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Cross-Cultural Perceptions of Blended Language Learning: A Comparative Exploration among Indian and Iranian Students

Irum ALVI
Rajasthan Technical University, India

Soodeh EGHTESAD *pubrel.ffll@ut.ac.ir
University of Tehran, Iran

The study examines the perceptions of Indian and Iranian students, toward blended language learning (BL), using both quantitative and qualitative data. A total of 213 responses were obtained through convenience sampling, comprising 52.6% Indian and 47.4% Iranian undergraduate students, all of whom had prior experience with blended learning, utilizing a 24-item questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed using IBM SPSS v26. Descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), reliability tests, and t-tests were conducted. The quantitative analysis indicated a generally positive response toward blended learning. The results indicated a significant difference in the general perception of blended learning suggesting that Iranian students may have a more favorable perception of BL compared to their Indian counterparts. However, no significant differences were found in other constructs, including BL Usage, Preferred Learning Environment, Learner Experience, and Personal Factors. The qualitative analysis highlighted the multifaceted nature of BL, revealing both its strengths in fostering an inclusive, cooperative learning environment and the challenges it poses for language teaching and learning. The qualitative insights revealed cultural differences, particularly concerns about maintaining cultural and linguistic heritage among Iranian students and the potential for disengagement due to the lack of face-to-face interaction. Based on the findings, it can be safely concluded that there exist potential differences in how students engage and perceive BL indicating the need for culturally tailored approaches for enhancing the effectiveness of blended learning.

Introduction

The emergence of technology has substantially enhanced language learning by offering instructors and learners various modes and environments for interacting, exploration of linguistic elements, and

knowledge construction tailored to individual needs, objectives, and interests (Golonka et al., 2014). Blended Learning, a technology-based learning system, has emerged and matured over the past three decades. It is one of the most practical educational approaches that enable learners and instructors to benefit from both face-to-face and online instruction using various digital resources and tools to enrich learning and teaching experiences.

Blended learning (BL) has been extensively utilized in the field of language learning (Ramalingam et al., 2022); however, the perceptions of both instructors and students regarding this educational approach are diverse. Previous research has focused primarily on learners' attitudes and perceptions toward blended learning in different contexts, such as the Chinese context (Wang et al., 2021), the Columbian context (Mendieta & Barkhuizen, 2019), the Iranian context (Alipour, 2020), and the Indian context (Kaur et al., 2021), among others. Moreover, researchers have focused on attitude and perception regarding blended learning (Deng et al., 2021; Stefanic et al., 2020), and language learning strategies in blended learning environment (Habók et al., 2021) within one country, while cross-cultural perceptions have been less widely studied. Cross-cultural perceptions involve understanding and interpretation of behaviors, values, and norms from different cultural perspectives, focusing on how individuals from diverse backgrounds perceive and understand a phenomenon.

Literature Review

Blended Learning

Blended Learning (BL) has emerged a growing trend in learning in the past few decades (Graham, 2006). This educational approach combines traditional face-to-face instruction with synchronous and/or asynchronous technology-mediated learning in a complementary manner (Graham & Halverson, 2023; Pu & Chang, 2023), sustaining education in various situations, while providing students and instructors with a more diverse and individualized form of participation and interaction in class. The alternation of face-to-face and technology-mediated learning can be applied to the instructor's delivery mode, instructor-student or student-student communications, and interactions, access to learning contents and resources, learning tasks and activities, as well as formative or summative assessment practices. Instruction through BL optimizes students' interaction and collaboration (Ellis et al., 2021; López-Pellisa et al., 2021; Peng & Fu, 2021), active participation, motivation and engagement in learning (Cornelius et al., 2019; Ehsanifard et al., 2020; Li, 2022), and personalized learning experiences (Alamri et al., 2021; Asarta & Schmidt, 2020), as learners are given opportunities to engage with their instructor or peers as well as course content and online resources both inside and outside the classroom, in a more flexible and student-centered manner (Asarta & Schmidt, 2020), using diverse technological tools and instruments.

In recent years, blended learning has become a widely used practice in language learning contexts (Ramalingam et al., 2022). Various studies have focused on the effects of BL on language proficiency and overall academic achievement (Li, 2022; Moradimokhles & Hwang, 2022; Wang et al., 2021), while others have investigated how specific aspects of language knowledge such as

grammar (Simonava, 2019) and vocabulary (Alipour, 2020; Polakova & Klimova, 2022; Sato et al., 2020) may be enhanced through BL. Research has also focused on the positive impacts of BL on developing specific language skills such as writing in a foreign language (Guo & Li, 2024; Sarré et al., 2021) through collaborative online writing activities and online corrective feedback, reading and willingness to read in a foreign language (Yang, 2012), speaking, communicative ability and engagement in classroom interactions (Ehsanifard et al., 2020; Hsu, 2016; Wang, 2021), and listening performance and accuracy (Caruso et al., 2017; Jiang et al., 2021).

