçi ortama göre daha çok yardım alabildim.

Y03 Daha iyi öğrendiğimi düşünüyorum.

Y04 Arkadaşlarımla daha rahat iletişim kurdum.

Y05 Belirlediğim hedeflere ulaşmak benim için önemlidir.

Y06 Öğretim elemanı rehberliğinde öğrenmem motivasyonumu artırdı.

Y07 Öğretim elemanı ile daha rahat iletişim kurabildim.

Y08 Çevrimiçi ortamlara göre daha fazla sorumluluk duygusu hissediyorum.

Y09 Öğretim elemanı derse katılmam için teşvik etti.

Y10 Yaptığım ödevler ve araştırmalar konuyu kavramam için yeterliydi.

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**Çevrimiçi öğrenme ortamlarında... Her Zaman Sık Sık Ara Sıra Nadiren  
Hiçbir Zaman**

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C01 Ders içeriğinin etkileşimli sunulması derse olan ilgimi artırdı.

C02 Düzenlenen eş zamanlı (sohbet) etkinliklerin daha iyi öğrenmemi sağladığını düşünüyorum.

C03 Düzenlenen farklı zamanlı (tartışma vb.) Etkinliklerin daha iyi öğrenmemi sağladığını düşünüyorum.

C04 Öğretim elemanı derse katılmam için teşvik etti.

C05 Arkadaşlarımla daha rahat iletişim kurdum.

C06 Ders çalışmak çok hoşuma gitti.

C07 Teknolojiyi kullanmak benim derse karşı olan ilgimi artırdı.



- C09 Yüz yüze ortama göre daha çok sorumluluk duygusu hissettim.
- C10 İletişim araçlarını (internet, e-posta, tartışma listeleri vb.) Kullanmak yalnız olmadığımı hissettirdi.
- C11 İşbirliğine dayalı etkinliklere katılmaktan hoşlandım.
- C12 Öğretim elemanından istediğim zaman yardım alabildim.
- C13 Ders çalışırken sorularıma iletişim araçları kullanarak yanıt aramaya çalıştım.
- C14 Öğretim elemanından anında dönüt alabildim.
- C15 Etkinlikleri yerine getirmek için zamanı iyi kullandım.
- C17 Daha iyi öğrendiğimi düşünüyorum.
- C18 Çalışırken yaşadığım sorunları genellikle çözdüm.
- C19 Öğretim elemanı ile daha rahat iletişim kurdum.
- C20 Öğretim materyallerine istediğim zaman kolaylıkla ulaşabildim.
- C21 Yer alan çevrimiçi kaynaklar beklentilerimi karşıladı.
- C22 Ders içeriği bireysel farklılıkları dikkate alarak hazırlanmıştı.

**Harmanlanmış öğrenme ortamlarında... Her Zaman Sık Sık Ara Sıra  
Nadiren Hiçbir Zaman**

- H01 Öğretim elemanı ders vermeye istekliydi.
- H02 Öğretim elemanı yüz yüze ve çevrimiçi ortamları etkili bir şekilde kullandı.
- H03 Öğretim elemanından aldığım danışmanlık hizmeti yeterliydi.
- H04 Daha iyi öğrendiğimi düşünüyorum.
- H05 Deneyimin önemli olduğunu düşünüyorum.
- H06 Öğretim elemanı yüz yüze ve çevrimiçi ortamları yönetme konusunda başarılıydı.
- H07 Çevrimiçi ve yüz yüze ortamlara ayrılan süre benim için uygundu.
- H08 Dersin içeriği seviyeme uygundu.

H09 Ders içeriđi açık ve anlaşılırdı.

H10 Ders içeriđi planlı bir şekilde sunuldu.

H11 Yüz yüze ve çevrimiçi olarak gördüğümüz içerik seçilen ortama uygundu.

H12 Her iki ortamın üstün özellikleri kullanıldı.

H13 Sunulan öğrenme materyalleri benim için yeterliydi.

H14 Kullanılan farklı öğretim yöntem ve teknikleri içeriđin aktarılması için uygundu.

H15 Her iki ortamda aktarılan içerikte bir bütünlük vardı.

H16 Hangi ölçütlere göre değerlendirileceğim önceden belirtildi

H17 Başarımların değerlendirilmesi için farklı değerlendirme teknikleri kullanılmasını isterim.

H18 Eğer ihtiyaç duyarsam sınıf arkadaşlarımla yüz yüze görüşmeye çalışırım.

H19 Öğretim etkinliklerini gerçekleştirirken zamanı iyi yönetebildim.

H20 Neyi nasıl öğreneceğime kendim karar verdim.

**Teknik konular açısından... Her Zaman Sık Sık Ara Sıra Nadiren  
Hiçbir Zaman**

C08 Kendimi yalnız ve mutsuz hissettim.

C16 Verilen ödevleri zamanında teslim etmekte zorlandım.

C23 Teknolojik altyapı nedeniyle sorun yaşadım.

