



Changes in First-Year English-Majored Students' Paragraph Writing Performance During a Blended Course at a Public University in Hanoi

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Abstract

This research examined changes in the paragraph-writing performance of 32 first-year English-majored students during a blended course at a public university in Hanoi. A single-class pre-test/post-test design was used. Following baseline assessment and orientation in Weeks 1–2, students completed blended activities from Weeks 3–10, combining asynchronous preparation on Google Classroom with face-to-face instruction, guided practice, peer interaction, drafting, and feedback. The post-test was administered in Week 11, followed by an 11-item questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with three purposively selected students in Week 12. Paired-samples t-tests indicated a significant increase in overall writing scores, with significant changes in content, organization, and grammar but not vocabulary. The questionnaire scales showed high internal consistency, and students reported favourable perceptions of engagement, motivation, confidence, and autonomy. Interview accounts illustrated perceived improvements in organization while also identifying distraction, unclear instructions, comprehension difficulties, and access constraints. Overall, higher post-test scores were observed after eight weeks of substantive blended instruction. However, the single-group design cannot isolate the contribution of blended learning from regular instruction, practice, feedback, task familiarity, or maturation.

Keywords: *blended learning; paragraph writing; English-majored students; action research; tertiary EFL*

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1. Introduction

Writing is a central component of university English programmes because it supports academic communication, disciplinary learning, and later professional participation. For first-year English-majored students, the paragraph is a foundational unit: learners must control a topic sentence, relevant supporting ideas, logical ordering, cohesion, vocabulary, grammar, and an appropriate concluding sentence before they can produce longer academic texts. Yet writing is also cognitively demanding. Learners must generate and select content while simultaneously attending to language form and textual organization. In public university contexts, students' limited linguistic resources and insufficient opportunities for sustained writing practice may further compound these challenges [1], [2].

The first university year creates an additional transition problem. Students move from school-based writing routines to a programme in which English is both the object and medium of study. Even learners with an approximate B¹ proficiency level may struggle to convert ideas

into coherent paragraphs under time constraints. Large differences in prior experience mean that a single classroom explanation rarely gives every student enough time to process models, rehearse language, draft, and receive feedback. When writing lessons are restricted to face-to-face class time, teachers must trade off explanation against practice and feedback.

Blended learning offers a practical way to redistribute these activities across time and space. It combines face-to-face instruction with purposeful online learning rather than merely placing digital files beside conventional teaching [3], [4], [5]. Pre-class materials can introduce concepts and models; classroom time can then be used for guided analysis, collaborative planning, drafting, and feedback; post-class tasks can support revision and consolidation. This sequence may be especially suitable for writing, which benefits from repeated exposure, reflection, and recursive revision.

Research has associated blended learning with flexibility, engagement, and richer interaction in higher education [3], [6]. Studies of EFL writing have also reported improvements in writing performance, motivation, and reduced apprehension [7]–[8]. However, outcomes depend on design. Learners can experience distraction, unclear instructions, weak self-regulation, and technological barriers in the online component [9], while vocabulary development may require a longer and more explicitly recycled learning cycle than other paragraph features.

In Vietnam, blended and flipped models have attracted increasing attention [10], but institution-specific evidence for first-year English majors remains limited. The present study responds to this gap through classroom action research in a three-credit integrated reading and writing course delivered over 12 weeks at a public university in Hanoi. It evaluates not only whether students improved after the intervention but also which components changed, how learners perceived the blend, and what implementation difficulties emerged.

The study addressed two research questions: *(1) How did first-year English-majored students' paragraph writing performance change during the blended-learning course?* *(2) What are students' perceptions and attitudes toward the use of blended learning in paragraph-writing instruction?* By combining performance measures with questionnaire and interview evidence, the study seeks to provide a grounded account of learning outcomes and classroom feasibility.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Paragraph writing in tertiary EFL

A paragraph develops one controlling idea through a recognizable internal structure. Introductory writing materials commonly emphasize a topic sentence, supporting sentences that explain or exemplify the main idea, and a concluding sentence that closes the unit [11], [12]. Effective performance therefore involves more than sentence-level accuracy. Content must be sufficient and relevant; organization must make the relationship among ideas visible; vocabulary must express meaning precisely; and grammar must permit accurate, readable sentences.

