

Blended Learning in ESL Classrooms Regarding Impacts on Students' Participation towards the Development of Practical Guidelines for Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of blended learning on student participation in secondary school ESL classrooms, identified the challenges students face during its implementation, and proposed practical guidelines to support teachers in implementing blended learning more effectively. A mixed-methods approach was employed, with quantitative data collected from a sample of 50 Form 2 students. Quantitative data from surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify overall response trends, and Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the survey items. On the other hand, qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with three teacher participants and analyzed using thematic analysis. In addition to interviews, field notes were used as supporting data to provide contextual insights into classroom practices. The findings indicate that blended learning had a generally positive impact on student participation, where they were found to be more engaged when digital tools and interactive activities were incorporated into lessons. Meanwhile, listening and speaking activities showed higher levels of participation, as students were more responsive to audio-visual materials and group-based interactions. Reading activities demonstrated moderate levels of engagement, although students' comprehension remained a concern. Writing, however, was acknowledged as the most challenging skill, with students experiencing difficulties related to typing, idea organization, and varying levels of digital familiarity. Based on these results and the specific problems that were found in the analyses, a complete set of practical guidelines was created to help teachers use blended learning more effectively. The study finds that blended learning could get ESL students more involved in class, especially if it is done in a planned and purposeful way. It is important to note, though, that how well it works depends on how well the teachers can utilize it.

Keywords: student participation, blended learning in ESL classroom, practical guidelines, mixed-methods, mixed-proficiency

INTRODUCTION

Over the decades, the advancements in technology have reshaped the educational landscape, introducing innovative and flexible teaching methods across all levels of education. The traditional way of learning, which predominantly relied on in-person teaching methods, has been adapted with other elements, which has introduced greater flexibility into teaching and learning. Among these innovations, blended learning, defined as a teaching approach that combines traditional classroom instruction with online learning experiences (Graham, 2006), emerged as a dominant mode of instruction during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Blended learning has gained prominence across educational contexts, including English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms, where it supports more adaptable and student-centered learning. In the context of secondary-level education, where students' language proficiency levels may vary, blended learning is a tool that has the potential to address the diverse proficiency levels found in ESL classrooms by giving students their own space to learn while still benefiting from real-time interaction and feedback.

With the rapid transformation of blended learning in education worldwide being vastly integrated, it causes immense change to the traditional teaching method. Blended learning, being a teaching method that integrates both traditional face-to-face instruction and online learning activities, makes learning sessions further reinforced by allowing learners to have more flexibility and accessibility that improves student engagement.

According to statistics reported by Straits Research (2024) and Diplomasafe (2024), the global blended learning market alone was valued at USD 22.3 billion in 2023 and was expected to double by 2032, driven by continuous technological innovations such as AI and cloud computing that offer users more personalized learning experiences that further expand collaborative opportunities across borders. The growing adoption of hybrid models proves the potential of blended learning teaching method to meet diverse learner needs in rapidly evolving educational landscapes.

In the context of Malaysia's education system, blended learning continues to gain recognition for its role in enhancing the participation of students. By having both teaching approaches applied in lessons, blended learning provides multiple avenues for students to engage. However, there are certain issues that persist, such as teacher digital readiness and uneven technological infrastructure. Recent studies shed light on educators' mixed experiences when implementing blended learning in their lessons, which points to the importance of institutional support to help mitigate these issues in order to fully reap the benefits of technology (Abdul Rais et al., 2025).

Focusing on the context of the study, Sarawak's education sector presents a unique context within Malaysia, where blended learning adoption in secondary ESL classrooms is still in the early stages of development. According to the Sarawak Education Enhancement Programme (SEEP) launched in 2025, there are disparities and limited digital readiness among educators and learners that need further addressing in order to mitigate the barriers that hinder with student participation in secondary school education across Sarawak, particularly the issues that impact ESL learning in mixed-proficiency classrooms. These challenges create a pressing need for more contextually tailored studies focusing on how blended learning impacts student participation and learning outcomes (Hong, 2023).

Based on the narrowing focus from global trends to the specific challenges of blended learning in Sarawak's secondary ESL classrooms, this highlights a critical research gap that needs addressing. While blended learning offers the potential to increase participation, one of the key areas where this impact must be evaluated is student participation. To be specific, it will specifically measure it in environments where learners typically possess varying levels of language proficiency. Determining the overall effectiveness of the approach in language acquisition requires an understanding of how blended environments influence participation.

Previous studies have highlighted blended learning's positive effects on general learning outcomes and learner motivation (Zainon & Yamat, 2021; Lim & Stapa, 2023), but few have explored how it influenced student participation in ESL classrooms, especially in regions such as Kuching, Sarawak.

This study aimed to examine how blended learning can cater to different proficiency levels among secondary school ESL students from Kuching, Sarawak, and how it enhanced both student participation and language acquisition. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, this research generated both quantitative and qualitative insights to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon. The findings of this inquiry provide educators with actionable strategies for fostering inclusive, engaging learning environments that address the diverse linguistic needs of their students. (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2020).

The research questions for this article are:

- a) How does blended learning impact student participation in secondary school ESL classrooms?
- b) What challenges do students experience when engaging in blended learning activities?
- c) What practical guidelines can be designed to support teachers in implementing effective blended learning in secondary school ESL classrooms?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

In exploring the impact of blended learning on participation in ESL classrooms, this study drew upon educational theories that were suitable to provide a comprehensive framework. Out of the huge selections of theories, a few stood out and were chosen to correlate with the topic of the study due to their relativity. Theoretical perspectives such as Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985), Constructivism Theory (Piaget, 1957), and Krashen's Second-Language Acquisition Theory (Krashen, 1982) inform our understanding of how blended learning can provide support or impose challenges toward student participation and language development in mixed-proficiency settings. All of these theories shed light on the importance of digital literacy and social interaction, which are crucial in understanding the advantages and disadvantages of blended learning environments.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), originally developed by Deci & Ryan (1985), served as the primary theoretical lens for this study. SDT is a theory that emphasizes the likelihood of individuals to engage and persist in learning when three basic psychological needs are met: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When putting this in the context of blended learning, where students often navigate a combination of independent digital tasks and classroom collaboration, these needs play a crucial role in enhancing the participation of the learners. For instance, interactive tasks in the classroom can support the feelings of competence and relatedness, while digital platforms can help foster autonomy through self-paced learning. As noted by Ryan and Deci (2000) and Zhou and Zhang (2022), motivation is most sustainable when learners feel in control of their learning, believe in their capabilities, and feel connected to others. Hence, this theory acted as a valuable framework for interpreting how learners engage with blended learning and what factors encourage or discourage their participation, especially in ESL classrooms, where motivational differences can be pronounced.