In formal and academic language learning settings, the implementation of BL has often been followed by an analysis of students' perceptions about this learning environment, the analysis of which has raised important questions regarding the advantages and disadvantages of blended language learning: according to Pinto-Llorente et al. (2017), blended language learning increases opportunities to access authentic materials in L2, provides students more accessible technological tools that support collaborative and independent learning, while offering them flexibility in accessing e-activities. Wang et al. (2019) argue that BL helps students in delivering multi-modal language input of different types and topics, enhancing students' language learning strategies, supporting peer review, building online learning communities, and empowering synchronous-asynchronous discussions, thus helping students to monitor their progress. According to Wright (2017), students believed that they were more motivated and more interested in learning in in-class lessons due to a more in-depth understanding of the new material, valued classroom interaction with peers and the instructor, and face-to-face input reception from the lecturer, while the convenience of study and flexibility of time and place of study were mentioned as advantages of technology-mediated sessions in their blended course.

Learning Culture

When introducing a new approach to learning and/or teaching, the degree of its effectiveness and acceptance, as well as the type and the extent of expected outcomes for students becomes highly influenced by the culture in which it has been implemented (Hamdan, 2014). Hofstede (2001) views culture as the collective programming of the mind, which characterizes the members of a society and shapes their perceptions, attitudes, values, and actions.

Language learning is a multifaceted phenomenon that occurs through the interplay of various factors related to learners, such as learning styles and strategies, as well as learning situations, all of which form the notion of "learning culture" (Taheri et al., 2019). Learning culture reflects students' attitudes and behaviors regarding knowledge, knowledge construction, and knowledge transmission within a specific context (Hodkinson et al., 2007), and is defined as how students perceive their educational materials, learning styles, tools and approaches, class interactions, as well as the meaning and purpose of education (Hamdan, 2014). Learning culture lies at the heart of teaching and learning due to its power to influence the various constituent components of the learning process (Kumpulainen & Renshaw, 2007; Tu, 2021); it is therefore important to understand and consider learners' cultural backgrounds and experiences to investigate their online presence, online behavior and acceptance in blended courses, as well as the way in which they perceive blended language learning across different cultures based on their specific cross-cultural perceptions and attitudes

(McLoughlin & Olivier, 2000; Zhu, 2012). This is especially true when investigating students' cross-cultural perceptions regarding blended language learning in countries like India and Iran, with deeply rooted, yet distinct Eastern-origin sociocultural and educational backgrounds, as they attempt to adopt, adapt, and implement a Western-originated teaching approach.

Students' unwritten learning cultures reflect the plurality of their experiences and perceptions regarding learning, course content, teaching approaches, and both online and face-to-face interactions (Hodkinson et al., 2007; Zhu, 2012). They influence how specific cultural values and perceptions in an educational setting interact with new or existing educational phenomena and/or practices, such as Blended Learning, based on students' particular national, linguistic, ethnic, historical, sociological, and educational characteristics (Hamdan, 2014). While numerous studies have delved into the effectiveness of BL methods (Li, 2022; Ramalingam, 2022; Tran & Ma, 2021) or the effects of cultural diversity on learning in general (Al-Obaydi, 2019; Kim, 2020; Paras et al., 2019), fewer works have examined the specific impact of cultural diversity on students' perceptions and experiences in Blended Learning. Moreover, existing research lacks comprehensive comparative analyses between students from diverse cultural backgrounds, particularly in the context of blended language learning, thus presenting a gap in understanding how cultural values, particularly education cultures shape perceptions (Hodkinson et al., 2007). More specifically, previous literature lacks detailed examinations of how cultural backgrounds, particularly from distinct regions like India and Iran, influence perceptions and preferences in blended language acquisition, necessitating deeper investigation into these specific cultural dynamics. Thus, the primary objective of this research is to comprehensively investigate and compare the perceptions of Indian and Iranian students within blended language learning environments and to delineate the similarities, differences, and underlying cultural factors that shape students' perceptions. Ultimately, this will provide valuable insights into optimizing blended language learning experiences in diverse cultural settings. This understanding can inform the design of more inclusive and effective instructional strategies, foster greater cultural sensitivity and empathy among learners, and ultimately enhance the overall efficacy of blended language learning programs.

