

PERCEPTION–PRACTICE GAPS IN BLENDED LEARNING: ENGLISH TEACHERS’ PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES IN TEACHING WRITING AT ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

Blended learning (BL) has been widely recognized as a promising approach for enhancing English language teaching and learning. This study investigated the perception–practice gap in blended learning implementation among English language teachers at Addis Ababa University, particularly in teaching writing skills. A convergent mixed-methods design was employed by combining survey data collected from 31 English language teachers with semi-structured interviews conducted with six participants. Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed separately and later integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of teachers’ perceptions and classroom practices. The findings revealed that teachers valued blended learning for improving student motivation, flexibility, learner autonomy, and access to learning resources. However, its actual implementation remained limited and largely informal. In practice, blended learning was mainly restricted to material sharing, task assignment, and communication through messaging applications. Major challenges include unreliable internet connectivity, inadequate technological infrastructure, insufficient practical training, and weak institutional support as key contributors to the perception–practice gap. The findings suggest that successful blended learning implementation requires institutional investment in technological infrastructure, sustained professional development, and stronger policy support. The study contributes to current discussions on technology integration in English language teaching by highlighting the contextual realities of blended writing instruction in Ethiopian higher education.

Keywords: *blended learning; ELT teachers; perception–practice gap; writing instruction; institutional challenges*

1. Introduction

Blended learning (BL), commonly defined as the integration of face-to-face and online instruction, has become increasingly prominent in higher education. It combines classroom interaction with the flexibility of digital technologies and is widely recognized for its potential to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes (Dziuban et al., 2018). While blended learning is often promoted for its flexibility and learner-centered nature,

recent studies indicate that its implementation remains uneven across disciplines and educational contexts, particularly in language education where traditional pedagogical practices continue to influence classroom instruction (Lim et al., 2019; Hrastinski, 2022).

In English language teaching (ELT), blended learning has been associated with several pedagogical benefits, especially in writing instruction. Online platforms provide learners with opportunities to access authentic materials, practice independently, collaborate with peers, and receive feedback beyond classroom time, while face-to-face instruction supports immediate interaction and guidance (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). However, the successful integration of these instructional modes requires purposeful pedagogical design and teacher readiness to ensure meaningful interaction and continuous feedback during writing development.

However, previous research consistently highlights a gap between teachers’ positive perceptions of blended learning and their actual classroom implementation. Teachers often recognize the pedagogical value of blended learning conceptually but struggle to integrate it systematically into writing instruction, where sustained feedback and iterative drafting are essential. This perception–practice gap occurs when teachers value blended learning but encounter difficulties implementing it effectively because of institutional, pedagogical, and technological constraints (Al-Senaidi et al., 2009; Lim et al., 2019). Such constraints commonly include insufficient training, heavy workload, weak institutional support, and limited access to technological resources.

In developing contexts, these challenges are often more severe. In Ethiopia, although higher education institutions increasingly promote technology-enhanced learning, implementation remains constrained by infrastructural limitations such as unstable internet connectivity, limited access to digital tools, and inadequate technical support (Tadesse & Muluye, 2020). These challenges are further complicated by students’ reliance on digital communication practices outside formal academic contexts, which do not necessarily translate into academic writing competence. Consequently, blended learning practices often remain fragmented and inconsistent, particularly in writing instruction where continuous interaction and feedback are crucial.

At the same time, there is increasing recognition that university students expect more flexible and technology-supported learning environments. Recent research suggests that well-designed blended learning can improve student motivation, engagement, and academic achievement when supported by appropriate pedagogy and institutional infrastructure (Means et al., 2013; Hrastinski, 2022). However, such outcomes depend largely on teachers’ digital competence, institutional readiness, and sustained pedagogical support rather than on technology availability alone.

Although global and regional interest in blended learning continues to expand, limited empirical attention has been given to how the perception–practice gap manifests in Ethiopian higher education, particularly in the context of English writing instruction. Most previous Ethiopian studies have focused on general ICT integration rather than the specific pedagogical challenges associated with implementing blended learning for writing development. This study therefore examines the perception–practice gap in blended learning within Ethiopian higher education, with particular emphasis on writing instruction at Addis Ababa University. By situating the study within this context, the research contributes to current discussions on technology integration in ELT, especially the tension between institutional promotion of digital learning and the realities of classroom practice.

