

Synchronous Hybrid Learning in Higher Education: Exploring the Perceptions and Experiences of EFL Students and Teachers in Thailand

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Abstract

Synchronous hybrid learning (SHL), which combines simultaneous delivery of face-to-face and online learning, has become an alternative approach for English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction in Thai higher education in the post-COVID-19 era. This mixed methods study explored and compared the perceptions and experiences of EFL undergraduate students and teachers regarding SHL in the English courses at an international college of a public university in Thailand. Data were collected from online questionnaires (240 students and 10 teachers) and semi-structured interviews (15 students and 5 teachers). The findings indicated significant differences between the perceptions and experiences of students and teachers in terms of pedagogical, social, and technical (PST) designs, attitudes, willingness, and benefits of SHL. Most EFL students had positive perceptions and experiences with SHL due to its flexibility, convenience, cost-time savings, their familiarity with technology, and enjoyment of English learning activities. In contrast, EFL teachers reported more negative perceptions and experiences with this learning format due to significant challenges, including difficulties in balancing attention between online and on-site students, increased workload, communication issues, isolation of online students, and technical issues. To improve the effectiveness of SHL, teachers' attentiveness toward online students, use of interactive activities, professional development, and suitable classroom facilities were necessary. Implications, recommendations, and limitations are also discussed in this study.

Keywords: synchronous hybrid learning, English as a foreign language (EFL), pedagogical, social, and technical (PST) designs, the technology acceptance model (TAM), higher education

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected the delivery of English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction in higher education worldwide, resulting in a rapid shift from face-to-face learning to online learning (Kanchai, 2021). In Thailand, while many educational institutions offered EFL courses online during the pandemic, some educational institutions, including an international college of a public university resumed face-to-face instruction as COVID-19 cases decreased between 2020 and 2021. However, some students were unable to commute to campus due to health concerns and travel restrictions. To ensure the continuity of EFL instruction, the international college fully adopted synchronous hybrid learning (SHL), a learning approach in which online learning and face-to-face learning are conducted simultaneously (Wang et al., 2017).

SHL offers significant benefits. It is considered an effective alternative learning approach for EFL instruction (Erliza & Septianingsih, 2022). It allows students who are unable to attend face-to-face classes to attend the classes online (Raes et al., 2020). However, SHL presents challenges for Thai EFL teachers, particularly in fostering interactive lessons, conducting suitable assessments, and presenting lectures to online students (Ulla & Espique, 2022).

As SHL continues to be integrated into higher education beyond the COVID-19 pandemic (Melcher et al., 2025), exploring both EFL students' and teachers' perceptions and experiences is crucial. Teachers' perceptions and experiences play a vital role in teaching effectiveness (Podolsky et al., 2019), while understanding students' perceptions and experiences allows teachers to improve their teaching practices to meet students' needs (Suleman, 2018). By combining the insights from both groups, this study provides language teachers, students, and administrators in higher education with a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges of SHL, which is necessary for improving the effectiveness of its implementation in foreign language education.

However, in Thailand, many research studies on English language learning in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period have focused primarily on fully online learning. Additionally, studies on SHL in EFL contexts, particularly those examining the perceptions and experiences of both students and teachers, are limited (Ulla & Espique, 2022). To fill in these gaps, this study aims to explore and compare the perceptions and experiences of EFL students and teachers regarding SHL. Thus, the study contributes to a better understanding of SHL implementation in EFL contexts and provides pedagogical implications for effective course design and teaching practices.

Literature Review

Synchronous Hybrid Learning (SHL)

Synchronous hybrid learning (SHL) is also known as blended synchronous learning or hybrid learning (Bower et al., 2015; Erliza & Septianingsih, 2022). Bower et al. (2015) defined it as a form of learning in which online students attend face-to-face classes through video conferencing. It is also known as a learning approach that integrates face-to-face learning and online learning simultaneously (Wang et al., 2017).

SHL offers several benefits. It provides flexibility and convenience by allowing students to choose the learning formats according to their needs (Pham et al., 2023). It serves as an alternative to maintain the continuity of education during the pandemic (White et al., 2010). In addition, it enables online students to engage in real-time interaction with teachers and peers regardless of location (Bower et al., 2015). Moreover, students can save their travel costs and time (Chen et al., 2005), while teachers can save time by not having to repeat lessons for absent students (Cunningham, 2014).

However, SHL presents challenges for both teachers and students. Teachers are required to do additional preparation (Bower et al., 2015) and perform multiple roles during the lessons, including presenting content, facilitating, and paying attention to all students simultaneously (Szeto, 2015). Moreover, online students often experience isolation (Cunningham, 2014) and struggle with concentration and interaction (Francescucci & Foster, 2014).

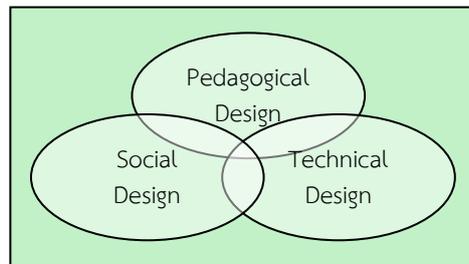
Pedagogical, Social, and Technical (PST) Designs

The PST designs, initially developed by Wang (2008) as the PST model, have been utilized to help teachers effectively incorporate technology into their teaching practice across various learning environments. As shown in Figure 1, Wang and Huang (2018) stated that an effective SHL environment can be created through the combination of pedagogical, social, and technical (PST) designs. Pedagogy refers to teaching strategies or approaches that teachers use to conduct lessons (Wang, 2008). Pedagogical design involves the design and management of instruction and the selection of learning activities to ensure that all students achieve the learning objectives. Teachers should provide equivalent learning experiences for online and on-site students, conduct appropriate learning activities, and ensure instruction is easy to follow. Social design refers to creating a friendly learning environment where students are willing to communicate and collaborate. A safe and comfortable environment, social

presence, and smooth interaction should be promoted. The effectiveness of pedagogical and social designs is greatly affected by the support of technology. Regarding technical design, technological tools should be appropriate and user-friendly, with clear instructional presentations and audio communication between online and on-site students.

