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EXPLORING STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF BLENDED ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN MALAYSIAN TERTIARY EDUCATION

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Abstract:

This study examined tertiary students' perceptions of blended English language learning, focusing on three dimensions of interaction: student-content, student-student, and student-teacher interaction. Guided by Moore's Interaction Theory, the study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design involving 641 students with experience in online and blended English language learning at selected Malaysian higher education institutions. Data were collected using a seven-point Likert-scale questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed positive perceptions across all three interaction dimensions. Student-content interaction recorded the highest overall mean (M = 5.33, SD = 1.151), followed by student-teacher interaction (M = 5.15, SD = 1.213) and student-student interaction (M = 5.06, SD = 1.341). At the item level, students particularly valued, useful information from educators (M = 5.73, SD = 1.017), appropriate educator guidance (M = 5.72, SD = 1.073), and attractive online learning materials (M = 5.51, SD = 1.090). However, comparatively lower ratings for willingness to share opinions with educators (M = 4.63, SD = 1.318) and lesson-related problems with peers (M = 4.76, SD = 1.505) indicate that student-initiated communication remains an area for improvement. These findings suggest that positive blended English language learning experiences are associated not only with accessible and well-designed digital content but also with effective teacher guidance and opportunities for meaningful peer interaction. The study contributes quantitative evidence on the relative strengths and areas for improvement across the three interaction dimensions, with

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implications for designing more interactive and learner-centred blended English language courses in Malaysian tertiary education.

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Keyword:

Blended Learning; English; Perception; Students; Tertiary Education

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Introduction

In contemporary higher education, blended learning has emerged as a cornerstone instructional approach, redefining the delivery of English language education by combining traditional face-to-face instruction with structured online learning activities. By blending physical classrooms with virtual domains, this hybrid model aims to integrate the pedagogical advantages of both environments. In English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts, blended learning provides vital opportunities for tertiary students to access digital materials, communicate with lecturers, collaborate with peers, and participate in flexible language learning environments. Rather than replacing the instructor, the blended model serves as an interactive, technology-enhanced extension of the classroom, aligning language instruction with the communicative demands of modern tertiary curricula.

Within the Malaysian higher education landscape, the integration of blended learning has evolved rapidly. What originally began as an emergency pedagogical response to systemic learning disruptions has now transitioned into a sustainable and institutionalized standard of instruction across public and private universities. This transition is strategically supported by national policy initiatives, most notably the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (Higher Education), which prioritises leveraging global online learning to enhance educational access, support learner-centered teaching methodologies, and foster digital literacy among graduates. As tertiary institutions across Malaysia establish hybrid learning designs as permanent instructional components, understanding how students navigate and perceive these environments is paramount to maintaining academic quality and student engagement.

Despite widespread institutional adoption, the ultimate success of blended English language learning depends fundamentally on students' subjective perceptions, readiness, and active interaction experiences. In language acquisition—where proficiency is built through

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collaborative socialization and iterative practice—learning is a communicative process rather than a passive consumption of content. Consequently, evaluating students' perceptions of blended English learning requires a focused examination of their experiences across three primary, critical dimensions of the blended classroom: student-content interaction, student-student interaction, and student-teacher interaction. These three modes of classroom interaction serve as critical presences that influence overall learning effectiveness, student engagement, and academic satisfaction.

Literature Review

Moore's Interaction Theory

In the domain of distance and technology-mediated education, Moore's (1989) seminal Interaction Theory serves as the foundational conceptual framework for understanding how learning occurs when physical distance separates participants. Moore introduced the concept of "transactional distance," which posits that distance in education is not merely a geographic separation, but a cognitive and communicative gap that exists between the learner and the educator. This psychological and operational space is highly variable and is defined by three major educational variables: dialogue, course structure, and learner autonomy. To effectively bridge this transactional gap and ensure high pedagogical quality, educational systems must foster structured and meaningful interactions within the learning environment. Under this framework, classroom interaction is categorised into three primary, interdependent constructs: student-content, student-student, and student-teacher interactions. These three interactive domains are widely recognised as primary pillars of classroom interaction in hybrid and blended language courses, serving as critical presences that directly influence student engagement, academic satisfaction, overall learner satisfaction, and ultimate language proficiency (Karlinda & Srivastava, 2025; Chaves-Yuste & de-la-Peña, 2026; Qiu, 2025; Wu, 2024). Taken together, the literature suggests that students' experiences of blended English language learning are associated with three interconnected dimensions of interaction—student-content, student-student, and student-teacher interaction —each of which contributes a distinct aspect of the learning experience. Accordingly, Moore's framework provides a useful theoretical basis for examining these interaction dimensions within blended English language learning environments.

Student-Content Interaction in Blended English Language Learning

Student-content interaction represents the intellectual and cognitive process through which learners engage with digital instructional materials, navigate online course resources, and integrate new knowledge with their prior experiences (Zhang & Vongurai, 2025). In a blended English language learning (BELL) environment, the structural, technical, and visual conditions of online learning materials significantly dictate their educational utility (Feng et al., 2025). When instructional materials are developed systematically and attractively to support the achievement of learning objectives, online resources can substantially enhance educational effectiveness through their temporal flexibility and continuous accessibility (Arias et al., 2018; Darmayanti & Lastari, 2022; Saboor et al., 2025). However, a breakdown in this interaction occurs when digital materials lack pedagogical clarity, scaffolded guidance, or appropriate visual design, which directly induces cognitive overload and digital fatigue among language learners (Pan et al., 2024; Wu, 2024).