Cultural Contexts of Iran and India

In Iran, English is the most widely practiced foreign language, followed by French, German, Arabic, Chinese, and Korean, among others. English and Arabic are studied in Iranian schools as mandatory subject matter, while other languages are mostly studied in private language institutes and universities. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, most schools and language institutes offered language courses solely in the form of face-to-face classes, although virtual and BL have been a common practice in the country's renowned universities since 2010. After the pandemic, however, many language institutes, schools, and universities continued to offer language classes in the form of blended courses to enhance students' language learning experiences by complementing the strengths and weaknesses of face-to-face and online learning settings. The majority of blended language classes are held in the form of face-to-face instruction with complementary online collaborative activities, resource sharing, and interactions, helping students stay in contact with the target language outside of class through social media, social messengers, as well as synchronous

online classrooms or communication platforms such as Skype, Adobe Connect, etc. In addition, coursework is primarily performed through online learning management systems and course platforms, allowing students and instructors to use a variety of internet-based assessment instruments.

In recent years, numerous studies have focused on the integration of BL in Iranian language classes and its impacts on students' production in a foreign language (Ehsanifard et al., 2020; Rezai et al., 2024; Torabi, 2021) and receptive skills (Yang, 2012), as well as vocabulary (Alipour, 2020) and grammar use (Torabi, 2021). In addition, a vast body of literature published in English, as well as those published in Persian, has focused on Iranian students' perceptions regarding blended language learning, the majority of which have either investigated students' satisfaction and effectiveness, especially during and after the Covid-19 pandemic in Iran (Taghizadeh & Hajihosseini, 2021).

On the other hand, English is a significant second language for millions of Indians. India has seen increased interest in other foreign languages. French, German, Spanish, Russian, Japanese, and Chinese are taught in schools, colleges, and language institutes across the country. These languages are often chosen for their economic, cultural, and academic benefits. In the 21st century, globalization and the digital revolution have further amplified the importance of foreign language learning in India.

Blended learning (BL) in India has evolved significantly over the past few decades, particularly with the rapid advancement of technology and social learning tools (Alvi, 2021). The concept of BL began to take shape in the early 2000s, driven by the increasing availability of digital tools and internet connectivity. Initially, BL was primarily adopted by higher education institutions and professional training organizations aiming to combine traditional face-to-face instruction with online components to enhance learning outcomes. The COVID-19 pandemic marked a significant turning point for BL in India, as educational institutions across the country were compelled to transition to online and blended modes of teaching almost overnight. This period saw a massive increase in the use of Learning Management Systems (LMS), video conferencing tools, and digital collaboration platforms to facilitate remote learning (Sharma & Alvi, 2021). Researchers have also examined the various dimensions of BL (Kaur, Saraswat, & Alvi, 2021). Several studies have been conducted to scrutinize the effect of BL on student characteristics, design features and outcomes (Kintu et al., 2017). Today, BL is an integral part of the Indian education system, spanning schools, colleges, and professional training institutes. Government initiatives such as the Digital India campaign and the introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes the integration of technology in education, are expected to further promote and standardize BL practices across the country.

As such, both India and Iran have rich histories of foreign language learning shaped by their unique cultural, political, and historical contexts. India has a more diverse influence from European languages due to colonization, whereas Iran's foreign language learning has been influenced by regional and diplomatic needs. In blended learning, both countries saw significant advancements in the early 2000s and experienced accelerated adoption due to the COVID-19 pandemic. India has a

more pronounced presence of EdTech startups and government initiatives such as NEP 2020, while Iran focuses on national initiatives and expanding digital infrastructure.

The Objective of the Research

This cross-cultural study aims to address the overlooked impact of several influences – general, personal and cultural—on blended language learning outcomes in two distinct cultures, filling a critical gap in the literature. Two developing countries, namely India and Iran were chosen for this study due to their distinct educational traditions, and rich cultural diversity, that is the presence of multiple cultural or ethnic groups within a society with different traditions, languages, and values, which may provide valuable insights into how these factors influence blended language learning. Additionally, the Iranian and Indian contexts are considered ideal for exploring the impact of cultural influences on blended language learning due to their complex linguistic landscapes, as well as the blend of traditional and modern educational practices, particularly in the context of second and foreign language acquisition. This understanding may provide valuable insights for developing more effective, inclusive, and culturally responsive teaching practices that address the needs of a diverse student population. As such, the present study attempts to address the following research questions:

1. What are the key similarities and differences in the perceptions of Indian and Iranian students towards BL?
2. How do cultural backgrounds influence students' overall perceptions of blended language learning?