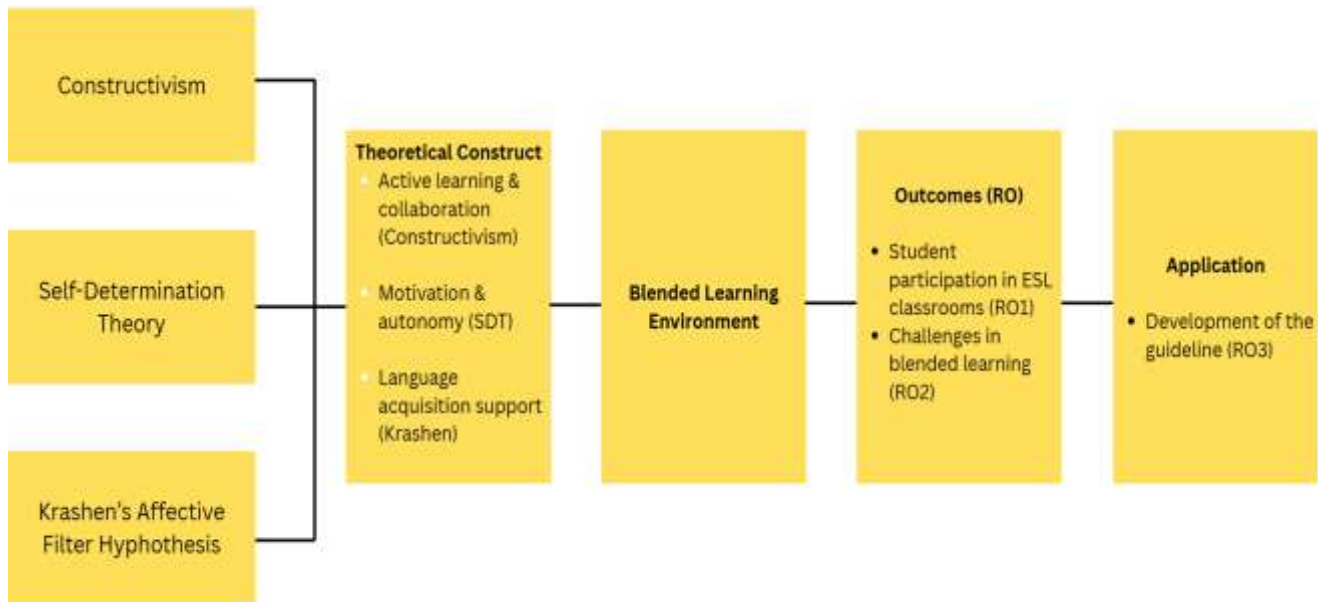
While SDT focuses on intrinsic motivation and the conditions that support it, Constructivism is a theory that touches on how learners are able to actively construct their knowledge through their experiences. According to Malik (2020), in the theory of Constructivism, its process underlines the importance of modeling, self-regulation, and observational teaching. In blended learning environments, this process is especially significant, as learners engage with digital tools alongside classroom activities that promote collaborative learning. According to Kyei-Blankson et al. (2021), a blended learning environment that is based on the theory of constructivism enhances engagement by encouraging learners to make sense of information through real-world tasks and peer interaction. Additionally, by combining online self-paced components with interactive face-to-face discussions, learners are given space to reflect, collaborate, and participate meaningfully. Therefore, this theory offered a strong foundation for deeper understanding of how the blended learning approach can encourage better language development and better engagement from the students in ESL classrooms.

Moving on, Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis provides a fresh and crucial perspective on language acquisition within blended learning. This theory contains five hypotheses: the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, natural order, comprehensible input, and the affective filter hypothesis. One particular hypothesis stood out the most in this case, and it is the affective filter hypothesis. Referring to Wang (2020), this hypothesis stresses that learners' mental states, such as their emotional well-being, motivation, confidence, and anxiety, could affect the learners' language learning process both positively and negatively. For instance, when the learner's emotional state is in the green, their affective filter is low, making language learning easier. Conversely, when their emotional state is disturbed, their affective filter will be high, hindering their language learning process. This theory was chosen as it showcases a deep relation between emotions and student participation. Learners' emotions are crucial to ensure that participation can be fostered during lessons.

In summary, all of the theoretical perspectives mentioned provided a comprehensive framework to showcase the impact of blended learning on student participation in ESL classrooms. Self-Determination Theory is relevant because blended learning environments can foster all three elements of the theory (autonomy, relatedness, and competence), which affects motivation and, consequently, students' willingness to participate in the lesson. On the other hand, Constructivism aligns with blended learning, as it emphasizes collaborative knowledge construction through active interaction and engagement. Lastly, Krashen's Input Hypothesis is necessary due to

mixed proficiency in ESL classrooms, where comprehensible input and scaffolded exposure are essential for language development. Together, these theories suggested that blended learning environments must not only facilitate active learning but also enhance student motivation and reduce anxiety. This integrated perspective is especially pertinent in mixed-proficiency ESL classrooms, where students exhibit varying levels of confidence, motivation, and interaction. Consequently, these theories collectively shaped the design of the current study and direct the formulation of an effective blended learning guideline intended to enhance students' participation.

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework



Student Participation in ESL Classrooms

Student participation is a critical component when it comes to language learning, not just in the context of ESL classrooms, but all classrooms in general. Having participation from the students means more interaction and liveliness during lessons, naturally benefitting learners as well in their language acquisition. Student participation is a correlation of important educational outcomes, including their achievements and performance in education (Halverson & Graham, 2019). In addition, ESL settings are influenced by several factors, including language anxiety, cultural norms, and classroom dynamics (Sabri, Khairuddin, Amir Johan, Mohd Daud, & Shamshul Bahrn, 2021). Therefore, this section explored these factors, including the roles of students' participation in language acquisition.

Among the listed, one of the most significant problems often found causing problems in students' participation in ESL classrooms is none other than language anxiety. Speaking from experience, many learners often would go through this particular problem in the early stages of language acquisition, where they would feel afraid of making mistakes in front of their peers or the teacher. Despite having a thorough grasp of the teaching and the learning materials, they would not be able to muster their courage to speak up and participate in the lesson. This particular statement is supported by research wherein anxiety is inversely related to student participation; students who suffer from language anxiety tend to avoid speaking opportunities. For instance, studies by Nawas (2020) and Sabri et al. (2021) showcased that a supportive and non-judgmental classroom environment helps foster better participation from students, as it can positively impact their mental state.

Apart from language anxiety, another notable problem that would cause issues in students' participation in ESL classrooms is cultural factors. Take students from collectivist cultures as an example. Due to their nature as collectivists, they have the tendency to put priority in group projects and activities over individuals. This particular trait would cause them to feel overwhelmed when presented with the unfavorable situation of needing them to speak out or take risks in front of others, as it may seem like an act to seek attention from others. For example, a study conducted by Yamini et al. (2025) highlighted how students from collectivist cultures prefer interdependence and group harmony. This causes discomfort when asked to speak out individually or take risks

in front of others. This particular behavior may conflict with their cultural values, causing reluctance in active verbal participation in lessons. Therefore, having to understand the cultural dynamics of the students can undeniably help improve the participation of students in ESL classrooms, where students could feel comfortable despite their differences.

Last but not least, classroom dynamics can significantly affect student participation. In a classroom where diverse proficiency exists, students with lower proficiency may feel intimidated by their peers as they fear that they might be judged, leading to lower participation from them. Conversely, students with higher proficiency might often seem to dominate the lesson, leaving no room for their weaker peers to speak up, unintentionally stifling their confidence even more. A study conducted by Khairina et al. (2022), highlighted how these mixed-proficiency classroom dynamics may create barriers to student participation. For example, students with higher proficiency often overshadow the weaker students. This would often result in students with lower proficiency feeling lost and unmotivated when being presented with difficult tasks, while the higher proficiency students would feel less competition and slowly disengage themselves with their peers.