Accordingly, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do English language teachers perceive BL for teaching writing skills?
2. How do teachers implement BL in writing instruction?
3. What challenges contribute to the perception–practice gap?

2. Literature Review

Blended learning (BL) has become an important instructional model in higher education, combining face-to-face interaction with online learning components. Rather than simply adding technology to traditional teaching, it is often described as a “thoughtful fusion” of in-person and online experiences that aims to make use of the strengths of both modes (Garrison & Vaughan, 2018). Although definitions vary, most emphasize the intentional integration of instructional approaches and technologies to improve flexibility and engagement (Oweis, 2018).

Face-to-face learning allows for direct interaction, immediate feedback, and social engagement (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004), while online learning supports flexibility and self-paced participation (Blake, 2011). Bringing these modes together can support learner autonomy while maintaining instructional guidance and social interaction through carefully designed learning environments (Cleveland-Innes & Garrison, 2020).

Research shows that blended learning can lead to improved learning outcomes compared to purely face-to-face or fully online instruction. Studies indicate that students in blended environments often benefit from increased flexibility and personalization, which can enhance satisfaction and engagement (Means et al., 2013; Abrami et al., 2011). Blended learning is also associated with deeper learning processes when discussion and reflection are effectively integrated into instruction (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). Overall, these findings suggest that BL is most effective when it is implemented in a purposeful and pedagogically sound manner.

2.1 The Role of Digital Pedagogy and ICT

In higher education, the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays a key role in supporting innovative teaching practices. Digital pedagogy involves more than simply using tools; it requires aligning technology with instructional goals (Bates, 2019).

In English language teaching (ELT) contexts, Web 2.0 tools such as blogs, wikis, and social media platforms are increasingly used to support communication and writing practice. Applications like Telegram, Facebook, and WhatsApp, although not originally designed for education, are widely used for collaboration and interaction (Ariantini et al., 2021). These tools allow learners to extend language use beyond the classroom and engage in authentic communication, while also supporting drafting, peer feedback, revision, and iterative writing development, which are central to process-based writing instruction.

However, effective ICT integration depends on more than access to technology. Teachers’ beliefs, skills, and institutional support play a crucial role in determining the success of implementation. Positive attitudes alone are not sufficient to ensure meaningful integration, as challenges such as limited training, workload demands, and contextual constraints often hinder effective practice.

The TPACK framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) explains that effective technology integration requires the alignment of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge. In ELT writing instruction, this involves designing learning tasks that integrate drafting,

feedback, and revision through digital tools rather than using technology only for content delivery.

Without sufficient training and infrastructure, digital pedagogy may remain limited, widening the gap between intended and actual classroom practice.

2.2 The Perception–Practice Gap

A common issue in educational research is the gap between teachers’ beliefs and their classroom practices. Although many teachers recognize the value of blended learning, they often continue to rely on traditional instructional methods. This perception–practice gap reflects the influence of both individual and contextual factors.

Teacher readiness is a key factor influencing implementation. Limited training and low confidence in using technology can hinder effective adoption. Institutional challenges such as unclear policies, heavy workloads, and lack of technical support also restrict meaningful integration. Student readiness may further influence instructional decisions, particularly when learners lack digital skills or confidence in using online tools.

Rather than operating independently, these factors interact dynamically. Teacher competence, institutional conditions, and student digital literacy collectively shape the extent to which blended learning is implemented in practice, creating multi-layered barriers to effective adoption.

Recent studies further indicate that students’ digital literacy and self-efficacy influence their engagement in blended environments, which in turn affects classroom implementation practices. Despite growing research on blended learning, limited attention has been given to how these factors interact in resource-constrained contexts. In particular, there remains a gap in understanding how teachers’ positive perceptions translate into actual classroom practices in writing instruction. Addressing this gap is essential for improving blended learning implementation in higher education.

