

# Do Blended Learning and Autonomous Learning Affect EFL Students' Writing Achievement? Insight from Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

Blended learning plays an important role in teaching writing and offers new prospects for enhancing autonomous learning in writing instruction for the Indonesian educational context. This study investigates the effectiveness of blended learning on students' autonomous learning and writing achievement. This study employed a mixed-method research design, with sixty-six students from a private university in Malang, Indonesia, participating in the study, engaging in blended learning sessions comprising both online and face-to-face components. Findings indicate a significant interaction between blended learning and learners' autonomy, positively influencing students' writing proficiency. The study revealed a p-value of 0.029. The p-value is lower than the significance level of 0.05, which means that  $\text{sig} = 0.029 < 0.05$ . Based on the statistical computation's outcomes, it can be inferred that the effect of blended learning depends on Autonomous Learning. This suggests that Autonomous Learning and blended learning both have an impact on students' ability to write. Cooperatively, blended learning and autonomous learning have an interactive rather than additive impact on writing achievement. While the study underscores the potential benefits of blended learning, limitations include its focus on a specific student demographic and educational setting, potentially limiting generalizability. Implications suggest that educators consider integrating blended learning to enhance student engagement and writing skills.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Blended learning has the potential to play a significant role in addressing issues in the teaching and learning process. At a time when modern technology seems to take up most people's time, whether they use it to shop, have fun, or do their jobs, it is important to recognize the opportunities it offers to people who want to learn English. When electronic educational technology is used, learning programs and courses can be tailored to each student's needs, wants, and abilities, which supports their performance and academic

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success (Sheerah, 2020). The use of technology in the teaching learning process is very important, as it can stimulate the students' motivation in their learning of English (Heriyawati et al., 2018). In this modern era, technology, especially in learning tools, can be used through blended learning. Blended learning or mixed-mode learning is a teaching method that blends traditional in-class lectures with various digital learning tools (Solihati, 2017).

Blended learning has emerged as a prevalent practice in modern education, with an increasing number of educational institutions striving to incorporate and execute it in order to offer an engaging and appealing learning atmosphere (Ismayana et al., 2020; A. I. Khan et al., 2012; Rahim, 2019). Numerous colleges in Indonesia have adopted blended learning to varying degrees, primarily as a supplementary tool to enhance the educational experience in traditional classroom settings (Hadiyanto et al., 2022; Harahap & Siregar, 2022; Maharani et al., 2023; Pardede, 2019; Sudewi, 2020). However, the university is actively promoting the adoption of online learning within the curriculum by urging faculty members to implement online learning into their traditional classroom settings (Bataineh, 2019). This paper employs the term "blended learning" to refer to a pedagogical strategy that combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning modalities, including virtual classrooms, online chat platforms, and discussion boards. The purpose of this approach is to provide students with a variety of synchronous and asynchronous online activities that can augment their English language proficiency, promote active learning, and facilitate communication (Asaad Hamza Sheerah, 2020; Sitawati et al., 2022).

A blended learning approach to writing training can improve students' metacognition. Engin (2014), suggests that independent learning improves students' ability to describe their own thinking processes in writing. In a mixed-methods self-study, blended learning in the English Education curriculum improved students' ability to discuss their work during writing class. Before the study, students focused on editing grammar errors to improve their writing. However, after implementing blended learning, they shifted focus to discussing idea clarity and work development. According to Pytash et al. (2014), online literacy training can broaden audiences and improve students' metacognitive skills by providing more feedback on revision and writing. This section defines blended learning and provides an overview of its models. The study evaluated the theoretical basis and characteristics of blended learning. Lastly, the impact of blended learning on English education classes and student views towards it were examined.

Regarding the writing skills taught to students in the English education department, students still face various problems. Writing is still viewed as a difficult task in the EFL context, particularly in terms of organizing ideas and developing supporting details (Kurniasih et al., 2022). Poor vocabulary, inability to select proper words, and grammatical errors are also thought to contribute to students' subpar writing (Mojica, 2010). English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students encounter challenges when it comes to various aspects of writing, including grammar, mechanics, organization, content, and style. In addition to cognitive elements such as understanding of grammar, organization, and content, and style, students' writing proficiency may also be influenced by affective factors, including motivation, anxiety, and self-efficacy. Motivation and attitude are crucial factors that significantly influence an individual's behavior and performance across various domains (Erkan & Saban, 2011; Wu, 2008).