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Therefore, successful student-content interaction relies on a careful balance between the presentation quality of online content and its direct alignment with lesson outcomes (Darmayanti & Lastari, 2022). Furthermore, effective course designs must move beyond merely providing access to digital content by ensuring the materials connect with learners' background knowledge, thereby promoting active learning, interpretation, and higher-level cognitive engagement (Verma et al., 2023). Within the English as a Second Language (ESL) domain, technology-enhanced learning supports language performance and comprehension (Hafeez et al., 2023), provided that students are supported with accessible, user-friendly, and manageable online instructional content (Abdul Halim et al., 2024).

Student-Student Interaction and Collaborative Language Learning

Language acquisition is inherently a social and communicative process, making peer-to-peer collaboration and social connectivity critical dimensions of any hybrid learning environment (Zhang & Vongurai, 2025). Student-student interaction encompasses peer collaboration, online discussion boards, and the development of interpersonal relationships during virtual and physical learning sessions (Ateerah et al., 2022). Empirical literature demonstrates that structured peer collaborative activities, such as group tasks and joint assignments, are highly valued by tertiary students because they facilitate teamwork, mutual academic support, and active classroom participation (Parmar et al., 2025). However, if blended or physical activities fail to integrate deliberate opportunities for collaborative discourse, student-student interaction becomes severely limited, resulting in deep feelings of social isolation and reduced peer communication (Alimi et al., 2021; Pan et al., 2024; Qiu, 2025).

While students are highly capable of adapting to structured academic collaboration, they often display a behavioural gap when initiating spontaneous, personal, or problem-focused interactions with their peers. This is driven by communication barriers such as reluctance to participate, introversion, and anxiety regarding the disclosure of academic difficulties to peers (Parmar et al., 2025). Thus, while peer support and a sense of community significantly contribute to student engagement and motivation (Abdul Halim et al., 2024), deliberate pedagogical interventions are required to lower these communicative barriers and support peer socialisation.

Student-Teacher Interaction and Instructional Presence

The presence, support, and guidance of the educator represent another key pillar in determining the academic success and quality of blended learning (Huang et al., 2026; Wu, 2026). Student-teacher interaction is defined by the immediacy of teacher feedback, instructional facilitation, and active two-way communication. In hybrid settings, student satisfaction and performance are strongly influenced by adaptive instructor guidance, positive teaching styles, and real-time guidance (Xinfa et al., 2025; Xiong, 2025). Students perceive a strong "teaching presence" when educators provide clear communication, effective instructions, and appropriate guidance throughout the learning process (Su et al., 2023).

However, if this relationship is neglected, and the class lacks timely feedback, clear instructional direction, or active engagement from the lecturer, student-teacher interaction diminishes, leaving language learners without adequate academic and emotional support (Pan et al., 2024; Qiu, 2025; Wu, 2024). Furthermore, a notable tension exists between structured, instructor-led communication and student-initiated interactions. While students highly

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appreciate obtaining useful instructional information and guidelines from their teachers, they exhibit a pronounced hesitation to initiate private communication to disclose learning difficulties or actively share personal opinions during virtual live sessions (Priadi, 2020). Because effective learning fundamentally requires two-way rather than one-way communication, educators must implement intentional communication strategies that encourage active student participation, utilise multiple communication tools, and extend interaction beyond online classes to make academic assistance highly approachable (Priadi, 2020; Abdul Halim et al., 2024).

Synergistic Influence of Interactions on Blended Learning Perception

In the tertiary blended learning landscape, student-content, student-student, and student-teacher interactions do not exist as isolated silos but rather form an interlocking web of instructional dynamics (Chen & Teh, 2022). The successful and synergistic integration of all three interaction domains is what ultimately shapes students' online learning experiences and overall positive impressions (Chen & Teh, 2022). For national educational frameworks such as the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (Higher Education), which prioritises leveraging global online learning to enhance educational access and foster digital literacy, achieving these mandates requires a holistic focus on the quality of these interactions (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015).

A student's online learning self-efficacy is positively associated with internal and background attributes, parental learning support, and their adaptability to hybrid dynamics (Andrew et al., 2021). Furthermore, student-teacher interaction remains a significant positive factor in sustaining student engagement in online education (Wijetunga, 2024), but this must be reinforced by highly accessible digital content (Arias et al., 2018) and collaborative peer networks (Ateerah et al., 2022). By systematically evaluating students' perceptions of these three interaction domains from a quantitative, empirical perspective, educators and curriculum developers can obtain the actionable insights needed to design balanced, interactive, and learner-centered blended English courses.