2.3 Blended Learning in the Ethiopian Context

In Ethiopia, the adoption of blended learning presents both opportunities and challenges. English instruction has traditionally been teacher-centered, while recent national policies aim to promote technology integration in education. However, implementation remains constrained in practice.

Ongoing challenges include unreliable internet access, limited availability of digital devices, and high technology costs. In addition, many instructors lack adequate training in online course design, which often results in limited use of blended learning strategies, such as restricting online activities to static material sharing rather than interactive learning tasks.

These infrastructural and pedagogical constraints are particularly critical in writing instruction, where continuous feedback, revision, and iterative interaction are essential for developing writing competence. At the same time, technology is expected to support rather than replace the teacher’s role, particularly in writing instruction where guidance and feedback remain central to student development.

2.4 Challenges in Implementing Blended Learning

Despite its benefits, blended learning faces several challenges. Teacher resistance to change remains an issue, as some educators are more comfortable with traditional teaching approaches. In addition, many institutions lack reliable infrastructure and technical support, which limits effective implementation.

Digital literacy also plays a significant role in determining how blended learning is used. When teachers or students lack confidence with technology, its application tends to remain basic rather than transformative.

These challenges are interconnected rather than isolated. Limited infrastructure, low digital competence, and weak institutional support collectively constrain meaningful blended learning implementation, even when teachers hold positive attitudes toward its use. As a result, structural and contextual constraints often prevent consistent and effective application of blended learning practices in higher education.

2.5 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Education has shifted from traditional uniform instruction toward more flexible, technology-supported learning environments. Traditional pedagogy emphasized uniform instructional delivery, whereas contemporary digital learning environments facilitate differentiated instruction that accommodates learners' diverse needs, learning paces, and abilities.

This study is grounded in Social Constructivism and Connectivism. Social Constructivism emphasizes learning through interaction, collaboration, and shared meaning-making (Saleem et al., 2021). In writing instruction, this perspective is reflected in peer feedback, collaborative writing activities, and group revision processes, where learners construct knowledge through social engagement.

Connectivism focuses on learning within digital networks where knowledge is distributed across technological platforms and social systems (Siemens, 2005). In blended learning environments, students engage continuously with online resources, digital communication tools, and technology-mediated feedback, which support the development of writing skills and learner autonomy.

Together, these theories conceptualize writing development as both a social and networked process in which interaction and digital connectivity jointly influence learning outcomes. Based on these perspectives, blended learning implementation serves as the independent variable, while students' writing skills and learning motivation function as the dependent variables. The relationship among these variables is mediated by contextual factors, including ICT tools, teacher implementation practices, and institutional support systems.

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) tools such as online discussion forums, virtual classrooms, and messaging applications facilitate interaction, feedback exchange, and collaborative writing activities. These tools influence the effectiveness of blended learning in supporting writing development.