These dimensions interact. A learner may know relevant vocabulary but present ideas in an order that obscures the controlling idea. Conversely, a well-organized plan may remain difficult

to understand when grammatical errors disrupt meaning. Analytic assessment is therefore useful because it separates dimensions for diagnosis while retaining an overall score [13]. In this study, content, organization, vocabulary, and grammar were each rated on a five-point scale, yielding a maximum total of 20 points.

Writing development also depends on self-efficacy and willingness to revise. Writing apprehension and low self-efficacy are associated with weaker participation and performance in tertiary EFL writing [2]. Feedback, manageable rehearsal, and visible models can support confidence, but learners also need opportunities to use feedback in revision.

2.2. Blended learning as an instructional design

Blended learning has been defined broadly, but its educational value lies in the deliberate integration of online and face-to-face experiences [3], [4]. The two modes should perform complementary functions and form a coherent learning sequence. A digital platform may support flexible access and individual preparation, whereas classroom interaction supports clarification, negotiation, collaborative practice, and immediate feedback. The blend is consequently a course-design principle rather than a fixed percentage of online time.

Four recurring design challenges are flexibility, interaction, support for learning processes, and an appropriate affective climate [14]. Too little structure can overload students who are not yet autonomous; too much structure can reduce choice and turn online work into compliance. Effective designs clarify the purpose, estimated completion time, submission process, and relationship of each online activity to subsequent classroom work. They also provide accessible materials and a predictable rhythm.

Google Classroom was selected for this study because it enabled the lecturer to distribute models, prompts, short explanations, and follow-up assignments in one familiar space. The platform did not replace teaching. It enabled students to preview concepts, preserve resources, submit work, and revisit feedback, while face-to-face sessions remained the main setting for explicit teaching, collaborative analysis, drafting, and individualized support.

2.3. Blended learning and EFL writing

Previous research offers a generally positive but qualified picture. Blended writing instruction has improved learners' written performance when online preparation is linked to classroom practice [7], [15]. It can sustain interest by increasing contact with materials and giving learners greater control over pace [16]. University-based research has likewise reported that students value the combination of independent preparation and interactive lessons [17].

Several mechanisms may plausibly explain why blended writing instruction is useful. Advance access to explanations and models may reduce in-class processing demands; classroom time may then support guided application, peer response, and teacher feedback; and stored digital resources may facilitate later review and revision. These mechanisms were not measured as mediators in the present study, and students' actual use of the resources was not systematically logged. They are therefore offered as design rationales rather than tested explanations for the observed score changes.

Nevertheless, technology does not automatically create engagement. Reviews of the online component identify self-regulation, digital literacy, access, and communication as persistent

challenges [9]. Students with lower proficiency may also need simplified input, worked examples, and step-by-step task instructions. The present intervention therefore linked each online activity directly to an in-class task and retained teacher mediation throughout the cycle.

2.4. Research gap

Earlier studies generally support the potential of blended writing instruction, but two issues remain underdeveloped in small-scale classroom research: whether perceived benefits correspond to changes in specific assessed writing dimensions, and how first-year learners experience the self-regulatory demands of online preparation. The present study addresses these issues by comparing component-level writing scores with questionnaire and interview evidence. Particular attention is given to the discrepancy between favourable perceptions of vocabulary support and the non-significant vocabulary score change, as well as to contrasting accounts of flexibility, distraction, and instructional clarity. The contribution is therefore analytical and pedagogical rather than based on location alone.