Methodologies

Research Design and Instrument

The study adopts an explanatory mixed-method research design. Items from previously validated scales were adopted for the present study (Bervell et al., 2021; Bhagat et al., 2021; Han & Ellis, 2020; Shelly et al., 2024). The items were modified to align with the research objectives of the current study. A pilot study was conducted with twenty respondents to test the instruments. This helped ensure the reliability and validity of the survey items. Subsequently, the final survey form with two sections, one for demographic information and another with a 24-item questionnaire (5-point Likert-scale) was distributed to Indian and Iranian students in blended language learning programs. The data collected were analyzed using IBM SPSS v26. Descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), reliability tests, and t-tests were conducted. Subsequently, quantitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with a subset of participants to gain insights into students' perceptions, which were analyzed through thematic analysis to complement the quantitative data. To manage invalid responses, if any, rigorous data validation checks were implemented and clear criteria for response validity were established, for ensuring only accurate and relevant data were included in the analysis. This approach helped in ensuring the integrity and reliability of the research findings.

Sampling and Participants' Characteristics

Using a convenience sampling methodology, 213 responses were collected, with the resultant sample comprising 52.6% of Indian and 47.4% of Iranian undergraduate students. All the respondents had experience with BL. Regarding gender distribution, the majority were62.4% males and 37.6% females, with a mean age of 18.5 years (standard deviation = 0.980). The demographic information of the sample is summarized in Table 1:

Table 1 Demographic Information

Category	Subcategory	Percentage (%)
Nationality	Indian	52.6
	Iranian	47.4
Gender	Male	62.4
	Female	37.6
Familiarity with BL	Experienced	21.6
	Limited Experience	35.7
	Moderate Experience	32.4
Preferred Learning Environment	BL	46
	In-Person Instruction	35.2
	Online Learning	18.8

Data Analysis and Statistical Methods

The analysis methods were guided by both the study objectives and the nature of the data. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was employed to find the underlying factor structure of the instrument and to confirm the validity of the constructs. Next, the factor loadings were observed to detect the strength of relationship between items and variables. The study also used Cronbach's alpha values to examine internal consistency as well as reliability of the selected factors. Subsequently, descriptive statistics were used to identify patterns, if any, among the responses. To investigate the cultural differences between Indian and Iranian students, independent samples t-tests were conducted. Finally, qualitative analysis was used to gain deeper insights into the cultural differences among the students.

Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to identify underlying relationships among variables, revealing that the factors explained 63.967% of the total variance, indicating a strong model fit. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .945, demonstrating excellent suitability for factor analysis. Additionally, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant (Chi-Square = 3752.075, df = 276, Sig. = .000), confirming that the variables are significantly correlated and appropriate for EFA. The factor analysis with varimax rotation identified three Eigenvalues, which were greater than 1; these three factors explained 63.967% of the total variation depicting these three factors predominantly influenced the students' perceptions of blended language learning.

Table 2 Factor Loading and Cronbach's Alpha

Factors	Items	Factor Loadings	
F1 General Perception of design features of BL Cronbach's Alpha=.943 N of Items=14	GP1	.800	Bervell et al., (2021); Han & Ellis, (2020); Shelly et al., (2024)
	GP2	.774	
	GP3	.732	
	GP4	.715	
	GP5	.698	
	GP6	.696	
	GP7	.693	
	GP8	.692	
	GP9	.647	
	GP10	.633	
	GP11	.619	
	GP12	.533	
	GP13	.496	
	GP14	.433	
F2 Learner experience Cronbach's Alpha=.917 N of Items=6	LE1	.806	Bervell et al. (2021)
	LE2	.767	
	LE3	.752	
	LE4	.735	
	LE5	.662	
	LE6	.617	
F3 Personal factors Cronbach's Alpha=.815 N of Items=4	PF1	.776	Bhagat et al., (2021); Han & Ellis (2020); Shelly et al., (2024)
	PF2	.620	
	PF3	.618	
	PF4	.570	
Total Scale: Cronbach's Alpha=.959; N of Items=24			

The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) results are presented in Table 2. The first factor, **General Perception of Blended Learning (F1)**, included 14 items with factor loadings ranging from .433 to .800 and a high Cronbach's alpha of .943, indicating robust internal consistency. This factor captured various features of BL, including course objectives, learning activities, teaching strategies, instructor support, resources available, etc. The second factor, **Learner Experience (F2)**, comprised 6 items with loadings between .617 and .806 and a Cronbach's alpha of .917, reflecting strong reliability and suggesting that this factor effectively measures students' experiences with BL. The third factor, **Personal Factors (F3)**, consisted of 4 items with loadings from .570 to .776 and a Cronbach's alpha of .815, indicating good reliability. This factor included items meant to gauge students' perceptions regarding self-efficacy, self-determination, autonomy, and time management skills for balancing between online learning and face-to-face learning tasks. The total scale, encompassing 24 items, had an overall Cronbach's alpha of .959, demonstrating excellent internal consistency and reliability across the entire measurement instrument. The internal reliability

coefficient for each factor exceeded the minimum of 0.70, which is endorsed by Hair et al. (2006) (Table 1).