Problem Statement

Although blended learning offers flexibility, accessibility, and expanded learning opportunities in tertiary contexts (Alimi et al., 2021; Wu, 2024), its pedagogical success in English language education fundamentally depends on how students perceive and experience the quality of learning interactions (Chaves-Yuste & de-la-Peña, 2026; Wu, 2024). While digital platforms and online activities can enhance learner autonomy and provide continuous exposure to language content (Wang & Chen, 2024; Wu, 2024), tertiary students frequently encounter operational and instructional challenges. These include unstable internet connectivity, technical glitches, digital fatigue, difficulty comprehending online content independently, limited opportunities for peer collaboration, and reduced direct lecturer support (Alimi et al., 2021; Peungcharoenkun & Waluyo, 2024; Wu, 2024).

In a blended language learning environment, three primary modes of interaction; student-content, student-student, and student-teacher serve as critical presences that influence overall learning effectiveness, student engagement, and academic satisfaction (Chaves-Yuste & de-la-Peña, 2026; Qiu, 2025; Wu, 2024). When online materials lack clarity or scaffolded guidance, student-content interaction suffers, leading to cognitive overload (Pan et al., 2024; Wu, 2024).

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Similarly, if virtual or physical activities fail to foster collaborative discourse, student-student interaction becomes limited, resulting in feelings of isolation and reduced peer communication (Alimi et al., 2021; Pan et al., 2024; Qiu, 2025). Furthermore, without timely feedback, clear instructional direction, and continuous encouragement from the lecturer, student-teacher interaction diminishes, leaving learners without adequate academic and emotional support (Pan et al., 2024; Qiu, 2025; Wu, 2024).

Despite the widespread adoption of blended learning in Malaysian higher education, existing empirical literature has predominantly focused on general digital readiness, technology acceptance models, and emergency remote teaching challenges during initial pandemic disruptions (Alimi et al., 2021; Hamzah et al., 2021; Su et al., 2023). Consequently, previous studies have largely overlooked a systematic, theory-grounded evaluation of how distinct classroom interaction domains—specifically student-content, student-student, and student-teacher interactions—shape language learning experiences in institutionalised, post-pandemic hybrid contexts (Chaves-Yuste & de-la-Peña, 2026; Wu, 2024). Furthermore, prior research often treats online interaction as a monolithic construct, neglecting critical behavioral nuances within interaction types, such as tertiary ESL learners' willingness to complete structured, teacher-assigned group tasks alongside their pronounced hesitation to initiate spontaneous peer discussions or privately seek instructor guidance (Parmar et al., 2025; Priadi, 2020).

Given these varying experiences and systemic barriers in Malaysian higher education, aligned with broader initiatives such as the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (Higher Education) to leverage global online learning (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015), it is essential to systematically examine students' perceptions across these three specific interaction domains from a quantitative perspective (Chaves-Yuste & de-la-Peña, 2026; Wu, 2024). Investigating how tertiary students evaluate student-content, student-student, and student-teacher interactions will clarify the extent to which they perceive blended English language learning as effective and positive, ultimately offering empirical insights to optimise blended course design and delivery (Chaves-Yuste & de-la-Peña, 2026; Wu, 2024).

Research Objectives

1. To examine tertiary students' overall perceptions of student-content interaction in blended English language learning across academic programmes (foundation, diploma and degree).
2. To examine tertiary students' overall perceptions of student-student interaction in blended English language learning across academic programmes (foundation, diploma and degree).
3. To examine tertiary students' overall perceptions of student-teacher interaction in blended English language learning across academic programmes (foundation, diploma and degree).
4. To evaluate the overall perceived effectiveness and positive impression of blended English language learning among tertiary language learners.

Research Questions

What are tertiary students' overall perceptions of student-content interaction in blended English language learning?

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1. What are tertiary students' overall perceptions of student-student interaction in blended English language learning?
2. What are tertiary students' overall perceptions of student-teacher interaction in blended English language learning?
3. To what extent do tertiary students perceive blended English language learning as effective overall?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to investigate tertiary students' perceptions of blended English language learning. A cross-sectional survey design enables researchers to collect data on participants' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences at a specific point in time, making it appropriate for examining technology-mediated learning among a relatively large group of respondents (Alimi et al., 2021). In the Malaysian higher education context, blended learning, which integrates face-to-face instruction with online learning components, has increasingly become part of contemporary instructional practices (Abdul Karim et al., 2026). Accordingly, the quantitative cross-sectional design was considered appropriate for the present study as it enabled the systematic examination of students' perceptions of student-content, student-student, and student-teacher interactions within blended English language learning environments across selected tertiary institutions.

Participants and Sampling

A total of 641 students with prior experience in online distance and blended English language learning participated in the study. Participants were recruited using a non-probability convenience sampling technique, which was considered appropriate given the practical and institutional constraints associated with accessing the target population (Huang et al., 2026). The sample comprised foundation, diploma, and degree students from selected Malaysian higher education institutions (HEIs), providing representation across different levels of tertiary education.

The relatively large sample size ($N = 641$) provided an adequate basis for the statistical analyses conducted in this study and enabled the researchers to capture a range of student perspectives across the participating institutions. Nevertheless, as convenience sampling does not provide all members of the target population with an equal probability of selection, the findings should be interpreted within the context of the sampled institutions and participants rather than generalised to the entire Malaysian tertiary student population.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, which is an established, highly accessible platform for large-scale survey administration in tertiary contexts. The questionnaire utilised a seven-point Likert scale (ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree) to provide a more precise measure of students' perceptions (Koo & Yaang, 2025).

