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Perceptions, readiness, and challenges of blended learning: Evidence from micro-teaching courses in Indonesian higher education

Ni Wayan Krismayani[1+]
Sebastianus Menggo[2]

[1]*Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar, Denpasar, Indonesia.*
Email: Chrismayani@unmas.ac.id
[2]*Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng, Ruteng, Indonesia.*
Email: sebastian.pradana@gmail.com


(+ Corresponding author)

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ABSTRACT

Blended learning is increasingly vital in transforming traditional classrooms into open and creative environments that integrate teaching and learning without being constrained by time and space. Several factors must be considered in a microteaching class, including interactions between teachers and students and the communication skills taught within this setting. The primary aim of this study is to examine microteaching practices concerning teacher qualification, based on prospective teachers' perceptions derived from their teaching reflections. This cross-sectional survey was conducted from May to July 2024, involving 136 college students from six English Study Programs across six universities in three Indonesian provinces within the BaliNusra regions. Data collection involved questionnaires and interviews, followed by both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The findings indicate that 136 respondents preferred offline methods over online for micro-teaching courses. Although prospective teachers are prepared to implement blended learning, this readiness is not fully supported by the stability of available facilities, which presents challenges. The effective implementation and success of blended learning in areas with inadequate ICT infrastructure remain significant obstacles. This study recommends that educators conducting micro-teaching courses consider the blended learning model as a viable alternative in today's digital age.

Contribution/ Originality: This study examines prospective teachers' perceptions, readiness, and challenges in blended learning environments. It addresses gaps in the existing literature and emphasizes the importance of digital literacy as a vital competency. Additionally, the research highlights the pedagogical, social, personal, and professional skills necessary to empower English teachers in the digital age.

1. INTRODUCTION

Students can access various materials through blended learning, including videos for visual learning, podcasts for auditory learning, and hands-on activities for kinesthetic learning. To improve student learning outcomes, blended learning requires the adaptation of lecturers and students to digital technology, modern teaching techniques, flexible learning processes, the effective use of time, space, budget, learning motivation, and learning autonomy (Menggo & Darong, 2022). Blended learning positively affected students' academic performance (Slivnaya, Borisenko, & Samofalova, 2023). In a classroom with both quick and slow learners, this approach helps maintain equilibrium. Every student can practice and learn new content at a pace that is ideal for them. The learning experience for its end users is transformed through blended learning, which offers comprehensive knowledge.

In recent years, blended learning which essentially refers to programs that integrate in-person and online learning has become increasingly popular (Yajie & Jumaat, 2023). Blended learning, sometimes called mixed learning, is an educational approach to traditional classroom activities. The flexible and friendly learning environment of blended learning allows students to interact with peers, teachers, and course materials both in person and virtually (Padmadewi, Artini, Ratminingsih, & Marsakawati, 2022; Tyas, Muam, Sari, & Dewantara, 2020).

Nevertheless, in-person instruction is still necessary for online learning. Combining online and in-person instruction is known as blended learning. Compared to fully online learning, blended learning can enhance learning outcomes and increase students' motivation to learn. Additionally, it has been shown that blended learning is more effective than face-to-face learning.

Microteaching provides students with practice, observation, and evaluation of their teaching simulations (Helda & Zaim, 2021; Mukuka & Alex, 2024). Students will take on the roles of observers, students, and micro-teachers. Prospective teachers should manage their learning autonomously, be qualified, and be quantifiable according to their specialization in micro-teaching classes (Kirsch & Sarmento, 2021; Luo & Li, 2024). They can use proper instructional methods, media, and other learning tools to participate in class activities. Teaching demonstrations, observations, and peer reviews are used in assessments to determine competency attainment. Nevertheless, these researchers relied purely on investigating micro-teaching courses, which did not particularly explore perception, readiness, and challenges in the Micro-Teaching course from a blended learning viewpoint within the Indonesian context.

In the English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education in Bali, Nusa Tenggara Barat, Nusa Tenggara Timur; they are Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar, Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama, NTB; Universitas Muhammadiyah Mataram; Universitas Bumigora Mataram; Universitas Terbuka Mataram, Universitas Hamzawadi Mataram; and Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng, NTT. All university-level institutions in Indonesia require a micro-teaching course to undertake an internship at junior and senior high schools. The micro-teaching course is a compulsory course for students enrolled in educational programs in pedagogy, particularly those focusing on English education. This course serves as a platform for applying various pedagogical subject competencies that have been programmed. Micro-teaching is a mini-educational model that simulates real classroom instruction. The mini-learning model is characterized by its limited and restricted components, including the number of students, classes, time allocation, learning media, types of assessments, and manipulation of student behavior. It stimulates actual teaching practices (Budiarta, Artini, Padmadewi, & Nitiasih, 2023; Tutyandari, Anandari, & Ardi, 2022).

Prior studies mainly concentrated on the fundamental nature of micro-teaching as a space for cultivating prospective teachers with comprehensive pedagogical, professional, social, and personality skills (Rosmayanti, Khair, & Cersel, 2020; Shi, 2020; Tam, 2024; Tutyandari et al., 2022). However, these researchers have yet to provide any empirical data regarding their analysis of student perceptions and problems, as well as the readiness of lecturers to implement the blended learning model in micro-teaching courses. There is a vital requirement to shift learning from traditional lecture-based to digital-based approaches. Education stakeholders need to integrate their learning processes with technological advancements. According to this perspective, the findings of this study can address this shortcoming. Blended learning, viewed from a broad pedagogical standpoint in higher education, is an adaptive and solution-oriented way to address the issues educators face and their readiness to implement them.