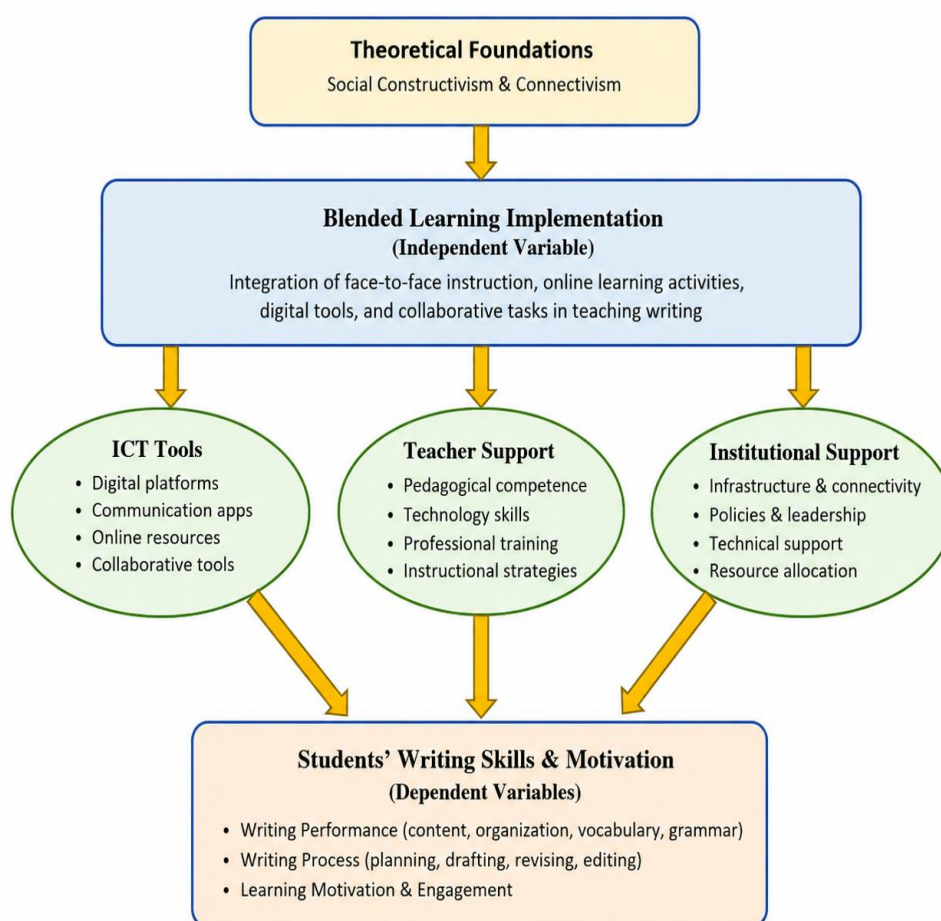
The framework is further informed by the Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System (CABLS) model (Wang et al., 2015), which conceptualizes blended learning as a system comprising six interconnected components: learner, teacher, technology, content, learning support, and institution. In the Ethiopian higher education context, each component reflects specific challenges affecting blended learning implementation. The learner component is constrained by limited digital literacy and unequal access to devices. The teacher component is influenced by insufficient training in blended pedagogy. The technology component is affected by unreliable internet connectivity and limited infrastructure. The content component is often not redesigned for interactive digital learning environments. The learning support component is weakened by inadequate technical

assistance, while the institutional component is constrained by limited policy implementation and resource allocation.

These interconnected challenges explain why blended learning implementation in Ethiopian higher education remains partial and fragmented rather than fully systematic, particularly in ELT writing instruction. The resulting conceptual framework illustrates the relationships among blended learning implementation, contextual mediating factors, and student outcomes in writing skills and learning motivation.

Figure1.

Conceptual framework for blended learning in ELT writing instruction (Adapted from Wang et al., 2015)



3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods design in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analyzed separately, and then integrated during interpretation. This design is appropriate when a researcher aims to compare and relate statistical trends with participants lived experiences in a single study (Creswell, 2022).

Quantitative data were used to examine teachers’ perceptions and implementation practices of blended learning, while qualitative data provided deeper insight into contextual and pedagogical factors influencing classroom practice. The two datasets were merged during interpretation through comparison of themes and statistical results to build a

comprehensive explanation of findings. This integration strengthened triangulation and improved the validity of the results.

3.2 Participants

The participants in this study were English language instructors teaching Freshman English Skills II courses at Addis Ababa University. Structured questionnaires were distributed to 36 ELT instructors, and 31 of them returned completed questionnaires, resulting in a response rate of 86.1%.

The participants represented a highly experienced and academically qualified group of instructors. All respondents were senior professionals with advanced academic qualifications, including Master of Arts (MA) degrees in English Language Teaching and related fields, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees, or advanced PhD candidacy status. In addition, all participants had more than ten years of teaching experience in higher education institutions, indicating significant professional expertise in English language instruction.

To complement the survey data, six senior ELT instructors were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews. These interview participants provided deeper insights into the practical experiences, pedagogical differences, and institutional realities associated with the implementation of blended writing instruction at the university.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was employed to select English language teachers teaching Freshman English Skills II courses at Addis Ababa University. This sampling technique was chosen because the study specifically focused on writing instruction in English language courses. Therefore, teachers who were directly involved in teaching the target course were considered appropriate participants for the study.

