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The Effectiveness of Blended Learning on EFL Students. Case Study of Master2 Students of Didactics and Applied Languages at Belhadj Bouchaib Ain Temouchent University.

An Extended Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for a Master's Degree in Didactics and applied languages

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Dedication

In the name of Allah, the most gracious, most merciful, all the praise is due to him alone. I would like to dedicate this work to everyone who gives me positive energy: my family and supervisor.

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I would thank Allah for giving me the strength and power to pass through my carrier and reach this level. All thanks and sincere gratitude to my supervisor Mr. Benghalem Boualem for his guidance, support, and help.

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Abstract

The pandemic of COVID-19 has caused an unprecedented crisis in all areas, especially in the field of education. There has been a massive closure of face-to-face activities since universities were under emergency conditions. Universities worldwide are adopting blended learning, in which technology is used to support and improve traditional face-to-face instruction. This research work seeks to determine the effects of blended learning on student attitude and investigates how well blended learning strategies are accepted and adopted in the Algerian universities through conducting a case study on students at the English Department at Belhadj Bouchaib University, Ain Temouchent. This study was mainly based on three academic tools; a well-structured questionnaire for master two students and classroom observations, and an interview with the teachers. The results showed a negative perception of the learning method for students who faced many difficulties while learning during the pandemic, and this is due to many reasons mentioned in the results obtained from both questionnaire and classroom observations. The findings also indicate that teachers and students needed pedagogical and technical training to employ BL successfully. Hence, both teachers and students should take advantage of modern technologies to keep up with developments in modern teaching and learning methods using Information and Communication Technology for effective learning. The researcher hopes the findings will benefit educators in understanding ways of implementing a successful blended learning program to meet the teacher and student needs.

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List of abbreviations

BL: Blended learning

FTF: Face to face

EFL: English as a foreign language

COVID-19: Corona Virus Disease 2019

ICT: Information Communication Technology

IMC: Internet-Mediated Communication

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General Introduction

General Introduction

Education evolves with time according to the needs of the modern world, and technology serves as a facilitator and a powerful aid for learning. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines education as the process of learning that leads to the development of adaptability (Education, 2017). The influence of modern technology on education is noticeable these days. Its goal is to educate students to comprehend and engage in a technological society supporting them with digital resources and skills (Zuga, 1994).

According to Stacey and Gerbic (2008), a new landscape in educational technology has emerged, in which local and remote environments are combined to support learning in university courses. Hofmann (2011) concurred with this concept, stating that the time for blended learning has started due to the growth of the global workforce and the increasing shifts in global economic factors. Blended learning is a new trend in higher education that involves the purposeful combination of face-to-face and online instruction (Ayala, 2009).

Due to the emergence of the pandemic, COVID-19, the Algerian universities, especially Belhadj Bouchaib university, adopt blended learning to save the academic year by creating a balance of online activities with face-to-face instruction. In this regard, different perspectives about the implementation were observed, ranging from opponents to advocates who are influenced by several factors that pose challenges, especially the impacts on student outcomes, and it is one of the reasons that can affect any subject matter, whether positively or negatively. Therefore, students' attitudes towards this new learning environment can determine the success or failure of blended learning.

This research evaluates learners' ability to effectively carry on with blended learning during the covid 19 pandemic. It also examines students' attitudes towards this transition from a "traditional" classroom model to a "blended" classroom model.

Based on these ideas, the following research questions are established:

- What are students' attitudes towards blended learning?
- Which BL component are students leaning to?

In order to answer these research questions, two hypotheses are put forward:

- Students have a positive attitude towards blended learning.
- Students focus on face-to-face instruction.