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To evaluate the blended English learning environment comprehensively, the instrument focused on three core dimensions (Karlinda & Srivastava, 2025) of classroom interaction:

1. **Student-Content Interaction:** Evaluating students' engagement and self-paced navigation of digital course materials (Zhang & Vongurai, 2025).

2. **Student-Student Interaction:** Assessing peer-to-peer collaboration, online discussions, and social connectivity (Zhang & Vongurai, 2025).

3. **Student-Teacher Interaction:** Measuring the immediacy of teacher feedback, instructional facilitation, and online communication (Huang et al., 2026; Wu, 2026).

These three dimensions are recognised as the primary pillars of interaction in hybrid and blended language courses, directly influencing overall learner satisfaction, engagement, and language proficiency.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were processed and analysed using SPSS to compute descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations (Schwitter & Liebe, 2025). Descriptive statistics are vital for summarising the central tendencies and variability of student attitudes toward the implemented blended teaching methodologies.

Findings

Table 1: The Demographic Characteristics Of The Study Participants.

Demographic Variable	**N**	**%**
Level of Studies		
Foundation	618	96.4%
Degree	23	3.6%
Hometown		
City/Town	451	70.4%
Rural/Suburban	190	29.6%
Age		
Less than 20 years old	618	96.4%
20 years old	23	3.6%

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Gender		
Female	417	65.1%
Male	224	34.9%
Items	**Yes**	**No**
Assessing the internet	639	2
Online materials	634	7
Online classes	641	0
Using Google Meet as a platform for online classe	628	13 (others)

Table 1 details the demographic profile of the participants, highlighting a female majority among the respondents. This gender distribution aligns with national statistics indicating higher female enrollment rates in Malaysian public tertiary institutions (Hirschmann, 2021). In terms of age, most participants were 18 years old, as the questionnaire was primarily administered to Foundation students. Furthermore, over half of the respondents resided in rural areas yet maintained sufficient internet access to participate in online instruction. The data also indicate that students possessed prior experience with virtual learning environments and were capable of utilizing online learning materials. Throughout the course, participants were required to engage via the Google Meet platform, demonstrating that optimal online learning experiences rely on foundational prerequisites such as access to reliable digital devices, stable high-speed internet coverage, and digital literacy in navigating online instructional content (Gottschalk & Weise, 2023).

To evaluate the construct of student-content interaction, several crucial elements warrant further examination, particularly the structural and technical conditions of the online learning materials (Feng et al., 2025). Incorporating this component is essential to guarantee that learners receive high-quality instructional resources, especially given empirical evidence demonstrating that online learning materials enhance educational effectiveness through their temporal flexibility and continuous accessibility (Arias et al., 2018). To address these dimensions, the specific measurement items evaluating student-content interaction are detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Levels of Agreement Across Constructs

Constructs	**Poor**	**Average**	**Good**
Student-content interaction	8	254	379
Student-student Interaction	37	286	318
Student-teacher Interaction	15	277	349

Table 2 depicts the descriptive results regarding the respondents' levels of agreement across each evaluated domain. Overall, a majority of participants expressed agreement with the statements in every construct, indicating an overwhelmingly positive impression of the online

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learning experience. This finding is consistent with Chen and Teh (2022), who highlighted the importance of student-content, student-instructor, and student-student interactions in shaping students' online learning experiences. Their study further demonstrated that effective online learning requires appropriate pedagogical practices, conducive learning environments, regular instructor support, and opportunities for virtual communication and collaboration. Similarly, Wijetunga (2024) found that student-teacher interaction was a significant positive factor in students' engagement in online education as it is vital in maintaining meaningful interaction between students and instructors. Crucially, the present findings demonstrate that students can adapt well to these interactional dynamics regardless of their geographical location, whether residing in rural or urban settings. This is further supported by Andrew et al. (2021), who reported that background attributes, parental learning support, and adaptability were positively associated with students' online learning self-efficacy.

Research Question 1: What are tertiary students' overall perceptions of student-content interaction in blended English language learning?

To address the research question regarding students' perceptions of student-content interaction in blended English language learning, descriptive statistics, specifically means
(M) and standard deviations (SD) were analyszed for the five items constituting this domain. The overall findings demonstrate a consistently high level of agreement across all evaluated parameters, indicating an overwhelmingly positive student perception of the online instructional content.

Table 3: Items For Student-Content Interaction

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.The online materials of the lesson able to instil learners with good qualities	5.27	1.129
2.The online materials shared by the educators are attractive	5.51	1.090
3.The online materials can deepen the understanding of the learners to the subject matter	5.17	1.259
4.The online materials meet the learning outcome of the lesson	5.39	1.168
5.The contents of the materials are relatable with learners' background knowledge	5.33	1.121

As presented in Table 3, respondents reported the highest agreement regarding the visual and structural appeal of the digital resources, with Item 2 ("The online materials shared by the educators are attractive") obtaining the highest mean score (M = 5.51, SD = 1.090). Students also strongly agreed that the instructional content was well-aligned with course objectives, as shown by Item 4 ("The online materials meet the learning outcome of the lesson" (M = 5.39, SD = 1.168). This finding suggests that students value not only the availability of digital materials but also the way these resources are designed and presented. This observation is consistent with Darmayanti and Lastari (2022) and Saboor et al., (2025), who emphasised that

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digital teaching materials should be developed systematically and attractively to support the achievement of learning objectives.