Methodology

3. Methodology

The study used one action-research cycle comprising planning, acting, observing, and reflecting [18], [19], [20]. During planning, diagnostic classroom work and the baseline test indicated recurring difficulty with idea development, paragraph organization, and language accuracy, alongside limited time for extended practice and feedback. The researcher therefore designed a sequence connecting online preparation with classroom application. During acting, the sequence was implemented from Weeks 3 - 10. During observing, test and questionnaire data were collected, while informal teaching notes were used to monitor participation and recurring difficulties. These notes were not systematically coded and are treated only as contextual records, not as a separate qualitative dataset. During reflecting, questionnaire and interview accounts were compared with score patterns to identify strengths and priorities for a subsequent cycle.

3.2. Setting and participants

The study was conducted at Hanoi University of Natural Resources and Environment, Vietnam, in a three-credit integrated reading and writing course for first-year English-majored students. The 12-week course met twice weekly for a total of five institutional class periods per week. Weeks 1–2 were used for orientation, familiarization with Google Classroom, diagnostic work, and the pre-test; substantive blended writing activities were implemented over eight weeks (Weeks 3–10); the post-test took place in Week 11; and questionnaire, interviews, and reflection followed in Week 12. Online tasks were normally posted at least three days before class, but time-on-task and completion rates were not systematically recorded. Prior experience with blended learning was not surveyed. The approximate CEFR B¹ designation reflected programme expectations and classroom performance rather than scores from a study-administered standardized proficiency test.

The intact class was selected because the action research addressed the researcher's existing teaching context. The 32 participants therefore formed a naturally occurring cohort rather than

a probability sample. All 32 completed the pre-test, post-test, and questionnaire; completion of these measures should not be interpreted as complete participation in every online activity. Three students were purposively selected for interviews using their test-score change and questionnaire responses to represent marked improvement, steady progress, and continuing difficulty. Participation in the research was voluntary, written consent was obtained, and reports used anonymous labels. The available study records did not include a formal ethics-committee approval or exemption number, and this should be considered when interpreting and reporting the study.

3.3. The 12-week intervention

The intervention combined asynchronous work on Google Classroom with scheduled face-to-face writing lessons. Before class, students reviewed short explanations, model paragraphs, vocabulary support, planning prompts, or discussion tasks posted at least three days in advance. During class, the lecturer checked understanding and guided brainstorming, outlining, drafting, peer response, and language practice. After class, useful structures, vocabulary, model texts, and teacher comments were uploaded to support revision. Compared with the usual predominantly face-to-face routine, the blended sequence moved preparation and resource review online and reserved more classroom time for application and feedback. Individual feedback was provided on the baseline task and comments were used on submitted writing, but the frequency of feedback, online completion rates, time-on-task, and deviations from the weekly plan were not systematically logged.

Table 1. *Twelve-week blended-learning plan*

Weeks	Focus	Online component	Face-to-face component
1–2	Preparation and baseline	Orientation materials; platform familiarization	Consent, course orientation, pre-test, diagnostic review
3–4	Paragraph structure and content	Models; topic-sentence and idea-generation tasks	Model analysis, brainstorming, selection of supporting details
5–6	Organization and cohesion	Outlining prompts; transition resources	Sequencing, outlining, collaborative reconstruction, guided drafting
7–8	Vocabulary and grammar	Lexical sets; sentence-level practice	Contextualized language work, error analysis, paragraph drafting
9–10	Integrated paragraph writing	Planning templates; draft submission	Timed practice, peer response, teacher conferencing, revision
11	Outcome assessment	Review resources	Post-test under controlled conditions
12	Reflection	Questionnaire	Interviews, class reflection, consolidation

3.4. Instruments

3.4.1. Writing tests and scoring rubric

The pre-test asked students to write 120–150 words on the advantages of online learning; the post-test required a paragraph of the same length about a natural wonder or beautiful landscape. Both were completed individually in class within 30 minutes without collaborative assistance. The prompts addressed familiar topics and used the same format, length, time limit, and analytic criteria, but their empirical equivalence was not independently established. Two

university English lecturers independently applied the rubric before comparing scores and discussing differences to reach a consensus score. The assessors were not blinded to testing occasion, and no inter-rater coefficient based on the independent pre-consensus ratings was retained. Consensus dimension scores were whole numbers from 1 to 5 and were summed without half-points to give a total score from 4 to 20. Because each occasion contained only one paragraph, the assessment sampled a limited range of writing performance.