Blended Learning's Impact on Participation

Blended learning is an approach that is dynamic and goes through ever-changing transformation in education by integrating traditional in-person teaching with modern digital tools. This particular approach creates various opportunities for learners to experience fresh and engaging ways of learning, which would result in improvement in their participation in ESL classrooms. Blended learning offers plenty of advantages, such as flexibility, adapting to different learning styles, and encouraging active participation. Despite the advantages, it is undeniable that implementing this approach does come with its challenges.

Research suggests that while blended learning can be beneficial, its effectiveness on participation would still depend on how it is being implemented in ESL classrooms. Challenges such as digital inequities, over-reliance on technology, and cultural nuances can hinder its success. Moreover, educators would often face problems with adjusting their teaching methods and implementing technology as a "tool" to improve their lessons. They would feel reluctant and hesitant to step out from their comfort zone and adapt to the technological advancements (Hassan et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2021). Hence, addressing these barriers is important to unlock the full potential of this teaching approach in ESL classrooms.

Blended learning, a method that combines online components with face-to-face interaction, would usually yield a positive result in terms of an increase in student participation, wherein they would feel more motivated to learn. Students are allowed to take charge of their learning paths using online components that traditional methods could not provide. The freedom given can provide those with low self-confidence in their language capabilities the opportunity to participate in the lessons more actively. Research has shown that this sense of control causes an increase in student participation, as students are more motivated to learn and engage with the materials on their own terms, at their own pace. Furthermore, their familiarity with the technology can spark greater interest and motivation to participate in blended learning classrooms (Lim & Stapa, 2023; Abdillah & Sueb, 2022).

However, not every learner shares the same sentiment and viewpoint on blended learning being an approach to improve their participation in ESL classrooms. As mentioned previously, the over-reliance on technology, or digital divide, can hinder the ability of some learners to engage fully with lessons. For instance, in lower-resource settings, learners without access to a stable internet would miss out on online components, hindering their participation in the lesson (Hassan et al., 2021). Additionally, a lack of instructor readiness to adapt themselves to technology in teaching and learning sessions also plays a role in how effective blended learning is in the context of student participation. Studies have shown that without having adequate teaching training and support, blended learning's full potential may not be realized, hence reducing student engagement and participation (Bates, 2019; Liman Kaban et al., 2024).

Although there are challenges, there are several strategies that can help to mitigate these barriers to help enhance the effectiveness of blended learning in fostering student participation. One of the strategies is to provide educators with adequate training to improve their readiness in utilizing blended learning. Educators should be provided with comprehensive training in both pedagogical strategies and technological tools to fully master a

blended learning approach. As suggested by Kumar et al. (2021) and Bates (2019), professional development programs that are specifically designed to help educate educators in digital literacy, online teaching strategies, and ways to foster active student participation are crucial to ensure educators are able to support learners in this era of technological advancement.

Another prominent strategy to tackle this issue includes improved technology access in institutions. In order to combat digital inequities, it is given that institutions should ensure that all learners have access to necessary devices and a stable internet. Providing financial support, such as scholarships or subsidies, can ease their burden to equip themselves with decent technological devices. Additionally, technical support has to be provided to the learners to ensure that they are well-equipped with the knowledge to make full use of the most recent and sophisticated hardware and software. This is crucial in order to create an environment that can help learners to learn better, resulting in better engagement (Zhao et al., 2022).

Alongside improving technological access in institutions, it is vital to foster a collaborative learning environment to improve student participation. Encouraging learners to collaborate both online and offline through group projects, discussion forums, or group activities can significantly improve engagement and participation. Research shows that blended learning opens up diverse opportunities for students to collaborate and interact with each other, increasing their motivation and sense of belonging, which in turn improves their participation during lessons (Joshi et al., 2023; Priyamvada, 2018).

To conclude, by encouraging independence, customization, and collaborative opportunities, blended learning demonstrates a profound ability to improve student involvement and engagement. Unquestionably, this prominent strategy has drawbacks that must be addressed, such as instructor readiness, digital inequities, and limited collaboration. These issues may be lessened, and an atmosphere where students will flourish as a result of increased involvement and participation may be created by putting into practice efficient measures, including professional training, better access to technology, and encouraging a collaborative learning environment. Finally, these insights highlighted the potential of blended learning to enhance educational practices.

Referred Blended Learning Guideline and Model

Blended Learning in English Language Teaching: Course Design and Implementation

Blended learning has become essential, something of importance in modern education. The combination of traditional face-to-face instruction with digital tools to enhance the learning experience is making an impact in the world of education (Graham, 2006; Tomlinson & Whittaker, 2013). Among the masses of available modules and guidelines on the web that are accessible, one stood out in particular: Blended Learning in English Language Teaching: Course Design and Implementation, published by the British Council and edited by Brian Tomlinson and Claire Whittaker. This module served as a comprehensive and practical reference for structuring blended learning guidelines.

Flipped Classroom Model

The flipped classroom, also known as “The Inverted Classroom” model, represents a transformational approach within blended learning pedagogy, where the traditional teaching and learning method is inverted. Instead of solely using classroom content for content delivery, the flipped classroom model is a model that provides an environment that includes project-based learning or world practices for learners in order to learn the subject better during class time (Misnawati, 2023; Pilu and Nur, 2023). Rather than the learners being exposed to the content only during class time, they would be exposing themselves using online content when they are in their own abode. The contents can be in the form of course videos, podcasts, e-books, or online meetings. The class time then would usually be used for higher-order thinking activities related to the knowledge they have obtained beforehand. This model aligns well with learner’s autonomy, active participation, and the application of knowledge in meaningful contexts (Misnawati & Anwar, 2024). For the purpose of designing an effective blended learning guideline, the flipped classroom model was selected as a primary reference due to its learner-centered philosophy, practical flexibility, and strong alignment with integrated language skill development.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a mixed-methods research design. By combining the data obtained through quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, the data thoroughly explored the impact of blended learning on student participation in secondary school ESL classrooms. The perk of using these methods, according to Kimmons and West (2022), is the fact that it is useful for solving educational problems in more authentic and situated ways and can provide evidence that appeals to a wide array of stakeholders. According to research conducted by Sharma et al. (2023), this particular research design excels when researchers are keen to explore complex and in-depth research questions that cannot be answered by using a single research design. A mixed-methods design is needed to examine the relationship between different variables to ensure the viability of the variables exists. Furthermore, this design plays a crucial role in completing and catering to the increasingly multifarious requirements of contemporary researchers.

In the context of this study, a mixed-methods approach was appropriate to be implemented, as it allowed for both breadth and depth of understanding of the target of the study, addressing the objectives through different perspectives (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). This specific design employed was a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, where quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed individually and then simultaneously, and then compared and merged during interpretation to provide a full understanding of the impact of blended learning (Creswell, 2017).

Sampling

This study used purposive sampling as its primary sampling technique. Purposive sampling, also known as judgment sampling, is a cornerstone in research, as it allows researchers to collect data that aligns closely with the contexts of the study, as well as their objectives (Memon et al., 2025). In this study, Form 2 students and ESL teachers were selected purposively from a secondary school in Kuching, Sarawak. Despite being the most populous city in Sarawak, with a diverse student demographic and a growing interest in technology in the education field, studies on blended learning remain underexplored in local academic research, particularly in the context of secondary ESL classrooms. Drawing on Ong et al. (2025), who highlighted that the empirical work in East Malaysian school contexts, including Sarawak, is still limited, especially for subject-specific areas such as secondary ESL. Therefore, the decision of choosing participants from this region aimed to address the critical gap in the literature and provide a more context-sensitive understanding of blended learning's impact on classroom participation.