The descriptive statistics (Table 3) illustrate the differences between Indian and Iranian students across several constructs related to their educational experiences. The findings indicate that Indian students tend to exhibit higher mean scores in BL usage (Indian: M=2.696, SD=0.8888; Iranian: M=2.604, SD=0.9806) and frequency of technology usage (Indian: M=3.509, SD=0.6974; Iranian: M=2.970, SD=0.8057) compared to Iranian students. Both groups show similar preferences for their learning environment (Indian: M=1.777, SD=0.7677; Iranian: M=1.673, SD=0.7498).

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics

Constructs	Nationality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
BL Usage	Indian	112	2.696	.8888
	Iranian	101	2.604	.9806
Frequency of Technology Usage	Indian	112	3.509	.6974
	Iranian	101	2.970	.8057
Preferred Learning Environment	Indian	112	1.777	.7677
	Iranian	101	1.673	.7498
General Perception of BL	Indian	112	3.965	.8142
	Iranian	101	4.180	.4026
Learner experience	Indian	112	3.985	.7961
	Iranian	101	3.884	.7497
Personal factors	Indian	112	3.834	.8936
	Iranian	101	3.779	.7860

T-Test Analysis between Indian and Iranian Students

The t-test was used to examine the mean differences, if any, between the perceptions of the two groups using SPSS v26 (Table 4).

Table 4 Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
BL Usage	Equal variances assumed	4.782	.030	.722	211	.471	.09247	.12808	-.16002	.34496

	Equal variances not assumed			.718	202.781	.473	.09247	.12874	-.16137	.34630
Frequency of Technology Usage	Equal variances assumed	.107	.744	5.229	211	.000	.53863	.10301	.33557	.74169
	Equal variances not assumed			5.190	198.963	.000	.53863	.10378	.33399	.74328
Preferred Learning Environment	Equal variances assumed	.000	.987	.994	211	.322	.10352	.10419	-.10186	.30890
	Equal variances not assumed			.995	209.648	.321	.10352	.10406	-.10162	.30865
General Perception of BL	Equal variances assumed	41.175	.000	-2.406	211	.017	-3.01582	1.25343	-5.48667	-.54498
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.483	165.807	.014	-3.01582	1.21455	-5.41380	-.61785
Learner experience	Equal variances assumed	2.234	.136	.947	211	.345	.60378	.63767	-.65325	1.86081
	Equal variances not assumed			.950	210.597	.343	.60378	.63569	-.64935	1.85691
Personal factors	Equal variances assumed	1.065	.303	.553	211	.581	.25619	.46345	-.65739	1.16977
	Equal variances not assumed			.556	210.875	.578	.25619	.46039	-.65137	1.16375

Independent Samples t-tests were conducted for three items on usage derived from the demographic section and three main factors identified. The results indicated a significant difference in the frequency of technology usage between Indian (M = 3.509, SD = 0.6974) and Iranian (M = 2.970, SD = 0.8057) students, $t(211) = 5.229$, $p < .001$, with Indian students demonstrating a higher frequency of technology usage showing a mean difference of 0.538. This finding suggests that Indian students may be using technology more frequently than their Iranian counterparts in the present context. The results indicated a significant difference in the general perception of BL

between Indian (M = 3.965, SD = 0.8142) and Iranian (M = 4.180, SD = 0.4026) students, t(211) = -2.406, p = .017, with Iranian students having a higher mean score by a mean difference of 0.215. This suggests that Iranian students may have a more favorable perception of BL compared to their Indian counterparts regarding course objectives, learning activities, teaching strategies, instructor support, and available resources. However, no significant differences were found in other constructs, including BL Usage, Preferred Learning Environment, Learner Experience, and Personal Factors influencing BL. These findings highlight notable disparities in technology usage and perceptions of BL between the compared groups, suggesting potential areas for targeted intervention or support to enhance educational experiences.

Independent Samples t-tests conducted addressees Research Question and revealed the key similarities and differences in the perceptions of Indian and Iranian students toward blended learning. Additionally, the explanatory mixed-method design helped the researchers in gaining a deeper understanding of how cultural backgrounds influenced students' overall perceptions of blended language learning thereby addressing Research Question 2.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative section involved interviews with students from Iran and India. Twenty participants were chosen using a convenience sampling technique. Each interview started with an introduction explaining the study's purpose, confidentiality, and participants' rights. The interviews were conducted in person, and lasted approximately 15 minutes. To gain a thorough understanding of participants' perceptions toward BL semi-structures and open-ended questions, based on the insights obtained from the quantitative analysis (Appendix-A), were used. Moreover, the students were asked how their cultural background influences their interactions and engagement in the BL environment. They were encouraged to describe instances where cultural differences significantly impacted their learning experience, both positively and negatively. The qualitative analysis of interviews involved thematic analysis and systematic coding to identify recurring themes and patterns. To ensure reliability and trustworthiness of the qualitative results, several methods were employed. Triangulation was used to cross-verify data with quantitative findings, and member checking was conducted by sharing interview summaries with participants to verify their accuracy. The coding process included independent initial coding by two researchers, followed by discussions to resolve discrepancies and refine the coding scheme.