Teachers can do writing tasks outside of class utilizing internet programs; thus, teaching writing is not restricted to face-to-face interactions. The advancement of science and technology also encourages teachers to provide superior instructional instruction, such

as online learning, which influences the stimulation of students' interests and affective components (Zhu & Zhou, 2012). As a consequence, students must be able to access materials from online sources. To learn through online learning, they also need to stay in touch more. In order to boost the students' autonomous learning in the writing course, the teachers need to implement the blended learning strategy. Learner autonomy has long been considered the ultimate goal of education. It is known to be a difficult skill that can have a big effect on personal growth and success. Liberty has a positive effect on language learning, and in fact, learner liberty is necessary for good language learning. In addition, over the past few decades, researchers have said that learner autonomy can make people more motivated to learn, which in turn makes learning more efficient.

When self-directed, learner-centered, and self-managed learning are emphasized, there is no doubt that learner autonomy becomes one of the most important factors in language learning success (Ariebowo, 2021; Marsevani, 2021). Every course, including a writing course that mostly involves in-person communication, must be offered online (Aprianto & Heriyawati, 2020; Asaad Hamza Sheerah, 2020; Heriyawati, 2013; Karimata et al., 2022; Rhema & Miliszewska, 2014).

In accordance with the preceding description, this study investigates the effect of Blended Learning and Learner's autonomy on students' writing achievement, especially on the argumentative essay. These contributions already have an effect on the learner's autonomy, but in this instance, we are keen to discover whether they have a beneficial contribution to the students' writing achievement. In particular, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. Does Blended learning affect students' writing achievement?
2. Does Autonomous learning affect students' writing achievement?
3. Is there any significant interaction between the Blended learning model and learners' autonomy in students' writing achievement?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Teaching Writing through Online Platform**

Writing is regarded as a pervasive aspect of contemporary society due to its usefulness in academics and the workplace, as well as its importance in accumulating, preserving, and disseminating knowledge. Teachers are instructed to switch from offline to online learning during the pandemic. This rapid change affects how instructors instruct and how students learn. Technology also plays a significant role in the dissemination and transmission of knowledge in online learning. Electronic devices, internet connections, and online learning applications are used for online education (Alsudais et al., 2022; Kurniasih et al., 2022). Google Classroom, Zoom, and WhatsApp are among the online platforms used by writing instructors to distribute materials, facilitate discussions, distribute assignments, and provide feedback on students' work. Some academics have utilized Edmodo and Flip Classroom (Erkan & Saban, 2011).

In addition, Google Meet and Google Classroom are examples of online learning platforms used for writing classes (Shelvam, 2021). Shelvam (2021) discovered that both Google Meet and Google Classroom are beneficial for enhancing students' motivation and writing skills. In addition, Google Docs, another Google tool, is widely used in online writing because it enables students to correct their grammatical errors. The findings indicated that using Google Docs in conjunction with peer and teacher feedback has a positive effect on

students' writing achievement. During the idea-generation process, the online utility Jam Board may also facilitate students' use of mind mapping before writing. Teachers are required to adapt to the use of online materials due to technological developments, as evidenced by the preceding information (Mohamed & Bahari, 2016).

Internet technology is crucial for language acquisition in today's society, enabling virtual cross-cultural learning and successful group collaboration while writing. This causes academic, emotional, and motivational issues for students (Shelvam, 2021). However, in today's digital age, employing pictures to link topics, introducing coordinating vocabulary phrases, and encouraging pupils to share their viewpoints before writing them down are antiquated. These strategies are ineffective. In language schools, collaborative web second-generation tools like Google Docs have changed classroom teaching and learning, according to the author.

Students in the online classroom are expected to be able to produce a piece of writing while having limited interaction with teachers (Kurniasih et al., 2023). Teachers often have two options for writing delivery: synchronous via Zoom meetings using the Google Meet application and asynchronous via Google Classroom and other learning management systems. Teachers used the Writing Process Approach to teach writing, which includes multiple stages such as pre-writing, during writing, and post-writing (H. Douglas Brown, 2000; Nunan et al., 2015). A recent study by Zaghlool (2020) found that students evaluated online writing instruction through Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) positively, as it is beneficial, enjoyable, and inspiring. Furthermore, it boosts pupils' self-esteem and promotes autonomous learning.