Figure 1

The PST Designs



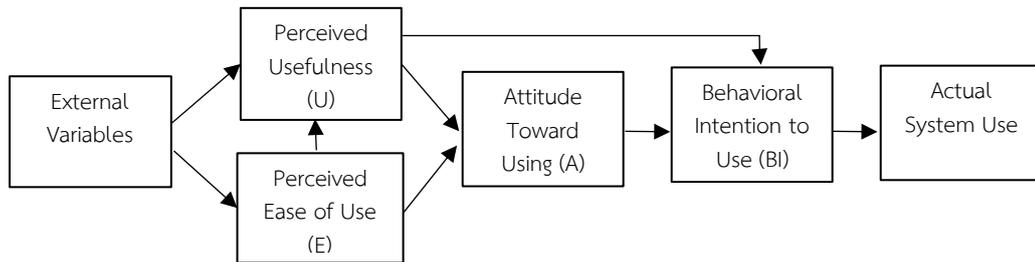
Note. Adapted from Wang (2019, p. 143)

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

To investigate EFL students' and teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding technology-integrated instruction, this study applies the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis (1989), which explains why users adopt or reject technology. As shown in Figure 2, perceived usefulness (U) and perceived ease of use (E) are the two main factors that influence users' attitudes (A) toward using technology, which then affect their behavioral intention to use (BI) and actual system use. U refers to the extent to which a user thinks that using a system can enhance his/her performance. E refers to the extent to which the user thinks that using a system requires minimal effort. A refers to the extent to which a user feels positively or negatively about using technology (Teo, 2019). If users find a system easy to use and useful, they are likely to develop a positive attitude toward it, which in turn increases their intention to use the system and actual system use (Davis et al., 1989).

Figure 2

TAM



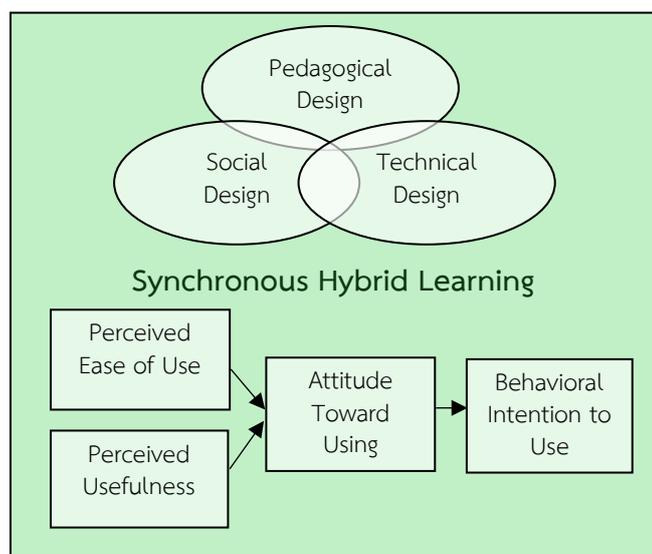
Note. Adapted from Davis et al. (1989, p. 985)

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study, as presented in Figure 3, is adapted from the PST designs (Wang & Huang, 2018) and TAM (Davis, 1989) to examine EFL students' and teachers' perceptions and experiences of SHL.

Figure 3

Conceptual Framework



Related Studies

Although many higher institutions adopted SHL during the COVID-19 pandemic, this learning format had been designed and developed before the pandemic. Bower et al. (2015) conducted a cross-case analysis of the SHL environment to investigate how the design and implementation affected students' learning. The study emphasized the importance of active learning design and appropriate technology selection. Additionally, Wang and Huang (2018) developed the SHL framework based on pedagogical, social, and technical designs and explored graduate students' perceptions and experiences of SHL. The findings showed that interactive video conferencing enabled online students to share similar learning experiences with on-site students. SHL was flexible and convenient for students. Clear audio, redesigned learning activities, and teacher attentiveness were essential for an effective SHL environment.

In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, research on students' and teachers' perceptions of SHL has been conducted in different countries. Lakhali et al. (2021) explored the perceptions and experiences of students and teachers regarding SHL in a Canadian graduate teacher program. The results showed that SHL provided opportunities for students who lived far from the university to attend lessons online. However, challenges were reported, including internet problems, inadequate equipment, and difficulties in class management. In addition, Erliza and Septianingsih (2022) investigated EFL undergraduate students' perceptions of SHL in English courses in Indonesia. The findings indicated that students perceived SHL positively regarding pedagogical, social, and technical aspects. However, challenges related to students' concentration and difficulties in learning English were identified. In Thailand, Ulla and Espique (2022) examined EFL teachers' hybrid teaching experiences in a Thai university. The results revealed that teachers faced challenges in making classes interactive, explaining lectures to online students, and conducting effective assessments. Class time management, the use of online platforms, and technological tools for language instruction were essential for supporting hybrid teaching.

In the post-COVID-19 pandemic, SHL continued to be implemented in some higher education institutions, as reflected in recent research studies. Adi Badiozaman et al. (2024) investigated university students' experiences and perceptions of their transition to SHL and found that their positive experiences were influenced by their self-efficacy in online learning and teachers' teaching competence. Additionally, Melcher et al. (2025) evaluated synchronous hybrid teaching at a university in the UK where SHL is still implemented. While students

preferred SHL for its inclusivity and flexibility, teachers expressed concerns about the lack of technical support, high workload, and low online student engagement.