Students also strongly agreed that the instructional content was well aligned with the course objectives, as reflected in Item 4 ("The online materials meet the learning outcome of the lesson"), which recorded a similarly high mean score (M = 5.39, SD = 1.168). Taken together, these findings indicate that students' positive perceptions of digital learning resources are shaped by both their presentation quality and pedagogical relevance. This interpretation is further supported by Darmayanti and Lastari (2022), who concluded that the presentation of learning content and learning tools constitutes a critical aspect of successful online learning and influences students' comprehension.

Furthermore, the materials successfully connected with the learners' prior experiences, as indicated by Item 5 ("The contents of the materials are relatable with learners' background knowledge" (M = 5.33, SD = 1.121). This finding suggests that the online materials were sufficiently relevant and meaningful for students to relate new content to their existing knowledge and learning experiences. Such pedagogical relevance is important in technology-enhanced learning, as effective course design should promote active learning, interpretation, and higher-level cognitive engagement rather than merely provide access to digital content (Verma et al., 2023). Positive perceptions were also evident in the developmental and cognitive value of the materials. Respondents agreed that the online materials could instill positive qualities in learners (Item 1; M = 5.27, SD = 1.129) and deepen their understanding of the subject matter (Item 3; M = 5.17, SD = 1.259). These findings suggest that online materials can support both learners' personal development and subject understanding. This is consistent with Verma et al. (2023), who highlighted the role of technology-enhanced learning in promoting engagement and cognitive skills, while Hafeez et al. (2023) found that blended learning improved students' English performance, particularly their comprehension.

Research Question 2: What are tertiary students' overall perceptions of student-student interaction in blended English language learning?

The level of mean is high and it is indicated that most of the respondents agree with the elements relating to student interaction. In addition, if the mean is greater than 3.66, it means that the level of respondents' perception about certain aspects is high.

Table 4 Items For Student-Student Interaction

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
I can interact well with other classmates during online lesson	4.81	1.433
I am able to collaborate with fellow classmates to complete any task given by the educator	5.32	1.237
I can share problem related to lesson with my classmates	4.76	1.505
I am able to assist my classmates when they have issues on the lesson	5.14	1.244

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I develop new relationship rather than the existing one during online	5.27	1.387

As presented in Table 4, all five items recorded mean scores above the high-perception threshold (M > 3.66), indicating that students generally perceived student-student interaction positively in blended English language learning (Ateerah et al., 2022). The highest mean score was recorded for Item 2 ("I am able to collaborate with fellow classmates to complete any task given by the educator") (M = 5.32, SD = 1.237), suggesting that students particularly valued opportunities for peer collaboration. This finding highlights the importance of collaborative activities in facilitating meaningful interaction, as peer collaboration can support effective online learning through teamwork, mutual support, and active participation. Students also reported positive perceptions of developing new relationships during online learning (Item 5; M = 5.27, SD = 1.387) and assisting classmates who encountered difficulties with the lesson (Item 4; M = 5.14, SD = 1.244). These findings suggest that blended learning can provide opportunities for students to establish supportive peer relationships beyond existing friendships.

Nevertheless, comparatively lower mean scores were recorded for students' ability to interact well with classmates (Item 1; M = 4.81, SD = 1.433) and share lesson-related problems with peers (Item 3; M = 4.76, SD = 1.505). Although these scores still indicate positive perceptions, they suggest that students may be more comfortable collaborating on structured academic tasks than initiating more personal or problem-focused interactions with their peers. A similar pattern was observed by Parmar et al. (2025), who found that students valued collaborative discussions of course content and assignments, particularly when clarifying academic requirements and completing tasks. However, the study also identified barriers to more open peer communication, including reluctance to participate, introversion, and concerns about disclosing information to peers.

Research Question 3: What are tertiary students' overall perceptions of student-teacher interaction in blended English language learning?

Table 5 depicts the role of educators to guide and assist students during online learning. All of the mean values are higher than 3.66, which proves that the items possess high positive feedback from the students.

Table 5 Items For Student-Teacher Interaction

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.I communicate with the educators privately when I face difficulty in learning	4.77	1.483
2. I can understand the content of the lesson during the lecture	4.89	1.171
3. I am willing to share my opinion with the educator during the online lesson	4.63	1.318
4. I obtain useful information from the educator during the lesson	5.73	1.017

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5. I am properly guided by the course educator during the lesson	5.72	1.073

The findings reveal a strong positive perception among participants, indicating that direct instructional support, guidance, and effective communication from educators play a vital role in the blended learning environment. This is due to the fact that effective blended learning relies on adaptive teacher guidance and meaningful teacher–student interaction to promote student satisfaction, engagement, and academic performance (Xinfa et al., 2025).