## 2.2 Blended Learning

Blended learning provides numerous benefits. As the term blended learning suggests, it combines the benefits of face-to-face learning and online learning. It enables both students and instructors to enter a new learning environment that offers the benefits of both face-to-face and online learning. Blended learning also permits students to progress at their own pace. Moreover, students still have regular class time (Aldosemani et al., 2019; Ismayana et al., 2020; Kuo et al., 2014; Widesma & Adnan, 2019). Some studies have indicated that language learners' language abilities can be effectively developed through blended learning (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019; Dziuban et al., 2018; Ghazizadeh & Fatemipour, 2017; Robert & Brown, 2004). Blended learning enables the development of learners' speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills as opposed to traditional face-to-face or completely online approaches.

Blended learning is an instructional strategy that combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online instruction in a single context. It is a trend that is growing in the era of technological advancement. Blended learning is a promising concept that has connected many significant disciplines, including teaching methodology, educational technology, online instruction, and learning (Dziuban et al., 2018). The use of blended learning in the English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context has received much attention as a method to teach and learn English. Utilizing blended learning rather than traditional instruction or online instruction alone has been shown to yield numerous benefits for student learning and the learning environment. Among these advantages are the enhancement of the English learning process, the development of language abilities, and the enhancement of the English learning environment. Despite these

advantages, the use of integrated learning can present some obstacles. However, there is a paucity of research examining the challenges teachers encounter when employing a blended learning approach in an ESL or EFL context (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019; Poon, 2013).

### **2.3 Autonomous Learning on Students' Writing Achievement**

The concept of autonomous learning pertains to the capacity of the learner to assume responsibility for their own learning process, encompassing the ability to independently establish learning objectives, define content and progress, choose appropriate methods and techniques, oversee the acquisition procedures, and evaluate the acquired knowledge (Ariebowo, 2021; Lengkanawati, 2017; Sholeh, 2015; Uswatun, 2013). Autonomous learners exhibit the capacity to independently locate resources or materials relevant to their desired areas of study, discern their individual learning requirements, and choose appropriate learning endeavors. Autonomous learners employ many types of strategies, including strategies to remember, social strategies, cognitive strategies, and meta-cognitive strategies. Autonomous Learning also influences some factors, such as motivation, environment, task design, teacher influence, and instructional materials, which are significant in fostering student autonomy in the learning process (Asaad Hamza Sheerah, 2020; Kop, 2011; Pondalos et al., 2022).

According to the study by Aprianti & Winarto (2021), there has been an increase in learner autonomy development in the writing course that emphasizes independent learning. In this case, the results showed that the e-portfolio's requirement that the participant always use the target language might have helped the initial development of autonomy in writing. The results also showed that the participants' freedom to choose certain aspects of their writing in the e-portfolio may play a role in supporting the constructs of learner autonomy, especially in terms of learner involvement, and that the e-portfolio's section on learner reflection may have helped support the constructs of learner autonomy. A similar study on autonomous learning conducted by Khotimah et al. (2019) found that both teachers and students reported positive beliefs about its value. However, their understanding of the nature of these beliefs was limited. Teachers are strongly motivated to introduce students to self-directed learning.

## **3. METHOD**

This study employed a mixed-method research design and included a sample of sixty-six students from a private university in Malang. The participants were third-semester students in the English education department, aged 19-20. They successfully completed the writing courses offered in the first- and second-semester English education curriculum at the institution. It was considered that the students possessed an adequate level of understanding to comprehend several forms of written material. Before the commencement of the study, informed consent was obtained from all participants. The informed consent procedure involved providing the students with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. They were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. Consent forms were distributed and collected, ensuring that all participants understood and agreed to the terms of the study.

The participants in this study were taught through blended learning, combining face-to-face sessions in eight meetings lasting 100 minutes each and online sessions in seven meetings of the same duration. The online class was conducted by using an LMS, which provides the materials prepared by the teacher and other online platforms, such as the web, to find the source of learning. The students were also completing their writing task of composing the essay during the online session. Meanwhile, in the offline class, the teachers provided a clear explanation about the writing materials related to the theory of writing. The discussion also happened in the offline class. The students were discussing their difficulty while they had online learning with the teachers. They were also consulting their product of writing to get feedback from the teacher and from their peers. The test of students writing was administered from the results of the students writing task. The students' writing products were scored based on their content, the writing mechanism, the suitability of the offered topics, and the correctness of grammar usage.