Previous studies regarding SHL were primarily conducted in foreign countries and focused on either students' or teachers' perceptions and experiences in general education. However, in Thailand, studies that combine EFL students' and teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding SHL remain limited. Therefore, this study will explore and compare EFL students' and teachers' perceptions and experiences of SHL. There are three research questions as follows:

1. What are EFL students' perceptions and experiences regarding SHL in their EFL courses?
2. What are EFL teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding SHL in their EFL courses?
3. Are there any significant differences between EFL students' and teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding SHL in their EFL courses?

Methodology

Research Design

A mixed methods research approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches, was employed in this study. Quantitative data were collected using online questionnaires. Then, qualitative data were collected using semi-structured interviews to obtain more in-depth insights into the quantitative findings.

Participants

This study involved 600 EFL undergraduate students and 10 full-time EFL teachers from an international college at a public university in Thailand. All participants had experience with SHL in the fundamental English courses during the 2020 and 2021 academic years. The students were sophomores, juniors, and seniors from 16 different majors. They were at least 18 years old and had diverse nationalities (such as Thai, Chinese, Indian, Taiwanese, and Japanese). The teachers, aged between 35 and 64 years old, were native or near-native English speakers with diverse nationalities (such as American, Australian, British, Canadian, French, and Thai) and had over 9 years of EFL teaching experience. A total of 240 students (40%) and 10 teachers (100%) completed online questionnaires. Of these, 15 students (6.5%) and 5 teachers (50%) participated in the semi-structured interviews.

The Synchronous Hybrid Learning (SHL) Context

At the international college, SHL was implemented in the fundamental English courses during the 2020 and 2021 academic years in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Students were given options to study online or on-site. In the courses, teachers conducted the lessons from classrooms equipped with computers, webcams, microphones, whiteboards, and projectors. In the study, students participated in the lessons either fully online or both online and on-site, depending on their circumstances.

Research Instruments

Two research instruments were used in this study: online questionnaires and semi-structured interview questions. Two similar sets of online questionnaires were created using Google Forms: one for the students and one for the teachers. The online questionnaires were designed and developed based on the previous literature, including Wang and Huang's (2018) PST designs, Davis's (1989) TAM, and studies on the benefits and challenges of SHL. The questionnaire for teachers was in English, while the student version was in English and Thai.

Each questionnaire consisted of five parts: (1) eight closed-ended questions asking about participants' demographic information and SHL background; (2) seventeen items on perceptions and experiences regarding the PST designs; (3) six items on attitudes and willingness to use SHL; (4) thirteen items on the benefits and challenges; and (5) two questions regarding interview consent. Items in parts 3 and 4 were developed based on TAM: perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitudes, and behavioral intention to use.

The questionnaire responses from parts 2 to 4 were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). In part 2, higher scores indicate positive perceptions and experiences regarding the PST design, while lower scores indicate negative perceptions and experiences. In part 3, higher scores reflect positive attitudes and willingness to use SHL, while lower scores indicate negative attitudes or reluctance to use SHL. In part 4, higher scores indicate greater perceived benefits or challenges, while lower scores represent fewer perceived benefits or challenges.

The semi-structured interview questions, designed based on questionnaires, aimed to gain deeper insights into students' and teachers' perceptions and experiences. There were two similar sets of interview questions: one for students and one for teachers. Each set contained 15 open-ended questions (see Appendix).

Research Instrument Validation

All research instruments were reviewed by five English Language Teaching experts using the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC). The IOC values for the student questionnaire, teacher questionnaire, student interview questions, and teacher interview questions were 0.93, 0.94, 0.91, and 0.91, respectively, indicating that the research instruments were aligned with valid objectives (Turner & Carlson, 2003). Then, a pilot test was conducted in January 2024 with 30 students and 5 teachers. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to assess the internal consistency of each construct of the questionnaires. Across constructs, Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.81 to 0.87 for the student questionnaire and from 0.82 to 0.89 for the teacher questionnaire, indicating good reliability (George & Mallery, 2003, as cited in Wadkar et al., 2016, p. 116).

Data Collection

Before data collection, the study received approval from the university's Central Institutional Review Board (IRB). Participants were informed about the research study and were asked to provide consent for voluntary participation. In January 2024, online questionnaires were distributed to all participants via Google Forms. At the end of the online questionnaires, all participants were asked to share their contact information if interested in a follow-up online interview. The interview participants were randomly selected from the volunteer list until data saturation was reached (Saunders et al., 2018). In total, 15 students and 5 teachers participated in the interviews. Interviews were conducted for approximately 30 minutes. They were audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated for analysis.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using the SPSS program (Version 30) to obtain descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency and percentage were used to show the findings of the closed-ended questions. Means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*) were used to present the findings of the five-point Likert-scale questions and were analyzed based on the intervals and descriptions from Pimentel (2019, p. 188), as shown in Table 1. In addition, a Mann-Whitney U test, a non-parametric test used to assess whether there is a significant difference between two independent groups when the data do not follow a normal distribution (Mann & Whitney, 1947), was conducted to compare EFL students' and teachers' perceptions and experiences of SHL. The qualitative data from the students' and

teachers' interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six steps suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Table 1

Five-point Likert Scale Interpretation

| Likert Scale | Interval | Description | Interpretation (Agreement with the Statements) |
|--------------|-----------|-------------------|--|
| 5 | 4.20-5.00 | Strongly agree | Very high |
| 4 | 3.40-4.19 | Agree | High |
| 3 | 2.60-3.39 | Neutral | Average |
| 2 | 1.80-2.59 | Disagree | Low |
| 1 | 1.00-1.79 | Strongly disagree | Very low |

Results

The findings are divided into four parts: (1) perceptions and experiences regarding PST designs; (2) benefits and challenges; (3) attitudes and willingness to use SHL; and (4) suggestions. The findings from parts 1-3 are presented using a weaving approach (Fetters & Freshwater, 2015, p. 210), with questionnaire findings supported by semi-structured interview findings. The findings from part 4 are presented using interview data.