Instruments

This study utilized three different instruments in order to obtain all the data needed, such as a survey, interviews, and field notes. Each of the instruments was chosen to ensure their potential in providing unique insights into the research objectives and to acquire the data needed for the mixed-methods approach. First, a student survey questionnaire was administered to capture the quantitative levels and frequency of participation in blended learning activities across different constructs. Second, a semi-structured interview protocol was designed to gather in-depth qualitative data on teachers' observations and experiences regarding student participation in blended learning activities. In addition to the interview questions, the researcher recorded detailed field notes during these teacher interview sessions to log specific contextual insights. This combined approach allowed the statistical data from the surveys to be directly cross-checked against the real-world instructional experiences of the educators.

Guideline Development Procedures

Literature Review

The literature review in this phase looked closely at how Tomlinson's framework addresses the reality of mixed-proficiency levels in language classrooms. His principles argue that blended learning should provide flexible

pacing, allowing learners to move ahead while giving lower-proficiency students extra time and scaffolding so they can keep up with the content. This directly relates to the target of this study, which was to find a plausible solution to lower digital stress and boost student participation.

Data Collection

By bringing together the statistical survey data, the teacher interviews insights, and the field notes taken, this allowed the development process to target the exact operational friction points that the final version of the guideline needed to resolve. This strict grounding in cross-validated evidence ensured that the final output would be able to function as a tool that is authentic and trustworthy to be used immediately by school teachers.

Drafting the Guidelines

The primary goal of this initial drafting stage was to create a functional prototype of the text that language teachers could immediately understand and test out in a real school setting. At this point of the guideline development process, the primary focus was simply to organize the broad data insights and put them into a readable format that could be easily read, reviewed, and evaluated later on. Instead of building a finalized set of rules, the drafting process was more of an exploratory approach. The main goal was to establish a basic structural layout that is suitable for everyday language teachers within public school environments.

Expert Validation

After the compiling of the initial draft, the researcher reached out to two experts to ask for their professional validation and guidance. The experts were provided with a structured feedback form that was created beforehand, which asked them to evaluate the clarity, sequencing, and usefulness of the planned steps. This form was essential because it gave them a clear framework to write down their critiques, and it became the direct guide for the researcher to refine and polish the guideline later on.

Revision and Refinement

Upon receiving feedback from the experts, the researcher made amendments to the guideline while referring back to the comments given to ensure that the guideline created was practical and relevant to the context of the study.

Finalization

The final step of the procedure was simply about putting everything together and locking in the completed document. Once those minor tweaks were made, the drafting phase was officially completed, turning the framework into the final, ready-to-use version.

Data Analysis Procedures

The student surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics, focusing on frequencies, percentages, and mean scores to summarize student responses regarding their participation levels and perceptions across blended learning in ESL classrooms. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the survey items measuring student participation in blended learning activities. This analysis helped to determine whether the set of Likert-scale items reliably measured the same underlying construct. Concurrently, the qualitative data gathered from the teacher interviews was processed using thematic analysis. The data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's recent guidance on reflexive thematic analysis, which emphasizes coding and theme development as an iterative, interpretive process led by the researcher rather than as a reliability-focused, codebook procedure (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Finally, the integration of both datasets allowed the researcher to examine the convergence, complementarity, and divergence, which enhanced the credibility and depth of the conclusions. Ultimately, the triangulated data had informed the development of an evidence-based guideline for enhancing student participation in mixed-proficiency blended learning ESL classrooms.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Students' Responses on Participation in Blended Learning

No	Item	Mean	SD
Technical Abilities & Accessibility			
1	I am comfortable using a computer.	3.18	1.00
2	I can confidently use web browsers on a computer to search for information.	3.20	1.07
3	I frequently use a computer to access the internet.	2.44	1.30
4	I have easy access to computer facilities with internet connection.	3.52	1.13
5	I can easily access the online learning platforms (e.g.: iLearn, Edmodo, Google Classroom, etc.) used for blended learning.	3.54	0.885
Listening Skill			
6	Learning with an online platform helps me understand listening materials better.	3.78	0.708
7	Online materials (like videos or recorded lessons) help me improve my English listening skills.	4.00	0.782
Speaking Skills			
8	Blended learning helps me improve my English speaking skills.	3.60	0.857
9	I do not feel anxious speaking in English during blended learning.	2.92	1.19
Reading Skills			
10	Blended learning helps me improve my English reading comprehension.	3.86	0.606
11	I find it easier to understand English reading materials through online platforms.	4.12	0.746
Writing Skills			
12	Blended learning activities require more time, making it challenging to complete writing assignments.	2.48	1.01
13	I need more time to fulfill learning activities on online platforms (e-learning).	2.30	1.13
Views on Blended Learning & Engagement			
14	I find English classes more enjoyable with blended learning than with traditional methods.	3.96	0.856
15	I feel more motivated to learn English through blended learning.	3.94	0.793
16	I get more actively involved in English classes when using online platforms.	3.76	0.797
Learner Participation Behaviour			
17	I actively participate in group discussions during English classes.	3.60	0.904
18	I regularly contribute to online class discussions or forums.	3.30	1.20
19	I ask questions when I do not understand the English lesson content.	3.64	1.08
20	I can concentrate better during English lessons when blended learning is used.	4.06	0.712

Findings Related to the Impact of Blended Learning on Students' Participation (Quantitative Data)

Referring to the analysis made and transcribed in the table above, the frequencies identified for the items were elaborated to showcase the variables. Beginning with technical abilities and accessibility of the students first. Referring to table 1, students reported the lowest mean score regarding their regular computer use ($M = 2.44$). Following this, the comfort of the students in using computers was the second lowest ($M = 3.18$), while their confidence in using the web browsers on computers as a platform to search for information followed next ($M = 3.20$).

Moving on to the next construct of the survey, listening skills had high means (3.78 - 4.00), showcasing a strong agreement among participants, reflecting a shared perception of the participants' favorability on implementing

listening activities in blended learning. Overall, these results suggest that the students' receptive communication is highly effective.

Speaking skills, on the other hand, were acknowledged with a mean score of 3.60, in which blended learning helped the students to perform better in speaking. However, their anxiety level had a lower mean ($M = 2.92$), which suggests reduced inhibition in verbal expression. Additionally, the disagreement percentage reveals a disparity that indicated some students struggled with challenges, suggesting a remaining confidence gap. Overall, the data may showcase the incline of students' favorability to learn speaking skills in blended learning settings; however, continued support is most likely needed to fully tackle the lack of confidence among students.

Reading skills received the highest overall mean of 4.12, with a strong agreement from the participants, indicating consistent recognition of proficiency and engagement in comprehension activities. Based on the score, this suggests that reading activities were the strongest participation domain.

Next, writing skills showed a contrast with the lowest mean score at 2.30. Although the writing-related items used in the survey were reverse-coded prior to analysis, the lower mean indicated that students perceive writing tasks in blended learning as relatively more demanding compared to other skills. The frequency distribution shows that many students selected "neutral" to "agree" as their responses to the question. This depicts the issue of online writing activities that may require additional effort and better time management.

