

**ENGAGING EFL LEARNERS IN A BLENDED LEARNING APPROACH FOR  
CREATIVE WRITING COURSE****Dyah Kusumastuti**

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Email: [dyahkusumastuti@ump.ac.id](mailto:dyahkusumastuti@ump.ac.id)**Abstract**

This article aimed at knowing the pedagogical part and the impact of using blended learning for Indonesian EFL learners in higher education level. However, our institution has revolutionary implemented blended learning for the past five years. By using simple random sampling technique, the participants were 25 students of the third semester of English Education Department in one of private universities in Central Java province, Indonesia. It showed that students have significant different way of learning in terms of offline and online process. The preliminary research was done to find the pedagogical parts of having blended learning and the students' belief as well as their challenges and difficulties on experiencing the model of blended learning which has been implemented in Creative Writing course. Moreover, the result showed that 84% students agree that blended learning is very beneficial to build their skill cognitively, psychologically, and socially in Writing. In addition, they have self-managed language learning experience, as blended learning promotes autonomous as well as discipline, it makes students are free to catch into materials in a certain time without depending themselves to teacher, beside that they also must have punctuality as they must do their assignment in a range of time.

*Keywords: blended learning, flipped classroom, LMS moodle, online learning*

**INTRODUCTION**

Information technology has become a very crucial thing nowadays. Long time ago, people were not really engaging to gadgets or laptops, even other things related to high digital technology, but it is significant diverse in this era. High digital technology is now like basic needs for everyone. It is also reflected in education field where students must engage themselves in a situation that accessing material is not only in a classical or traditional way but also in modern approach. One of the technology implementations is through blended learning. The interest of blended learning approach deceits within the revamping of technology helped learning strategies in expansion to the existing conventional based learning<sup>1</sup>.

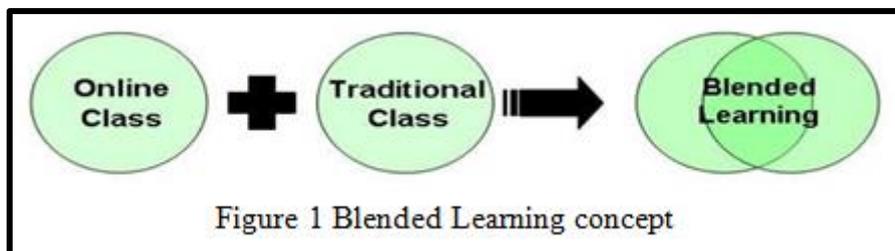


Figure 1 Blended Learning concept

Blended learning as shown in Figure 1 alludes to a learning environment that join assorted educating styles, conveyance implies, media groups or a combination of all these<sup>2</sup>. It can also be defined as the integration of various learning activities like online and face-to-face learning<sup>3</sup> cited from<sup>4</sup>. However,<sup>5</sup> it was reviewed that blended learning as an educational approach that provides instructive communities the chance to customize their learning utilizing synchronous and asynchronous conveyance modes to improve levels of

interaction among the agents involved (generally, students and faculty). In language learning, blended learning can also be implemented for any skills and competences.

In the past, learning a language can only be accessed traditionally with a teacher and students meet in face to face classroom. The students get knowledge and practice about developing skills just through classical way. However the learning process is now significantly changed. By having technology, students and teacher experience both face face and online learning process. This article examines at the pedagogical aspects and the students' belief on experiencing writing activity that is affected from the rapid expansion of information technology by which they have done blended learning from the beginning of their study in higher education especially in university level.

In addition, the difficulties and challenges faced by the students are also highlighted. The platform, LMS moodle, used in the process of having blended learning must affect the students' belief on experiencing the new way of learning.

### *Defining Blended Learning*

Blended Learning definitions have been developed by some experts. Graham<sup>11</sup> conceives of blended learning as a framework that combines face to face instruction with computer-mediated instruction and raises not only as it were the utilize of distinctive data and communication innovations but also streamlines the rise and improvement of diverse sorts of intelligent and experiences among individuals. Additionally, blended learning also represents to “a crucial movement in directions strategy” and its adaptability empowers the online conveyance of substance to be shared with the leading sorts of classroom interaction and live instruction to personalize learning, empower caring reflection, and individualise instruction over an assorted group of learners<sup>12</sup>.

