# A META-ANALYSIS OF BLENDED LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION IN EFL CONTEXT

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## Abstract

This study measured the blended learning effect within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) condition under a quantitative meta-analytic system. Having begun with a starting dataset of fifty experimental publications published between 2012 and 2023, twenty-eight were selected, producing thirty-three effect sizes on diversified education levels and linguistic proficiency. Using a random-effects methodology, the cumulative effect size was 1.938 (p < 0.001), highly significant and indicating a very strong positive effect of blended learning on English proficiency. Subgroup analyses identified the strongest results for listening (ES = 5.014), speaking (ES = 2.033), grammar (ES = 2.338), and writing (ES = 1.849), while vocabulary (ES = 1.079) and reading (ES = 1.505) registered significant but comparatively smaller achievement

These findings show the strength of blended learning in improving EFL skills, especially oral and interactive skills. This study is significant in terms of integrating scattered empirical findings using a systematic meta-analytic procedure and thus bolstering the theoretical base of blended learning research.

In practice, the findings provide actionable recommendations for teaching and curriculum development when designing effective, technology-rich pedagogies. It confirms the research that blended learning is a viable and satisfactory pedagogic approach toward advancing language teaching employing EFL scenarios.

**Keywords:** *Blended-learning; EFL; Meta-analysis, Listening; Speaking; Grammar; Writing .*

## INTRODUCTION

Blended learning, having been conceptualized as a deliberate combination of face-to-face and technology-based instruction (Cleveland-Innes & Wilton, 2018; Kumar et al., 2021), has become a significant pedagogy that embodies critical twenty-first-century competencies such as communication (Poon, 2013; Lim & Wang, 2016). Its practice covers systematized designs—in particular rotation, flex, self-blend, and enriched-virtual (Staker & Horns, 2012) that combine traditional modes and digital modes. Modern perspectives further describe blended learning by pinpointing three axes: modality, media, and method, such that they describe how the learning environment, technology tools, and teaching methods work in concert in implementing it (Graham & Halverson, 2023).

In some contexts of learning, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, blended learning has been successful. In Indonesia, this pedagogy has been adopted across all levels of learning, from elementary school to colleges, with repeated findings of positive

outcomes (Suwarti et al., 2022; Jannah, 2022; Suriaman et al., 2022). Scholarly studies have confirmed that there are developments in meeting students' global oral ability, metacognitive understanding about composing, reading comprehension capacity, and listening ability (Ginaya et al., 2018; Wahyuni, 2018; Ghazizadeh & Fatemipour, 2017; Aji, 2017). Such evidence corresponds to wide studies suggesting that blended learning has a positive impact on student satisfaction, motivation, and overall academic achievement (Zeqiri et al., 2021; Sahni, 2019; Kazu & Yalçıni, 2022). However, difficulties remain. Blended learning effectiveness relies on certain aspects like levels of student engagement, flexibility levels among teachers, and accessible technology-based resources (Mekki et al., 2022; Kaur, 2022; Mukhtaramkhon, 2022). Additionally, literature tends to signify research gaps. Although previous meta-analyses have reported findings from diverse global contexts, such as Iran and China (Najafi & Heidari, 2019; Li, 2022), and broader reviews have examined blended and virtual pedagogical strategies (Schmid et al., 2023), there remains an urgent need for inclusive meta-analytic research on blended learning in the Indonesian EFL context. And no such meta-analysis has been carried out in the English Study Program at Pattimura University, thus creating a gaping absence in empirical evidence that might be capable of informing both practice and policy in education.

In response to this gap, this study adopts a meta-analytic procedure to integrate experimental literature on blended learning within the EFL environment in a systematic manner. It aims at finding the overall effect size of blended learning techniques on English language proficiency and on how they affect certain language abilities—the ability to listen, speak, read, and write. This research aims to (1) review if blended learning has a notable positive impact on EFL competence across studies, (2) evaluate affected effect sizes on certain language abilities, and (3) help provide evidence-based recommendations to teachers, curriculum planners, and researchers. By integrating disparate empirical research findings, this work hopes to reinforce the theoretical groundwork behind blended learning research and offer tangible advice towards successful application within linguistic pedagogy.