As for views on blended learning and engagement, students generally demonstrated a highly positive overall engagement. The motivation scores across this specific construct were highly consistent (~ 3.90), which clearly highlights that the integration of digital tools served as an effective catalyst for student interest. Collectively, these statistical indicators verify that the implementation of blended learning environments successfully fostered strong emotional and cognitive engagement from the students during blended learning lessons.

Lastly, in terms of the actual learner participation behaviors of the students, the descriptive data reveals that concentration levels were remarkably strong ($M = 4.06$). Meanwhile, online discussions were notably moderate ($M = 3.30$), which strongly suggests a distinct variability in individual participation depth across virtual platforms. While these findings indicate an overall willingness to interact, it was still needed for the students to be encouraged further by teachers so that their collaborative participation could become more consistent.

Summary of Quantitative Findings

Overall, the quantitative findings indicated that students demonstrated a moderate level of participation in blended learning ESL classrooms. Participation appeared strongest in receptive skills, particularly reading and listening, whereas it was comparatively lower in productive skills, especially writing. Therefore, these findings suggested that while blended learning was generally able to foster good participation from the students, certain areas such as speaking confidence and writing task demands require additional instructional support.

Findings Related to the Challenges Experienced by Students in Blended Learning (Qualitative Data)

Table 2: Themes Identified from Teacher Interviews

Theme	Teacher Insight	Field Notes (Supporting Data)
Technical Skills and Accessibility	Teachers mentioned that not all students were technologically proficient and had little access to technological devices. Some students require more guidance when using digital tools such as Google Classroom or Canva. Additionally, typing speeds for the students vary, which influenced their participation in blended learning tasks.	Teachers noted that additional time is required for the students to explore more about technology, aside from guiding them in utilizing it properly. Something worth mentioning also includes that some students shared devices with their family members.

Student Engagement and Motivation	Teachers observed that students tended to be more participative when blended learning was involved during lessons. Their enthusiasm could be seen very clearly during blended learning lessons compared to traditional “chalk and talk” approaches. Additionally, students often showed excitement when blended learning activities were introduced.	Teachers mentioned that the students were moving more toward the technological era, which might explain why it was more appealing to them.
Speaking Participation	Teachers reported that students generally participated more in lessons when the topic was about the things they like, such as TikTok. This was apparent as the students who were usually reserved would slowly partake and speak up when blended learning was implemented.	Teachers noticed the differences in students’ participation when the topic for the activity was in line with their interests. Some noted that group discussions during blended learning worked really well in fostering participation among the students.
Listening Activities	Teachers generally agreed that listening activities were effective in blended learning environments. Multimedia resources such as videos and audio recordings were seen as helpful in improving students’ listening comprehension.	Some of the teachers would share audio files and TikTok links on Telegram as an additional activity for the students to do at home and submit on Google Classroom. The result was positive, as a majority of the students managed to submit on time, with satisfactory marks.
Writing Challenges	Teachers mentioned that writing was the skill that their students struggled with the most during blended learning. A majority of them underperformed during writing tasks. Differences in typing speed and technological familiarity may make it difficult to set deadlines for writing assignments.	Teachers mentioned time constraints when monitoring and managing online writing tasks. Also, students may find it challenging to engage with and write about unfamiliar topics, making the material even harder. Furthermore, technological proficiency had influenced their participation.
Reading Comprehension	Teachers expressed mixed views regarding students’ reading abilities. A teacher stated that their students have no problem with reading activities. While some teachers believed that students’ reading abilities improved during blended learning activities, others noted that some students struggled with deeper comprehension despite being able to read the text.	Teachers noted that participation did not necessarily reflect the understanding of the students during reading activities. Some of them partook in the lessons but did not fully comprehend the reading tasks.
Time Constraints and Integration	Some teachers stated that blended learning required additional instructional time, particularly when introducing students to new digital tools or platforms.	Teachers stressed the need to balance curriculum requirements with time spent teaching digital tools.
Overall Perception of Blended Learning	Despite some challenges, teachers expressed their positive views toward blended learning. They agreed that the implementation of blended learning in their lessons definitely brought more positives than negatives. Some	Teachers described blended learning as beneficial for increasing classroom participation.

	of the teachers also mentioned that they used social media platforms to distribute assignments, which they believed enhanced student engagement and facilitated communication outside of traditional classroom settings.	
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Table 2 presents an overview of the themes identified from the semi-structured interview conducted with teacher participants regarding the implementation of blended learning in ESL classrooms. Overall, teachers reported that blended learning enhanced student engagement and participation during lessons. Students were described as being more enthusiastic and motivated to learn when digital tools and interactive activities were being utilized in lessons. However, several notable moments from the interview were identified regarding challenges, particularly related to students' varying levels of technological proficiency and the time required to manage blended learning activities. In terms of language skills, it is notable that the students were varied in language proficiency. Listening and speaking skills were generally perceived as effective in promoting participation, while writing tasks were considered more challenging due to differences in technical skills, as well as accessibility. On the other hand, teachers had mixed opinions regarding their students' reading comprehension, suggesting that although students may participate in the reading activities, their level of understanding still needed some work, considering quite a number of them just read but never fully understood the texts. Despite these challenges, all of the teacher participants generally viewed blended learning as a valuable approach for enhancing student engagement in mixed-proficiency ESL classrooms.

Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Table 3: Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Theme	Survey Findings	Interview Insights (Including Field Notes)	Interpretation
Technical Skills and Accessibility	Students reported moderate familiarity with technological use and indicated that they most likely did not use computers much unless required.	Teachers reported that some students struggled with digital tools, although others were able to adapt when necessary. Additionally, some teachers reported that there were a handful of students that shared devices with their family members.	Both findings suggest that while some students had access to technology, differences in digital proficiency influenced their participation in blended learning activities.
Listening Skills	Students reported positive responses for listening activities, indicating that blended learning supported their participation.	Teachers observed increased student participation during listening activities when digital materials were used.	Both data sources suggest that blended learning effectively supported listening activities and enhanced student engagement.
Speaking Skills	Students generally agreed that blended learning was advantageous for strengthening their speaking skills. However, some of them reported anxiousness during blended learning speaking activities.	Some teachers reported increased participation only when the speaking topics were something they could relate to. Nonetheless, blended learning was noted as a really beneficial tool to foster participation from the students.	The findings indicate that blended learning could generally attract the students for speaking activities, particularly when the activities and topics were relevant to the students' interests. However, students' anxiety did persist at times.

Reading Skills	Reading recorded the highest mean score among the language skills, indicating blended learning as beneficial for the students.	Some teachers noted that students were able to read texts but occasionally struggled with comprehension.	While students perceived that blended learning could impact performance in reading activities positively, teachers suggested that comprehension issues continued to occur.
Writing Skills	Writing recorded the lowest mean score, indicating greater difficulty during blended learning activities.	Teachers reported that writing tasks were challenging due to varied typing speed, digital proficiency, and time constraints. Also, students' lack of knowledge on various topics made it hard for them to relate to them in their writing.	Both findings indicate that writing was the most challenging skill in blended learning environments.
Motivation and Engagement	Students reported increased motivation and enjoyment when blended learning elements were used.	Teachers observed that students became more participative when blended learning was used in lessons.	Both datasets indicate that blended learning contributed positively to student motivation and engagement.