Perceptions and Experiences regarding PST Designs

Table 2

Students' and Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences regarding Pedagogical Design

| Items | Students | | | Teachers | | |
|---|----------|------|----------------|----------|------|----------------|
| | M | SD | Interpretation | M | SD | Interpretation |
| 1. I felt that <u>online</u> students could easily follow the teachers' instruction. | 3.24 | 1.14 | Average | 3.10 | 0.99 | Average |
| 2. I felt that <u>on-site</u> students could easily follow the teachers' instruction. | 4.06 | 0.93 | High | 4.40 | 0.52 | Very high |
| 3. Learning activities were suitable for both on-site and online students. | 3.54 | 1.18 | High | 3.50 | 0.97 | High |

| | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| 4. My teachers/I could pay equal attention to both on-site and online students. | 3.45 | 1.23 | High | 1.50 | 0.70 | Very low |
| 5. I found that online students could participate in learning activities similarly to on-site students. | 2.93 | 1.22 | Average | 1.80 | 0.79 | Low |
| Total | 3.44 | 0.83 | High | 2.86 | 0.62 | Average |

Table 2 presents students' and teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding pedagogical design. Most students felt that on-site students could easily follow the instruction ($M = 4.06$), learning activities were suitable ($M = 3.54$), and teachers paid equal attention to them ($M = 3.45$). A student commented:

“The teachers always came up with new activities, such as peer editing activities and discussions in Zoom breakout sessions. I also liked the grammar quizzes on Kahoot!”

(Student 12)

However, students' agreement that online students could follow the instruction ($M = 3.24$) and engage in activities similarly to on-site students was only at an average level ($M = 2.93$). A student shared:

“When I participated in the lesson online, I could not focus on learning because the teacher didn't pay much attention to me.”

(Student 7)

Although most teachers found their learning activities suitable ($M = 3.50$) and on-site students could easily follow instruction ($M = 4.40$), they found it difficult to give equal attention to online and on-site students ($M = 1.50$). A teacher commented:

“When I paid attention to on-site students, I tended to forget about online students.”

(Teacher 1)

Overall, students' high level of agreement regarding pedagogical design ($M = 3.44$) reflected positive perceptions and experiences of learning activities and teacher attentiveness. However, teachers' average level of agreement ($M = 2.86$) suggested their difficulties in providing equal attention.

Table 3

Students' and Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences regarding Social Design

| Items | Students | | | Teachers | | |
|---|----------|-----------|----------------|----------|-----------|----------------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Interpretation | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Interpretation |
| 1. I felt that <u>online</u> students regularly interacted with the teacher. | 2.80 | 1.20 | Average | 2.10 | 0.74 | Low |
| 2. I felt that <u>on-site</u> students regularly interacted with the teacher. | 3.88 | 0.96 | High | 4.00 | 1.28 | High |
| 3. I felt that online students and on-site students regularly interacted with each other. | 2.86 | 1.22 | Average | 1.70 | 0.95 | Very low |
| 4. I felt that online students and on-site students could easily collaborate in group work. | 2.91 | 1.30 | Average | 1.50 | 0.84 | Very low |
| 5. I felt that <u>online</u> students could easily communicate with the teacher. | 3.20 | 1.20 | Average | 2.60 | 0.84 | Average |
| 6. I felt that <u>on-site</u> students could easily communicate with the teacher. | 4.07 | 1.04 | High | 4.80 | 0.42 | Very high |
| 7. I felt that <u>online</u> students and on-site students could | 3.06 | 1.28 | Average | 1.70 | 0.48 | Very low |

| Items | Students | | | Teachers | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Interpretation | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Interpretation |
| easily communicate with each other. | | | | | | |
| 8. I felt comfortable and safe to participate in/conduct the courses. | 3.70 | 1.12 | High | 3.00 | 1.16 | Average |
| Total | 3.31 | 0.79 | Average | 2.68 | 0.37 | Average |

Table 3 presents students' and teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding social design. Most students felt comfortable and safe with the courses ($M = 3.70$). However, online students found it more difficult to communicate and interact with teachers ($M = 3.20$ and 2.80) compared to on-site students ($M = 4.07$ and $M = 3.88$). Communication ($M = 3.06$), interaction ($M = 2.86$), and collaboration ($M = 2.91$) between online and on-site students were only at an average level. A student commented:

“Online students were quite hesitant to speak during the lessons because they couldn't see the teachers and on-site students.”

(Student 11)

Similarly, teachers found it more difficult to communicate and interact with online students ($M = 2.60$ and $M = 2.10$) than with on-site students ($M = 4.80$ and $M = 4.00$). Additionally, they strongly disagreed that both groups of students interacted, communicated, and collaborated easily ($M = 1.70$ and $M = 1.50$). A teacher mentioned:

“There was almost no interaction between the students online and the students on-site. They didn't ask each other questions because they didn't feel close enough.”

(Teacher 1)

Overall, both students' and teachers' agreement regarding social design was at an average level ($M = 3.31$ and $M = 2.68$), suggesting communication difficulties among teachers and students.