It is recognized that integrating a learning model varies across different educational settings. Differences in abilities and problems will always occur for several reasons, including the diverse backgrounds of lecturers and students, the availability of resources and infrastructure, the level of initiative and curiosity exhibited by students and lecturers, and other elements of the learning process. However, understanding students' perspectives on implementing a learning model, such as the blended learning model, allows educators to reflect on and modify learning components that do not align with the desired student learning outcomes. It also provides an opportunity

to consider alternative models if students have negative perceptions of the current one. This logical reasoning empowers researchers to disseminate their findings to the public.

Online and offline micro-teaching provide discussion forums containing comments and criticisms from teachers and peers. Lessons are shortened to 40 or 45 minutes to practice specific educational skills.

The students were scored based on the following basic teaching skills: opening and closing the class, giving reinforcement, using variation in media, voice, and body language, explaining the material, asking questions, using media and ICT in learning, and managing the classroom. The prospective teacher should be able to master all basic teaching skills in online or offline micro-teaching practice. Therefore, the researchers conducted this study to analyze the microteaching experience in an online and offline micro-teaching course. New teaching strategies, such as blended learning, are required to meet these needs. While prior research has extensively examined how blended learning might improve student engagement and learning flexibility, most studies still concentrate on generic courses or non-specific educational environments. In fact, micro-teaching has unique characteristics since it requires integrating practical pedagogical skills with digital technology, which often creates additional challenges for lecturers and students. Therefore, a research gap exists in comprehensively understanding students' perceptions, readiness, and challenges in this particular context. The current study aims to close this gap by examining students' attitudes, preparedness, and difficulties when implementing blended learning in microteaching courses in Indonesian higher education.

From this point of view, the researchers formulated the following two research questions.

1. What are prospective teachers' perceptions of the blended learning model in microteaching courses?
2. What are the readiness and challenges of prospective teachers in implementing the blended learning model in microteaching courses?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Blended Learning in ELT

Face-to-face learning is the term used to describe the conventional classroom-based mode of instruction. In-person, instructor-led sessions are a part of this kind of teaching. In this scenario, the instructor determines the pace of learning while the students are passive learners. Face-to-face instruction works well because of the benefits of having the teacher and students engage in real-time. Online learning, often known as distance education or e-learning, is the distribution of educational resources and information through the internet.

Blended learning is the concept of implementing both face-to-face and online learning into a hybrid approach, allowing learners to benefit from both methods of learning (Menggo & Darong, 2022). With blended learning, students can learn at their own pace and gain proficiency using technology for learning. Blended learning is more effective than online or in-person learning techniques. The advantages of blended learning include the ability for students to meet with teachers and classmates in person. Additionally, it simplifies access for students who live in rural locations or have limited transportation options to receive education online. Face-to-face instruction provides students with the opportunity to communicate directly with teachers and peers. While face-to-face instruction allows teachers to offer more individualized support, online learning also enables students to receive personalized assistance. Combining in-person and online instruction helps students improve their learning outcomes and develop technological skills effectively.

Blended learning is far more effective than online or in-person learning approaches. This type of instruction allows teachers or students to experience both online and offline environments simultaneously. In this manner, educators and students will only become weary of the learning process and will be ready to continue. Online learning is more productive and efficient since it allows teachers and students to learn from anywhere. Meanwhile, face-to-face instruction enables students and teachers to discuss subjects that could be challenging to understand. It may also be

more straightforward for teachers or students to implement more enjoyable learning activities due to mixed learning. Budgetary concerns are also unnecessary to take into account because they can reduce transportation and paper costs.

Online learning tools also enable teachers to design adaptable and successful learning activities. Teachers can advise students to become comfortable with the material online before the in-person meeting so that class time can be utilized for debates, sharing ideas, or practicing speaking English. As a result, teachers can encourage their students to be active and involved in English language learning through blended learning. In conclusion, blended learning can enhance teaching and learning since it benefits teachers and students.

In the context of a microteaching class, the perception, readiness, and challenges in blended learning are closely interconnected. The teacher's and students' perceptions of blended learning influence how they view the effectiveness of teaching practice. When their perceptions are positive toward blended learning, they will be motivated to utilize technology and integrate mixed learning techniques. This relates to readiness that allows them to manage in-person and virtual learning successfully. In blended learning, challenges such as technical issues and limited facilities must exist. By facing these challenges, they are encouraged to review their perceptions and hone their teaching readiness.

2.2. Basic Concept of Micro-Teaching

Before implementing micro-teaching, teachers and prospective teachers must understand that microlearning has several notable and unique aspects. Teachers and prospective teachers can comprehend these aspects and optimize the development of specific teaching skills (Megawati & Astutik, 2021). The essential teaching skills include opening and closing the class, providing reinforcement, using variation in media, voice, and body language, explaining the material, asking questions, utilizing media and ICT in learning, and managing the classroom.