The students were categorized into two groups based on their level of autonomous learning using an adapted questionnaire with multiple-choice items. This questionnaire assessed their preferences, behaviors, and attitudes towards independent learning and self-directed study. Students who demonstrated a strong inclination towards self-initiated learning and independent study were classified as high autonomous learners. Conversely, those who preferred structured guidance and support in their learning approach were classified as low-autonomous learners.

The research instruments were used to gather data, including a writing test designed to assess students' writing proficiency, which was administered to the students in 100 minutes. In addition, the researchers administered a writing assessment that was conducted in the final test week in order to evaluate the students' writing proficiency using the scoring rubric offered. The teacher gives some topics, and the students develop an argumentative essay. However, the writing test assessed the students' performance based on a single score of writing achievement. The analysis of the students' writing test results involved the utilization of a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to assess the interaction effects of the three factors being studied.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before investigating the effects of Blended Learning and Autonomous Learning on writing proficiency, we assessed whether the data followed a normal distribution. The homogeneity of any variable variant can be determined using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z test; the p-value is  $>0.05$ , indicating that the dependent variable is homogeneous. The calculated sig value of 0.572 is greater than 0.05, indicating that the homogeneity requirements for the variables have been met (See table 1). Furthermore, Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for all variables.

**Table 1.**  
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances<sup>a</sup>  
Dependent Variable: Writing Achievement

F	df1	df2	Sig.
.671	3	128	.572

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + Method + Ability + Method \* Ability

**Table 2.**  
Descriptive Statistics of All Variables

Dependent Variable: Writing Achievement				
	Writing Skill	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Blended Learning	High	87.48	7.787	33
	Low	86.24	9.827	33
	Total	86.86	8.819	66
Autonomous Learning	High	79.11	13.128	44
	Low	84.95	6.988	44
	Total	82.03	10.860	88
Total	High	82.70	11.850	77
	Low	85.51	8.289	77
	Total	84.10	10.289	154

Table 1 presents the results of the homogeneity test for the research variable, while Table 2 provides descriptive analyses of all variables, including blended learning, autonomous learning, and students' writing achievement.

#### 4.1 Blended Learning and Students' Writing Achievement

Regarding the primary focus of this investigation, the data analysis shows that blended learning affects students' writing achievement. The researchers employed a two-way ANOVA to evaluate the interaction effect among the factors. The study revealed that the *p-value* is 0.003. The *p-value* compared with the significant level of 0.05 is lower than 0.05. The first hypothesis is significant,  $0.003 < 0.05$ , so the hypothesis, which states that "Is there a difference in the writing ability of students who are taught using blended learning and those who do not use blended learning," can be accepted. These statistics recommend that blended learning can be applied to the teaching and learning of writing in the classroom, as students feel confidence and enjoy participating in class while technology is utilized. Blended learning also contributes significantly to the teaching and learning of writing.

##### 4.1.1 Autonomous Learning and Students' Writing Achievement

The statistical calculation used to determine the effect of autonomous learning on students' writing achievement, as the focus of the second research question, yields a *p-value* of 0.154. The *p-value* compared with the significance level 0.05 is higher than 0.05; alternatively, we can state that the significance level is  $0.154 > 0.05$ . These computations mean that students' autonomous learning does not affect writing ability. So, the second hypothesis, which states that "Is there a difference in writing ability between students with high autonomous learning and students with low autonomy", can be rejected. This statistical figure shows that students' writing skills are not affected by their level of autonomy but rather by their ability and motivation to write. Students must have an overwhelming passion for writing.

##### 4.1.2 Blended Learning, Autonomous Learning, and Students' Writing Achievement

Table 3 performs the interaction among blended learning, autonomous learning, and students' writing achievement.

**Table 3**  
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Writing Achievement					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1655.694 <sup>a</sup>	3	551.898	5.693	.001
Intercept	1075854.394	1	1075854.394	11098.419	.000
Blended Learning	879.667	1	879.667	9.075	.003
Autonomous Learning	199.377	1	199.377	2.057	.154
BL * AL	473.065	1	473.065	4.880	.029
Error	14540.644	150	96.938		
Total	1105510.000	154			
Corrected Total	16196.338	153			

a. R Squared = .102 (Adjusted R Squared = .084)

In the final analysis that can be seen in the table 3, the quantitative evidence for the third research question is statistically significant. The study revealed that the *p-value* is 0.029. The *p-value* is lower than the significant level of 0.05, which means that  $\text{sig } 0.029 < 0.05$ ; see table 3. Based on the statistical computation's outcomes, it can be inferred that the effect of blended learning depends on Autonomous Learning. This suggests that Autonomous Learning and blended learning both have an impact on students' ability to write. Cooperatively, blended learning and autonomous learning have an interactive rather than additive impact on writing achievement. Finally, regarding students' autonomous learning, both high- and low-autonomous learners enjoyed the writing class using blended learning. They can write better when they have high responsibilities and good intentions on their way to writing a good paragraph.