In other words, Lalima and Dangwal<sup>13</sup> stated that blended learning is an advanced concept that grasps the preferences of both conventional educating within the classroom and ICT backed learning counting offline learning and online learning. Furthermore, Valiathan<sup>7</sup> divided it into three types; “those which are skill-driven, pointed at the securing of particular information and abilities, where the instructor gives input and bolster; those which are attitude-driven, pointed at the advancement of modern demeanors and practices, where peer-to-peer interaction and bunch work are central; and those which are competency-driven, pointed at capturing inferred information, where learners must watch specialists at work comparison between conventional learning and blended learning”.

This article focuses on the three types mentioned above that the students are involving in skill-based course namely Creative Writing where the teacher gives feedback and support, and then peer feedback is invited as well. Furthermore, competency-based education is done also where the learners compare between face to face learning and blended learning.

### *Advantages Of Blended Learning*

One advantage of blended learning is that it has the potential to oblige differing learning styles<sup>10</sup>. Besides that, blended learning promotes flexibility in learning. Integration of the virtual and physical scene empowers both teacher and students to become learner<sup>6</sup>. Blended learning benefits both parties to actively get experience of learning process. In addition, Chen and Jones<sup>14</sup> laid out other points of interest of blended learning such as bottomless understanding of themes by utilizing web-based assets as well as dynamic support of students in class. Furthermore, Yuen<sup>15</sup> stated that online learning engagement online learning

engagement provides an interactive setting for communication among teachers and students in the classroom and may facilitate cooperative activities even beyond the classrooms.

Hancock and Wong<sup>17</sup> concluded the advantages of blended learning:

- It implies an alteration from inactive learning to dynamic learning. The center of the classroom moves from a presentational organize to one of dynamic learning. This includes setting learners in conditions which compel them to perused, talk, tune in and think.
- It bargains learners the opportunity to be either together or separated. The demonstrate of blended learning emphasizes taking together the online and face-to-face classroom components. In expansion, a blended exchange framework permits students to memorize and get to fabric in a run of modes a fundamental highlight since students often have exceptionally diverse learning styles. In reality, investigate demonstrates that blended learning developments students' chances of assembly course results compared with completely online and indeed completely face-to-face courses, by declining disappointment rates, expanding test scores and expanding boost on the portion of students.
- It improves a human touch to the teaching. The intelligently content empowers the instructor to form a high level of interest, accountability, and real assessment.
- It boosts individualization, personalization and significance. It occupancies the teacher tailor learning substance to the interesting needs of distinctive audience segments.
- The demonstrate compromises students the most excellent of both spaces since teachers and students have more prominent adaptability and availability without relinquishing face-to-face contact. A blended learning approach is a compelling and low-risk methodology pointed at assembly the challenge of the transformational changes that mechanical improvements bring to higher instruction.

## **METHOD**

This research method used descriptive qualitative study in which students' experience elaborated spesifically through observation and questionnaire.

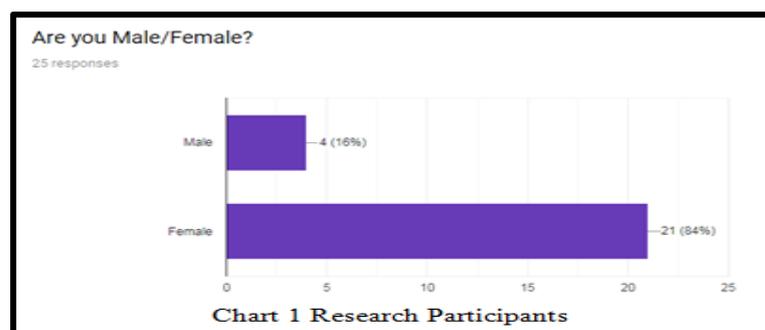
### *Research Question*

In this study, the researcher attempted to discover out the educational sides and the learning involvement of the students. For the academic parts, the researcher especially needs to discover out how the on class exercises seem encourage the students' learning, whereas for learning encounter, the researcher needs to know how the students discover those exercises, what the challenges are, and how the students adapt with the challenges. Subsequently, for these goals, the taking after inquire about questions were defined:

1. What are the pedagogical parts of the use of Blended Learning in Creative Writing Course?
2. What are the students' belief as well as the difficulties and challenges faced by the students while participating in the blended learning of Creative Writing?