## METHODOLOGY

This study applied a quantitative meta-analytic study to explore the overall effect of blended learning on English proficiency for the EFL context. Meta-analysis was used because it permits the systematic aggregation of effect sizes of multiple empirical studies for a comprehensive and reliable estimate of the effectiveness of blended learning.

A total of 50 articles were retrieved from Google Scholar using the search keywords 'blended learning' and 'EFL'. Of these, 28 articles from 2012 to 2023 were chosen with purposive sampling, in consideration of these criteria: (1) emphasis on blended learning for EFL settings, (2) experimental study with control and experimental groups, and (3) access to means and standard deviations for deriving effect sizes. Data was extracted through a documentation study with a structured data extraction template that recorded sample features, study design, details of intervention, and statistical information. Validity of the instrument was attained with expert review, consistency with the study purposes, and inter-rater reliability cross-checks.

The data were analysed using openmeta (Analyst). The effect sizes (Cohen's d/Hedges' g) were computed and categorized according to Cohen's criteria, and a random-effects model was applied to adjust for study heterogeneity. Heterogeneity was tested with Cochran's Q and $I^2$, and subgroup analyses and meta-regression delved into the role of specific language abilities. Publication bias was inspected with funnel plots and Rosenthal's Fail-Safe N.

Table 1. Effect Size Category Based on Cohen

| No | Effect Size | Category |
|----|-------------|----------|
| 1 | < 0.20 | Ignore |
| 2 | 0.20 - 0.50 | Low |
| 3 | 0.51 - 0.80 | Moderate |
| 4 | 0.81 - 1.30 | High |
| 5 | > 1.30 | Very High |

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**3.1 Result**
**3.1.1 General Characteristics of the Primary Studies**

In this study, out of a total of 28 sample articles, 3 articles yielded more than one result. These articles include Zohre Shooshtari & Saeid Hosseinimehr (2020), with four results, Hamood Albatti (2023), with two results, and Mofrad (2017), with two results. These articles were treated separately to account for the multiple effect sizes reported within each study, resulting in a total of 33 results from the 28 articles.

Table 2. Primary Studies on Blended Learning

| No | Authors | Titles | Years | Skill |
|----|---------|--------|-------|-------|
| 1 | Behjat et al. | Blended Learning: A Ubiquitous Learning Environment for Reading Comprehension | 2012 | Reading |
| 2 | Ghahari & Golestan | Impact of Blended Learning on Iranian EFL Learners' Writing Performance | 2013 | Writing |
| 3 | Khan | Effectiveness of Blended Learning for Teaching of English: An Exploratory Study | 2014 | General |
| 4 | Mohammadi & Mirdehghan | A CMC Approach to Teaching Phrasal-Verbs to Iranian EFL Senior High School Students: The Case of Blended Learning | 2014 | Vocabulary |
| 5 | Aslani & Tabrizi | Teaching Grammar to Iranian EFL Learners through Blended Learning Using Multimedia Software | 2015 | Grammar |
| 6 | Tosun | The Effects of Blended Learning on EFL Students' Vocabulary Enhancement | 2015 | Vocabulary |
| 7 | Mofrad - Studi 1 | Enhancing EFL Learners' Writing Capability in a Blended Learning Environment: The Effects of Learning Styles | 2017 | Writing |
| 8 | Mofrad - Study 2 | Enhancing EFL Learners' Writing Capability in a Blended Learning Environment: The Effects of Learning Styles | 2017 | Writing |
| 9 | Ibhar & Said | The Effects of Blended Learning on EFL High School Students' Vocabulary Mastery | 2018 | Vocabulary |
| 10 | Qindah | The Effects of Blended Learning on EFL Students' Usage of Grammar in Context | 2018 | Grammar |