The impact of blended learning on students' writing abilities differs from the impact of autonomous learning on students' writing abilities. As the participants in this study demonstrated similar proficiency in foreign-language use, completing a complex writing task did not place additional cognitive pressure on either group's autonomous learning. Our experience with blended learning found that virtual activities should be considered part of the learning environment rather than a substitute for face-to-face sessions. Instead, these activities should be utilized outside of the classroom as resources for both teachers and students. In this respect, virtual classroom activities should be viewed from two perspectives. First, for teachers, a virtual classroom is a pedagogical tool that helps them achieve their instructional goals. Second, the virtual classroom should be presented as an extension of students' learning, providing them with access to their learning activities after their face-to-face sessions. This finding is in line with the research conducted by Dziuban et al. (2018) and Solihati (2017), who suggested that Teachers and students benefit in two ways from hybrid classroom practice. First, it facilitates the distribution of instruction and learning materials prior to classroom activity. Students can retrieve learning materials through Google applications, allowing them sufficient time to review and understand the materials before attending actual classroom sessions. Second, it benefits teachers by facilitating the creation and distribution of learning assignments.

In an offline situation, research has found that students have high levels of anxiety when writing English papers. This situation also supports the results of the research

conducted by M. Jennifer & Ponniah (2017), F. Zhang (2010), and H. Zhang (2019). The results of earlier research conducted in the pandemic-affected online learning environment in Afghanistan (Quvanch & Kew, 2022) and China (Wern & Rahmat, 2021) showed that EFL students there reported moderate levels of tension in writing class. Meanwhile, in an online environment, feedback cannot be provided through a face-to-face writing session but rather through an online learning platform. The application, namely Zoom platform, provides students with oral feedback. Students received feedback on their Learning Management System contributions. On occasion, however, there were no queries about the feedback, or revisions did not account for the feedback. This situation makes it difficult for the teacher to track the progress of their students. On the side of the students, they require more motivation and focus to complete their assignment, while they have an online class on writing.

Considering the role of autonomous learning in the students' writing composition, the students' writing abilities are more influenced by their ability and motivation to write rather than by their level of autonomy. Students must have a strong enthusiasm for writing. This finding is in contrast to some research on the autonomous learning (Marsevani, 2021; Marzuki, 2013; Sholeh, 2015; Uswatun, 2013; Zulaihah & Harida, 2017), which stated that learner autonomy is the ultimate objective of education, and it has been identified as a complex capacity that has the potential to have a significant impact on personal development and achievement. Autonomy has a positive effect on language learning, and learner autonomy is without a doubt a prerequisite for effective language learning (Pondalos et al., 2022). In addition, research conducted over the past several decades suggests that learner autonomy can increase motivation to learn and, as a result, the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Commonly, learners are unable to accept responsibility for their learning, and they will find it difficult to critically reflect on their learning. Consequently, there must be an effort made to encourage student autonomy in continuous classroom activities. This condition is also consistent with the study on autonomous learning and reading comprehension conducted by Hafid (2020), who found no significant difference in reading comprehension between students with high and low autonomy levels. She emphasized that there was no interaction between reading strategy, cognitive style, and autonomous learning style.

The third purpose of the research was to examine the combination effects of blended learning and autonomous learning on students' writing achievement. Blended learning and autonomous learning operate in collaboration; this can be inferred during implementation. Blended learning is student-driven. Autonomous learning also functions cooperatively. This indicates that blended learning and autonomous learning have a combined effect on the writing achievement of students. Blended learning and autonomous learning operate cooperatively, and their effects on writing achievement are interactive as opposed to additive. Students in this era are very familiar with technology; therefore, students with high or low levels of autonomous learning appreciate the implementation of blended learning in the teaching of writing; however, students' writing abilities remain diverse. In relation to this circumstance, teachers must inspire students to have a strong desire to compose an excellent composition.

