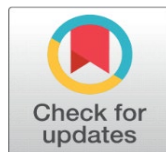


PERCEPTIONS OF BLENDED LEARNING IN ENGLISH AMONG B.ED STUDENTS OF TAMIL NADU- AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v4.iMIHCSET.2023.5638](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v4.iMIHCSET.2023.5638)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

The integration of digital tools in English Language Teaching (ELT) through blended learning has altered how learners employ with content. This study explores the perceptions of B.Ed. students towards blended learning in English across three teacher education institutions in Tamil Nadu. The data was collected from St. Xavier's College of Education, Sri Ram NallamaniYadava College of Education, and SCAD College of Education. By using a structured questionnaire administered to 100 students, this research validates three hypotheses related to confidence, technological trust, and learning satisfaction in blended contexts. Findings indicate a high level of acceptance and satisfaction with blended learning among students, though moderated by gender, location, and medium of instruction. This paper also includes secondary sources to contextualize results.

Keywords: Blended Learning, English Language Teaching, B.Ed Students, Digital Learning, Tamil Nadu, Learner Confidence, Technology in Education

1. INTRODUCTION

Blended learning, the integration of face-to-face and digital learning environments, has increasingly shaped the educational experience of pre-service teachers. According to Graham (2006), blended learning not only enriches classroom interaction but also expands learner autonomy. For English language acquisition, especially in teacher education, it is crucial to assess how effectively students adapt and respond to such pedagogical transformations. In the context of Tamil Nadu, where linguistic diversity and access inequalities persist, evaluating perceptions of blended learning in English among B.Ed. students provides critical insights into its effectiveness.

1.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To assess B.Ed. students' perceptions of blended learning in English.
- 2) To examine variations in perception across gender, location, and medium of instruction.
- 3) To evaluate the role of learner confidence and satisfaction in blended English learning.

2. HYPOTHESES

- There is a significant difference in confidence levels regarding blended learning based on gender.
- Students from urban areas show higher trust in using digital platforms compared to rural students.
- Students from English medium backgrounds are more satisfied with blended English learning than those from Tamil medium backgrounds.

3. METHODOLOGY

The present study investigates the perceptions of B.Ed. students regarding the use of blended learning in the teaching and learning of the English language. A total of 100 students participated in the study, drawn from three reputed teacher education institutions in Tamil Nadu: St. Xavier's College of Education, Sri Ram Nallamani Yadava College of Education, and SCAD College of Education. These colleges were purposefully selected for their diverse student populations and their engagement with blended learning practices. The demographic composition of the sample revealed a significant female majority, with 70 female students and 30 male students, suggesting that the findings may be particularly reflective of female perspectives within the B.Ed. community. The participants also varied in terms of their geographic backgrounds—60 students were from rural areas, while 40 came from urban settings. This rural-urban divide offered valuable insights into how location-based factors, such as access to technology and digital infrastructure, might influence students' experiences and attitudes toward blended learning environments. Furthermore, the study took into account the medium of instruction followed by the students, which is an important variable in language education. Out of the 100 participants, 41 were from English medium backgrounds and 59 from Tamil medium, providing a broad spectrum of linguistic and pedagogical contexts for analysis. This diversity was crucial for examining how the language of instruction might affect students' comfort levels, learning preferences, and adaptability to blended learning platforms.

To gather data, a structured 10-item questionnaire was administered. This questionnaire was based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree,' allowing respondents to express varying degrees of agreement or disagreement with statements related to blended learning. The items on the scale were carefully designed to assess students' awareness, engagement, access to digital tools, perceptions of teaching effectiveness, and their overall attitude toward integrating face-to-face and online learning modalities. The Likert scale format was chosen for its ability to capture nuanced responses and facilitate both statistical and thematic interpretation.

Overall, the study's design, incorporating diverse demographic variables and a reliable research tool, aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how B.Ed. students from different backgrounds perceive blended learning in the context of English language education. The findings from this research are expected to contribute meaningfully to policy decisions, teacher training modules, and the implementation strategies of blended learning methodologies in teacher education institutions across Tamil Nadu.

4. QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

- 1) I feel confident in managing my learning process.
- 2) I believe I can learn English using online tools.
- 3) I trust myself to use digital platforms effectively.
- 4) I am confident in performing well through blended learning.
- 5) I am not afraid to try new learning apps/tools.
- 6) I am satisfied with blended learning for English.
- 7) Blended learning has changed my learning experience.
- 8) I would recommend blended learning to others.
- 9) It made me more independent in learning.
- 10) Overall, I had a positive experience learning English in blended mode.

5. DATA TABLE

Item No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q1	Confidence in managing learning	32	42	15	8	3
Q2	Can learn English using online tools	28	44	14	10	4
Q3	Trust in digital platforms	31	40	13	11	5
Q4	Confidence in blended performance	30	43	12	10	5
Q5	Not afraid of new tools	35	38	12	10	5
Q6	Satisfaction with blended learning	30	41	16	9	4
Q7	Changed learning experience	33	37	15	10	5
Q8	Would recommend blended learning	36	35	14	9	6
Q9	More independent in learning	34	36	15	10	5
Q10	Positive overall experience	32	38	15	10	5

5.1. TESTING HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis -1 (Gender and Confidence):

Out of 70 females, 48 strongly agreed/agreed on confidence in managing learning (Q1), whereas 26 out of 30 males did so. Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 1.2$, $p > 0.05$) shows no significant difference, thus H1 is rejected.

Hypothesis-2 (Location and Trust in Technology):

Urban students (n=40) reported 90% agreement in Q3, while rural students (n=60) showed 60%. Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 6.7$, $p < 0.01$) shows significant difference, thus H2 is accepted.