Table 4

Students' and Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences regarding Technical Design

| Items | Students | | | Teachers | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Interpretation | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Interpretation |
| 1. I faced no technological issues in synchronous hybrid English courses. | 2.42 | 1.13 | Low | 2.30 | 0.68 | Low |
| 2. I felt that online students could clearly see the teachers and the content on the screen. | 3.84 | 1.09 | High | 3.20 | 0.92 | Average |
| 3. There was clear audio communication between teachers, online students, and on-site students. | 3.50 | 1.01 | High | 3.60 | 0.84 | High |
| 4. The classroom facilities were well prepared to support SHL. | 3.67 | 1.11 | High | 2.70 | 1.16 | Average |
| Total | 3.36 | 0.72 | Average | 2.95 | 0.65 | Average |

Table 4 presents students' and teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding technical design. Although most students agreed that the facilities were well-prepared ($M = 3.67$), that the teachers and screen could be clearly seen ($M = 3.84$), and that the audio was clear ($M = 3.50$), they faced technological issues ($M = 2.42$). The students emphasized:

“Sometimes, there were internet issues on both the students' and teachers' sides.”

(Student 15)

“When I attended the lessons online, I sometimes could not see or hear my teachers and my on-site classmates clearly.”

(Student 8)

“Some teachers and students were not very good at using technological devices. Sometimes, they could not share their screens on Zoom.”

(Student 7)

Similarly, most teachers encountered technological issues ($M = 2.30$), related to the video problems ($M = 3.20$) and inadequate classroom facilities ($M = 2.70$). A teacher mentioned:

“The classroom wasn’t set up for the online students to hear everything happening in the classroom.”

(Teacher 1)

Overall, both students’ and teachers’ average level of agreement ($M = 3.36$ and $M = 2.95$) indicated technological issues related to internet connectivity, inadequate facilities, audio and video issues, and limited technological skills.

Table 5

Differences regarding PST Designs between Students and Teachers

| | Group | N | Mean | Sum of | Mann- | Z | Sig |
|--------------------|----------|-----|--------|----------|-----------|-------|------------|
| | | | Rank | Ranks | Whitney U | | (2-tailed) |
| Pedagogical | Students | 240 | 127.73 | 30655.50 | 664.50 | -2.40 | .017* |
| | Teachers | 10 | 71.95 | 719.50 | | | |
| Social | Students | 240 | 128.15 | 30757.00 | 563.00 | -2.85 | .004* |
| | Teachers | 10 | 61.80 | 618.00 | | | |
| Technical | Students | 240 | 126.94 | 30338.50 | 731.50 | -2.10 | .036* |
| | Teachers | 10 | 78.65 | 786.50 | | | |

* $p < .05$

A Mann-Whitney U test, a non-parametric statistical test, was conducted to examine differences between students’ and teachers’ perceptions and experiences of SHL. As shown in Table 5, the Mann-Whitney U test showed significant differences between students’ and teachers’ perceptions and experiences regarding pedagogical ($U = 664.50$, $Z = -2.40$, $p = .017$), social ($U = 563.00$, $Z = -2.85$, $p = .004$), and technical design ($U = 731.50$, $Z = -2.10$, $p = .036$).

Students' mean rank scores for PST design (mean rank = 127.73, 128.15, and 126.94) were significantly higher than those of teachers (mean rank = 71.95, 61.80, and 78.65), indicating more positive perceptions and experiences among students in all three areas.

Benefits and Challenges

Table 6

Students' and Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences regarding Benefits

| Items | Students | | | Teachers | | |
|---|----------|-----------|----------------|----------|-----------|----------------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Interpretation | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Interpretation |
| 1. I found SHL flexible and convenient. | 4.13 | 0.96 | High | 2.10 | 0.99 | Low |
| 2. SHL could be used as an alternative approach to ensure the continuity of instruction during the pandemic. | 4.10 | 0.96 | High | 3.50 | 1.18 | High |
| 3. SHL promoted a sense of community among online and on-site students and teachers. | 3.42 | 1.16 | High | 2.10 | 0.88 | Low |
| 4. SHL provided an opportunity for online students to interact in real time with on-site students and teachers. | 3.51 | 1.08 | High | 2.30 | 0.95 | Low |
| 5. I could save travel costs and time by attending/conducting synchronous hybrid courses. | 4.32 | 0.91 | Very high | 2.30 | 1.77 | Low |

| | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| 6. It was not complicated to learn/teach in the SHL format. | 3.74 | 1.07 | High | 2.30 | 1.16 | Low |
| 7. It was easy to use the video conferencing program for SHL. | 4.10 | 0.93 | High | 3.50 | 0.97 | High |
| Total | 3.90 | 0.73 | High | 2.59 | 0.85 | Low |

Table 6 presents students' and teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding the benefits of SHL. Students identified several benefits, including cost and time savings ($M = 4.32$), convenience and flexibility ($M = 4.13$), the continuity of instruction during the pandemic ($M = 4.10$), real-time interaction for online students ($M = 3.51$), ease of participation ($M = 3.74$), and video conferencing usage ($M = 4.10$). A student commented:

"I could save money and time because I didn't have to rent a room or spend time commuting to the campus."

(Student 14)

In addition, two students shared that SHL helped them improve their time management and technological skills.

"I was able to improve my time management skills."

(Student 2)

"SHL helped me improve my technological skills and gain valuable knowledge about technology."

(Student 10)

Teachers recognized that SHL not only ensured continuity of education ($M = 3.50$) but also provided them opportunities to improve their teaching skills.

"I was able to add more interesting questions on quizzes. Also, I developed more things that I couldn't do before, such as using Google Forms for peer feedback."

(Teacher 1)

Overall, students perceived SHL as beneficial ($M = 3.90$), especially for cost and time savings, flexibility, convenience, continuity of education, ease of learning, and skills development. Although teachers perceived SHL as less beneficial ($M = 2.59$), they recognized its role in promoting educational continuity and professional growth.