In conclusion, students can write better, regardless of their level of autonomous learning, when they take on a great deal of responsibility on the path to writing a decent paragraph. This result is also supported by the research findings of Bataineh (2019), which state that the university should employ blended learning in all of its graduate courses,

particularly English language lectures. Moreover, R. M. I. Khan et al. (2022) and Shi (2022) argue that in autonomous learning, students are responsible for setting their own learning objectives, selecting a learning method, regulating their learning behavior, and evaluating their learning outcomes. As a learning method, autonomous learning is based on the internal mechanism that initiates the learner's learning, mobilizes the learner's internal factors, and cultivates the learner's autonomous learning habit through content mastery, strategy mastery, and learning behavior.

Blended learning has been shown to enhance students' engagement in creativity, depth of content, grammar mechanics, and coherence and clarity in writing. The following findings, derived from interviews conducted as part of our study, provide a comprehensive understanding of how blended learning strategies improve writing skills across various dimensions.

#### 4.2 Increased Engagement in Creativity

Increased engagement in creativity refers to the heightened involvement and enthusiasm students exhibit in generating original ideas and expressing themselves innovatively. The implementation of blended learning significantly increased students' engagement in creativity. During the face-to-face sessions, students were encouraged to brainstorm and collaborate on writing topics, which fostered a creative learning environment. The collaborative nature of these sessions allowed students to draw inspiration from each other, leading to more diverse and creative outputs. One student (high autonomy) mentioned that

*"After attending lectures for 4 semesters, I have taken four writing courses. So far, my writing skills have improved significantly. My writing is much more substantial, well-organized, and not haphazard. I have also focused on creative writing. I started learning about creative writing in my third semester. My creative writing skills have developed through assignments such as essays, argumentative essays, and even writing scientific research articles. Although there is still much to improve, my skills have increased significantly compared to before I started my studies." (std. 1 and std. 3).*

The other (low autonomy) said

*"I do love writing, maybe i don't need specific engagement to it. But I know one of my projects in Writing Class have improved my engagement. Once, my teacher gave me a task to write an advertisement for a product. This helped me understand the challenge of persuasive writing. Even though I have loved writing since I was a child, this project offered me new insights that made me love writing even more." (Std. 2).*

Our study found that blended learning significantly increased students' creativity, aligning with research on combining face-to-face and online learning. (Mirzaei et al., 2022) demonstrated that integrating the ARCS motivational model with flipped teaching improved EFL learners' writing performance and motivation. In our sessions, students engaged in brainstorming and collaboration, fostering creativity and diverse outputs. One student noted significant improvements in writing and creative skills through various assignments. At the same time, another highlighted enhanced engagement from specific projects, similar to findings by Zhao et al. (2021) on collaborative intercultural learning. The online component of blended learning enabled students to use digital tools for creative thinking, enhancing

their ability to organize ideas and experiment with different expressions. These findings underscore that blended learning, integrating face-to-face interaction with online exploration, enhances creativity, supported by research on motivational and technological integration in education.

### 4.3 Richer Content and Depth

Richer content and depth in writing refer to the inclusion of more detailed, well-researched, and comprehensive information that enhances the quality of the written work. Blended learning also led to richer content and greater depth in students' writing. The combination of in-person discussions and online resources provided students with a broader range of perspectives and information to incorporate into their essays. This access enabled students to delve deeper into their topics and support their arguments with well-researched evidence.

One student (high autonomy) mentioned

*"In the past, I used to write just for the sake of writing, without doing deep research or thinking about whether my writing had substance. But as I learned more about writing, I started to create more meaningful content that wasn't just random but also helpful to others. I'm happy with my progress, especially when I was finally able to write a mini research article. I wrote a research article on "Creative writing to support an English language learning, is it effective?" It wasn't a big project, but I noticed a big improvement." (std. 3)*

The other student (low autonomy) said

*"I'm pretty sure that in the blended learning class, the teacher conducted reviews after the students completed their assignments. In these reviews, I tended to use basic vocabulary for my tasks. Then, while reviewing my work, the teacher provided me with some aspects to improve, involving my critical thinking skills, academic writing vocabulary, and some guidelines for publishing articles." (std. 2).*

Blended learning in our study led to richer content and greater depth in students' writing, a finding supported by research. For example, one student noted a shift from writing without substance to creating meaningful content, highlighting personal growth in research and article writing. Another student benefited from detailed feedback during reviews, enhancing critical thinking and academic vocabulary use. Moreover, the blended learning approach encouraged thorough research and critical engagement with diverse viewpoints. This resulted in higher-quality essays that demonstrated students' ability to integrate nuanced arguments from various sources. This aligns with findings from Ironsi (2023), who found that blended interactive educational resources significantly improved students' writing skills by fostering engagement and utilizing effective learning formats. Similarly, Alfaifi (2022) explored metacognitive strategy instruction in EFL writing classrooms using blended learning. Their study demonstrated positive outcomes in improving writing skills through engagement and reflective learning processes. These studies collectively emphasize the effectiveness of blended learning in enhancing content depth and critical thinking in student writing.