As detailed in Table 5, all five items recorded mean scores well above the moderate threshold (M > 3.66), demonstrating high overall agreement. Respondents expressed the strongest agreement regarding the utility of information provided by instructors, with Item 4 ("I obtain useful information from the educator during the lesson") obtaining the highest mean score (M = 5.73, SD = 1.017). This was closely followed by Item 5 ("I am properly guided by the course educator during the lesson"), which yielded a mean score of 5.72 (SD= 1.073). These high scores demonstrate that students feel well-facilitated and value the active instructional presence and real-time guidance provided by their educators during blended sessions. This finding is consistent with Su et al. (2023), who found that students perceived high levels of teaching presence when instructors provided clear communication, effective instructions, and appropriate guidance throughout the learning process.

Students also reported positive evaluations concerning content comprehension during lectures, as shown by Item 2 ("I can understand the content of the lesson during the lecture"; (M = 4.89, SD = 1.171). However, items evaluating active communication and private interaction yielded relatively lower mean scores. Item 1 ("I communicate with the educators privately when I face difficulty in learning") recorded a mean of 4.77 (SD = 1.483), while Item 3 ("I am willing to share my opinion with the educator during the online lesson") received the lowest mean score within the construct (M = 4.63, SD = 1.318). This finding is noteworthy as Priadi (2020) emphasised that effective learning requires two-way rather than one-way communication, allowing students to actively respond and interact with their teachers. Furthermore, opportunities to ask questions and express opinions are important features of effective teacher–student interaction, as they encourage greater student participation in the learning process (Priadi, 2020). Thus, the findings highlight the importance of strengthening two-way communication to encourage greater student participation and interaction with educators in blended learning environments.

Research Question 4: To what extent do tertiary students perceive blended English language learning as effective overall?

Overall, the findings demonstrate a high level of perceived effectiveness, with respondents consistently reporting positive evaluations across student-content, student-student, and student-teacher interaction domains (M > 3.66).

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Table 6 Overall Mean and Standard Deviation for Interaction Domains

Interaction Construct	Overall Mean (M)	oOoOStandard Deviation (SD)
Student–Content Interaction	5.33	1.151
Student–Teacher Interaction	5.15	1.213
Student–Student Interaction	5.06	1.341

Overall, the findings demonstrate positive perceptions across all three interaction domains, with student-content interaction recording the highest overall mean (M = 5.33, SD = 1.151), followed by student-teacher interaction (M = 5.15, SD = 1.213) and student-student interaction (M = 5.06, SD = 1.341).

As summarised in Table 6, student-content interaction received the highest rating (M = 5.33, SD = 1.151), particularly for the visual appeal of digital resources (M = 5.51, SD = 1.090), alignment with learning outcomes (M = 5.39, SD = 1.168), and content relatability (M = 5.33, SD = 1.121). This finding is consistent with Abdul Halim et al. (2024), who reported that students valued accessible and user-friendly online content and considered ease of content an important aspect of learner-content interaction.

Similarly, student-teacher interaction was perceived positively (M = 5.15, SD = 1.213), indicating the importance of instructional guidance, feedback, and communication in blended learning. Halim et al. (2024) likewise found positive perceptions of instructors who encouraged active participation, used multiple communication tools, and maintained interaction beyond online classes. This is further supported by Xiong (2025), who found that positive teaching styles significantly enhanced students' motivation and learning engagement.

Student-student interaction also received a positive rating (M = 5.06, SD = 1.341), suggesting that peer interaction remains an important component of blended learning. Similar findings were reported by Halim et al. (2024), where peer support, collaborative learning, and a sense of community contributed to students' engagement and motivation in online learning.

In essence, the findings indicate that students perceive blended English language learning positively when learning materials, teacher support, and peer interaction are effectively incorporated into the learning environment. This pattern is consistent with previous research highlighting the complementary roles of content, instructor, and peer interaction in supporting online learning engagement.

Discussion

Positive perceptions of blended English language learning

The study collected responses from 641 students across foundation, diploma, and degree levels, with the findings indicating generally positive perceptions of blended English language learning. Viewed through Moore's (1989) Interaction Theory, these high ratings indicate that structured interactive domains successfully bridge the "transactional distance"—the cognitive

and communicative gap inherent in technology-mediated learning environments (Karlinda & Srivastava, 2025; Qiu, 2025). This favourable response may partly be attributed to the students' familiarity with digital learning environments, as most participants reported prior experience in accessing the internet, navigating online learning materials, and participating in online classes. Such familiarity may have reduced the technological barriers associated with blended learning and enabled students to engage more readily with its online components across both urban and rural or suburban settings (Andrew et al., 2021).. However, students' positive perceptions should not be attributed to technological familiarity alone. Previous research suggests that blended learning is valued for its flexibility, learner autonomy, access to diverse learning resources, and ability to create more student-centred learning experiences (Hafeez et al., 2023).

This interpretation is particularly relevant to English language learning. Karlinda and Srivastava (2025) found that students perceived blended learning positively because digital tools and online activities provided flexible study options, greater familiarity with learning tasks, immediate feedback, and access to multimedia materials, which contributed to their confidence and engagement. Similarly, previous studies reviewed by Hafeez et al. reported that English language learners valued blended learning for promoting autonomous learning, increasing classroom interaction, reducing communication anxiety, and creating more engaging learning experiences. These findings suggest that the positive perceptions observed in the present study may reflect not only students' readiness to use digital technologies but also their recognition of the pedagogical affordances offered by the combination of online and face-to-face learning (Chaves-Yuste & de-la-Peña, 2026; Wu, 2024).