| 11 | Al Bataineh et al. | The Effect of Blended Learning on EFL Students' Grammar Performance and Attitudes: An Investigation of Moodle | 2019 | Grammar |
|----|----|----|----|----|
| 12 | Xiaoli | A Study on Blended Listening Teaching Model Supported by Mobile Technology | 2019 | Listening |
| 13 | Alrouji | The Effectiveness of Blended Learning in Enhancing Saudi Students' Competence in Paragraph Writing | 2020 | Writing |
| 14 | Ehsanifard et al. | The Impact of Blended Learning on Speaking Ability and Engagement | 2020 | Speaking |
| 15 | Ibrahim | Utilizing a Blended Learning Strategy to Enhance EFL Students' Listening Comprehension Skills at the Faculty of Specific Education | 2020 | Listening |
| 16 | Kantisa & Sitthitikul | The Effects of Blended Learning on Thai University Students' Speaking Ability, Learning Motivation and Perceptions | 2020 | Speaking |
| 17 | Shooshtari & Hosseinimehr-Study 1 | Blended Learning in the Development of EFL Productive Skills: Implementing Web-based Activities in High School Setting | 2020 | Writing |
| 18 | Shooshtari & Hosseinimehr-Study 2 | Blended Learning in the Development of EFL Productive Skills: Implementing Web-based Activities in High School Setting | 2020 | Writing |
| 19 | Shooshtari & Hosseinimehr-Study 3 | Blended Learning in the Development of EFL Productive Skills: Implementing Web-based Activities in High School Setting | 2020 | Speaking |
| 20 | Shooshtari & Hosseinimehr-Study 4 | Blended Learning in the Development of EFL Productive Skills: Implementing Web-based Activities in High School Setting | 2020 | Speaking |
| 21 | Benhadj | A Quasi-experimental Study on the Impact of Blended Learning on EFL Students' Language Proficiency | 2021 | General |
| 22 | Li | Students' Academic Achievement and Satisfaction in a Blended Learning Community of College English in China: A Quasi-experimental Study | 2021 | General |
| 23 | Warman | The Effect of Google Classroom in Blended Learning on University Students' English Ability | 2021 | General |
| 24 | Bagum et al. | The Effect of Blended Learning on Students' Achievement in English Writing Skills at Elementary Level | 2022 | Writing |
| 25 | Bouftira et al. | Developing EFL Learners' Pragmatic Competence through a Blended Learning Model: A Quasi-Experimental Study | 2022 | Pragmatic |
| 26 | Menggo & Darong | Empirical Evidence of Blended Learning in Indonesian EFL Class | 2022 | General |
| 27 | Poláková & Klimova | Vocabulary Mobile Learning Application in Blended English Language Learning | 2022 | Vocabulary |
| 28 | Rahimzadeh & Gilakjani | Investigating the effectiveness of blended learning in reading proficiency: Evidence from intermediate EFL learners | 2022 | Reading |
| 29 | Teng & Zeng | The Effects of Blended Learning on Foreign Language Learners' Oral English Competence | 2022 | Speaking |
| 30 | Albatti - Study 1 | Blended Learning in English Language Teaching and Learning: A Focused Study on a Reading and Vocabulary Building Course | 2023 | Vocabulary |

| 31 | Albatti - Study 2 | Blended Learning in English Language Teaching and Learning: A Focused Study on a Reading and Vocabulary Building Course | 2023 | Reading |
|----|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|---------|
| 32 | Motlagh et al. | The Impact of Blended Collaborative Learning on the English Reading Comprehension | 2023 | Reading |
| 33 | Siregar et al. | Development of blended learning on English learning outcomes in PJKR study program | 2023 | General |