While the qualitative analysis confirmed the quantitative findings regarding course objectives, learning activities, teaching strategies, instructor support, available resources, personal factors, and learner experiences, it also revealed several additional themes, including community and cooperation, learning path, practical application, knowledge integration, learning goals, instructional methods, and learning environments. Both groups demonstrated consistently positive perceptions of blended language learning across a range of aspects, providing persuasive evidence of a vibrant and encouraging learning environment, though a few negative perceptions were also noted. The qualitative data also offered valuable insights into cultural preferences and diversity among the students (Table 5):

Table 5 Qualitative Analysis: Themes, Sub-Themes, and Participant Perspectives

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Code	Excerpts from Indian Students	Excerpts from Iranian Students
Community and Cooperation	Sense of Unity	[CC1] Unity	"…it's reflected in how we connect within this learning environment and support one another."	"Indeed, we do not see each other in person, but after a few weeks, we feel like a community of learners; we share ideas, experiences, and prior knowledge, and we help each other even when somebody is trying to express his/her ideas in French but does not find the right word by typing the word in the chat box, and we work together to make the best out of the class experience."
	Participation and Bonding	[CC2] Bond	"Engaging in discussions is important for learning… it's also for sharing and growing together."	"I feel like if I don't participate in class discussions, I will be missing out a lot because not only does the participation help me develop my language skills, but it also indicates my presence in class. Besides, honestly if I don't participate, I will get bored."
Learning Path	Guidance and Support	[LP1] Guidance	"Feeling valued in an inclusive and supportive environment makes learning more enjoyable."	"The provided materials are effective; they offer good guidance and feedback."
	Feedback and Improvement	[LP2] Feedback	"The materials offered are really helpful; they make the learning process smooth and enjoyable."	"Feedback and materials' efficiency highlighted by Iranian students."
Practical Application	Real-World Use	[PA1] Real-World Use	"I like using everything I learn in the blended language class in real life daily."	"While we recognize the importance of real-life applications, our emphasis leans more towards mastering the foundational aspects, ensuring a strong base for practical use later. Our educational system is formed in a way that it first presents us a deep and complete understanding of a notion's theoretical foundations, before delving into its practical applications."
	Theoretical Foundation	[PA2] Theoretical Foundation	"We prioritize using language skills in daily interactions for both routine work and future professional success."	"We focus on thoroughly learning the language's fundamentals before practical application."

Knowledge Integration	Blending Traditions	[KI1] Blending Traditions	"We, Indians, love to blend new things, even new languages with our colorful traditions and stories."	“My language is important for me, very important; it holds precious treasures from our ancient culture, so I prefer to preserve it as it is, since we are almost the only country in the world that speaks it if we don’t take care of our language, an extensive amount of literature and culture embedded in our language will be lost in the future."
	Preservation of Culture	[KI2] Preservation	"Learning new languages adds to our rich cultural tapestry."	"Preserving our language is crucial for maintaining our cultural heritage."
Learning Goals	Individual Focus	[LG1] Individual Focus	"Personalized learning is very important for me; it allows me to learn as per my interests."	"While personalized learning is important for me, group learning makes me feel that I am in my safe corner. I feel like group learning makes me feel more empowered and more encouraged to learn."
	Group Learning	[LG2] Group Learning	"Personalized learning is very important for me; it allows me to learn as per my interests."	"Although personalized learning is important for me, group learning makes me feel more empowered and more encouraged to learn, as we share every learning experience and are inspired by our classmates’ ideas and perspectives."
Teaching Strategies	Interactive Participation	[TS1] Interactive Participation	"Engaging in discussions is important for learning… it's also for sharing and growing together."	"I feel like if I don’t participate in class discussions, I will be missing out a lot because not only does the participation help me develop my language skills, but it also indicates my presence in class. Besides, honestly if I don’t participate, I will get bored."
	Effective Materials	[TS2] Effective Materials	"The materials offered are really helpful; they make the learning process smooth and enjoyable."	"The provided materials are effective; they offer good guidance and feedback."
Cultural Integration	Blending Cultures	[CI3] Blending Cultures	"We, Indians, love to blend new things, even new languages with our colorful traditions and stories."	"Our language holds precious treasures from our ancient culture, so I prefer to preserve it as it is."
	Respecting Traditions	[CI4] Respecting Traditions	"Learning new languages adds to our rich cultural tapestry."	"Preserving our language is crucial for maintaining our cultural heritage."
Learning Environment	Supportive Atmosphere	[LE1] Supportive Atmosphere	"Feeling valued in an inclusive and supportive environment makes learning more enjoyable."	"A supportive environment fosters better learning and collaboration."