The ability to effectively communicate the lesson is key to helping students understand the topic or theory (Nguyen, 2020). Teachers must be knowledgeable about learning resources and techniques suitable for student learning environments. To ensure that learning activities are engaging for students and that they are energized, teachers must not only be experts in the content they will teach but also in the teaching strategies they will employ. The ability of teachers to end lessons using learning experiences has been comprehensively gained by students (Siripol & Wilang, 2024; Yanto, 2022). Closure can be achieved by providing a conclusion, summary, reflection, and review. Moreover, students can be motivated to participate actively in their education by recognizing and rewarding good behavior and academic accomplishments (Wang, Huang, & Omar, 2021). Teachers can use praise, incentives, or awards to promote good behavior and encourage students to actively participate and stay on task in the learning process.

Then, teachers must be skilled at using spoken and written language effectively and accurately to communicate ideas, instructions, and explanations in a way that students can grasp (Bozkurt & Koyunkaya, 2020; Yanto, 2022). The teacher should use language that reflects students' comprehension levels. Using precise wording helps avoid misunderstandings or misinterpretations. The use of a variation of sound, mimic, and tone is the crucial thing that teachers should have. The teacher's voice can also help to build authority and an organized learning environment. To be an excellent teacher in front of their students while teaching, they must make the proper gestures. The ideal teacher's gestures in class should be just the right amount neither too much nor too little.

The ability to effectively communicate the lesson is the key to helping students understand the topic or theory. Teachers must be knowledgeable about learning resources and techniques suitable for student learning environments. Teachers must be experts in the content and teaching strategies they will employ to ensure that learning activities are engaging for students and that they are not bored. Furthermore, giving a question that can raise students' thinking levels is one of the ways to encourage them to engage in higher-order thinking in class (Amobi & Irwin, 2009; Fetriani, Lolita, & Saputra, 2021). Students can elevate their level of thinking by asking questions; therefore, teachers should understand the level of questions. Besides educational media, learning activities may be conducted in the classroom to help students and teachers achieve learning objectives. Learning media support various learning

objectives, including more standardized message delivery, engaging and participatory learning, and increased information retention (Yüzgeç & Sütçü, 2020). Using technology in teaching and learning in the 21st-century era is highly necessary. 21st-century teachers are challenged to integrate new technologies into their teaching practices (Haryani, Coben, Pleasants, & Fetters, 2021; Yunus, 2007). Using technology in the EFL classroom could increase the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process and improve students' English proficiency. Finally, managing or facilitating a classroom refers to the teacher's ability to plan educational activities there (Natasha & Firdaus, 2022). In managing the classroom, the teacher should be able to manage time, students, material, and space. Teachers controlling the classroom may foster a secure, orderly, and encouraging atmosphere where students feel free to participate, ask questions, work together, and actively learn.

2.3. Digital-Based Learning

Technological developments must be balanced with initiatives to increase educational standards to ensure high-quality learning. Developing learning that focuses on students is one effort that can be done. This needs to be implemented because it is to build a learning system that makes it possible to have more interactive learning abilities, not boring as a model of learning variations. Digital learning is a breakthrough in education that utilizes technology and digital media to deliver material to achieve learning objectives (Mushaddiq, Abduh, & Ariyani, 2022; Peters, 2000). Digital learning is a learning approach that combines technology and digital media to deliver learning materials. It covers a variety of methods, from online courses to the use of technology in face-to-face learning. Digital learning is a system that facilitates students' learning in a broader and more varied way. Making learning more straightforward and valuable is another advantage, particularly in the twenty-first century, when learning orientation fosters autonomous and academic learning skills (Jannah, Prasojo, & Jerusalem, 2020; Zamista & Azmi, 2023).

Students' enthusiasm and creativity are positively impacted by digitally based learning that incorporates a variety of interactive visualizations and simulations (Sarajari & Gilakjani, 2024). Students' independent learning is encouraged by the rise of digital learning technologies, including e-learning, virtual courses, computer-based learning, game-based learning, interactive multimedia, etc. Teachers everywhere are urged by the media, government, school administrators, peers, parents, and students to integrate new technologies into their classrooms. Technology has indeed enhanced students' metacognitive skills, teachers' learning styles, and the efficacy of instruction (Sarajari & Gilakjani, 2024). To make learning materials and other information easily accessible to students, such as computer media technology with the internet, an interaction between the instructor and student can partially replace what can be done using various types of learning media. It is made up of blended learning and adaptive learning.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed survey research with a cross-sectional design conducted from May to July 2024 across six English Language Education Study Programs in six universities located in three provinces in Indonesia. The participating institutions included Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar, Bumigora, Muhammadiyah Mataram, Universitas Terbuka Mataram, Nahdlatul Ulama Nusa Tenggara Barat, and Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng. A total of 136 prospective teachers from these programs were selected using a multistage cluster random sampling technique. The researchers established specific criteria for sample selection, which included respondents having completed courses in pedagogical strategies, teaching-learning strategies, language assessment, language skills, and curriculum and material development design. To ensure anonymity and protect privacy, all prospective teachers were assigned code names instead of their real names. Throughout data presentation and analysis, each participant was given a unique identifier, which was used consistently. Following ethical research standards, this coding method was employed to maintain anonymity while allowing readers to trace individual viewpoints throughout the findings. Quantitative analysis was performed on Likert-scale questionnaire data to assess prospective teachers' satisfaction levels. Conversely, qualitative analysis was applied to retrospective interview