### 3.1.1.1 General Characteristics based on Publication Year

The distribution of the selected studies, based on publication year, is presented in Figure 2.
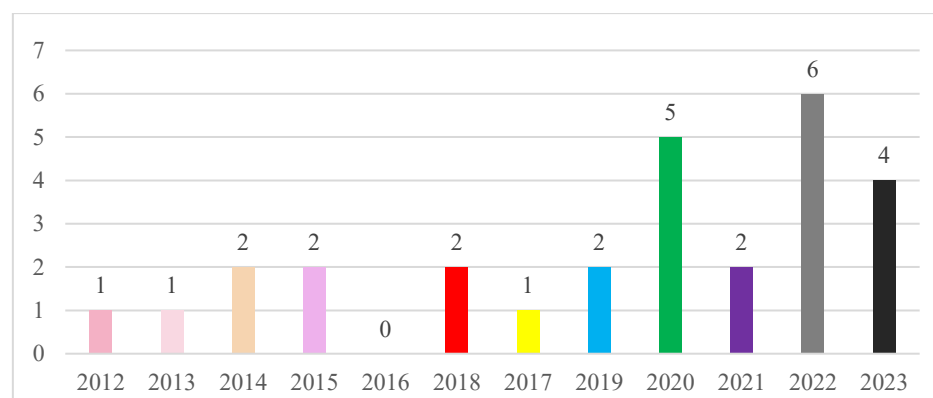


Figure 1. Frequency of Articles based on Publication Year

It showed that in 2022, six articles (21.43%) were produced; therefore, this year also shared more attention from authors for the blended learning model of EFL instruction. In second place, 5 articles (17.86%) were published in 2020, and in third place, 4 articles were published in 2023 (14.29%). 2021, 2019, 2018, 2015 and 2014 contributed with the same number of articles (7.14%) while in 2017, 2013 and 2012 had one article each (3.57%). It is interesting to note that there were no included papers from 2016, but it could indicate literature gap or the absence of relevant studies applicable for the inclusion criteria set for specifically that year. Collectively, the results demonstrate that most of the included studies were published in recent years and a sharp rise in articles starting from 2020. This tendency reflects the growing interest and focus on blended learning approaches in EFL teaching. The examination of publication years shows a continued increase in the number of studies performed over time with a marked increase in the last 3 years (2020-2023).

This expansion has in turn resulted in a growing body of literature that analyzes the effectiveness of blended learning models for EFL. Such growth in research is also consistent with the increasing use of mixed methods of instruction in language learning and assessment that call for examining their impact on various aspects of language abilities.

### 3.1.1.2 General Characteristics based on Skills
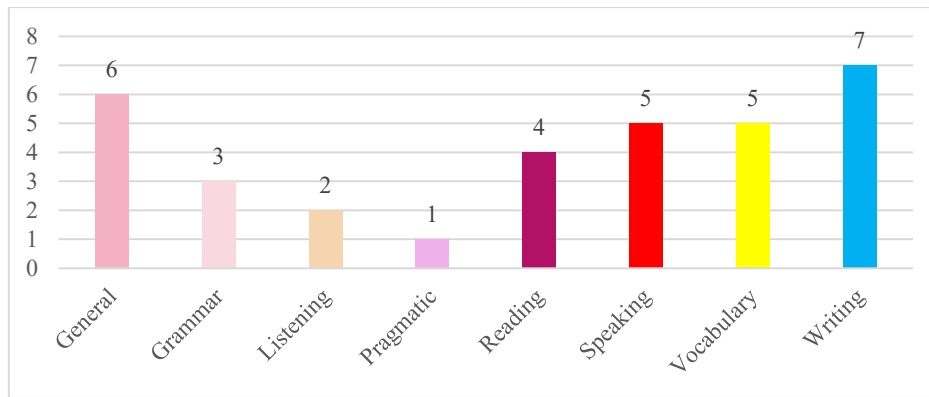The distribution of the selected studies based on the language skills targeted is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Frequency of Articles based on Skills

From the findings, it is clear that the maximum number of articles (7, representing 21.21%) focused on writing skills, demonstrating significant research interest in examining how blended learning methodologies lead to the development of writing expertise in the EFL context. General proficiency in languages, without special focus on any aspect of proficiency in languages, was the theme of the second largest number of articles (6, representing 18.18%). Vocabulary and speech proficiency were addressed by 5 articles (15.15%) each, and reading proficiency by 4 articles (12.12%). Grammar proficiency and skills were the focus of three articles (9.09%), and listening and pragmatic proficiency were studied in two (6.06%) and a single (3.03%) article, respectively.

Overall, the results highlight a relatively diversified set of language proficiency studies concerning blended learning methods for EFL instruction. However, most attention has focused on writing, general language proficiency, vocabulary, and speaking, with considerably less attention given to listening and pragmatic proficiency.