### *Participants*

By using simple random sampling, there were 25 EFL students, 4 males and 21 females, participated in this research. All of them were students of the Creative Writing Class in semester 3, 2019-2020 of English Education Department in one of private universities in Central Java province, Indonesia.



### *Research Instrument*

The instruments used in this research are observation and questionnaires. The observation was done on the online class, whereas the questionnaires were distributed in the middle of the semester.

### *Research Procedures*

The discourses and assignments were given after the clarification of certain subjects and the students did the learning process in their online class both in a certain time and anytime depend on the types of tool menu given by the teacher. It was done after the lesson assembly outside the classroom. They had the full week some time recently the following class meeting. For the assignments, the students were inquired to post passages on the task devices and they were also asked to comment on their classmates' posts. To assist the students, the teacher continuously given her posts to begin with as illustrations on how to do the assignments and the teacher was too included within the discussions (comments) beneath the students' posts. There were 2 points of assignments with 3 diverse devices blended with the regular classroom meetings, such as video conference, discussion and assignment:

1. Making a personal narrative writing
2. Making a headline news

During the learning process when the students associating on the LMS, moodle, the teacher, was moreover taking an interest within the discourses, observed the intelligent and took notes on basic events. All the posts and discourses were recorded as the LMS, moodle may well be spared as a content record or could bedownloaded.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Before examining the students' belief on experiencing the blended learning, it is important to know the model of online class implemented. The blended learning model is based on self-learning trough e-learning/on class and face to face classes. Likewise the same idea is coming from the following illustration (figure 2, graniteschools.org) <sup>16</sup>.

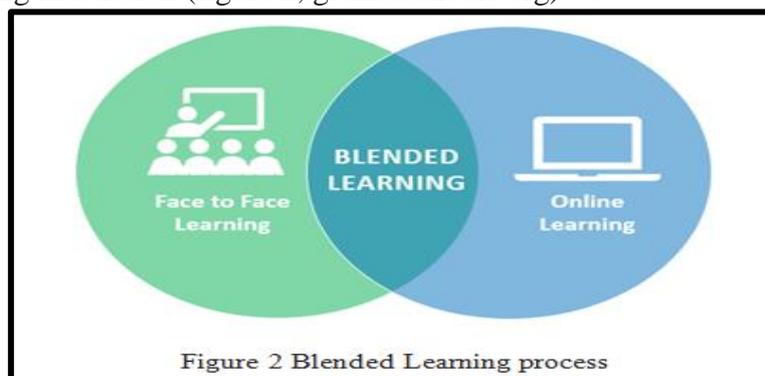


Figure 2 Blended Learning process

The blended learning style course based on four characteristics, firstly students can learn basic course in face to face learning, and then they can implement the course through writing or other skills, next is teacher can give a lecture and additional learning contents via e-learning environment. Finally, the viable portion of the lecture can be recreated and available through it.

Both students and teacher are having similar way of the authorization and evaluation whether it is in the form of discussion, chat or even assignment tool. In addition, blended learning is possibly done in more adaptable, intelligently, proficient, open, and shifted learning involvement<sup>3</sup>.