The triangulation analysis compared findings from the student survey, teacher interviews, and field notes to identify areas of convergence and divergence. Overall, both data sources indicate that blended learning positively influenced student participation in mixed-proficiency ESL classrooms. Students' motivation level and overall participation when blended learning was implemented during lessons were noticeably better, indicating a favorability from the students towards blended learning. As for the four language skills, listening and speaking activities appeared to benefit the most from blended learning integration, while writing activities presented greater challenges for students. In relation to writing, both students and teachers highlighted the role of digital proficiency in influencing participation levels, as well as the variation of their typing speed being one of the reasons for underperformance. Lastly, some divergence was observed in reading skills, where students reported positive experiences while teachers found students struggling with occasional difficulties in comprehension.

Pedagogical Implications

This section elaborates on the pedagogical implications derived from the key findings of the study in relation to the research objectives. The discussion integrates findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data to highlight relevant implications for ESL teaching practices.

Supporting Students' Digital Readiness

The findings of this study indicate that some students experienced difficulties when using digital tools during blended learning activities. Both survey responses and teacher interviews suggested that although many students were familiar with technology, some of them were still rather inexperienced in using the tools to complete tasks such as typing or navigating online platforms. Therefore, it is important for teachers to provide sufficient guidance when introducing these technological tools in their classrooms. For instance, teachers can gradually familiarize their students with the commonly used platforms, such as Google Classroom, educational websites, or presentation tools, before handing them difficult tasks. Additionally, it is also helpful if the instructions and demonstrations for the tools are provided so that the students can learn by themselves, which ultimately boosts their confidence in using technological tools. By supporting students' digital readiness, teachers can ensure that technological challenges do not hinder students' participation in blended learning activities.

Designing Engaging Listening and Speaking Activities

The findings in this study also reveal the tendency of the students to participate more when the topics were interesting and when multimedia was used. This could suggest that teachers should integrate multimedia

materials such as videos, podcasts, and recorded dialogues into listening activities. As for speaking tasks, the activities can be designed around the topics that are relevant to students' interests, such as social media trends or current events. Additionally, teachers can use short clips as the set induction of the lesson, where they act as a discussion starter to encourage students to share their opinions. Pairing or grouping students can also reduce their anxiety in speaking English, as it helps them bond. When students feel more comfortable and engaged with the learning materials, they may become more willing to express their ideas and practice their speaking skills.

Supporting Reading Comprehension in Digital Environments

The findings of this study indicate that students could read but did not fully understand the text. This problem leads to a few possible pedagogical implications, such as teachers should provide guided reading strategies when using digital reading materials. Important vocabulary should be explained as well before students begin reading tasks. Furthermore, to ensure the students' full comprehension, teachers can also include comprehension questions so they can properly understand the content. Some digital tools such as highlighting features or interactive quizzes can help improve students' focus on key information. Lastly, when introducing new topics, teachers should start with shorter and simplified text and gradually increase the difficulty as students become accustomed to them. These strategies help students move beyond simply reading the text and develop deeper comprehension skills.

Adapting Writing Tasks in Blended Learning

The findings of this study indicate that writing skills were the most challenging skills in blended learning environments. Both students and teachers reported that writing tasks were very time-demanding due to differences in typing speed and digital proficiency. Therefore, teachers should consider adapting writing tasks when implementing blended learning activities. For example, allow students to plan their ideas before typing or gradually introduce writing tasks to help students become familiar with the tools. In relation to this, the assignments should begin with simpler tasks and progress to more extensive essays. Lastly, teachers should also consider allowing peer support, where more technologically proficient students assist their weaker classmates during activities. This not only promotes collaborative learning but also reduces pressure on less confident students. As for deadlines, it is highly preferable to set them flexibly, as it can help ease the pressure. These strategies help students become more familiar with digital tools, reduce difficulties in completing writing assignments in digital environments, and support their development of writing skills.

Enhancing Student Motivation through Blended Learning

The findings also reveal that blended learning environments were favored by both students and teachers, as the students were more motivated and participative during the lessons when blended elements were present. Teachers observed an increase in students' enthusiasm when technology was incorporated into classroom activities, regardless of the students' language proficiencies. Therefore, teachers should consider integrating blended learning elements into their teaching practices to create a more interactive learning environment. For instance, the multimedia elements can be in videos, animations, or interactive slides. Additionally, teachers can utilize digital platforms to distribute and submit learning materials efficiently. Given that students reacted positively when blended learning elements were present in the classrooms, these strategies can further motivate the students to partake in the language learning process even more.

Proposed Guideline for Blended Learning

Guideline for Implementing Blended Learning in ESL Classrooms to Enhance Student Participation

Section 1: Introduction

This guideline addresses the third research question of this study: "What practical guidelines can be designed to support teachers in implementing effective blended learning in secondary school ESL classrooms?"

Unlike general recommendations or a simple checklist of strategies, this guideline follows the principles-driven, procedure-oriented framework proposed by Tomlinson and Whittaker (2013) for blended learning in English language teaching. As such, it provides:

- Explicit pedagogical principles (Section 2) derived from both the Tomlinson and Whittaker framework and the findings of the present study;
- A sequenced procedural model (Section 3) organised into four iterative phases;
- Conditional strategies (Section 4) that link specific classroom conditions to teacher actions;
- Observable success indicators (Section 5) to support teacher reflection and formative evaluation.

This guideline is designed specifically for secondary school ESL teachers working with mixed-proficiency classes where students demonstrated varied digital readiness and where writing was identified as the most challenging skill. This guideline assumes that there is access to basic digital tools (e.g., Google Classroom, YouTube, simple polling, or quiz applications) but also provides non-digital alternatives where appropriate.

Another goal of this guideline is not merely to describe blended learning activities but to enhance student participation that is defined behaviorally (e.g., completing tasks, contributing to discussions), cognitively (e.g., asking questions, making connections), and affectively (e.g., reduced anxiety, increased willingness to speak).

Section 2: Underlying Principles (Tomlinson & Whittaker Framework)

This guideline incorporates several guiding principles adapted from Tomlinson and Whittaker's (2013) *Blended Learning in English Language Teaching: Course Design and Implementation*. Their work highlights that there is no fixed formula for blending online and face-to-face learning but instead notes that effective implementation is reliant on the specific needs of the students and their learning context. This idea is particularly relevant to the present study, as the guideline is designed to respond to the realities of mixed-proficiency ESL classrooms.

Principle 1: Pedagogy before Technology

Tomlinson and Whittaker (2013) emphasize that technology should not be used for its own sake. In this guideline, digital tools are selected based on how they support participation, rather than simply adding variety. For example, pre-class listening activities are used in order to help students familiarize themselves with the topics before the lesson in order to improve participation and reduce their anxiety. This reflects the findings that students were more willing to participate after having prior exposure to the content.

Principle 2: Flexibility for Different Learners

The guideline recognizes that there are differences in language proficiency for each learner, as well as the digital divide. As such, flexibility is emphasized in the guideline through elements such as adjustable deadlines and multiple ways of responding (e.g., written or spoken), and additional support like vocabulary lists or guided prompts. This is especially important for writing tasks, which were found to be more challenging for the students.

Principle 3: Integration of Online and Face-to-Face Learning

Rather than treating online and in-class activities as separate, this guideline emphasizes the importance of linking them meaningfully. For example, pre-class materials are used to prepare students for in-class discussions, and their responses are incorporated into classroom activities.