C24 Teknik anlamda zorluklar yaşadım.

C25 İnternet bağlantısı ile ilgili sorun(lar) yaşadım.

## **Appendix B** The Efficiency Scale Of Blended Learning Environments

### **THE EFFICIENCY SCALE OF BLENDED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**

**In face-to-face learning environments.. Always Frequently Sometimes Rarely  
Never**

- F1. I was able to benefit from the instructor more than I was in the online environment.
- F2. I was able to get more help from the instructor compared to the online environment.
- F3. I think I learned better.
- F4. I communicated more easily with my friends.
- F5. It is important for me to reach the goals I have set.
- F6. Learning under the guidance of an instructor increased my motivation.
- F7. I was able to communicate more easily with the instructor.
- F8. I feel a greater sense of responsibility compared to online environments.
- F9. The instructor encouraged me to attend the class.
- F10. The homework and research I did was enough for me to understand the subject.

**In online learning environments                      Always Frequently Sometimes Rarely  
Never**

- O1. The interactive presentation of the course content increased my interest in the course.
- O2. I think that the simultaneous speaking activities enable me to learn better.
- O3. I think that the different timed (discussion, etc.) events organized helped me learn better.
- O4. The instructor encouraged me to attend the lesson.
- O5. I communicated more easily with my friends.
- O6. I enjoyed studying very much.

- O7. Using technology increased my interest in the course.
- O9. I felt a greater sense of responsibility than in the face-to-face environment.
- O10. Using communication tools (internet, e-mail, discussion lists, etc.) made me feel that I was not alone.
- O11. I enjoyed participating in collaborative activities.
- O12. I was able to get help from the instructor whenever I wanted.
- O13. While studying, I tried to find answers to my questions using communication tools.
- O14. I was able to get immediate feedback from the instructor.
- O15. I made good use of the time to carry out activities.
- O17. I think I learned better.
- O18. I usually solved the problems I had while studying.
- O19. I communicated more easily with the instructor.
- O20. I could easily access the teaching materials whenever I wanted.
- O21. The online resources included met my expectations.
- O22. The course content was prepared taking into account individual differences.

**In blended learning environments      Always   Frequently   Sometimes   Rarely  
Never**

- B1. The instructor was willing to teach.
- B2. The instructor used face-to-face and online environments effectively.
- B3. The advisory support I received from the instructor was sufficient.
- B4. I think I learned better.
- B5. I think this experience is important.
- B6. The instructor was successful in managing face-to-face and online environments.
- B7. The time devoted to online and face-to-face environments was convenient for me.

- B8. The content of the course was suitable for my level.
- B9. The course content was clear and understandable.
- B10. The course content was presented in a planned manner.
- B11. The content we saw face-to-face and online was appropriate for the chosen medium.
- B12. The superior properties of both environments were used.
- B13. The learning materials presented were sufficient for me.
- B14. Different teaching methods and techniques used were suitable for transferring the content.
- B15. There was integrity in the content transmitted in both environments.
- B16. The criteria by which I will be evaluated have been specified in advance.
- B17. I would like different evaluation techniques to be used to evaluate my performance in blended environments.
- B18. If I need to, I try to meet my classmates face to face.
- B19. I was able to manage time well while performing teaching activities.
- B20. I decided what to learn and how.

**In terms of technical aspects    Always   Frequently   Sometimes   Rarely   Never**

- O8. I felt lonely and unhappy.
- O16. I had difficulty in submitting the given assignments on time.
- O23. I had problems because of the technological infrastructure.
- O24. I had technical difficulties.
- O25. I had problems with the internet connection.

## Appendix C İzin yazışmaları




SAYI: ATADEK-2022/19

09.12.2022

KONU: Etik Kurul Kararı

Sayın Dr. Öğr. Üyesi. Hülya Yumru,

Sorumluluğunu yürüttüğünüz **“Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğrenenlerin Harmanlanmış Öğrenmeye İlişkin Görüşleri ve Dil Sınıflarında Kullanımını İyileştirmeye Yönelik Önerileri”** başlıklı proje 09 Aralık 2022 tarih 2022/19 sayılı ATADEK toplantısında görüşülmüş olup 2022-19/32 karar numarası ile tıbbi etik yönden uygun bulunmuştur.

  
Prof. Dr. Murat Başkaya

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**Etik onay istenen tıbbi araştırmanın başlığı:**

Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğrenenlerin Harmanlanmış Öğrenmeye İlişkin Görüşleri ve Dil Sınıflarında Kullanımını İyileştirmeye Yönelik Önerileri

**Etik onay istenen tıbbi araştırmanın yürütücüsü (sorumlusu):**

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**Karar:**

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**Toplantı Tarihi: 09.12.2022**

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## Appendix D etik kurul kararı

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 13.03.2023-80910



T.C.  
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## **RESUME**

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### **Education:**

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2011-2017: Piri Reis Universtiy Prep Department, İstanbul

2010-2011: Maltepe University Prep Department, Maltepe İstanbul

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