Table 2. *Analytic scoring framework*

Dimension	Score	Level	Descriptor
Content	5	Excellent	Main idea is clear and accurately developed with relevant supporting details.
	4	Good	Main idea is generally clear and developed with mostly relevant support.
	3	Average	Main idea is present but partly unclear, inaccurate, or insufficiently developed.
	2	Poor	Main idea is unclear and support is limited or frequently irrelevant.
	1	Very poor	No clear controlling idea or meaningful development is evident.
Organization	5	Excellent	Ideas are well organized, coherent, and logically sequenced throughout.
	4	Good	Organization is generally clear and coherent with minor lapses.
	3	Average	Main ideas are identifiable, but sequencing or cohesion is incomplete.
	2	Poor	Ideas are disconnected and logical sequencing is weak.
	1	Very poor	The paragraph is incoherent and lacks recognizable organization.
Vocabulary	5	Excellent	Word choice is varied, precise, and appropriate; word-form errors are negligible.
	4	Good	Word choice is effective with occasional errors that do not impede meaning.
	3	Average	Vocabulary is adequate but includes repetition or misuse of words and forms.
	2	Poor	Range is limited and frequent word-choice or word-form errors affect clarity.
	1	Very poor	Vocabulary is extremely limited and errors seriously impede meaning.
Grammar	5	Excellent	Structures are well controlled with no or negligible errors.
	4	Good	Structures are generally controlled with few errors.
	3	Average	Some errors occur, but overall meaning remains comprehensible.
	2	Poor	Frequent errors and weak structural control reduce comprehensibility.
	1	Very poor	Errors dominate and seriously impede comprehensibility.

3.4.2. Questionnaire and interviews

The researcher-developed questionnaire contained 11 statements informed by the writing rubric and literature on language-learning motivation and attitudes. Five items concerned perceived writing benefits and six addressed engagement, motivation, confidence, control,

stress, and willingness to continue. Responses used a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). The English items were translated into Vietnamese and both versions were presented in parallel; no separate pilot study or validation sample was used. The six attitude items were analysed as one internally consistent set and individually, not as six validated subscales. The post-only design supports description of perceptions but not claims of attitudinal change over time. Three interviews, lasting approximately 5–10 minutes, were conducted in Vietnamese by the teacher-researcher, audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated into English for analysis.

3.5. Data collection and analysis

Data were analysed in SPSS version 20. There were no missing pre-test, post-test, or questionnaire responses among the 32 participants. Means and standard deviations summarized each writing dimension and the total score. Paired-samples t-tests compared pre- and post-test scores at $\alpha = .05$. The overall score was treated as the primary outcome; component tests were exploratory and were not adjusted for multiplicity. Although the 1–5 component scores are bounded, paired tests were used as approximate interval analyses to maintain consistency with the rubric-based scoring plan. Mean-change 95% confidence intervals and Cohen's d_z (mean paired change divided by the standard deviation of paired changes) were calculated from the reported paired-difference output. Raw-data distributional and influential-observation diagnostics were not available for reanalysis. Questionnaire scales were summarized with Cronbach's alpha, while response-category counts, item means, and standard deviations were reported. Interview transcripts were coded deductively for writing development, affective response, learner control, and challenges; contrasting cases were retained. Informal observation notes were not included as analysed evidence.

4. Results

4.1. Changes in paragraph-writing performance

Table 3 presents pre- and post-test results, 95% confidence intervals for the mean change, and paired-sample effect sizes. The overall mean increased from 12.16 to 14.28 out of 20, a mean change of 2.125 points, 95% CI [1.533, 2.717], $t(31) = -7.324$, $p < .001$, $d_z = 1.29$. Negative t values reflect the SPSS subtraction order (pre-test minus post-test), whereas gains and confidence intervals are displayed as post-test minus pre-test.