It is also notable that the total number of articles (33) is more than the initial sample of 28 studies. The difference can arise from the fact that there are those studies dealing with several language skills at the same time, and such studies might fall into several categories. The distribution of the studies by various language skills provides significant information on those regions of language proficiency that have been best studied in the scope of blended learning research in the field of EFL. The distribution also points to possible voids or less studied regions that are likely to need more study.

### 3.1.2 Heterogeneity Assessment

Heterogeneity statistics, such as Cochran's Q and I-squared ($I^2$), were calculated to determine the extent of heterogeneity and assess its impact on the interpretation of the meta-analytic results.

Table 3. Heterogeneity Statistics

| tau² | Q(df=32) | Het. p-Value | I² |
|------|----------|--------------|------|
| 1.830 | 659.587 | < 0.001 | 95.148 |

An estimate of the variation among true effects between studies is given by the value of tau² (1.830), with a non-zero value being indicative of the presence of heterogeneity. The Q statistic

(659.587 with 32 degrees of freedom) tests the null hypothesis of homogeneity among the studies, with highly significant p-value (less than 0.001) informing about considerable heterogeneity among the effect sizes.

The $I^2$ statistic (95.148%) shows how much of the differences in effect sizes comes from actual differences in studies, not from random chance. An $I^2$ value of 95.148% means there is a lot of variation in the effect sizes among the studies. These statistics remind us to be careful when looking at the overall effect size and suggest that we should explore possible factors or different groups in more detail.

Because of the large differences, the forest plot shows a visual representation of the effect sizes and confidence intervals for each study, along with the overall effect size estimate. The forest plot in figure 5 shows the individual studies on the left side, with the author(s) and year of publication. The effect size estimate for each study is shown by a square, and the horizontal line next to each square shows the 95% confidence interval (CI) for that effect size.

The overall effect size estimate is shown by the diamond at the bottom of the plot, and it is 1.678. The confidence interval is 95%, which ranges from 1.201 to 2.155. This positive effect size estimate, together with a confidence interval that does not cross zero, indicates a statistically significant positive effect of blended learning strategies on English language proficiency.
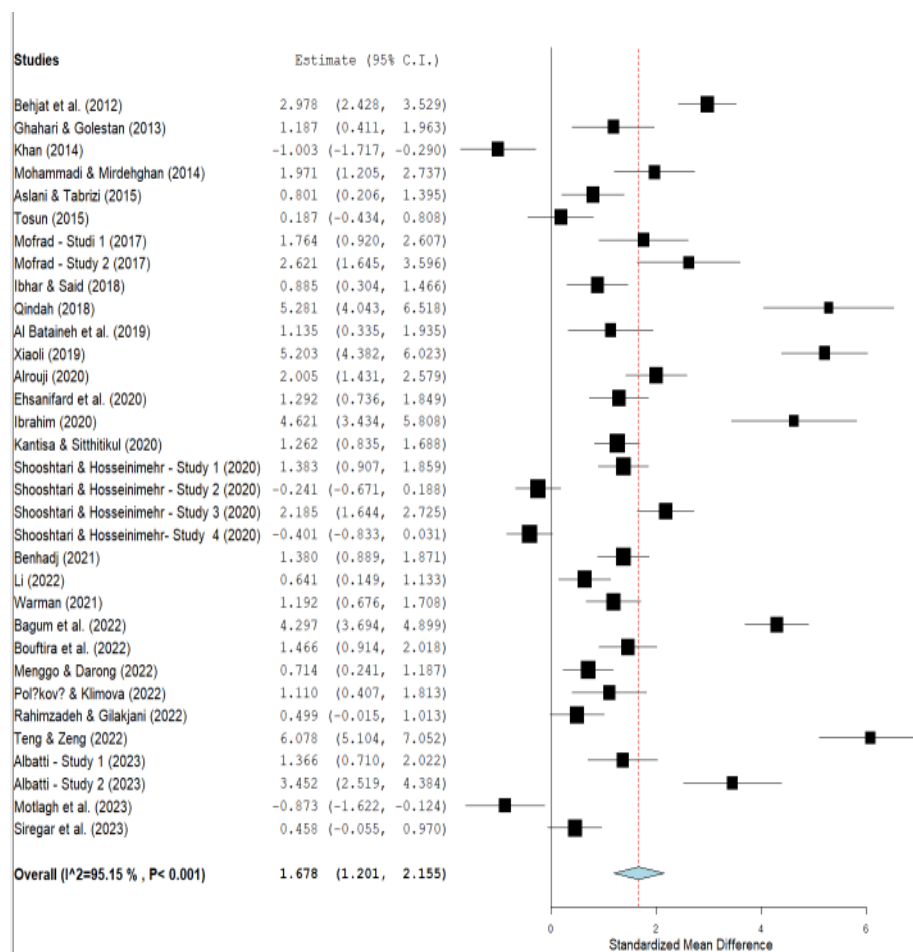