transcripts to identify challenges faced during microteaching, both offline and online. The researchers developed a questionnaire using Google Forms to evaluate perceptions of how blended learning was implemented over 12 meetings six in-person and six online via Zoom. The questionnaire consisted of 15 closed-ended items rated on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strong dissatisfaction) to 5 (strong satisfaction). All items were validated by pedagogical experts to ensure relevance to microteaching. The validation confirmed that the instrument effectively measures microteaching skills. Finally, the researchers conducted retrospective interviews to explore problems encountered by prospective teachers during online and offline microteaching sessions. The interview data were transcribed and analyzed qualitatively using the guiding theoretical framework of the study.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Microteaching sessions are divided into offline practice sessions in the classroom and online sessions through Zoom. The author breaks down the four phases of microteaching courses at the English Education Study Program into planning, teaching, evaluating, and reflecting. Here are the results of the prospective teachers' perceptions, readiness, and challenges toward blended learning in microteaching courses.

4.1. Result

The results show the prospective teachers' perceptions of blended learning, their readiness for the blended learning model, and the challenges faced in blended learning within microteaching classes. Figure 1 summarizes the respondents' perceptions of the blended learning model in the microteaching course.

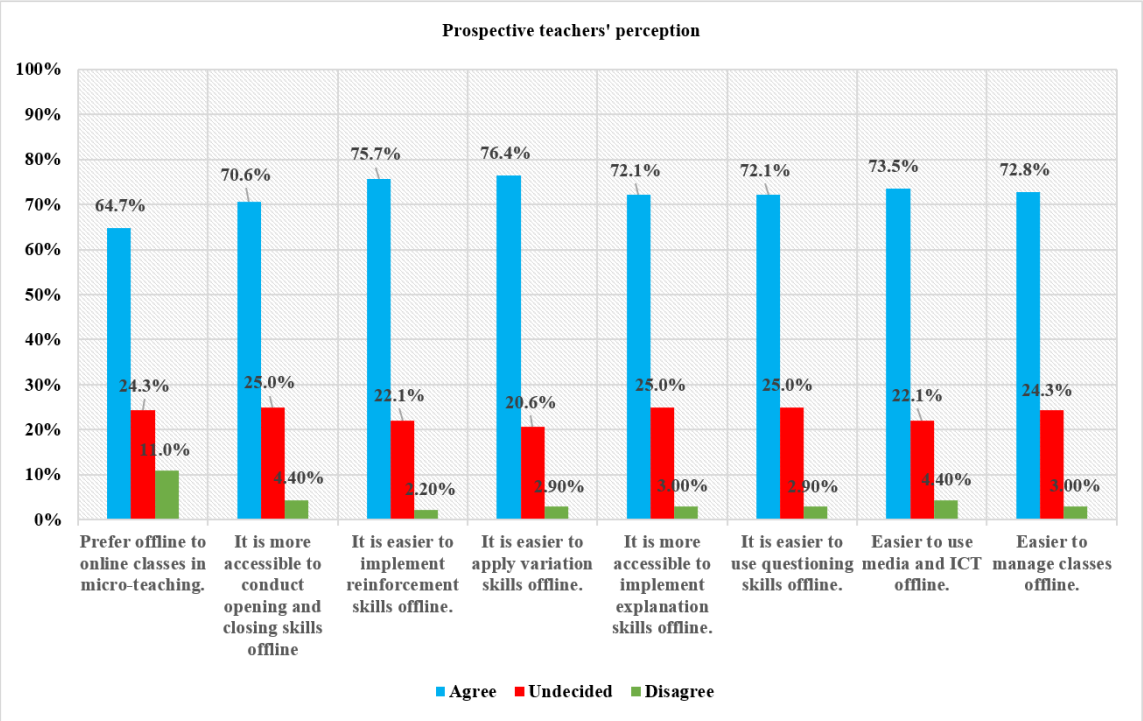

Figure 1. Prospective teachers' perspective towards blended learning on microteaching.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of prospective teachers who prefer offline and online classes. Their perceptions include how they open and close the class, provide reinforcement, master the learning content, utilize body language and variation in voice, explain the material, ask questions, utilize media and ICT for learning, and manage the classroom in blended learning. This study also finds prospective teachers' readiness for microteaching courses, as detailed in Figure 2.