Table 3. Pre- and post-test results ($n = 32$)

Measure	Pre M (SD)	Post M (SD)	Gain [95% CI]	t(31)	p	d _z
Content	3.16 (.847)	3.72 (.683)	.563 [.260, .865]	-3.788	.001	.67
Vocabulary	3.28 (.729)	3.47 (.621)	.188 [-.079, .454]	-1.438	.161	.25
Grammar	3.06 (1.216)	3.63 (.942)	.563 [.221, .904]	-3.356	.002	.59
Organization	2.66 (.827)	3.47 (.567)	.813 [.465, 1.160]	-4.762	< .001	.84
Overall	12.16 (2.187)	14.28 (1.853)	2.125 [1.533, 2.717]	-7.324	< .001	1.29

Organization showed the largest observed mean gain, increasing from 2.66 to 3.47, mean change = .813, 95% CI [.465, 1.160], $t(31) = -4.762$, $p < .001$, $d_z = .84$. This descriptive ranking does not demonstrate that the organization gain was statistically larger than gains in other dimensions. Organization also had the lowest baseline mean, which left more room for improvement.

Content increased from 3.16 to 3.72, mean change = .563, 95% CI [.260, .865], $t(31) = -3.788$, $p = .001$, $d_z = .67$. Grammar increased from 3.06 to 3.63, mean change = .563, 95% CI [.221, .904], $t(31) = -3.356$, $p = .002$, $d_z = .59$. These results document within-class change but do not identify which elements of the course produced it.

Vocabulary increased from 3.28 to 3.47, but the mean change did not reach the specified significance level, mean change = .188, 95% CI [-.079, .454], $t(31) = -1.438$, $p = .161$, $d_z = .25$. The interval includes both negligible change and a potentially meaningful positive difference. The result therefore indicates imprecision rather than evidence of no lexical benefit; task sensitivity, scoring resolution, and sampling variation are also plausible explanations.

4.2. Reliability of questionnaire scales

The five perceived-effectiveness items produced Cronbach's $\alpha = .872$, and the six attitude items produced $\alpha = .907$. These coefficients indicate internal consistency in this sample but do not establish dimensional structure, construct validity, or the validity of each individual attitude domain. Accordingly, the results below emphasize transparent item-level patterns rather than treating engagement, motivation, confidence, control, stress, and future preference as separate validated scales.

Table 4. *Questionnaire scale reliability*

Scale	Items	Cronbach's α	Interpretation
Perceived effectiveness	5	.872	High internal consistency
Attitudes toward blended learning	6	.907	High internal consistency

4.3. Perceived effectiveness

Item means ranged from 3.78 to 4.09. "Positive responses" were defined as agree plus strongly agree, with $n = 32$ for every item. The highest mean concerned idea generation and development ($M = 4.09$), followed by organization and overall performance (both $M = 4.00$). Corrected integer-count percentages are reported in Table 5.

Table 5. *Perceived effectiveness of blended learning ($n = 32$)*

Item	M	SD	Counts SD/D/N/A/SA	Positive n (%)
E1	4.09	.928	1/0/6/13/12	25 (78.1%)
E2	4.00	1.047	2/0/5/14/11	25 (78.1%)
E3	3.81	1.091	1/4/4/14/9	23 (71.9%)
E4	3.78	1.263	3/3/2/14/10	24 (75.0%)
E5	4.00	1.016	1/2/4/14/11	25 (78.1%)

For E3, 23 of 32 students (71.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that blended learning enhanced their vocabulary, whereas the vocabulary test comparison was non-significant. Self-reported

usefulness and test performance represent different evidence. The discrepancy may reflect perceived access to lexical support without a detectable change on one timed paragraph task; the present data cannot distinguish this explanation from task sensitivity, scoring resolution, or sampling variation.

