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EXPLORING BLENDED LEARNING IN THE EFL CRITICAL READING COURSE OF ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION: PRACTICE AND OBSTACLES

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Abstract

Purpose: This study explores the implementation of blended learning and the obstacles encountered by lecturers and students in the EFL Critical Reading course within an Islamic higher education context. It focuses on instructional practices, technology integration, learning experiences, and the challenges associated with implementing blended learning. **Design/methodology/approach:** This study employed a qualitative case study design conducted at Universitas Islam Madura (UIM), Indonesia, involving one lecturer and 30 students from the English Education Study Program. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The collected data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns related to blended learning practices and implementation obstacles. **Findings:** The findings indicate that blended learning was implemented by integrating face-to-face instruction and online learning activities, encompassing learning design, teaching strategies, digital technology integration, and assessment practices. However, several obstacles emerged, including limited internet connectivity, students' linguistic difficulties, insufficient digital readiness, limited classroom interaction, and challenges related to motivation and independent learning. These findings suggest that successful blended learning requires more than technological availability; it also depends on pedagogical preparedness, student engagement, and institutional support. **Originality/value:** This study contributes to the understanding of blended learning in Islamic higher education by highlighting the relationship between instructional practices and contextual obstacles to learning in EFL Critical Reading. It offers pedagogical insights for developing more inclusive, interactive, and context-sensitive blended learning environments that support students' critical reading competencies.

Keywords: Blended learning, EFL, Critical Reading course, Islamic higher education, Practice and Obstacles.

1. Introduction

The development of digital technology has driven a transformation of the learning paradigm in higher education, including in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This transformation not only changes learning media and resources but also demands a pedagogical approach that integrates face-to-face interaction with the flexibility of digital learning. In this context, blended learning has emerged as an approach