The selected instructors were expected to provide relevant information related to classroom practices, the use of blended learning, and the challenges encountered during instruction. Using purposive sampling helped the researcher gather data that were closely related to the objectives of the study and the actual teaching context.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

Data for this study were collected through a structured questionnaire containing both closed-ended and open-ended items, as well as semi-structured interviews. These instruments were selected because they provided both quantitative and qualitative data, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions and practices regarding blended learning in writing instruction. The questionnaire enabled the researcher to gather data from a relatively large number of participants in a systematic and efficient manner, while the interviews provided opportunities for participants to explain their experiences, challenges, and teaching practices in greater depth. The combination of these instruments also supported data triangulation, which strengthened the credibility of the findings.

3.4.1 Closed-Ended Questionnaire

The closed-ended questionnaire was designed to examine teachers' practices, experiences, and perceptions of blended learning in writing instruction. It included items related to the frequency of blended learning use, the digital tools employed, and teachers' perceptions of its usefulness, flexibility, and effectiveness. Additional items explored

perceptions of student motivation, participation, and satisfaction. Sample statements included: “Blended learning improves students’ writing performance,” “Digital tools make writing instruction more engaging,” and “I regularly integrate online activities into my writing lessons.”

Participants responded using a three-point Likert scale (Disagree, Neutral, Agree). This simplified scale was adopted to reduce ambiguity, facilitate clearer response choices, and minimize central tendency bias. It also allowed for efficient analysis of general patterns in teachers’ perceptions and practices rather than highly fine-grained attitudinal distinctions. The use of a structured Likert-scale questionnaire ensured consistency in measurement and enabled systematic comparison of responses across participants.

3.4.2 Open-Ended Questions

The questionnaire also included open-ended questions that allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences with blended learning. These questions focused on areas such as challenges faced during implementation, teaching strategies used in blended writing classes, digital platforms employed, and the level of institutional support available.

The inclusion of open-ended questions was important because it enabled participants to provide explanations and examples that could not be captured through fixed-response items alone. These responses provided valuable qualitative insights that complemented and enriched the quantitative findings.

3.4.3 Interview Questions

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six teachers to gain deeper insights into their experiences with blended learning in writing instruction. The interviews included guiding questions related to teachers’ classroom practices, perceptions of blended learning effectiveness, challenges encountered, and strategies used to support students’ writing development.

The semi-structured format was considered appropriate because it allowed the researcher to ask predetermined questions while also giving participants the flexibility to expand on issues they considered important. This approach helped generate detailed and context-specific information.

Although the interviews were not audio-recorded, detailed notes were taken during and immediately after each interview to ensure that participants’ responses were captured accurately. To enhance reliability, the researcher reviewed and organized the notes immediately after each session and confirmed key points with participants during the interviews whenever clarification was needed. In addition, the interview notes were carefully compared with questionnaire responses to ensure consistency across the collected data.

3.5 Reliability and Validity of Instruments

The reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient to determine internal consistency. The analysis demonstrated acceptable to high internal consistency across all three sections:

- a. Part I (Practices and Experiences): $\alpha = .90$
- b. Part II (Perceptions of Effectiveness): $\alpha = .95$
- c. Part III (Impact on Motivation): $\alpha = .75$

In alignment with methodological standards, Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70 were considered acceptable, while values exceeding 0.80 indicated high reliability.

To ensure face and content validity, the instruments were subjected to expert review by two specialists in English Language Teaching (ELT) and educational technology. Furthermore, a pilot test was conducted with writing instructors who were outside the main study sample. Feedback from the pilot test was utilized to refine the wording, improve clarity, and ensure the contextual relevance of individual items before final administration.

3.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS software and summarized using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, to systematically describe teachers' perceptions and classroom practices.

Qualitative data derived from the open-ended questionnaire items and semi-structured interview notes were analyzed thematically, following Braun and Clarke's (2021) inductive thematic analysis framework. The qualitative data were systematically coded and categorized into overarching themes, which included blended learning practices, institutional challenges, and teacher experiences in writing instruction.