4.4. Attitudes toward blended learning

Post-course attitudes were favourable: 29 of 32 students (90.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that the lessons were engaging, and 28 (87.5%) reported greater confidence. These are retrospective perceptions collected at one time point and should not be interpreted as independently measured increases from baseline. Response counts and corrected percentages are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. *Student attitudes toward blended learning (n = 32)*

Item	M	SD	Counts SD/D/N/A/SA	Positive n (%)
A1	4.31	.644	0/0/3/16/13	29 (90.6%)
A2	4.09	.893	0/3/2/16/11	27 (84.4%)
A3	4.31	.780	0/1/3/13/15	28 (87.5%)
A4	4.09	.928	0/3/3/14/12	26 (81.3%)
A5	4.09	.734	0/1/4/18/9	27 (84.4%)
A6	4.03	1.031	1/2/4/13/12	25 (78.1%)

4.5. Interview themes

The three interviews illustrated, rather than established the prevalence of, experiences underlying the questionnaire patterns. All three participants identified organization as the clearest perceived area of improvement, although Student 3 also described continuing difficulty with grammar and maintaining clarity. The deductive coding retained these contrasting accounts rather than treating the interviews as evidence of saturation.

Table 7. *Thematic summary of student interviews*

Theme	Source	Illustrative quotation	Bounded interpretation
Organization	Students 1–3	“I think I’ve improved the most in organization” (S1); “my organization has improved the most” (S2).	Shared perception across all three interviews; not a class-wide prevalence estimate.
Preparedness	Students 1–2	“Access learning materials ... before class makes me feel more prepared” (S1).	Illustrates perceived value of advance access.
Self-regulation	Students 1–2	“Sometimes it’s a bit hard to stay focused when I’m at home” (S1).	Distraction and time management were reported by two participants.
Clarity and comprehension	Student 3	“Sometimes the instructions ... are unclear” and “I don’t always understand ... the reading materials.”	One discrepant case indicating a need for clearer scaffolding.

The interviews indicated different support needs. Students 1 and 2 mentioned distraction or time-management difficulties during online work, while Student 3 reported unclear instructions and difficulty understanding some reading materials. These accounts concern self-regulation and language comprehension; the interview transcripts did not document a specific technology-access failure. They suggest a possible support disparity within the three selected cases but do not demonstrate a cohort-wide equity effect.

5. Discussion

5.1. Changes in writing performance

The overall score change is consistent with reports of improved EFL writing during integrated online and classroom instruction [7], [15], [17], [20]. However, the present result describes change during the complete course sequence; neither a causal effect of blended learning nor the separate contribution of Google Classroom can be established. Preparation, supported application, feedback, task familiarity, and maturation may all have contributed. The proposed teaching mechanisms were not directly tested.

Organization showed the largest observed mean gain. Paragraph structure is highly teachable through explicit models, visual outlines, reconstruction tasks, and focused feedback. Online models gave students time to inspect the relationship among topic sentences, supporting details, transitions, and conclusions. Classroom tasks then made these relationships observable through discussion and collaborative planning. The three interviewees reported noticing related changes in their own work.

One possible explanation for the content gain is that advance prompts and brainstorming support reduced idea-generation demands; this process was not measured directly. When students arrived with a conceptual framework and practised selecting relevant details, they could devote more attention to development. The grammar gain may reflect the combination of reusable explanations with contextualized error analysis and revision. This interpretation is compatible with research suggesting that blended environments can support grammar use when learners receive multiple opportunities to notice and apply forms [15].

The vocabulary result warrants caution because the confidence interval was wide enough to include both negligible and positive change. It does not show that eight weeks of substantive exposure were insufficient or that particular vocabulary activities would necessarily improve scores. Spaced retrieval, collocation work, and required reuse of target language are therefore proposed as options for a future action-research cycle, to be evaluated rather than assumed effective.

5.2. Student perceptions and attitudes

The positive questionnaire and interview results indicate that students accepted the instructional model. Engagement, confidence, and motivation were particularly strong. These patterns align with research linking blended learning to increased flexibility and participation [3], [16], [17], [21]. Pre-class exposure appears to have reduced uncertainty: students could anticipate the focus of the lesson and enter classroom activities with an initial plan. Stored materials also made review possible without relying solely on notes taken during class.