#### 4.4 Better Grammar in Mechanics

Better grammar in mechanics refers to the improved accuracy and correctness in the use of grammatical structures, punctuation, and overall writing conventions. The use of blended learning contributed to noticeable improvements in students' grammar and mechanics. The iterative process of drafting and receiving feedback both in class and online allowed students to refine their grammatical accuracy and writing mechanics. The continuous feedback loop helped students identify and correct grammatical errors, leading to more polished final drafts.

One student (high autonomy) mentioned

*“So far, after getting the task to write a research article, I have read several reference journals. This has helped me gain more references and improve my reading skills, which had gotten worse in the past few months. I notice how good writers use proper language, making their writing easy to understand and not complicated. I see how they explain complex ideas clearly and simply.” (Std. 1)*

The other student (low autonomy) said

*“Yes. Although I'm not sure my revisions always produce better results, I know my previous work had significant mistakes. For instance, I made errors in punctuation. I learned where to stop a sentence and when to end and start a new paragraph.” (Std. 4).*

Our study demonstrates that blended learning significantly enhances students' grammar and writing mechanics through iterative drafting, detailed feedback processes, and the integration of online tools. Participants reported notable improvements in clarity and structure, influenced by engagement with reference materials and reflective revisions. Students' experiences resonate with findings from Muluk et al. (2022), who found that a flipped classroom approach improved writing performance by fostering independent learning and active engagement. Bai (2022) similarly highlights how blended learning environments support personalized learning and interaction, enhancing educational quality through diverse resources. Together, these findings underscore the efficacy of blended learning in enhancing grammatical accuracy and critical thinking skills in writing. By integrating face-to-face interactions with online tools, educators can create dynamic learning environments that cater to diverse learning styles and optimize student writing proficiency.

#### 4.5 Improved Coherence and Clarity

Improved coherence and clarity refer to the logical flow and ease of understanding in a piece of writing. Students' writing demonstrated improved coherence and clarity as a result of the blended learning approach. The structured guidance during face-to-face sessions helped students organize their thoughts logically, while online tools facilitated the editing process. The use of structured outlines and planning tools ensured that students' essays had a clear and logical progression of ideas.

One student (high autonomy) said

*“Before I started learning how to write well and clearly, my writing was often unclear and lacked direction. I have improved a lot since then. My writing is now easier to understand than before I started studying. For example, in my first semester, I had to write a scientific*

*article about character education. Back then, my writing was unfocused and too general. After these three semesters, I have learned that it's better to focus on small but deep topics instead of big and complicated ones.” (Std. 1).*

The other student (low autonomy) said

*“The pressure I felt made me review my work more than once. I made sure my sentences aligned with each other. Independently, I created an outline and wrote my tasks based on it. This changed my habit of writing content. Previously, I wrote directly without an outline, which sometimes resulted in incoherent writing.” (Std. 2).*

Our study highlights that blended learning significantly enhances students' coherence and clarity in writing by providing structured guidance and facilitating iterative feedback processes. Participants reported improvements in organizing their ideas logically and expressing them clearly, which was supported by both face-to-face sessions and online tools. Students' feedback aligns with Alfaifi's (2022) findings, which demonstrate that metacognitive instruction through blended learning improves coherence in second-language writing by encouraging strategic planning and reflective practices. Similarly, Muluk et al. (2022) found that a flipped classroom approach enhanced coherence and clarity in IELTS writing by promoting independent learning and active engagement. Moreover, Bai (2022) underscores how blended learning fosters personalized learning environments that support coherence and clarity through diverse online resources and interactive platforms. This approach not only accommodates varying learning styles but also enhances student engagement and the quality of writing outcomes.

We conclude that the integration of face-to-face interactions with online tools in blended learning environments effectively promotes coherence and clarity in student writing. Future research should continue exploring specific instructional strategies and technological interventions to optimize writing instruction and improve student outcomes across educational contexts.