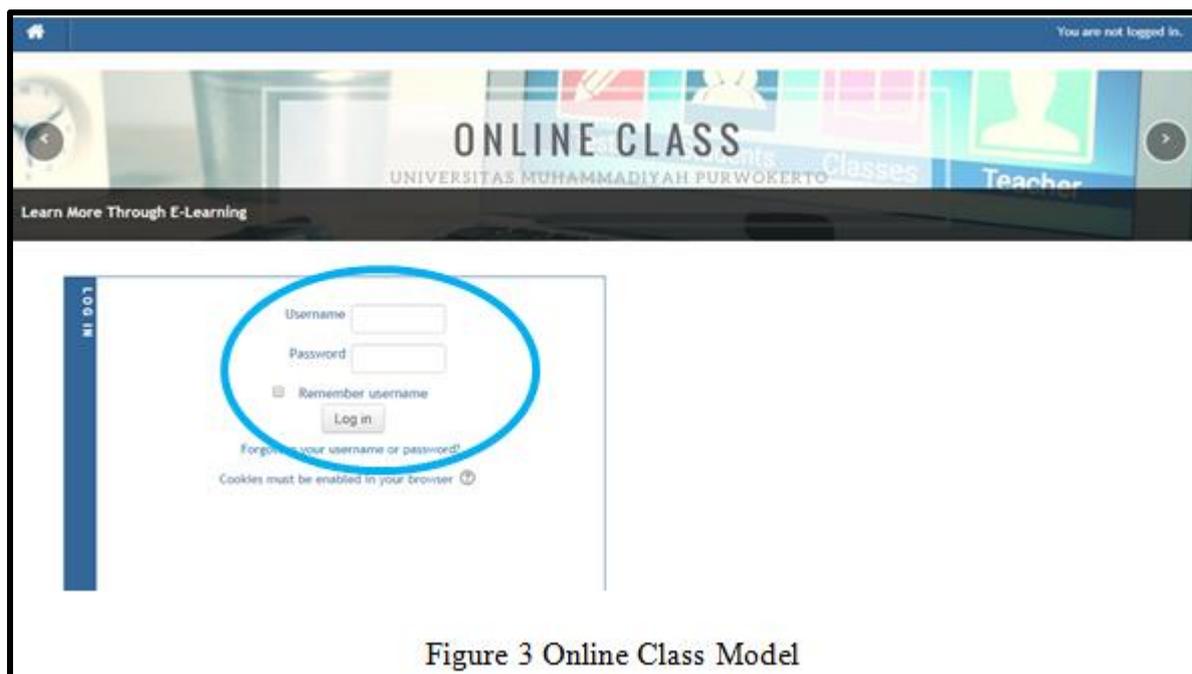


Figure 3 Online Class Model

Figure 3 is a model of blended learning through online class. It is used by both teacher and students. Open source, LMS, moodle is used in which all the students must first log on using username and password. After that, the students choose a course which relates to credits they take. However, the method of creating courseware for moodle incorporates the development of learning materials (week after week addresses and assignments), adjustment rules and other substance such as student discourse bunches and forums<sup>4</sup>. Throughout this section, the researcher would display the comes about of this investigation and expound the talk on those findings. In common, based on the research questions, the dialog focused on the students' learning involvement with blended learning to see its academic possibilities in language learning. At the conclusion of this fragment the challenges of executing this online innovation in Creative Writing classroom would also be expounded.

### *Pedagogical Implications*

Blended learning as the part of the rapid development of technology has pedagogical implications for language teaching and learning process. However, implementing blended learning is not always easy. It really needs careful thought and consideration. Furthermore, blended learning in terms of its technology application must involve students in a situation of interactive, personalized, and holistic<sup>5</sup>. The blended learning ought

to advance dynamic intelligent among learners, the intuitive ought to create personalized learning, and the learning ought to also put comprehensively, not just partly and passively<sup>9</sup>.

The process of blended learning has actually been designed to meet those three factors and luckily, during the observation, the learning process had been interactive, personalized, and holistic as well. The students had theoretically learnt how to make a personal narrative writing started their outline and continued to make their introductory paragraph. In blended learning process, their friends and teacher gave feedback to their writing on class and it would be also elaborated in face to face classroom. As they have learnt that an introductory paragraph must be written well to hook the readers, the teacher and peer feedback for the introductory really focused on whether it has met the requirements of introductory paragraph or it must still be improved. It is clearly concluded from the following excerpts of the students.