Operationalizing Tomlinson's Model for Guideline Development

The development of this guideline was informed by Tomlinson's model, which emphasizes the integration of input, procedures, principles, and evaluation in instructional design.

In this study, input was derived from the findings related to students' participation, engagement, and challenges encountered in blended learning environments. These findings provided valuable insights into learners' needs, particularly in mixed-proficiency ESL classrooms.

The procedure component of this study is reflected in the structured phases of the guideline, which outline the step-by-step strategies for planning, designing, and implementing blended learning activities.

In terms of principal, the guideline incorporates student-centered learning, the use of engaging and relevant materials to enhance engagement, and differentiated instruction to cater to various proficiency levels among students.

Lastly, evaluation becomes incorporated in reflective teaching practices wherein the teacher evaluates the participation and performance of students and makes the needed changes for subsequent lessons.

With this integration, the guideline goes beyond mere guidelines into a theoretical framework for implementing blended learning practices.

Section 3: Procedural Framework: The Four-Phase Cycle

This guideline goes beyond being a static list of strategies. It is organized as an iterative four-phase cycle that teachers can implement over approximately a 6-8 week period, based on an estimated frequency of two ESL lessons per week.

Phase	Focus	Duration	Key Output
Phase 1	Digital Readiness Audit	1-2 lessons	Student digital profile; peer mentor assignments
Phase 2	Pre-Class Engagement (Flipped Element)	Ongoing (before each lessons)	Student posts; pre-class comprehension
Phase 3	In-Class Participation Design	Each lesson	Observed participation events
Phase 4	Motivation & Sustainment	Biweekly	Feedback data; adjusted activity types

Phase 1: Digital Readiness Audit

Purpose: To reduce the anxiety of students in blended learning classes and ensure equal participation across all proficiency levels.

Teacher Actions (Step-by-Step):

1. Administer a 5-question digital self-check (2 minutes, anonymous):

- "Can you upload a file to Google Classroom?"
- "Can you record a voice note on your phone?"
- "Can you post a comment and reply to a classmate?"
- "Can you open a video link and watch it at home?"

- “Rate your confidence using digital tools for English class (1 = very low, 5 = very high).”

2. Introduce one new digital tool per week (e.g., Week 1: Google Classroom commenting; Week 2: Padlet; Week 3: Mentimeter).
3. Provide 2-minute screencast demonstrations showing each task step-by-step.
4. Establish fixed peer mentor pairs for two weeks, pairing a digitally confident student with a less confident student.

Differentiation:

Low digital readiness: Provide printed task instructions with an in-class guided practice session before independent work.

High digital readiness: Appoint students as “tech mentors” (earn participation badges).

Success indicator: 90% of students complete the first pre-class task independently by Week 3.

Phase 2: Pre-Class Engagement (Flipped Element)

Purpose: Activate prior knowledge, reduce in-class anxiety (especially for listening and speaking), and ensure all students arrive with shared content exposure.

Teacher Actions (Step-by-Step):

1. Release/Play/Share a 3–5 minute video or audio clip on the lesson topic (e.g., a short dialogue, a news excerpt, or a narrative).
2. Attach 2–3 guided comprehension questions (not graded for correctness; e.g., “What is the main problem?” “How does the speaker feel?”)
3. Require students to post one question or one personal connection on Google Classroom before class (e.g., “This reminds me of...” “I don’t understand why...”).
4. Use pre-class responses to design in-class discussion prompts (e.g., “Several of you asked about X — let’s discuss that now.”).

In case of a lack of digital access:

- Teachers may provide downloadable or offline materials for students with limited internet access.
- Teachers can show the videos briefly during class before activities begin.
- Teachers may prepare printed summaries or simplified notes for students with limited device access.
- Teachers could pair or group the students to assist their peers who are unable to access materials beforehand.

Differentiation:

Lower proficiency: Provide transcript + 5 key vocabulary items with pictures/definitions.

Higher proficiency: Ask for an open-ended prediction or opinion (e.g., “What would you do next?”).

Success indicator: At least 75% of students post a meaningful comment before class by Week 4.

Phase 3: In-Class Participation Design (by Skill Area)

This phase translates pre-class exposure into active, low-anxiety production. Strategies are organized by the language skills identified in the study findings.

Listening and Speaking

Condition (from findings): Students were more willing to participate when activities involved engaging, relatable topics supported with digital tools; students were able to speak, but anxiety persisted.

Teacher Actions:

1. Use “Think-Pair-Share 2.0”:

- Think (1 min): Play a 30–60 second clip; students listen for one specific detail.
- Pair (3 min): Discuss with partner using sentence starters (“I heard that...” and “I think the speaker felt...”).
- Share (2 min): Each pair submits one idea via digital poll (Mentimeter, Poll Everywhere) (no whole-class cold calling.)

2. Use familiar or trending topics (e.g., TikTok trends, school events, local news) as listening material.

Anxiety reduction: All speaking occurs in pairs or small groups first; whole-class sharing is anonymous via poll or written format.

Success indicator: Increased number of voluntary speaking turns (teacher observation checklist).

Reading Comprehension

Condition (from findings): Although students were able to read, they had problems with comprehension.

Teacher Actions:

1. Pre-teach 5–7 key vocabulary items (using images, examples, L1 translation where appropriate).

2. Provide 3 guiding comprehension questions before students read.

Example:

- Question 1 (Prediction): "Based on the title and the main image on your screen, what do you think the main character is trying to achieve in this story?"
- Question 2 (Vocabulary Context): "Look at the bold words in the first paragraph online. Have you heard these words used in a movie or conversation before?"
- Question 3 (Personal Connection): "Before we open the link, how would you handle a situation where you had to move to a completely new school or city?"

3. Use digital annotation (e.g., Google Docs highlight function): Students highlight evidence for each question in a different color.

4. In pairs, students explain their highlighting to another pair (“Show me where you found the answer to question 2.”).

5. Encourage discussion to deepen understanding

Differentiation:

Lower proficiency: Shorter text; questions in L1 or simplified English.

Higher proficiency: Unseen follow-up question requiring inference.

Success indicator: Correct answers to guiding questions improve from baseline (pre-test) by at least 20%.

Writing Skills

Condition (from findings): Writing was identified as the most challenging skill due to differences in typing speed and digital proficiency.

Teacher actions (micro-tasks)

Day	Task	Scaffold Provided
Day 1	Write 3 sentences on a familiar topic	Sentence starters (e.g., “First,...”, “I think...”)
Day 2	Add 2 supporting details	Detail prompts (e.g., “For example,...”, “This shows...”)
Day 3	Peer review using structured form	“2 stars and 1 wish” template Example:  Teacher’s Operational Note: This is a structured framework that directly lowers writing anxiety and boosts student interaction during peer-review sessions. Providing explicit sentence starters reduces the cognitive effort needed to formulate feedback, allowing lower-proficiency learners to comment confidently on their peers’ essays without freezing up. As for higher-proficiency learners, teachers can reduce the number of examples and encourage them to build their own sentences instead. The ‘Two Stars’ prompts require students to identify strong vocabulary or good sentence structures first, which builds writer confidence. The single ‘Wish’ prompt structures corrections into a constructive editing suggestion rather than a harsh red mark.

		Teachers should pin these prompts directly inside the digital writing platform or shared document layout before students begin peer-editing.
Day 4	Submit revised version	Checklist (capitalisation, full stops, topic sentence)

Flexible deadline policy: Students may request a reasonable deadline extension without penalty, provided they email the request 24 hours before the original deadline.