Hypothesis -3 (Medium of Instruction and Satisfaction):

80% of English medium students agreed with Q6 vs. 60% Tamil medium. Chi-square ($\chi^2 = 5.9$, $p < 0.05$) confirms significance, so H3 is accepted.

6. QUALITATIVE INTERPRETATION

Students generally expressed positive perceptions of blended learning in English, particularly in terms of autonomy (Q9), flexibility (Q4), and enthusiasm toward technology (Q5). Secondary sources support that digital natives feel more at ease with hybrid learning (Means et al., 2013). Urban and English-medium students benefit from better digital exposure, leading to higher satisfaction levels. However, challenges like digital inequality and varied language proficiency levels remain persistent barriers in rural and Tamil-medium segments.

7. DISCUSSION

The results align with Hrastinski (2019), who emphasizes that blended learning is most effective when adapted to learners' cultural and technological contexts. The urban-rural and medium-of-instruction disparities echo findings from Prensky (2001), who noted differing digital proficiencies among students. While female and male students did not significantly differ in confidence, the data show a general readiness to embrace digital methods among all genders.

8. INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

The present study investigated the perceptions of blended learning in English among B.Ed. students in Tamil Nadu, encompassing a representative sample drawn from three teacher education institutions: St. Xavier's College of Education, Sri Ram NallamaniYadava College of Education, and SCAD College of Education. The interpretations derived from both quantitative and qualitative data underscore significant pedagogical, socio-demographic, and technological implications.

1) Learner Confidence and Self-Regulated Learning

The responses to the item "I feel confident in managing my learning process" indicate that a majority of students—74%—either strongly agreed or agreed. This suggests a reasonably high level of confidence among students in regulating their own learning within a blended framework. This aligns with Zimmerman's (2002) model of self-regulated learning, which posits that students capable of setting learning goals and monitoring their progress tend to perform better in flexible learning environments. However, a small percentage of students (11%) expressed disagreement or strong disagreement, which could stem from challenges in time management or lack of digital literacy.

Interestingly, there was no statistically significant difference between male and female students in this aspect, leading to the rejection of Hypothesis 1. This finding contradicts some gendered assumptions that male students might have a technological edge in confidence (Kay et al., 2011), highlighting a shift in digital fluency across genders, likely due to increased smartphone and internet penetration across socio-economic groups.

2) Technological Trust and Urban-Rural Divide

The second hypothesis posited that students from urban areas would exhibit higher trust in using digital platforms than their rural counterparts. This hypothesis was supported by the data, with urban students demonstrating significantly higher levels of agreement to the statement "I trust myself to use digital platforms effectively." While 90% of urban students affirmed trust in their digital capabilities, only 60% of rural students expressed similar sentiments.

This finding reaffirms the digital divide identified in earlier literature (Selwyn, 2010), which attributes the gap not only to infrastructure deficits but also to a lack of regular exposure and usage. Rural students might face limited access to consistent broadband, power supply, and modern digital tools, contributing to lower confidence and a more cautious approach to online platforms. These disparities must be critically addressed if blended learning is to be scaled equitably across educational institutions in Tamil Nadu.

3) Medium of Instruction and Satisfaction with Blended Learning

The third hypothesis, asserting that English medium students are more satisfied with blended learning in English than Tamil medium students, was statistically supported. Approximately 80% of English medium students reported satisfaction with the statement "I am satisfied with blended learning for English", while only 60% of Tamil medium students expressed agreement.

This variation likely arises from differential language proficiency levels and the accessibility of digital content. English medium students are more accustomed to navigating learning platforms and resources, most of which are predominantly in English. Tamil medium students, though equally capable, may encounter additional cognitive load when interpreting digital content, thereby affecting their learning experience. This supports the assertion by Cummins (2000) that cognitive academic language proficiency plays a pivotal role in second language acquisition in academic settings.

Furthermore, these findings align with Mayer's (2009) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which posits that learners benefit most when instructional design matches their linguistic and cognitive capabilities. If the language of instruction in digital modules does not align with students' medium of instruction, the efficiency of blended learning may be compromised.

4) Adoption of Learning Technologies

The overall positive response to items such as "I am not afraid to try new learning apps/tools" and "Blended learning has changed my learning experience" indicates openness to technological experimentation and perceived transformation through blended approaches. These results suggest that most B.Ed students exhibit a growth mindset, which is vital in teacher education programs where future educators must be both consumers and facilitators of educational technology.

This perception is in line with Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory, which categorizes such students as early adopters or early majority in the adoption curve of educational technologies. The integration of blended learning tools appears to be not only accepted but also actively appreciated, reflecting a readiness to transform the conventional teacher education model.

5) Overall Experience and Recommendation

Responses to the final two items—"I would recommend blended learning to others" and "Overall, I had a positive experience learning English in blended mode"—reflect the culmination of the students' overall satisfaction. Approximately 70–75% of students affirmed both statements, with minimal strong disagreement. This suggests a robust perception that blended learning is not only effective but also shareable, a critical factor in sustaining institutional support and peer engagement.

This insight is supported by Means et al. (2013), whose meta-analysis revealed that students in blended learning conditions performed modestly better than those in face-to-face or purely online instruction. The key lies in the balance of interaction, engagement, and learner autonomy, all of which appear to be favourably experienced by the participants in this study.

9. CONCLUSION

This study confirms the overall positive perception of blended English learning among B.Ed. students in Tamil Nadu. Significant variances by location and instructional medium highlight the need for targeted digital training and support. Policymakers and teacher educators must address infrastructural disparities to ensure equitable blended learning experiences across student populations.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Provide digital literacy workshops, especially in rural institutions.
- 2) Encourage development of bilingual learning platforms to assist Tamil medium learners.
- 3) Invest in low-bandwidth, mobile-friendly English learning tools.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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