The integration of the quantitative and qualitative datasets was carried out during the interpretation phase. Statistical results were directly compared against the qualitative explanations to achieve data triangulation, thereby developing a more comprehensive and robust understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to strict ethical procedures and received formal approval from the Addis Ababa University Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection. Before participating, all individuals were fully informed about the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Written informed consent was subsequently obtained from all participants.

To maintain strict anonymity and confidentiality, pseudonyms or alphanumeric codes were used instead of participant names, and all collected data were securely stored in password-protected digital files. The study was conducted in full compliance with internationally accepted ethical standards for educational research, ensuring respect for persons, beneficence, and robust data protection throughout.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

This section presents findings related to ELT teachers' practices, perceptions, and experiences regarding blended learning (BL) in teaching writing at Addis Ababa University. Quantitative data were collected from 31 teachers through a structured questionnaire, while qualitative data were obtained from open-ended responses and semi-structured interviews with six teachers.

Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were used to analyze questionnaire data. The questionnaire employed a three-point Likert scale (1 = Disagree, 2 = Neutral, 3 = Agree). Mean scores closer to 1 indicate disagreement, scores around 2 indicate neutrality, and scores closer to 3 indicate agreement.

Qualitative findings were analyzed thematically and integrated with survey results through triangulation.

4.1.1 Teachers’ Practices and Experiences in Blended Learning

Table 1.

Teachers’ Practices and Experiences in Blended Learning (N = 31)

Dimension	Item	M	SD
BL Practices	I use multiple digital platforms when teaching writing skills.	1.58	0.87
	I use BL to teach different English language skills.	1.45	0.80
	I apply BL whenever internet access is available.	1.52	0.87
	I rarely use BL in my teaching.	2.32	0.90
BL Knowledge	I have sufficient knowledge to implement BL effectively.	2.32	0.86
	I know how to design lessons using BL approaches.	2.29	0.85
	I am familiar with digital tools used in BL.	1.74	0.76
	I have received adequate training on BL.	1.77	0.80
Barriers to BL	Teaching with BL is time-consuming.	1.55	0.61
	Available computer facilities are inadequate.	2.65	0.73
	Poor internet connectivity limits BL use.	2.65	0.68
	Students’ limited digital skills make BL difficult.	1.16	0.51
Institutional Support	College management supports technology integration.	1.06	0.37
	Teachers regularly use technology in teaching.	2.10	0.58
	The college provides adequate BL training.	1.29	0.64

Note. Scale: 1 = Disagree, 2 = Neutral, 3 = Agree.

Survey findings indicated limited implementation of blended learning among ELT teachers. Most participants reported infrequent use of digital platforms and blended approaches in writing instruction. Although teachers demonstrated moderate conceptual understanding of BL, their familiarity with digital tools and practical implementation skills appeared limited.

The main barriers identified were inadequate computer facilities, unreliable internet connectivity, and insufficient institutional support. In contrast, student digital skills were not generally viewed as a major challenge.

Interview findings triangulated the survey results. Teachers explained that BL was mainly used for sharing materials, assigning tasks, and communicating with students through platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram rather than for structured blended instruction. Participants also emphasized that weak internet access, limited infrastructure, and lack of practical training reduced consistent implementation of BL.

4.1.2 Teachers’ Perceptions of Blended Learning Effectiveness

Table 2.

Teachers’ Perceptions of Blended Learning Effectiveness (N = 31)

Dimension	Item	M	SD
Learning Effectiveness	BL is effective for teaching English, particularly writing skills.	2.77	0.50
	BL helps students make better learning progress.	2.84	0.45
	BL enhances students’ learning opportunities.	2.97	0.17
	BL can be more effective than face-to-face instruction in some contexts.	2.29	0.70

Student Engagement & Interaction	BL promotes active student participation.	2.52	0.63
	BL provides a more interactive learning experience.	2.13	0.68
	BL encourages collaboration among students.	2.42	0.59
	BL increases students' motivation to participate.	2.52	0.61
Flexibility & Learner Autonomy	BL allows more time to engage with learning materials.	2.45	0.60
	BL offers flexible timing for learning activities.	2.90	0.33
	BL enables students to learn at their own pace.	2.45	0.65
	BL encourages responsibility for learning.	2.45	0.60
Access to Learning Resources	BL enables access to a wide range of resources.	3.00	0.00
	BL allows access to materials anytime and anywhere.	2.71	0.50
	BL provides diverse learning resources.	2.77	0.47
	BL helps students locate additional resources easily.	2.52	0.60

Note. Scale: 1 = Disagree, 2 = Neutral, 3 = Agree.