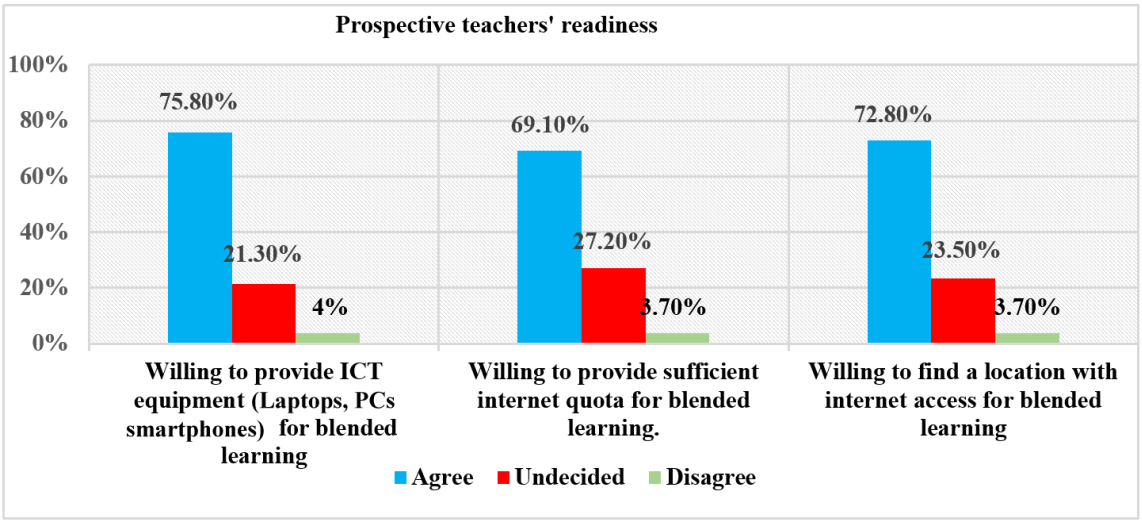

Figure 2. Prospective teachers' readiness towards blended learning in microteaching.

Figure 2 shows the prospective teacher's readiness for blended learning in micro-teaching. The highest percentage (75.8%) is their readiness to provide ICT equipment such as laptops, PCs, smartphones, etc. Besides their willingness to provide the ICT equipment, they are also ready to find another place to carry out blended learning and provide their quota in carrying out blended learning. Although the data on prospective teachers' readiness to implement the blended learning model is interesting, it must be considered together with various obstacles to implementing this offer, as shown in Figure 3.

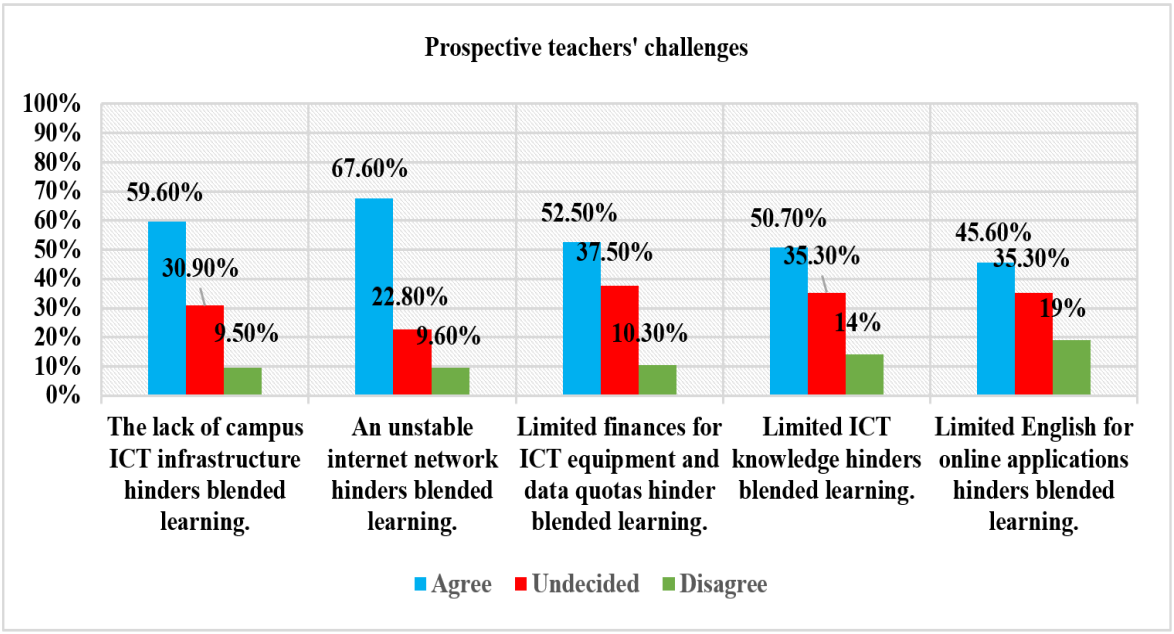

Figure 3. Teachers' challenges towards blended learning in microteaching.

Figure 3 shows that the need for a stable internet network is an obstacle to blended learning. As mentioned in Figure 2, the prospective teachers were ready to provide ICT equipment, an internet quota, and a place with internet access.

However, most prospective teachers have identified a few issues or difficulties they anticipate arising from blended learning. The difficulties relate to the internet connection. Most of them felt that the internet connection posed the most significant challenge.

4.2. Discussion

The essential teaching skills include the skills to open and close the class, give reinforcement, master the material, use variation in voice and body language, explain the material, ask questions, use media and ICT in learning, and manage the classroom, as explained below:

4.2.1. Blended Learning in English Language Teaching

Most prospective teachers prefer offline learning to online learning. 64.7% preferred offline learning to online learning, 24.3% chose neutral, and only 11% preferred online learning to offline learning in microteaching classes. This aligns with previous studies conducted by Rismiyanto (2021), which state that most prospective teachers favor the offline teaching platform over the online one. Challenges faced by prospective teachers include difficulty in controlling students, being disturbed by signals, and students not responding well. This is consistent with Supardi (2023), who argued that students experienced issues with internet connection and needed more experience with online platforms; consequently, this made students less nervous when attending classes online.