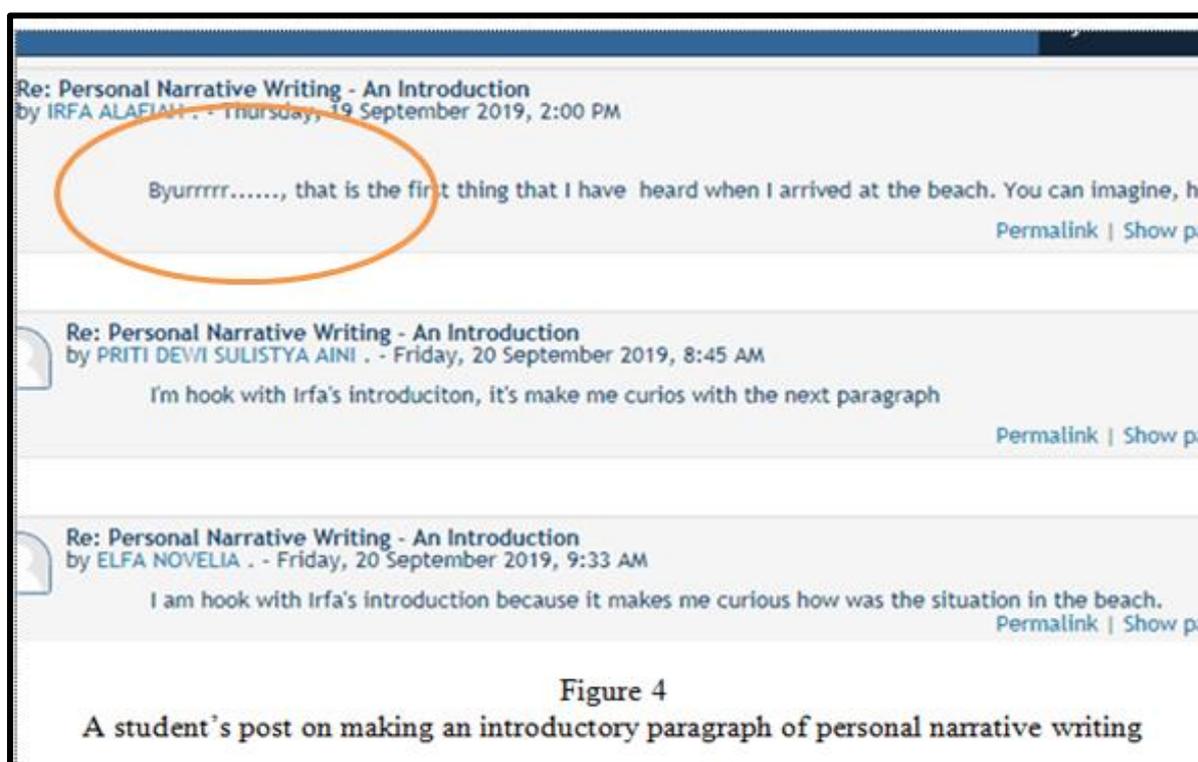


Figure 4 describes one of the students' posts of introductory paragraph in which this post triggered her friends to give any comments and make the writing process more interactive. There were actually 7 comments following this post, the longest discussion can invite 9 comments. Teacher divided the students into groups so that they can give comments on each member' post. There were totally 6 groups and the discussion can be covered for the groups' entire member where in face to face classroom meeting, the long discussion will not be effectively done as the time constraints and it might be true that the students were reluctant to give comment as they were mentally afraid to make mistake.

The post in figure 4 also looked like the personalized writing; it was the student life experience. Furthermore, she had a creative way on inviting the readers' interest to read the next paragraphs. She used a principle of onomatopoeia (for example: "Byurrrr" as the sounds of water) to start her paragraph. Some comments from her friends evidenced that her writing can hook reader to be curious of what possibility situations can happen.

Another way to express an introductory paragraph besides onomatopoeia is by having a question. It will invite the reader to think of the answer whether or not they have a similar experience with the writer. The following figure (Figure 5) is an excerpt which shows a question in her introductory paragraph. In this blended learning, the student learnt how to use her life experience as a tool to deliver a real story in an interesting way without making the readers bored. Additionally, this blended learning also opens students' behaviour on commenting their friends' posts respectively. They were about to build their self-character in a very respectful way without making their friends feel annoyed. It is evidenced from the students' way of putting smiley emoticons in their suggestions.