Table 7

Students' and Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences regarding Challenges

| Items | Students | | | Teachers | | |
|--|----------|-----------|----------------|----------|-----------|----------------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Interpretation | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Interpretation |
| 1. I felt that teachers needed to spend more time and put in more effort to prepare and manage synchronous hybrid courses. | 3.79 | 1.04 | High | 4.00 | 1.16 | High |
| 2. I felt that online students were isolated. | 3.63 | 0.99 | High | 4.30 | 0.48 | Very high |
| 3. I felt it was difficult for <u>online</u> students to communicate with the teacher and other students. | 3.65 | 1.01 | High | 4.00 | 0.47 | High |
| 4. I felt it was difficult for <u>online</u> students to concentrate on the information. | 3.65 | 1.01 | High | 4.20 | 0.63 | Very high |
| 5. I felt there were some technological issues during the lessons. | 3.77 | 0.92 | High | 3.90 | 0.99 | High |

| | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 6. SHL requires high-cost connectivity and technological tools. | 3.60 | 1.02 | High | 3.60 | 0.97 | High |
| Total | 3.68 | 0.69 | High | 4.00 | 0.19 | High |

Table 7 presents students' and teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding the challenges of SHL. Most students reported facing challenges, particularly related to technology ($M = 3.77$), communication ($M = 3.65$), concentration ($M = 3.65$), and isolation of online students ($M = 3.63$). A student emphasized:

“Sometimes I felt isolated when participating in the lesson online. Some online students just turned off their cameras and microphones. No one communicated.”

(Student 10)

While teachers reported challenges similar to those of students, many reported an increased workload ($M = 4.00$). A teacher mentioned:

“There was more work required, such as revising the teaching materials, managing all the technological devices, and engaging two groups of students at the same time.”

(Teacher 1)

Overall, both students and teachers reported significant challenges ($M = 3.68$ and $M = 4.00$), including technological issues, online students' difficulties in concentration and communication, isolation among online students, and teachers' increased workload.

Table 8

Differences regarding Benefits and Challenges between Students and Teachers

| | Group | N | Mean Rank | Sum of Ranks | Mann-Whitney U | Z | Sig (2-tailed) |
|-----------------|----------|-----|-----------|--------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| Benefits | Students | 240 | 129.36 | 31046.00 | 274.00 | -4.14 | < .001* |
| | Teachers | 10 | 32.90 | 329.00 | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-----|--------|----------|--------|-------|------|
| Challenges | Students | 240 | 123.78 | 29707.00 | 787.00 | -1.85 | .064 |
| | Teachers | 10 | 166.80 | 1668.00 | | | |

* $p < .05$

Regarding Table 8, the Mann-Whitney U test results showed significant differences between the students' and teachers' perceptions of benefits and challenges, $U = 274.00$, $Z = -4.14$, $p < .001$. Students' mean rank (mean rank = 129.36) was significantly higher than that for teachers (mean rank = 32.90), suggesting that students perceived more benefits from SHL. No significant difference was found between the groups regarding challenges.

Attitudes and Willingness to Use SHL

Table 9

Students' and Teachers' Attitudes and Willingness to Use SHL

| Items | Students | | | Teachers | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Interpretation | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Interpretation |
| Attitudes | | | | | | |
| 1. I like the SHL approach adopted in the English courses. | 3.44 | 1.16 | High | 1.50 | 0.71 | Very low |
| 2. Overall, I was happy to conduct/ enroll in the English courses in the SHL format during COVID-19. | 3.52 | 1.11 | High | 1.50 | 0.71 | Very low |
| 3. I like English courses conducted in the SHL format more than in a face-to-face classroom. | 3.30 | 1.27 | Average | 1.30 | 0.48 | Very low |
| 4. I find SHL in English courses a valuable experience. | 3.46 | 1.09 | High | 1.90 | 1.10 | Low |
| Total | 3.43 | 1.00 | High | 1.55 | 0.62 | Very low |

Willingness

| | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| 5. I would like to enroll in/conduct these English courses in the SHL format in the post-COVID-19 period. | 3.37 | 1.32 | Average | 1.40 | 0.70 | Very low |
| 6. I would like to enroll in/conduct other English courses in the SHL format in the post-COVID-19 period. | 3.23 | 1.32 | Average | 1.40 | 0.70 | Very low |
| Total | 3.30 | 1.22 | Average | 1.40 | 0.70 | Very low |

Table 9 presents students' and teachers' attitudes and willingness to use SHL. Most students were happy to enroll in the synchronous hybrid English courses ($M = 3.52$) and liked this learning format ($M = 3.44$). A student mentioned:

"I like SHL because I am more familiar with using technological tools. Also, I would love to take other synchronous hybrid English courses because I can choose to learn from anywhere."

(Student 11)

In contrast, most teachers were dissatisfied with SHL ($M = 1.50$) and reluctant to conduct other courses in the post-COVID-19 period ($M = 1.40$). Two teachers pointed out:

"Overall, it was not a great learning experience. For me, a lot more stress and a lot more having to manage multiple devices while teaching."

(Teacher 3)

"I would not prefer SHL because I felt like I wasn't good at it, and I didn't have enough experience to do a good job."

(Teacher 4)

Overall, while students showed positive attitudes ($M = 3.43$) and willingness to enroll in synchronous hybrid English courses ($M = 3.30$), teachers reported negative attitudes ($M = 1.55$) and low intention to conduct other courses in this format ($M = 1.40$).