Teachers generally perceived blended learning positively, particularly in relation to learning flexibility, learner autonomy, and access to learning resources. Participants strongly agreed that BL expands learning opportunities and supports student progress.

Perceptions of student engagement and interaction were moderately positive. While teachers believed that BL encourages participation and collaboration, views regarding interactivity were less consistent.

Interview findings supported these results. Teachers stated that BL helps students draft, revise, and receive feedback beyond classroom time, which is particularly useful in writing instruction. However, participants also noted that BL was often used for communication and material sharing rather than for highly interactive learning activities.

4.1.3 Student Motivation, Satisfaction, and Challenges

Table 3.

Student Motivation, Satisfaction, and Challenges in BL (N = 31)

Dimension	Item	M	SD
Student Motivation	Students show higher motivation in BL settings.	2.61	0.66
	Students produce better writing outcomes in BL.	2.35	0.73
	Classroom participation improves through BL.	2.45	0.77
	Students make noticeable writing progress through BL.	2.16	0.92
	Students participate more actively in BL than in traditional classes.	2.84	0.48
Student Satisfaction	BL provides personalized learning opportunities.	2.58	0.71
	BL allows convenient online feedback.	2.42	0.76
	Students achieve better academic results in BL contexts.	2.39	0.77
	Students are generally satisfied with BL sessions.	2.29	0.78
	BL increases confidence in independent writing tasks.	2.23	0.79

Challenges	Students struggle with time management in BL.	2.23	0.75
	Some students prefer face-to-face instruction.	2.32	0.66
	Limited internet access and devices hinder learning.	2.71	0.62
	Students are reluctant to participate due to limited experience.	2.23	0.79
	Some students prefer direct teacher guidance.	2.10	0.87

Note. Scale: 1 = Disagree, 2 = Neutral, 3 = Agree.

Teachers generally perceived BL as motivating for students, particularly in terms of participation and engagement. However, perceptions regarding improvements in writing performance and academic outcomes were more moderate.

Teachers also reported moderate levels of student satisfaction with BL, especially regarding personalized learning opportunities and flexible feedback. At the same time, technical limitations and students’ preference for face-to-face instruction remained important challenges.

Interview findings confirmed these patterns. Teachers explained that students often participate actively in online activities but may experience difficulties related to internet access, device availability, and independent learning skills. Several participants also noted that some students continue to prefer direct teacher guidance during writing activities.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Perception–Practice Gap in Blended Learning

The findings of this study revealed a clear gap between teachers’ positive perceptions of blended learning and its actual implementation in classroom practice. Although teachers valued blended learning for flexibility, learner autonomy, access to resources, and student participation, its practical use remained limited primarily to communication and material-sharing activities through platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram.

These findings suggest that positive perceptions alone are insufficient for meaningful pedagogical integration. Teachers generally recognized the potential of blended learning but lacked the practical skills, technological infrastructure, and institutional support necessary for systematic implementation (Lim et al., 2019; Mishra & Koehler, 2006). The findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that teachers often demonstrate favorable attitudes toward educational technology while facing difficulties integrating it effectively into classroom practice (Hrastinski, 2022; Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020).

The findings also reflect the principles of social constructivism and connectivism, which emphasize interaction, collaboration, and technology-mediated learning. Although blended learning has the potential to support collaborative writing and peer feedback, these interactive dimensions were only partially realized because of practical and institutional constraints.

4.2.2 Institutional and Infrastructural Barriers

The study identified unreliable internet connectivity, inadequate computer facilities, insufficient practical training, and weak institutional support as the major barriers affecting blended learning implementation.