Figure 3. Forest Plot

### 3.1.3 Publication Bias

To evaluate the presence and potential impact of publication bias on the meta-analytic findings, funnel plots and statistical tests, such as Rosenthal's Fail-Safe N (FSN), were utilized. The funnel plot is presented in Figure 4.
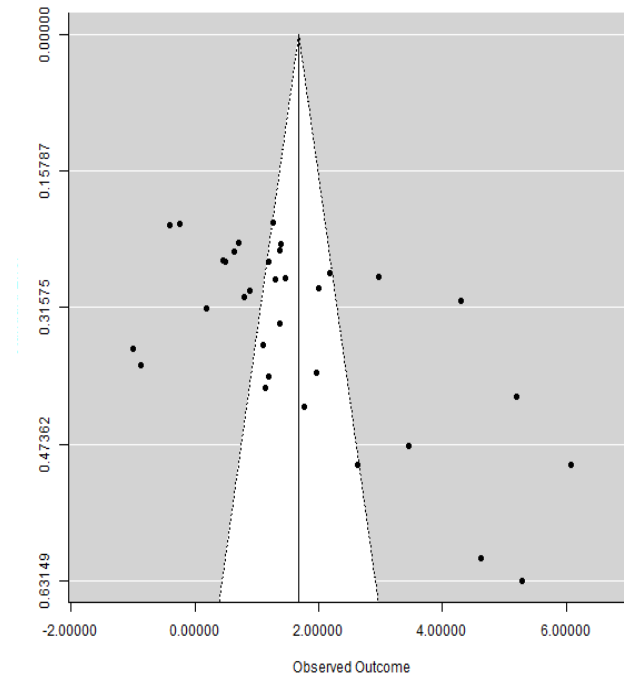


Figure 4. Funnel Plot for Publication Bias

The funnel plot is a scatter plot of the study effect sizes against their respective standard errors or precision measures. In the absence of publication bias, the plot should resemble a symmetrical inverted funnel, with smaller studies (indicated by larger standard errors) dispersed at the bottom of the plot and larger studies (indicated by smaller standard errors) clustered around the overall effect size estimate at the top of the funnel.

In this funnel plot, visual inspection suggests some degr ee of asymmetry, indicating potential publication bias. Studies with smaller effect sizes or non-significant results appear to be underrepresented, particularly in the lower right quadrant of the plot. To further assess the potential impact of publication bias, Rosenthal's Fail-Safe N (FSN) was calculated. The FSN value represents the number of additional studies with an effect size of zero that would be needed to render the overall effect size estimate statistically non-significant.

In this study, the FSN value was calculated to be 8656. Rosenthal's rule suggests that an FSN value greater than 5k + 10 (where k is the number of included studies) indicates a low risk of publication bias. In this case, with 33 included studies, the threshold value is 5(33) + 10 = 175.

The calculated FSN value of 8656 is substantially higher than the threshold value of 175, suggesting a low risk of publication bias. This means that a large number of additional studies with null or negative effects would be required to invalidate the overall effect size estimate and the conclusion of a significant positive effect of blended learning strategies on English language mastery in the EFL context.