Table 10

Differences regarding Attitudes and Willingness to Use SHL between Students and Teachers

| | Group | N | Mean Rank | Sum of Ranks | Mann-Whitney U | Z | Sig (2-tailed) |
|--------------------|----------|-----|-----------|--------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| Attitudes | Students | 240 | 129.82 | 31157.00 | 163.00 | -4.64 | < .001* |
| | Teachers | 10 | 21.80 | 218.00 | | | |
| Willingness | Students | 240 | 129.41 | 31058.00 | 262.00 | -4.24 | < .001* |
| | Teachers | 10 | 31.70 | 317.00 | | | |

* $p < .05$

Table 10 showed significant differences regarding students' and teachers' attitudes ($U = 163.00$, $Z = -4.64$, $p < .001$) and willingness ($U = 262.00$, $Z = -4.24$, $p < .001$). Students' mean ranks (mean rank = 129.82 and 129.41) were significantly higher than teachers' (mean rank = 21.80 and 31.70), suggesting that students had significantly more positive attitudes and greater willingness to use SHL in English courses.

Suggestions

In the interviews, students and teachers provided suggestions for improving SHL effectiveness. They highlighted the importance of enhancing teachers' attentiveness toward online students, conducting interactive activities, improving classroom facilities, and gaining synchronous hybrid teaching experience.

A student emphasized the need for teachers to be more attentive toward online students. He commented:

“The class will be more effective if the teacher asks online students more questions and interacts more with them.”

(Student 5)

In addition, a few students suggested that the teachers should conduct more interactive activities to enhance online students' engagement.

“I recommend using the breakout room function on Zoom. I think it works well for online students, as they can interact and discuss with on-site students.”

(Student 7)

“I would like the teacher to improve activities so that online students are more engaged. The teacher can use the Kahoot application for quizzes.”

(Student 13)

Moreover, a teacher highlighted the need to install more technological tools in the classroom to enhance students' learning experience. He commented:

“There should be more cameras so online students can see everything in the classroom, and more microphones so they can hear on-site students.”

(Teacher 4)

Furthermore, a teacher emphasized that gaining more experience in synchronous hybrid teaching was necessary. He shared:

“I just need to teach many more synchronous hybrid classes. I suppose that if I do this more often, my teaching will become more natural.”

(Teacher 2)

Discussion

This section discusses the findings from the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. It is divided into three parts: (1) pedagogical, social, and technical designs; (2) benefits and challenges; and (3) attitudes and willingness to use SHL.

Pedagogical, Social, and Technical (PST) Designs

The study showed that students reported significantly more positive perceptions and experiences regarding PST designs than teachers. Regarding pedagogical design, students generally had positive perceptions and experiences because of the suitability of learning

activities and teachers' attentiveness. Student interviews indicated learning activities such as peer editing, group discussions, and quizzes on Kahoot! (a game-based learning platform) supported both student interaction and learning enjoyment. These findings align with Erliza and Septianingsih's (2022) study, which found that well-prepared and appropriate learning activities contributed to EFL students' positive perceptions of hybrid learning in Indonesia. In contrast, teachers faced difficulties in paying equal attention to both on-site and online students. While this corresponds with Wang and Huang's (2017) findings with teachers teaching graduate courses, this study interestingly revealed that such difficulties were influenced by a lack of communication from online students, technical issues, and limited experience with hybrid teaching.

Regarding social design, although students generally felt more comfortable and safer with SHL than teachers, both groups shared concerns about the lack of communication between online and on-site students. This supports Wang and Huang's (2018) study, which also found that online students reported difficulty communicating with on-site students due to the lack of eye contact and difficulty hearing on-site students. Interestingly, this study further revealed that unequal teacher attention and a lack of close relationships between online and on-site students were significant factors that led to the lack of communication.

For technical design, both students and teachers encountered technological issues related to the poor quality of audio and video, internet issues, limited technological skills, and insufficient classroom facilities. These findings are in line with those of Lakhal et al. (2021), who found that internet connectivity and inadequate equipment were challenges for teachers and graduate students in Canada. While in line with that previous study, this study further revealed that these technological issues played an important role in shaping teachers' ability to conduct and manage their teaching and students' ability to concentrate and engage in the SHL environment.

Benefits and Challenges

The study found that students perceived significantly greater benefits from SHL than teachers. For students, SHL allowed them to continue their learning during the pandemic. It also offered convenience and flexibility, allowing them to select the formats according to their needs. These findings are in line with Pham et al.'s (2023) findings conducted with EFL students in a Vietnamese college. Additionally, students were able to save time and travel expenses from SHL, which supports Chen et al. (2005), who found that synchronous online learning

lessened financial burdens for students in New Zealand. Importantly, beyond these benefits, this study revealed that SHL also enabled students to develop essential soft skills such as time management and technological skills necessary for their learning success and future careers. For teachers, SHL not only promoted the continuity of education during the pandemic but also provided them with opportunities for professional development, particularly in developing teaching and technological skills. For example, based on the interviews, a teacher learned to integrate digital tools into class activities and adapt learning materials for synchronous hybrid courses.

In terms of challenges, it was found that teachers encountered more challenges than students in SHL. For teachers, apart from difficulty paying equal attention to students, communication issues, and technical issues (see the PST Designs section), additional workload was another significant challenge. Teachers were required to revise the teaching materials and manage multiple technological devices while teaching simultaneously, which is in line with Bower et al. (2015) and Melcher et al. (2025), who reported similar issues for teachers in Australia, New Zealand, and the UK. However, this study further highlights that the increased workload was a significant factor contributing to teacher stress and negative perceptions of SHL.

For students, apart from the communication issues and technical issues (see the PST Designs section), online students' difficulty concentrating on the lesson was another main challenge. These findings support Francescucci and Foster (2014) who found that undergraduate students in Canada struggled to concentrate in online classes due to distractions. While supporting their findings, this study interestingly revealed that this challenge was also influenced by the lack of attention from the teachers and technical issues.