The second skill is opening and closing the classroom (Siripol & Wilang, 2024; Yanto, 2022). Also argued that a poor internet connection was the biggest obstacle to implementing blended learning. It was found that 70.6% of prospective teachers had difficulty starting classes in online learning compared to offline learning, as shown in the following interview protocol.

At the beginning of the class opening, I was confused and afraid because the shared screen, which was shared by my friend Agus Budianta, was not visible due to my signal at home being disturbed at that time. At the opening of the class, I was calm because I could greet students well, but the class condition was unexpected because the students at the beginning of the class did not respond well (Respondent A).

Meanwhile, 4.4% of prospective teachers said starting classes online was more accessible than offline learning. And 25% hesitated to say they needed help opening courses in online education. More interaction in closing the classroom in online learning is a problem some prospective teachers must face. It is difficult for prospective teachers to understand the students who truly understand, especially those who grasp the material directly. They cannot detect the students one by one. Some agreed that ending the class online is more accessible than offline learning since they can record the whole activity in Zoom apps and self-evaluate their teaching.

The third is the skill to reinforce student participation by giving rewards and punishments. 75.7% of prospective teachers argued that giving rewards or punishments in offline learning was easier than in online learning. Teachers should provide rewards before the end of class. Offering rewards in offline learning is adequate to reinforce the behavior as soon as it happens. The students will feel more empowered. In offline learning, prospective teachers can show any gesture of giving rewards, for example, by using facial expressions, body language, etc., as the following excerpt of the interview.

I tried to use rewards for my classmates, but they were only emoticons in Zoom; hmm. Hmm, it doesn't work at all (Respondent B).

Reinforcement should be given with warmth and enthusiasm (Fetriani et al., 2021; Sarimanah, Efendi, & Dewi, 2021; Werdi, 2021), who state that giving reinforcement should be enthusiastic, and the teacher should pay attention to the students when giving reinforcement. In online learning, it is challenging to make students passionate about learning since there is less interaction with the students. Then, 21.1% neither agree nor disagree that giving rewards for online learning is more accessible than offline learning. Meanwhile, 22.1% of prospective teachers stated that awards could be presented in online education by recognizing student achievements using information and communication technology.

The fourth skill is using variation skills (variations in voice and body language), which is considered difficult for 76.4% of prospective teachers, who agreed it was easier to use variations in voice and body language in offline classes than in online courses, as stated in the following excerpt of the interview.

During the teaching simulation, I was also unable to practice gestures when teaching in class because it was online, so they were less visible. This allowed me to experience the authentic classroom atmosphere. In addition, through this teaching simulation, I also learned how to implement teaching techniques in the classroom (Respondent C).

This analysis focuses on prospective teachers' perceptions of blended learning, particularly regarding communication skills and non-verbal cues. The highest percentage of respondents indicated that students sometimes require more concentration when explanations are given, which can be hindered by unstable internet connections. Such connectivity issues indirectly affect the clarity, correctness, and effectiveness of spoken language. The use of gestures, including variations in expression, movement, silence, eye contact, and changes in position, is crucial in enhancing communication. This is supported by research from Pattaufi, Aswan, and Hakim (2023); Simamora (2023) and Werdi (2021), who highlight the limitations of observing students' movements, gestures, and facial expressions during online teaching via Zoom. They suggest that using gestures can be more varied and satisfactory in offline learning environments. Additionally, 20.6% of prospective teachers expressed doubts about the accessibility of using variations and body language in online learning compared to offline settings. Conversely, 2.9% believed they could easily show gestures during online classes, indicating a perception that online platforms can support non-verbal communication effectively.

The fifth skill is mastering the material. 72.1% of prospective teachers needed help in mastering the material. They should be able to comprehend the content being taught; they must also organize the learning activities that will take place in the class. Among these tasks is preparing the learning resources, media, and methods used during the learning activities. The following protocols show that prospective teachers needed help in getting the students to understand the material. It is challenging to control the students. Some of them remained silent, while others did not give any responses, so she did not know whether they understood or not, as follows.

If I teach via Zoom or other platforms, I can't see their activities directly, and I can't see if they pay attention to the material I teach. When teaching online, making my students understand things thoroughly is very difficult. If I am allowed to teach directly later, I will pay more attention to my students' activities, and I can also directly ask about things they do not understand (Respondent D).

Controlling students is difficult, as finding others who can understand the material is challenging. This is supported by statements from Simamora (2023) and Supardi (2023), who state that a teacher must have a good understanding of the teaching material that will be delivered to students. This understanding can help teachers provide clear explanations and address student questions effectively. In online microteaching, prospective teachers sometimes find it challenging to manage students; some may close their cameras, making interaction in online classes difficult. Additionally, 25% of students prefer a neutral approach, while 3% of prospective teachers agree that mastering the material in online courses is more manageable than in offline learning.