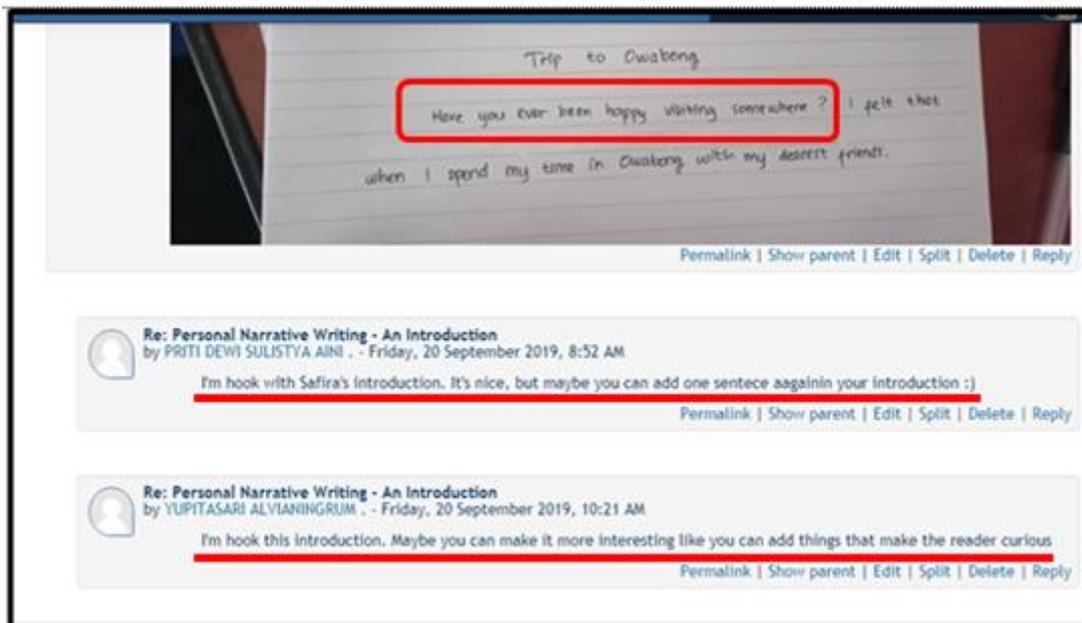


Figure 5 Student's post on introductory paragraph shows question

The students' experience in using blended learning as their learning environment appears that they were not simply practicing English composing through their sentences and passages. It was an entire learning involvement. They were effectively included in each of the task and effectively communicated and shared their life stories, feelings, and thoughts.

Blended learning was also revealed in face to face classroom. Students and teacher have a chance to meet each other. Students may ask questions directly about the material which cannot be covered from online class. The following figure gives an image of a learning situation in a classroom as part of blended learning.