	Inclusiveness	[LE2] Inclusiveness	"The inclusive nature of the environment helps in better learning and understanding."	"Inclusiveness in the learning environment makes me feel more comfortable and engaged."
Cultural Insights	Integration of Cultures	[CI1] Cultural Integration	"We, Indians, love to blend new things, even new languages with our colorful traditions and stories."	“My language is important for me, very important; it holds precious treasures from our ancient culture, so I prefer to preserve it as it is, since we are almost the only country in the world that speaks it if we don’t take care of our language, an extensive amount of literature and culture embedded in our language will be lost in the future. I think we owe it to the future generations to preserve our language, just like the previous generations did for us. So, I like to learn French, but I still will use my language for day-to-day use."
	Embracing Diversity	[CI2] Embracing Diversity	"I, and my friends, like learning languages by looking at many different ways to understand them. This helps us know more."	"I enjoy exploring different views and ideas, but I also find that focusing on specific details helps me understand and learn better. It's like seeing the big picture while also zooming in on important parts to get a clearer picture of what I'm studying; details are very important for me, they help me make the big picture."
Negative Perception	Lack of Face-to-Face Interaction	NF1 Feeling of absence	“I miss my traditional classroom atmosphere.”	"Indeed, we do not see each other in person, but after a few weeks, we feel like a community of learners..." (Iranian)
	Potential for Boredom	NF2 Risk of disengagement	“Sometimes I feel lost in online classes”	"I feel like if I don’t participate in class discussions, I will be missing out a lot...if I don’t participate, I will get bored." (Iranian)
	Cultural Preservation Concerns	NF3 Anxiety over losing cultural and linguistic heritage	--	"...if we don’t take care of our language, an extensive amount of literature and culture embedded in our language will be lost in the future." (Iranian)
	Emphasis on Fundamentals Over Application	NF4 Delay in practical application	--	"While we recognize the importance of real-life applications, our emphasis leans more towards mastering the foundational aspects, ensuring a strong base for practical use later." (Iranian)

Discussion

The study aimed to scrutinize the perceptions of Indian and Iranian students toward blended language learning. The findings indicate that both Indian and Iranian students’ perceptions toward BL are positive, though Iranian students seem to have a more favorable general perception of BL compared to their Indian counterparts. The results also confirmed that the learner experience for both Indian and Iranian students was positive. The findings align with prior research which

emphasizes the pivotal role of students' learning experience in blended learning (BL) environments (Bhagat et al., 2021). The findings suggest students perceived that their participation in blended courses increased their motivation levels, which affirms prior studies (Peng & Fu, 2021). BL also seemed to enhance their confidence and skills, as well as autonomy and self-efficacy. BL provides an efficient and personalized learning experience (Asarta & Schmidt, 2020; Kintu et al., 2017). Moreover, the students' perceptions concerning course content, course objectives, class materials, learning procedures, and assessment were found to significantly influence their acceptance of BL. BL assisted the students in reducing instructor-centeredness, thereby allowing them more active participation. Notably, the BL environment was seen to encourage dynamic, meaningful, interactive, and significant learning experiences, thereby improving learners' satisfaction and achievement, affirming prior studies (Asarata & Schmidt, 2020). Lastly, the study corroborated past research findings that personal factors, namely self-determination, self-efficacy, autonomy, and time management skills significantly influence students' learning experiences and outcomes positively (Bhagat et al., 2021).

The qualitative analysis validated the quantitative findings, and revealed the multifaceted nature of BL, its strengths as well as challenges. The main themes highlighted the significant role of community and cooperation, learning paths, practical application, knowledge integration, learning goals, teaching strategies, cultural integration, learning environment, and cultural insights in enhancing the students' acceptance of BL for language learning. These themes delved into the sense of unity, participation, guidance, real-world use, blending traditions, individual focus, group learning, interactive participation, effective materials, blending cultures, respecting traditions, supportive atmosphere, inclusiveness, and integration and preservation of culture. The lack of face-to-face interaction and a tendency toward disengagement was noticed. The findings revealed students' concerns over cultural preservation and the emphasis on fundamentals over application, particularly among the Iranian students. Overall, the qualitative analysis highlighted the multifaceted nature of BL, revealing both its strengths in fostering an inclusive, cooperative learning environment and the challenges it poses for language teaching and learning.