The findings of this study provide several important insights into the relationship between blended learning, autonomous learning, and EFL students' writing achievement. First, the results demonstrate that blended learning significantly improves students' writing performance, indicating that integrating face-to-face instruction with online learning environments can effectively support the development of writing skills. The statistical analysis showed that blended learning had a significant effect on writing achievement ( $p = 0.003$ ). Moreover, the study revealed a significant interaction between blended learning and autonomous learning ( $p = 0.029$ ), suggesting that the effectiveness of blended learning is influenced by the degree of learner autonomy. In contrast, autonomous learning alone did not significantly affect writing achievement ( $p = 0.154$ ), suggesting that students' writing performance may depend more on motivation, instructional design, and learning support than on their level of autonomy. These findings both confirm and extend previous research on technology-integrated language learning. This study confirms that blended learning enhances language learning outcomes by creating flexible learning environments that combine digital resources with classroom interaction. However, the results also challenge some prior assumptions that learner autonomy independently predicts language learning success. While previous studies suggested that autonomy strongly influences language learning outcomes, the present findings indicate that autonomy may not directly improve writing achievement without supportive instructional environments such as blended

learning. Thus, the study extends prior research by emphasizing that autonomy becomes more meaningful when integrated with structured pedagogical strategies and technological support.

From a qualitative perspective, the implementation of blended learning also contributed to improvements in several dimensions of students' writing, including creativity, content depth, grammatical accuracy, and coherence. Students reported that online tools and collaborative classroom activities helped them generate ideas, conduct deeper research, and revise their writing more effectively. These findings highlight that blended learning not only supports cognitive aspects of writing but also fosters engagement and reflective learning practices. Therefore, the synergy between blended learning and learner autonomy should be viewed as an interactive pedagogical framework that promotes more comprehensive development of writing skills in EFL contexts.

This study contributes to existing theories of technology-enhanced language learning and learner autonomy by demonstrating that learner autonomy does not operate independently but interacts with instructional design. The findings support the theoretical perspective that blended learning environments can function as scaffolding systems that facilitate autonomous learning processes. Thus, the study enriches blended learning models by highlighting the importance of combining technological integration with pedagogical strategies that guide students' engagement and motivation in writing development. Meanwhile, the findings offer several practical implications for educators and policymakers. First, English language instructors are encouraged to integrate blended learning strategies in writing courses by combining classroom instruction with online platforms that allow collaborative writing, feedback, and independent exploration of learning resources. Second, teachers should not rely solely on promoting learner autonomy but should also provide structured guidance, feedback, and motivational support to enhance students' writing performance. Third, higher education institutions and policymakers should support the implementation of blended learning infrastructures, such as learning management systems and digital writing tools, to create flexible and engaging learning environments that improve students' writing proficiency and overall language competence.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study reveals a significant synergy between blended learning and autonomous learning in shaping students' writing achievements. The integration of technology in writing classrooms under blended learning fosters a comfortable environment that enhances student participation. Moreover, it significantly impacts both the teaching and learning processes of writing, making the writing class enjoyable for students across autonomy levels. When students approach writing with a sense of responsibility and intentionality, regardless of their autonomy level, they demonstrate more effective writing outcomes. Importantly, students' writing skills are primarily influenced by their intrinsic abilities and motivation rather than their level of autonomy. Furthermore, blended learning proves effective in enriching students' engagement in creativity, depth of content, grammar mechanics, and coherence and clarity in writing. These insights, drawn from comprehensive interviews conducted during our study, provide a nuanced understanding of how Blended Learning strategies contribute to enhancing writing skills across diverse dimensions.

Limitations include the study's focus on a specific student demographic and educational context, potentially limiting generalizability. Classification of students into high-

and low-autonomy learners relied on self-reported data, which may introduce bias. Despite these limitations, the study highlights blended learning's potential to enhance creativity, depth of content, grammar mechanics, and writing coherence. Educators should consider these findings when designing writing courses, aiming to improve student engagement and proficiency through blended learning strategies. Future research should explore broader contexts to validate and extend these findings.

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**Authors' contributions**

Dwi Fita Heriyawati was responsible for the conceptualization of the study, as well as conducting data gathering, data collection, and interpretation of the findings. Like Raskova Octaberlina contributed to preparing the first draft of the manuscript and organizing the collected data through systematic data sorting. Meanwhile, Daniel Ginting contributed to the theoretical conceptualization of the study, the overall research design, and the data analysis. Together, the authors collaboratively ensured the coherence and rigor of the research process and the development of the manuscript

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