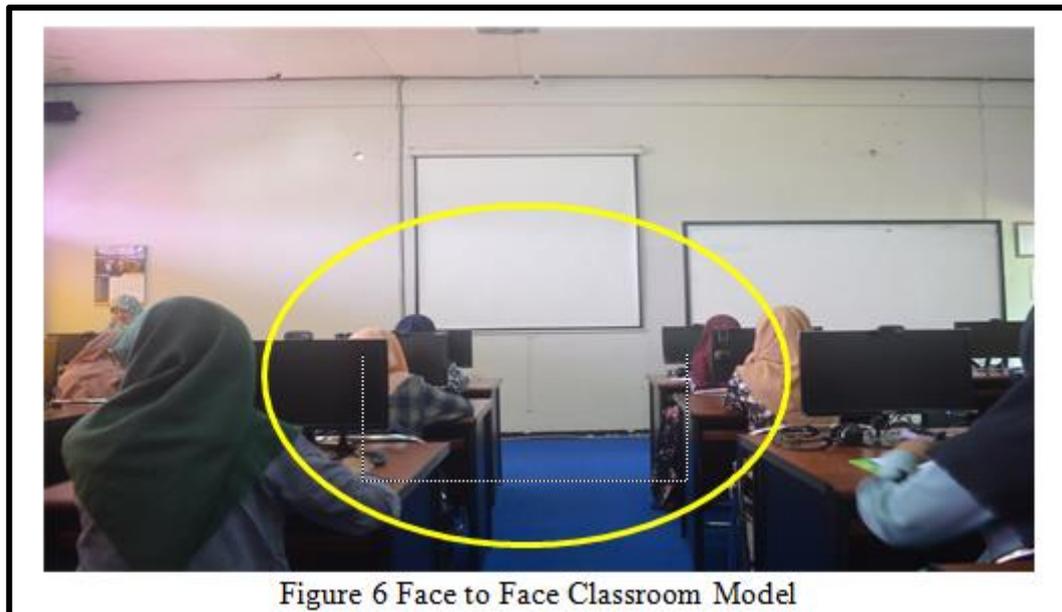


Figure 6 Face to Face Classroom Model

Creative Writing has some topics in which one of them is about making newspaper headline. Figure 6 gives an illustration of blended learning where teacher and student did an interaction in class besides learning through online class. Also, through blended learning, the students could afford to be more relaxed in this writing class. They needed an understanding to pursue of how to write newspaper headline theoretically. However, they must be aware of certain principles of making catchy headline news. It is also possible for students to discuss in a group about what they write as an outline. The assignment was then completed in an online class. Besides, this assignment in on class had certain time to finish, the students' sense of punctuality would be really considered. The following post is an example of how the students make headline news after having the theory from face to face classroom.



Figure 7 Student Post in Writing Newspaper Headline

Figure 7 shows the interaction between teacher to student or student to student. Blended learning is certainly becoming a bridge to pass a communication without feeling of worriedness of making mistake. Nevertheless, in figure 7, student posted a headline after reading an article given. Other students gave any comments and suggestions related to the theory of making a newspaper headline to enhance their friends' writing. This post had 24 comments including feedback which is given from teacher. Surprisingly, it was found that some students who were rather passive in regular meeting, they were having different behaviour in the online class in which they are able to give suggestion in even long sentences. The blended learning opens such situation that breaks the students' afraid of affectation. Here, all encompassing learning prepare also took place.

The students were included effectively in their own learning, by assessing the learning process. In the surveys, when the students were inquired what they like almost mixed learning exercises in their Creative Writing course, the answers of 84% out of 25 students are related to instructive highlights. As an illustration, they said that the online exercises made them practice to create sentences in English when they must grant conclusion to their friends' composing, made them think about more as well in the mean time they must check dictionaries and online assets so they seem compose good and right English sentences especially for the topic of personal narrative and newspaper headline, they moreover conceded that they may get offer assistance from their companions additionally the teacher and it was an enormous opportunity to upgrade their English, and they seem learn from their friends' posts. Moreover, a few answers are related to social (10 students) and psychological (15 students) impacts. For illustration, they said that the assignments might empower them communicate with the teacher and other companions, indeed with those whom they rarely conversation to in real life. A few also said that these online exercises might make them conversation much, unlike in class.

### *Difficulties And Challenges*

From the questionnaire given to the students, almost all of them said that they enjoyed blended learning. All things considered, it does not mean that this approach is faultless, it is information from surveys that students conceded they still had issues on linguistics, non-linguistics and even psychological.

In the face to face meeting, students admitted they had psychological and linguistics problems, they were still shy to express their own opinion to their friends' writing directly as they could freely do it in online class. Besides that, they are reluctant to write since they are doubtful on their grammar and vocabulary; they worry that their writing will not tend to be successful.

In the online class, all of them had non-linguistics problems to cope with, such as on time management, internet connection, confusing in understanding teacher's instruction or even worse the tool in on class platform, and lack of understanding materials. They suggested for solving these non-linguistics problems to give them longer due date in completing the assignment. Students were having psychological problems as well, such as they did not learn from the online class' material before doing the assignment, it is because of their laziness.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Blended learning can be one of the best approaches from the rapid development of technology to engage the students to language learning process which triggers them to a significantly different way. In addition, it invites positive manners like creativity, discipline

and punctual. Besides, the linguistics, non-linguistics and even psychological matters cannot be ignored in this process of blended learning, moreover in completing their online assignments.

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