The sixth is the ability to ask questions. 72.1% of prospective teachers feel students need to be more interested in answering questions. In the interview session, she clarified that her students may have become bored with the lesson, so they did not respond at all, as shown in the following excerpt of the interview.

My lesson is boring when I ask questions and instruct students to read the phrases or conversations listed on the slides, but no students answer. I don't know why they don't want to read, even when I point it out, and other students respond. That's all for my experience. Hopefully, with my previous experience, I can improve again regarding the learning activities that I will do in class later (Respondent E).

Difficulty concentrating is also included in students' difficulties during this online learning because there are many distractions at home, making it more difficult for students to focus. Based on the previous study conducted by Afifah and Fikri (2023) and Bozkurt and Koyunkaya (2020), they stressed that offline classes foster understanding more. One significant benefit is how simple it is to ask direct questions and converse with classmates and the instructor offline. Students prefer and want more offline classes because they are more pleasant and easier to

understand. Meanwhile, 25% are neutral about this skill. Then, the same percentage, 2.9%, of prospective teachers agree that asking questions in online classes is more accessible than in offline courses.

The seventh is the skill of utilizing media and ICT in learning. 73.5% of prospective teachers agree that media and ICT are easier to implement offline than online learning. In online learning, they encountered problems due to internet connection issues. A sluggish internet network, outages, insufficient teaching tools, and similar problems cause online learning to take longer (Ergül, 2023; Haryani et al., 2021; Yunus, 2007). While 22.1% chose neutral, 4.4% agreed that using media and ICT in online learning is more accessible than offline learning. Those who agree said online learning allows students to access educational materials and resources anytime, anywhere, if they have an internet connection. The following protocols show that prospective teachers found utilizing ICT in online learning easier. There are many features in the application to be used in supporting the teaching-learning activities as follows.

Carrying out the teaching-learning process online is sometimes easier than offline classes. A mute feature is provided on Zoom and Google Meet if you assess a student's speaking ability, so that you are not disturbed by the voices of other students. But of course, the problem experienced during online classes is the signal. If the signal is good, learning can proceed smoothly. (Respondent F).

The last is the ability to manage the class. 72.8% of prospective teachers need help managing the classroom. Offline microteaching is better because it makes it easier to interact directly with the students, as shown in the following excerpt of the interview.

Micro-teaching is much better offline because it allows us to interact directly with the learners and makes it easier to manage classroom activities (Respondent G).

24.3% of those doubt that managing classes online is more accessible than offline. At the same time, 3% agree that facilitating online courses is more accessible than offline classes. Managing the class is one of the fundamental teaching abilities that are improperly applied in microteaching classes. Specific tasks in online-based microteaching learning, including shaking hands and strengthening movement to approach, are challenging to complete because they genuinely call for proximity between teachers and students (Jeremias, Rijoly, & Binnendyk, 2023; Li & Li, 2024; Megawati & Astutik, 2021; Natasha & Firdaus, 2022; Tam, 2024).

4.2.2. Digital-Based Learning in English Language Teaching

Digital technology must be applied in the field of education today. Digital technology is increasingly significant in the 21st century and motivates students to learn and innovate. When teaching materials are combined with digital technology, the learning process can be more exciting and motivating. Here are the readiness and challenges of prospective teachers in implementing the blended learning model in micro-teaching courses.

a) Readiness in implementing the blended learning model in micro-teaching courses

Prospective teachers' readiness for blended learning in microteaching is crucial for successful implementation. On the other hand, prospective teachers' readiness in blended learning for microteaching classes may present challenges. Some educators may struggle with the technical aspects of integrating digital tools and platforms into their teaching practice, which can lead to potential disruptions in lesson delivery and student engagement the teacher's candidate (Chekhratova, Kovalenko, Petrenko, Pohorielova, & Ved, 2022; Isnawati, 2023; Nuryadin, Karlimah, Lidinillah, & Apriani, 2023; Sha'ar, Buddharat, & Sınghasuwan, 2022). The researchers investigated the prospective teachers' readiness to use blended learning in microteaching classes. Based on the questionnaire results, 75.8% stated they could provide ICT equipment such as laptops, PCs, and smartphones to carry out blended learning. This is the highest percentage among the prospective teachers. However, 21.3% of prospective teachers still doubt their ability to prepare for blended learning. Additionally, 37% of prospective teachers disagree that they are ready to prepare the ICT equipment.

Regarding connectivity, most of 69.1% of prospective teachers can provide internet quota for blended learning. In contrast, 27.2% of prospective teachers still doubted this. Only 3.7% of prospective teachers strongly disagreed

that they were interested in providing internet quota to run blended learning. They explained that the teachers were ready to discuss technical and pedagogical aspects. However, internet connection still has limitations and challenges (Azrai, Rini, & Suryanda, 2020; Ngoc & Tuyen, 2022). The prospective teachers were also prepared to find a place to have internet access to carry out blended learning. 72.8% were willing to do so, while 23.5% doubted it. 3.7% of prospective teachers disagreed that they could find the right place for blended learning.

b) Challenges in implementing the blended learning model in microteaching courses