Differentiation:

Lower proficiency: Typing is optional, meaning they can do a handwritten submission with a photo(s) uploaded.

Higher proficiency: Add a concluding sentence independently.

Success indicator: Completion rate rises from baseline; more students attempt longer writing tasks by Week 6.

Phase 4: Motivation and Participation Sustainment

Purpose: Prevent the novelty effect from wearing off and maintain engagement over time.

Teacher Actions (Biweekly):

1. Conduct a 3-minute anonymous feedback poll:

- “What digital tool helped you participate most this week?”
- “What frustrated you or made you less likely to participate?”
- “What topic would you like to talk about next?”

2. Rotate activity types on a two-week cycle:

- Week A: Video-based discussion + interactive quiz (Kahoot!)
- Week B: Audio-only listening + digital poster (Canva or Google Slides)
- Week C: Reading annotation + paired explanation

3. Use participation badges (digital or physical):

- “First to post” (pre-class comment)
- “Helpful peer reply” (responding to a classmate’s question)
- “Most improved tech use” (teacher nomination)

Positive reinforcement: At the start of each lesson, name 2–3 students publicly for specific participation actions (e.g., “Aina posted a really thoughtful question last night.” Let’s start with her idea”).

Note: Teachers are highly encouraged to implement more new ideas to keep the lessons fresh for the students to participate in.

Success indicator: Participation rate (measured by task completion and in-class observation) remains above 70% after 6 weeks.

Section 4: Guideline Summary Table

The following table showcases the summary of the guideline that is suitable for quick classroom reference:

Focus Area	Barrier (from findings)	Teacher Actions (step-by-step)	Success Indicator
Digital readiness audit	Varying technological proficiency	1. 5-question audit. 2. One tool/week. 3. Peer mentor pairs. 4. Screencast demos.	90% complete first pre-class task independently by Week 3
Pre-class listening (flipped)	Positive response to multimedia, but uneven access	1. 3–5 min video/audio. 2. 2–3 guided Qs. 3. Required one post (question/connection). 4. Use posts to shape in-class discussion	75% post meaningful comments before class by Week 4
Speaking participation	Anxiety with unfamiliar topics	1. Relatable/trending topic. 2. Think-Pair-Share 2.0. 3. Digital poll for anonymous sharing. 4. No cold calling	Increased voluntary speaking turns (teacher observation)
Reading comprehension	Can read text but cannot infer meaning	1. Pre-teach 5–7 keywords. 2. Guiding Qs before reading. 3. Digital annotation (colour-coded). 4. Pair explanation of evidence 5. Encourage group discussions	20% improvement from baseline on comprehension Qs
Writing skills	Typing speed and digital proficiency gaps	1. Chunk into 4-day micro-tasks. 2. Scaffolds for each day. 3. Flexible extension 4. Handwritten option	Higher completion rate; more students attempt longer tasks
Sustained motivation	Enthusiasm declines after initial novelty	1. Biweekly feedback poll. 2. Rotate activity types every 2 weeks. 3. Participation badges. 4. Give positive reinforcement	Participation >70% after 6 weeks

Section 5: Teacher Reflection and Formative Evaluation

Following Tomlinson and Whittaker’s (2013) emphasis on adapting to the teaching context, this guideline is not meant to be applied rigidly. Instead, teachers are encouraged to reflect on their lessons and make adjustments based on what works best for their students. To support this, a brief reflective log can be completed at the end of every two-week cycle, guided by the following questions:

- Are all students able to access and use the digital tools effectively?
- Which activities generated the most student participation?
- Did the tasks cater to students with different proficiency levels?
- Were students actively engaged during both online and face-to-face components?

- What challenges did students encounter during the lesson?
- How can the lesson be improved for future implementation?

Sample (based on findings):

Cycle 1, Week 2: Several students completed the reading task but showed weak understanding. Barrier: Limited vocabulary. Adjustment for Cycle 2: Pre-teach key vocabulary before the reading activity.

Cycle 1, Week 2: Some students took too long to complete the writing task. Barrier: Difficulty organising ideas and typing. Adjustment for Cycle 2: Provide sentence starters and allow draft planning on paper.

Cycle 1, Week 2: A few students were passive during the online activity. Barrier: Lack of interaction. Adjustment for Cycle 2: Include a simple discussion prompt requiring peer responses.

Summary of the Guideline

To summarize, this guideline covers the importance of aligning blended learning practices with students' needs and abilities to enhance participation in ESL classrooms. The findings of the study suggest that while blended learning can increase the participation and motivation of students, it still relies heavily on how well the teachers implement them in their lessons.

By supporting the students' digital readiness, designing suitable and meaningful activities, and providing ample support and scaffolding across language skills, teachers can create a more conducive and engaging learning environment. Additionally, the integration of pre-class and in-class learning allows students to engage with content more deeply and participate more actively during lessons.

Finally, by drawing on Tomlinson and Whittaker's (2013) model for blended learning in ELT, the guideline provides a structured yet flexible approach that serves as a practical reference for teachers to adapt blended learning strategies in ways that are responsive to their students' needs, ultimately contributing to improved participation and learning outcomes in ESL classrooms.

Unlike a simple list of recommendations, this guideline provides:

- Three underlying principles that justify every strategy;
- A four-phase iterative cycle (Digital Readiness → Pre-Class Engagement → In-Class Participation → Motivation Sustainment);
- Conditional strategies organised by skill area and barrier type;
- Observable success indicators for teacher self-evaluation;
- A reflective log for context-responsive adaptation.

By following this guideline, secondary ESL teachers can go beyond generic "use more technology" advice and actually implement proper ways of using blended learning in a more systematic way that can enhance student participation across many constructs, including technology readiness, motivational sustainment, and all four English language skills. Nonetheless, future research should empirically test this guideline in different secondary ESL contexts and measure its effect on participation longitudinally, ideally using mixed methods to capture both behavioral and affective dimensions of engagement.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this entire research journey serves as a powerful reminder that the success of digital education relies heavily on the human realities of the classroom. The data has beautifully proven that blended learning is an approach that is highly favored. If it is implemented correctly, both teachers and students genuinely feel that it breathes new life into the lesson, making it more conducive, resulting in a boost of motivation, as well as enhancing the overall learning experience.

However, the ultimate verdict of this is that proper execution is crucial. As secondary schools move forward under current national master plans such as Rancangan Pendidikan Malaysia (2026-2035), we must realize that infrastructure alone is not sufficient. If real-world challenges are something that is overlooked, such as the challenges that hinder students' participation and the diverse needs of mixed-proficiency classrooms, technology can easily turn from an exciting bridge into an overwhelming barrier.

Ultimately, it is hoped that this research will inspire a shift toward a more empathetic, balanced, and teacher-supported digital learning environment. By using practical, reality-based tools like the pedagogical practical guidelines that are created in this study, the education system can finally achieve the flexibility that is missing. This framework recognizes that the only way to truly relieve the pressure on teachers while improving student participation is by directly mitigating the day-to-day technology anxieties and learning challenges faced by their students. By protecting teachers' time, reducing digital stress for the learners, and supporting lower-form secondary students of all proficiency levels, public schools can transform into spaces where every single student can feel confident, secure, and fully participate in lessons with ease.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Blended Learning Pedagogical Guideline (Infographic)