Teachers repeatedly described blended learning adoption as depending largely on individual effort rather than coordinated institutional systems. This finding indicates that institutional culture and technological readiness strongly influence the success of blended

learning implementation. The findings align with the Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System (CABLS) framework, which highlights the interconnected roles of infrastructure, institutional support, teachers, learners, and technology in blended learning environments (Wang et al., 2015).

The findings also reflect broader patterns of digital inequality reported in African higher education contexts, where infrastructural and institutional limitations continue to shape educational innovation unevenly (Tadesse & Muluye, 2020). These interconnected challenges limited the effective and systematic integration of blended learning practices in writing instruction.

4.2.3 Implications for Writing Instruction

Teachers particularly valued blended learning for writing instruction because it enabled students to draft, revise, and receive feedback beyond classroom time. This finding supports earlier research suggesting that blended environments can strengthen process-based writing instruction when implemented systematically.

The findings further suggest that blended learning can support important stages of the writing process, including collaborative drafting, peer review, asynchronous feedback, and multiple revision cycles (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Zhang & Zou, 2022). These features may help students engage more actively in writing development by providing additional opportunities for reflection, interaction, and revision beyond face-to-face classroom sessions.

However, teachers also emphasized that increased participation does not automatically result in improved writing performance. Effective blended learning implementation therefore requires not only technological access but also pedagogically structured activities, teacher guidance, and students' readiness for independent learning.

4.2.4 Contribution of the Study

This study contributes to ongoing discussions on technology integration in ELT by focusing specifically on writing instruction in Ethiopian higher education, a context that remains underexplored in blended learning research.

Unlike many previous studies conducted in broader language-learning settings, this study demonstrates how infrastructural, institutional, and pedagogical constraints shape the gap between teachers' positive perceptions of blended learning and their actual classroom practices.

The findings suggest that strengthening blended learning implementation in higher education requires:

1. practice-oriented professional development focused on the practical integration of BL into writing instruction,
2. continuous pedagogical and technical support that helps teachers move from conceptual awareness to classroom implementation,
3. reliable internet connectivity and improved technological infrastructure,
4. adequate access to computers, digital devices, and learning management systems,
5. institutional policies and administrative support that actively encourage blended pedagogy,
6. opportunities for teachers to share experiences and effective BL practices, and
7. interactive approaches that support collaborative writing, peer feedback, revision, and learner autonomy.

5. Conclusion

This study examined ELT teachers’ practices, perceptions, and experiences regarding blended learning in teaching writing at Addis Ababa University. The findings revealed a notable discrepancy between teachers’ positive perceptions of blended learning and its limited implementation in classroom practice. Although teachers acknowledged its potential to enhance learner motivation, flexibility, autonomy, and access to learning resources, its use was largely confined to communication and material-sharing activities. Consequently, while blended learning was perceived to increase student engagement, its contribution to writing performance remained moderate due to limited pedagogical integration.

The findings suggest that the challenges surrounding blended learning implementation are primarily rooted in systemic and institutional factors rather than teacher attitudes. Inadequate ICT infrastructure, unreliable internet connectivity, insufficient professional training, and limited institutional support emerged as the principal barriers. These results indicate that successful blended learning implementation requires a coordinated alignment of technological resources, institutional policies, and pedagogical support alongside teacher readiness.

From a theoretical perspective, the study extends the application of the CABLS framework by demonstrating how weaknesses in institutional and technological components can hinder the effective integration of blended learning. The findings also support social constructivist and connectivist perspectives, emphasizing that meaningful learning in blended environments depends on sustained interaction, collaboration, and active learner participation. Practically, the study highlights the importance of investing in technological infrastructure, providing continuous practice-oriented professional development, and establishing supportive institutional policies that promote interactive and process-oriented writing instruction.

Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations. As a case study conducted in a single institution with a relatively small sample of ELT teachers, the findings may not be readily generalizable to other higher education contexts. In addition, the reliance on self-reported data and the absence of audio-recorded interviews may have limited the depth and richness of the qualitative findings. Future research should therefore involve multiple institutions, larger and more diverse participant groups, and the inclusion of students’ perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of blended learning implementation and its impact on writing development in higher education settings.

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