### 3.2 Discussion

### 3.2.1 Effectiveness of Blended Learning in EFL Context
The meta-analysis demonstrates that blended learning is extremely effective in education about EFL, with a grand mean of 1.938 (very high). Earlier studies have researched this idea (Ginaya et al., 2018; Wahyuni et al., 2018; Ghazizadeh & Fatemipour, 2017), which proposes an integration of face-to-face learning and technology-mediated learning environment that can add synergistic benefit to the learning of the English language. The positive gains under the influence of blended learning may be discussed in terms of increased student flexibility of access, the use of multimedia presented in learning resources as a way to engage learners through different learning styles, and experiences of collaboration and interaction, which provide opportunities for learners to gain communicative competence.

### 3.2.2 Impact on Particular Language Skills
Sub-group analysis indicated extremely large effects for listening (ES = 5.014) and speaking (ES = 2.033), indicating blended learning has a large impact on oral skill development, particularly through the use of authentic multimedia input and interactive potential to engage students. writing and grammar can also represent similar levels of significance in gains, owing to aspects of learning from online environments, such as drafting in blogs, acquiring student feedback, and practicing grammar with online platforms and other sorts of technology. Vocabulary (ES = 1.079) and reading (ES = 1.505) signify moderate gains, which suggest blended learning can provide larger gains, while suggesting vocabulary and reading may not have the same greater impact as oral and productive skill sets. As with pragmatic aspects of language, the area demonstrated the potential for blended learning; however, further study is warranted, as there are limited studies to accommodate a collective means of gathering an educated conclusion.

### 3.2.3 Implications for EFL Teaching and Learning Practices
The outcomes of this research underline the importance of effective placement of blended learning within EFL practices. Teachers should take more learner-centered approaches using authentic multimodal materials and ways of communicating, which can provide learning opportunities that produce learner-student collaboration. As they relate to autonomy and metacognition, meaningful feedback is commonly provided through online assessment, as well as peer feedback. Furthermore, professional learning is also necessary to support teachers to develop both technical and pedagogical skills to implement blended learning successfully.

### 3.2.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions
The conclusions of the study are limited by the unequal sample distribution across competencies and the number of studies that were included. Most also examined and measured short-term outcomes, and future studies should focus more on the long-term effects of blended learning through longitudinal studies. Further studies should explore blended learning models, different ages, and levels of proficiency to understand different strategies that may work in each context. Future studies can also widen the insight into learner and teacher experiences through qualitative methods to support quantitative measures.

### CONCLUSION
This meta-analysis on 28 studies from the years 2012 to 2023 illuminates that the outcome of blended learning on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction has a positive interpretation in significance. Effect sizes indicate a moderately large effect size of 1.938 (p <

0.001). The meta-analysis further demonstrates that blended learning has the greatest effect on student outcomes for listening and speaking skills; however, grammar, writing skills, reading, and vocabulary suggest blended learning had a positive impact. The examination has demonstrated the advantageous nature of blended learning and spatially blended learning as EFL instruction by balancing the face-to-face and technology aspects of learners' lessons. The practical implications highlight the necessity of learner-centered environments, multimedia use, feedback, and teacher training, and for future research to explore larger and more balanced samples, long-term effects, ages, and proficiency levels, mixed-method studies, and blended-learning models or tools.

**ETHICAL STATEMENT**

The present research was conducted strictly according to well-defined ethics standards by obtaining informed consent, protecting participants' confidentiality, and observing proper respect for local cultures. Special care was exercised regarding persons who are members of vulnerable groups to ensure their protection, comfort, and equitable participation. The study obtained neither any financial aid nor any form of sponsorship from external sources, and the authors confirm there are no competing interests to declare. The data and information were collected using sound research techniques and later authenticated to ensure their validity and reliability. The application of artificial intelligence (AI) was restricted solely to technical support for refining writing and language editing, with neither affecting nor influencing any scientific content regarding research. The authors gratefully acknowledge valuable opinions expressed by participants and informed critiques by anonymous reviewers based on another version of this article submitted earlier. The authors hold full responsibility for the contents and conclusions expressed by this work.

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