Perceived autonomy should nevertheless be interpreted carefully. Flexibility helped many students manage pace and revisit difficult content, but it also created demands for self-regulation. Reports of distraction and incomplete preparation resemble challenges documented in broader reviews of blended learning [9]. Autonomy is therefore not the absence of structure. First-year learners may need calendars, short tasks, reminders, completion checks, and visible links between preparation and classroom participation.

The high support for continuing blended learning supports considering continued local use with monitoring and refinement. Students' positive attitudes do not eliminate the difficulties reported by less confident learners. Inclusive implementation should offer concise instructions, examples of completed tasks, downloadable or low-bandwidth materials, and brief in-class recovery opportunities for learners who could not access or understand the preparation.

5.3. Pedagogical implications

A practical option for writing lecturers is to design a continuous pathway in which pre-class work prepares a specific classroom activity and classroom products lead to review or revision. Short model-based tasks may be useful where they match learner needs, but this study did not compare short tasks with longer online instruction. Directions should state the purpose, steps, expected product, approximate completion time, and submission method, with a brief comprehension check before application.

Classroom time should prioritize processes that benefit from human interaction: comparing plans, explaining choices, co-constructing criteria, drafting, conferencing, and using feedback. Online time is well suited to repeated viewing, low-stakes practice, resource storage, and submission. This allocation preserves the social and diagnostic value of face-to-face instruction while using the platform to extend contact with writing.

Vocabulary deserves a more systematic strand. Lecturers can select a manageable set of topic words and collocations, use spaced retrieval across weeks, require targeted reuse in drafts, and provide feedback on appropriacy rather than correctness alone. Learners can maintain digital vocabulary records with example sentences drawn from their own writing. Such work would directly address the only dimension without a statistically significant gain.

At programme level, universities should provide reliable access, platform orientation, and professional development in blended course design [22]. Training should focus on alignment and learner support rather than technical features alone. Departments can also coordinate workload so that first-year students do not receive excessive and inconsistent online tasks across courses.

5.4. Limitations

5.4.1. Design and sample

The one-group design, one intact class, and absence of a comparison condition restrict causal interpretation and generalizability. Regular instruction, feedback, practice, task familiarity, and maturation cannot be separated from the blended sequence.

5.4.2. Measurement and analysis

Each test sampled only one paragraph, prompt equivalence was not independently established, and assessors were not blinded. Independent pre-consensus ratings and raw data for inter-rater reliability and distributional diagnostics were not retained. Component tests were exploratory and unadjusted for multiplicity.

5.4.3. Self-report and duration

The questionnaire was post-only, the teacher also acted as researcher, and three interviews cannot establish prevalence or saturation. Online participation was not systematically logged, and no delayed post-test examined retention or transfer.

6. Conclusion

This classroom action research documented higher paragraph-writing scores after eight weeks of substantive blended activities within a 12-week course involving 32 first-year English-majored students. The overall score and the content, organization, and grammar dimensions increased significantly; the vocabulary comparison was not significant. Because the study had no comparison group, these changes cannot be attributed to blended learning alone.

Students reported favourable perceptions of the blended course, and three interview accounts illustrated perceived benefits alongside distraction, time-management difficulty, unclear instructions, and language-comprehension challenges. These post-course self-reports describe participants' views but do not establish attitudinal change or the prevalence of each experience across the cohort.

The findings support carefully monitored local refinement rather than a general claim of effectiveness. A future cycle could strengthen lexical recycling, simplify online directions, record task completion and time-on-task, provide alternative access formats, and use longer-term and comparative evaluation.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest. Data Availability Statement

Anonymized data may be made available by the corresponding author subject to institutional and participant-consent requirements.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

Generative AI (ChatGPT, OpenAI) was used solely to assist with language editing and improving the clarity of the manuscript. The authors reviewed, edited, and verified all content and took full responsibility for the final version of the manuscript.

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