The isolation of online students was another significant challenge for both students and teachers. The study showed that online students tended to turn off the cameras and felt isolated during the lessons. This corresponds with Cunningham's (2014) and Watanapokakul's (2022) studies, which reported similar challenges among New Zealand postgraduate students and Thai EFL undergraduate students in online lessons. However, this study adds that feelings of isolation were caused by a lack of communication and interaction between online and on-site students.

Attitudes and Willingness to Use SHL

The study showed that students had significantly more positive attitudes and willingness to use SHL than teachers. According to the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis et al., 1989), perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use were key factors shaping users' attitudes and, subsequently, their behavioral intention to use a system. When examining the findings through the lens of TAM, students who found SHL useful (such as being flexible and convenient) and easy to participate in were more likely to develop positive attitudes and the intention to continue using SHL. This corresponds with Watanapokakul (2024), who also highlighted that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use directly affected Thai EFL students' positive attitudes toward online learning and their intention to use it. The present study also revealed that students who were familiar with technology tended to have more positive perceptions and greater willingness to use SHL. This supports Kampookaew's (2020) study, which emphasized the role of technological familiarity in shaping EFL students' attitudes. Additionally, game-based learning tools not only made lessons enjoyable and interactive but also helped foster students' positive attitudes toward SHL, which corresponds with Taylor et al.'s (2023) findings on perceived enjoyment as a key factor influencing EFL students' positive attitudes and intention to adopt the technology.

In contrast, although teachers perceived some benefits of SHL, challenges in implementing synchronous hybrid courses (such as balancing attention, communication issues, and increased workload) negatively influenced their attitudes and intention to adopt SHL. Watanapokakul (2024) found that attitudes played a crucial role in mediating the influence of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use on the intention to use. Even if teachers perceived SHL as useful and easy to use, the negative attitudes could contribute to teachers' low willingness to adopt it. Without a shift in teachers' attitudes, the effective implementation of SHL remains a challenge.

Pedagogical and Administrative Implications

This section discusses implications based on the findings, focusing on pedagogy and administration.

Pedagogy

Challenges such as online students' isolation, difficulty concentrating, and lack of interaction and communication suggest the need for teachers to engage more with online

students. To enhance student engagement, teachers can conduct more interactive activities using online tools, such as breakout rooms, chats, and polls. Fostering positive attitudes toward SHL is also necessary for teachers and students. Incorporating game-based learning and engaging learning content can enhance students' enjoyment and positive attitudes. Additionally, training programs (such as overseas and domestic workshops) on effective activity and assessment design, technology usage, and classroom management should be provided to help teachers improve teaching practice and develop positive attitudes toward SHL.

Administration

The technological issues (such as audio and video issues), along with teachers' suggestions on the need to develop classroom facilities, indicate that the university should invest in high-quality technological equipment in the classroom, such as Full HD webcams and microphone speakers on each desk, to facilitate effective communication among teachers and students. The equipment and online tools should be user-friendly (Wang & Huang, 2018) and familiar to both students and teachers (Watanapokakul, 2024). Furthermore, providing real-time technical support and teaching assistants during the lessons can help reduce the burden on teachers.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study has a few limitations. Since the data were collected through questionnaires and interviews, responses might have been affected by question misinterpretation or personal bias. Incorporating classroom observations in a similar study could help enrich the understanding of EFL students' and teachers' perceptions and experiences of SHL. Regarding research content, the study did not thoroughly examine the positive aspects of SHL in English courses, such as effective teaching methods and class management strategies, or positive impacts of SHL on students' learning outcomes. Therefore, future research should explore effective strategies to enhance online and on-site students' engagement in synchronous hybrid English courses, investigate the effectiveness of SHL by evaluating EFL students' learning outcomes, and examine factors that foster EFL teachers' and students' positive perceptions and experiences of SHL.

Conclusion

In the post-COVID-19 era, synchronous hybrid learning (SHL) has emerged as a practical alternative for EFL instruction in higher education. This study explored and compared the perceptions and experiences of EFL students and teachers regarding SHL. Students significantly had more positive perceptions and experiences of SHL than teachers in terms of pedagogical, social, and technical designs; attitudes and willingness; and benefits. Students' positive perceptions and experiences were influenced by the benefits, learning enjoyment, and familiarity with technology. In contrast, teachers reported negative perceptions and experiences due to significant challenges. Although SHL has the potential to be a flexible learning format for EFL instruction in the post-COVID-19 era, its success depends on addressing the challenges through cooperation among various stakeholders.

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AI Declaration

During the preparation of this work, the authors used ChatGPT and QuillBot in order to ensure the accuracy of grammar and language fluency. After using this tool/service, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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Appendix

Interview Questions for EFL Students and Teachers

1. Which synchronous hybrid English courses did you take/conduct?
2. How did you attend/conduct those synchronous hybrid English courses?
3. What do you think about applications/classroom tools that were used in synchronous hybrid courses?
4. Did you face any technical issues while using those applications/classroom tools?
5. What do you think can be done to solve those technical issues?
6. What do you think about your synchronous hybrid learning/teaching experiences?
7. What do you think about teachers'/your teaching methods and class management?
8. What do you think about the learning activities that the teachers/you prepared in synchronous hybrid English classes?
9. What are your suggestions on how the teachers/you can improve the teaching in synchronous hybrid English classes?
10. How was the atmosphere in your synchronous hybrid classes?
11. How was the interaction and communication between teachers and on-site and online students?
12. What do you think can be done to improve interaction and communication in synchronous hybrid classes?
13. What are the benefits of SHL?
14. What are the challenges of SHL?
15. Would you like to take/conduct synchronous hybrid courses in the future in the post-COVID-19 era? Why or why not?