Nevertheless, technological familiarity should not be equated with readiness or confidence in learning independently through technology. As noted by Hamzah et al. (2021), familiarity with digital tools does not necessarily ensure students' self-efficacy, particularly when learners continue to value direct interpersonal interaction. This distinction is supported by Karlinda and Srivastava (2025), who found that although students benefited from the flexibility and accessibility of digital learning, some experienced difficulties maintaining focus and motivation in self-directed online environments, indicating that learner autonomy requires self-regulation that not all students possess. Moreover, self-efficacy has been identified as an important factor influencing students' engagement and academic performance in blended learning environments. Therefore, the present findings suggest that students' positive perceptions of blended English language learning may stem not only from their familiarity with digital technology but also from its perceived learning benefits, their confidence in using it, and opportunities for meaningful interaction with teachers and peers.

The Role Of Learning Materials In ESL Learning

The results of the study reveal that learners generally agreed that the online materials were attractive and well-organised, making their learning experience more pleasant and effective. This aligns directly with Feng et al. (2025) and Pan et al. (2024), who emphasiszed that attractive presentation quality and pedagogical clarity are vital to prevent cognitive overload and digital fatigue among language learners. Moreover, students felt the materials were relatable to their existing background knowledge, which helped bridge the gap between familiar ideas and new linguistic concepts (Verma et al., 2023; Zhang & Vongurai, 2025). .

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In line with findings by Thang et al. (2013) and Darmayanti & Lastari (2022), these results emphasisze that the success of blended ESL delivery depends on thoughtful material design. When digital resources are engaging, clear, and contextually relevant, they significantly enhance independent study and task completion. Specifically, integrating well-designed digital assets such as authentic online reading materials, audio-visual media, and interactive learning tools provides structured scaffolding that directly addresses learners' specific background knowledge and cognitive needs (Alam et al., 2022; Ramalingam et al., 2022; Wu, 2024). Furthermore, establishing a strong teaching and cognitive presence through scaffolded digital tasks not only reinforces linguistic concepts but also systematically enhances students' learning motivation, self-directed study, and overall task completion (Chuane, 2025; Verma et al., 2023). As noted by Abdul Halim et al. (2024), when online resources are manageable and user-friendly, they optimisze language comprehension and overall academic performance (Hafeez et al., 2023). Together, these studies highlight the importance of purposeful digital integration in supporting learners' cognitive needs while fostering motivation and independent learning.

Peer And Teacher Interaction In Blended Classrooms

The findings demonstrated that student engagement in blended classrooms relies on multidimensional dynamics, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and technological factors (Zhang & Vongurai, 2025). Through blended learning environments, students manage to practisce language skills cooperatively via online group tasks and less-threatening digital discussion boards. The highest mean score within the student–student domain was recorded for peer collaboration on tasks, closely followed by developing new relationships during online learning. These peer support networks establish active learning communities where students exchange feedback and solve linguistic problems together, positioning peer interaction as a vital driver of student engagement in blended settings (Jeevarajathy et al., 2025; Ramalingam et al., 2022). However, comparatively lower scores were recorded for general interaction and sharing lesson-related problems. This behavioral contrast aligns with Parmar et al. (2025), who identified that while tertiary students value structured academic collaboration, communication barriers such as reluctance to participate, introversion, and anxiety regarding disclosing difficulties hinder spontaneous peer interaction. Thus, deliberate pedagogical interventions are necessary to lower affective barriers and mitigate feelings of social isolation (Alimi et al., 2021; Pan et al., 2024).

In addition, teacher-student interaction yielded highly positive feedback, particularly regarding the utility of information received and proper educator guidance. Prompt feedback, clear instructions, and reachable instructors provided learners with the structural scaffolding and confidence necessary to maintain academic progress (Su et al., 2023; Xiong, 2025). While digital tools provided the operational platform, active and well-planned teaching was what rendered the interactions meaningful. These findings align with Hassan et al. (2021), who demonstrated that structured blended instruction yields statistically significant improvements in written performance and learner engagement among Malaysian ESL tertiary learners compared to traditional teaching methods alone. Furthermore, effective blended learning depends on appropriate scaffolding and teacher involvement to support self-regulation and learner engagement (Jeevarathy et al., 2025; Wu, 2026). Thus, the empirical evidence confirms that incorporating structured collaborative reading and digital interaction frameworks significantly enhances reading comprehension, oral engagement, and active participation among higher education language learners.

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Institutional, Pedagogical, and Digital Literacy Support

Teacher–student interaction emerged as an important component of successful blended English language learning (Huang et al., 2026; Wijetunga, 2024). Students particularly valued lecturer support, clear explanations, prompt feedback, and accessible guidance across both online and face-to-face settings. This suggests that the blended format does not reduce the role of the instructor; instead, it requires teachers to maintain an active presence across different learning environments. Similar findings were reported by Wu (2026), who found that targeted guidance, timely feedback, and increased learner–instructor interaction contributed to positive perceptions of blended EFL learning. More importantly, teaching quality and evaluation were identified as stronger predictors of learner satisfaction than online learning experience and interaction alone.