The present findings confirm prior studies that have focused on the ways in which cultural values influence students' perceptions regarding blended language learning. These cultural elements,, mainly national and cultural identities shape students' interaction preferences in a BL environment; they influence learner differences regarding their culture of asking questions, collaborating with others and preferences in the way they use technologies (Tu, 2021), identity negotiation, authority, communication strategies and resource sharing in various cultural spaces, as well as technology adoption and technology affordances, individual and collective values and the ways in which these values influence students' choice of the learning environment as well as their interaction, group work and resource/activity sharing, politics of education in various cultures and the ways in which they shape and impact the particular blend of online and face-to-face interaction, student's investment in learning and their academic and social engagement in learning in a blended environment, as well as BL acceptance and effectiveness in terms of collectivism, power distance, short-term orientation, and uncertainty avoidance.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

There are several theoretical implications: the study highlights how students' attitudes and practices regarding blended language learning may be influenced by their perceptions, experiences, and cultural backgrounds. The present study offers numerous managerial and practical implications. Both personal and cultural preferences should be considered by educators and instructional designers when developing curricular materials, choosing teaching strategies, and creating inclusive and engaging learning environments in the classroom. In blended learning contexts, tailoring educational experiences to students' cultural backgrounds may also improve their engagement, motivation, and academic performance. Furthermore, the identified differences in perceptions between Indian and Iranian students highlight the need for adopting individualized and adaptable teaching strategies. Diverse learning styles and preferences can be accommodated by offering opportunities for individualized learning experiences, which are preferred by Indian students, as well as collaborative and group-oriented learning environments, which are preferred by Iranian students. By adopting and implementing these strategies and practices, blended language learning programs can encourage student autonomy, engagement, and satisfaction.

Although the mixed-method study provides insightful information, it has certain limitations. These include subjectivity in data interpretation social desirability bias, and potential difficulties in extrapolating results beyond the particular cultural contexts examined due to the limited sample sizes. In addition, the validity of the study may be impacted by temporal circumstances and researcher influence. The process of combining quantitative and qualitative data is complex and requires careful planning and execution. Future research in this field should examine how other cultural groups perceive blended language learning. Employing more robust sampling methods and larger sample sizes may also be used to reduce selection bias and enhance external validity. To determine the impact of temporal changes on students' views over time, longitudinal studies may also be conducted.

Conclusion

The study aimed to scrutinize the perceptions of Indian and Iranian students in BL environments, addressing key questions regarding similarities, differences, and cultural influences. Quantitative findings highlighted difference in technology usage with Indian students utilizing technology more frequently than their Iranian counterparts. No significant difference was found in BL Usage, Preferred Learning Environment, Learner experience, and Personal Factors influencing BL between the two groups. However, Iranian students demonstrated a more favorable overall perception of BL for language learning in comparison to the Indian students. The qualitative analysis reinforced the results of the quantitative analysis. It illustrated both the strengths and challenges of BL. The qualitative insights also highlight challenges, particularly concerns about maintaining cultural and linguistic heritage among Iranian students and the potential for disengagement due to the lack of face-to-face interaction. Based on the findings, it can be safely concluded that there exist potential cultural differences in how students engage with and perceive BL indicating the need for culturally tailored approaches for enhancing the effectiveness of blended learning.

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Irum ALVI has been working as an assistant professor of English at Rajasthan Technical University (RTU), Kota, since 2008. Her scholarly pursuits encompass communication skills, soft skills, literature, entrepreneurship skills, and personality development. Her academic contributions include numerous publications in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes, reflecting her interdisciplinary approach to English studies. For further questions, she may be contacted at ialvi@rtu.ac.in

Soodeh EGHTESAD is an assistant professor in French and English Language Teaching. She has been working at the University of Tehran for 13 years and mainly teaches M.A. and PhD seminars in French and English Language Teaching. Her main research interests consist of language learning and technology, language course design, lesson planning, and language learning and literature. For further questions, she may be contacted at seghtesad@ut.ac.ir

Appendix-A

Summary of Sample Questions:

General Perception of Blended Learning

What aspects of the blended learning approach (combining online and face-to-face activities) do you find most effective for your language learning? Describe your overall experience with blended learning in this language course.

Learning Experience and Personal Factors

How do you connect new language concepts with your prior knowledge during your studies? Can you share a particular experience where your personal study habits greatly influenced your success in the blended learning course?

Cultural Influences

How does your cultural background influence your interactions and engagement in the blended learning environment? Can you describe an instance where cultural differences significantly impacted your learning experience, either positively or negatively? How do you think your cultural background has shaped your approach to learning in a blended environment? Provide specific examples".