The prospective teachers were ready to implement online classes but faced some challenges. 59.6% of prospective teachers consider the lack of campus ICT infrastructure as an obstacle to running blended learning. While 30.9% still needed to be convinced that campus ICT infrastructure is one of the factors causing the problems in blended learning. Many obstacles that frequently arise include the infrastructure and facilities for internet access, which are still unable to support the number of people who can access the internet, and internet speeds that are insufficient to match the demand of researchers and instructors (Adhikari, 2020; Ledger & Fischetti, 2020). Meanwhile, 9.5% of prospective teachers disagree that the lack of campus infrastructure is an obstacle in microteaching blended classrooms. Another challenge is related to the internet connection. 67.6% of prospective teachers consider the internet connection an obstacle in microteaching classes. This is the most significant challenge faced by prospective teachers in microteaching blended learning. This is in line with a study by Altakhaineh, Alaghawat, and Younes (2023); Boonmoh and Kamsa-ard (2023); Hadijah (2017), and (Ngoc & Tuyen, 2022), who stated that internet connection is a problem most prospective teachers face in online learning. The results of the interview strengthen this reason. The prospective teachers faced difficulties due to technical issues such as sluggish internet connection and the inability to use Zoom apps well. While 22.8% still doubt this problem, 9.6% of prospective teachers disagree that the lack of connectivity is problematic in micro-teaching classes. The next challenge is ICT equipment and internet quota.

52.5% of prospective teachers agree that more funding is needed to provide ICT equipment and internet quotas in microteaching blended courses. In contrast, 37.5% of prospective teachers still doubt that limited finances are an obstacle to blended learning. As stated by Bandara and Jayaweera (2024) and Rasmitadila et al. (2020), allocating sufficient financial funds is essential and a prerequisite for effective blended learning. Financial investments will yield benefits such as ubiquitous education and long-term economic value. Additionally, 10.3% of prospective teachers agree that more funding is needed to provide ICT and internet quotas in microteaching blended classes.

The fourth challenge is the use of various online applications. 50.7% of prospective teachers consider the limitation of using multiple online applications as an obstacle to blended learning classes. In comparison, 35.3% of prospective teachers still doubt their ability to use online applications. As stated by Rasmitadila et al. (2020), the application displayed on the web is appropriate and simple, but must be modified to make it easier for users to understand. Then, 14% of prospective teachers did not agree that the inability to use various online applications is a challenge in microteaching classes. The last issue is limited computer English skills to operate multiple online applications, which is an obstacle to blended learning. 45.6% of prospective teachers agreed that the limitation of computer English is challenging in blended learning classes. Based on the study by Boonmoh and Kamsa-ard (2023), Rahiem (2020), Wulansari, Sudiyanto, and Sumaryati (2023), and Zamista and Azmi (2023), computer literacy and internet connectivity presented further obstacles. Prior research has indicated that students' learning and motivation were impeded by both personal and technical issues, which corroborates these findings. In comparison, 35.3% of them doubted that their computer English is a challenge in microteaching blended classrooms, and 19% of them still disagreed that having limited knowledge of using various online applications is a challenge in blended learning.

The information and justification above highlight the study's shortcomings. First, the research is limited to surveys of students' perceptions, readiness, and challenges in blended learning. Second, the respondents were homogeneous since they came from English Language Education Departments from six universities in the BaliNusra regions. Third, the interviews were limited to online interviews using Voice Note in WhatsApp. Fourth, the number of questions on the questionnaire is limited. Because of these drawbacks, it is advised that future researchers

investigate the effectiveness of blended learning on various subjects so that it is presumed to have multiple impacts on blended learning.

5. NOVELTY

Based on the results of this study, researchers highlight three distinct viewpoints in the public space: (1) a student-centered perspective is a priority for stakeholders who advocate for lecturers to reflect on and adapt teaching methods, digital media, and assessment types, in accordance with students' perceptions, readiness, and the actual challenges they encounter. Recently, micro-teaching research has concentrated on the effectiveness of implemented methods or student learning achievements; (2) contextual pedagogical practices that promote adjusting the principles of blended learning to the particular circumstances of Indonesian students (as defined by limited internet access, ICT infrastructure, and learning habits) rather than merely imitating educational models from other countries; (3) the imperative of educators to possess digital literacy competencies, indicating that the findings of this study necessitate prospective teachers to be not only pedagogically, social, personal, and professionally proficient but also sufficiently digitally literate to adequately prepare prospective English teachers for the challenges of the digital era.

6. CONCLUSION

Blended learning is considered the most effective approach in the era of digital education, although in this research, prospective teachers tend to favor offline learning over online learning. The questionnaire and interview results indicate that prospective teachers perform best when using offline teaching. It is clear from the interviews that the teachers were prepared to use blended learning to some extent. Additionally, the classroom had internet access and was well-connected. They had prepared the teaching materials, online resources, and pedagogical expertise needed to teach using the blended learning approach. The prospective teachers were ready with the necessary materials, technology assistance, evaluation, and pedagogical knowledge for both offline and online learning. Challenges included internet connection issues, fewer opportunities for social interaction between teachers and students, inadequate teaching tools, difficulty observing students' movements and facial expressions during the teaching and learning process, lack of use of various online applications, and limited computer English skills. Effective teachers can gain significant knowledge about the art of teaching by engaging in microteaching. Before implementing blended learning, the lecturer must ensure that students are comfortable with the technological tools used in the classroom.

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