Aligned with the observed findings, students gave high ratings to educator guidance (M = 5.72) yet showed lower initiative in sharing opinions or seeking private help (M = 4.63 and 4.77)—the data reinforces the essential need for structured teacher scaffolding in sustaining students' engagement. The findings also reinforce the importance of teacher scaffolding in sustaining students' engagement. This discrepancy exemplifies the tension highlighted by Priadi (2020), wherein students appreciate receiving clear guidelines but hesitate to initiate two-way communication. Previous research suggests that instructors can strengthen teaching presence by providing clear explanations, guidance, feedback, and structured learning activities. Such support can increase students' confidence in completing tasks and encourage them to communicate their learning needs (Abdul Halim et al., 2024; Xinfa et al., 2025). Therefore, effective blended learning should not be viewed simply as the integration of technology into conventional instruction. Rather, technology needs to be accompanied by purposeful teacher facilitation that connects online learning with classroom activities and provides students with appropriate academic support.

At the institutional level, these pedagogical practices need to be supported by adequate digital infrastructure and digital literacy development. This synergistic integration of content, teacher guidance, and peer networks aligns with Chen and Teh (2022) and is crucial for achieving national policy framework mandates, such as the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (Higher Education), which prioritises global online learning to expand educational access and foster digital literacy (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). Pham and Abdullah (2026) identified technological accessibility, appropriate teaching methodologies, technical and academic support, learner participation, and feedback as key components of effective blended English language instruction. They further noted that limited digital literacy can hinder students' engagement and progress in online learning environments. Thus, institutions should not only provide reliable technological infrastructure but also ensure that both students and instructors possess the digital competencies required to use these resources effectively. This combination of technological provision, teacher support, and digital literacy may help create a more accessible and sustainable blended English language learning environment.

Limitation Of The Study

Although this study provides useful insights into blended English language learning, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the use of context-specific sampling from selected tertiary institutions limits the generalisability of the findings to other educational contexts. This limitation is consistent with previous studies, which acknowledge that convenience sampling

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and institution-specific samples may restrict the generalisability of findings due to limited randomisation and diversity among participants (Halim et al., 2024; Yong et al., 2026). Furthermore, the gender imbalance among respondents may also limit the representation of gender-related differences, although female-dominated samples may partly reflect broader enrolment patterns in Malaysian higher education (Yong et al., 2026).

Second, students' blended learning experiences may be affected by technological accessibility. Previous research indicates that reliable internet connections and access to appropriate technological tools are important for sustaining student engagement in online environments (Halim et al., 2024). Finally, the study relied primarily on self-reported questionnaire data, which may be influenced by subjective perceptions and response bias. Xiong (2025) similarly acknowledged that questionnaire responses may be inaccurate or biased and may not fully capture complex learner experiences. Future research could therefore employ a mixed-method design incorporating qualitative interviews to generate more in-depth and complementary insights into students' experiences (Harris & Brown, 2010). Longitudinal research could also provide a clearer understanding of how students' perceptions and engagement develop over time.

Conclusion

This study examined the perceptions of 641 Malaysian tertiary students towards blended English language learning, with particular attention to student–content, student–student, and student–teacher interactions. Overall, the findings indicate highly positive perceptions across all three interaction domains. Students valued engaging and outcome-aligned learning materials, opportunities for peer collaboration, and consistent lecturer guidance, suggesting that blended learning relies on that effective blended learning is supported by the interaction of content, social engagement, and teaching presence.

The findings further demonstrate that technology alone does not drive blended English language learning. Rather, its role depends on how digital resources are integrated with appropriate instructional strategies, meaningful interaction, and continuous support. The findings further demonstrate that technology alone does not determine the effectiveness of blended English language learning. Rather, its value depends on how digital resources are integrated with appropriate instructional strategies, meaningful interaction, and continuous support. This interpretation is consistent with Wu (2026), who found that students' positive perceptions of blended EFL learning were associated with flexibility, accessibility, targeted instruction, learner autonomy, and increased teacher–student interaction. Similarly, Pham and Abdullah (2026) emphasised that blended English instruction requires successful blended English instruction requires an integrated approach involving appropriate learning materials and technology, effective teaching strategies, active learner participation, technical support, and continuous feedback.

These findings carry practical implications for Malaysian tertiary institutions. Continued investment in digital infrastructure should be accompanied by lecturer professional development, student digital literacy support, and the purposeful design of interactive learning activities. In particular, institutions should ensure that technological tools complement rather than replace meaningful teacher and peer interaction. Future studies could adopt mixed-method or longitudinal designs to explore students' experiences in greater depth and determine whether positive perceptions of blended learning translate into measurable improvements in English

language proficiency over time. This is particularly important because perception-based findings may not necessarily reflect actual language achievement as well as the the recommendation of incorporating objective assessments of learning outcomes in future research.

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Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) "The author(s) declare that generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were used during the preparation of this manuscript. The following tool(s) were used: ChatGPT Plus and Grammarly. The tool(s) were used for language editing, grammar improvement, and data analysis. All AI-assisted content was reviewed and verified by the author(s), who take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, integrity, and final content of the manuscript."

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