To reach the aims of the study and validate the hypotheses, Both qualitative and quantitative methods and a combination of primary and secondary sources are used in this

General Introduction

research. The qualitative data support the quantitative data analysis and results. The first part of the study consisted of a well-structured questionnaire for master two students in addition to classroom and online observation and an interview for teachers. Therefore, three research tools are used in this study: an online questionnaire addressed to master two students, face-to-face instruction classroom observation, and online classroom observation. The third research tool is addressed to teachers of Belhadj Bouchaib University. The data obtained from these research tools would confirm or refute the proposed hypotheses.

This dissertation consists of three chapters. The first chapter provides a detailed introduction to the study, including a description of blended learning, focusing on its components, models, and benefits, and a general description of bl in the EFL classroom at the BelhadjBouchaib University, Ain Temouchent during the pandemic of COVID-19. It also includes definitions of attitude by shedding light on students' attitudes towards blended learning.

Chapter two presents and discusses research tools and procedures that are carried out to investigate the research questions and hypotheses, including their validity and reliability. Finally, the third chapter is devoted to the discussion of the research instruments' findings, besides; some pedagogical implications followed by limitations that the researchers faced while conducting the research work, and the research ends with a general discussion of the research questions and hypotheses to see if the results go in the same direction with the hypotheses.

Chapter one: Literature Review

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1.1 Introduction

The present chapter includes the concepts that outline the breadth of the literature review for this research. The arrangement of pieces of information is presented as follows: First, it begins with a definition of the concept of blended learning, followed by the combination of face-to-face instruction and online learning components of blended learning. After that, the different model components of blended learning. The following sections are devoted to blended learning benefits, particularly students' attitudes towards blended learning. Finally, the chapter ends with the experience of Belhadj Bouchaib students with blended learning during the pandemic of COVID 19.

1.2 Definition of Blended Learning

At its most basic level, blended learning is the intentional integration of face-to-face and online learning modalities (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004), i.e., combining traditional classroom engagement with technology. Furthermore, both students and teachers participate in classroom activities; the group works simultaneously via computer-mediated communication such as zoom meetings and conferences.

The term blended learning was used interchangeably with "hybrid learning," mixed-mode instruction, etc. However, over time the term "blended learning" has largely replaced these terms since the meaning of the word "to blend" in the dictionary means to create a harmonious effect of different learning methods and tools in learning environments (Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003).

According to Lanham, Augar, and Zhou (2005), blended learning is a mixture of traditional classroom instructions and online learning as well as a combination of synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (anytime) online learning technologies. Similarly, Graham (2006) stated that blended learning joins face-to-face instructions with computer-mediated instruction.

Similarly, Clark and Myer (2003) state that different persons may interpret BL differently because there is no single definition or method for the term. While describing BL, Garrison, and Kanuka (2004) note a substantial issue in the challenge of unlimited design choices and applicability in many circumstances.

Ghoul (2013) and Horn & Staker (2014) describe how blended learning can help teachers group students by ability, adapt instruction at each station to address student inadequacies or need for acceleration, and create lessons based on learning styles.

For example, a course might be offered five times a week, two of which are held online and the others in the classroom, or students might meet FTF and online on alternating weeks to benefit from both environments. Other courses may be provided 75 percent online and 25 percent of FTF sessions during a semester in which students are assigned group work and presentations.

BL is more than a strategy that combines online and offline learning. Instead, learners can take advantage of both environments by relying upon the good characteristics of the current learning (offline) approaches to the advantages of online teaching pedagogy.

For the aim of this study, many definitions have been proposed:

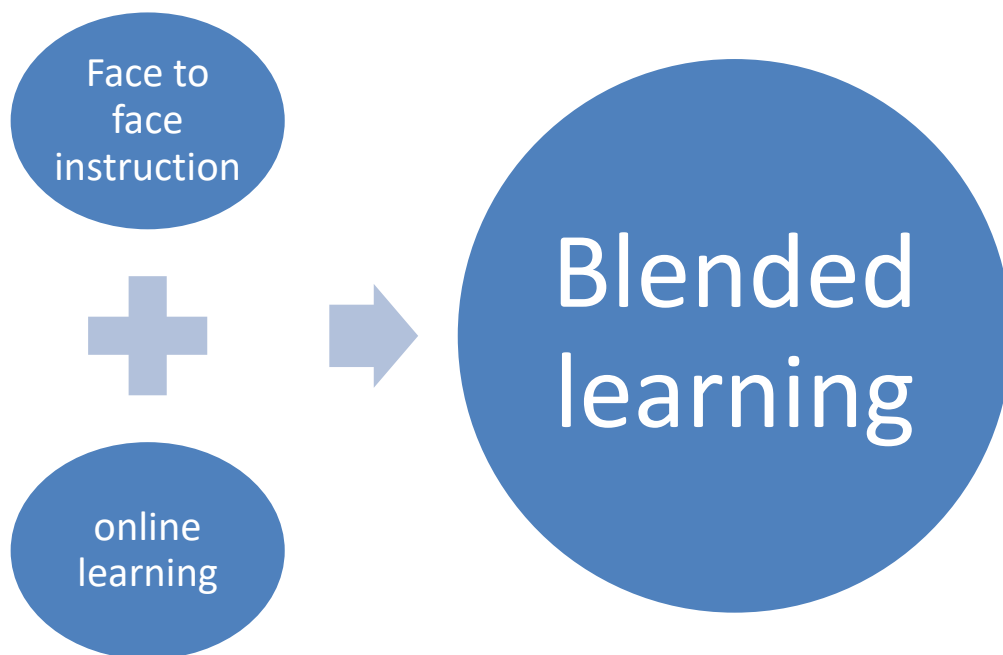
- A combination of the traditional approach with the online approach (Kim, Bonk, and Oh, 2008).
- • The use of learning technologies that can adapt to different types of learners to impart the correct skill to the right person at the right time (Singh, 2003)
- To enhance learning outcomes by mixing physical FTF instruction and online learning. (Kudrick, Lahn, and Morch, 2009).

However, Oliver and Trigwell (2005), for example, have criticized the word BL, claiming that, despite its growing popularity, it is ill-defined, lacks clarity, and is used inconsistently. There is no blending theory on which BL may be based, and learning cannot be blended in any meaningful way. The majority of what has been published on BL has to do with teaching arrangements rather than learning. The authors proposed that learning should be reintroduced to the learner in its correct context and that variation theory be used instead as a guide for picking and using ICTs and adapting them to boost student learning (Runesson, 2005).

However, it should be emphasized that Oliver and Trigwell (2005) are not opposed to the use of ICTs to supplement traditional teaching. On the contrary, the question is whether referring to this as BL aids in comprehending such an ICT integration. According to Oliver and Trigwell (2005), we should picture an unblended pedagogic scenario and begin conceptual work. Vygotsky's idea of “оучение” Obuchenie (1980) as the teaching-learning

activity might be beneficial in envisioning what is integrated while not seeing learning or teaching in isolation. It has been challenging to translate Obuchenie into English directly (Cole, 2009). Biesta (2015) examines the growing usage of the term learning as a marketing-driven "new language of learning."

Figure 1.1 Understanding Blended Learning.



Source: adapted from Ololube (2014)

1.3 Component of Blended Learning

Rydeen (2002) pointed out that blended learning combines two different learning environments where both students and teachers can learn and teach effectively in a potential environment.

Learners get education from their experiences outside the school and those within. Based on these factors, BL combines two learning environments of education, namely:

1.3.1 Face to Face Instruction

Face-to-face instruction, also known as traditional learning, occurs when both the teacher and the student are present in a demarcated classroom using traditional resources such as textbooks, chalkboards, and so on (Jansen, 2004).

FTF instructions demand a physical and real-time contact where the teacher is the controller and instructor of the learning environment (Black and Wiliam, 2006; Waghid, 2018).

A traditional lecture-style class is teacher-controlled, and both teacher and student can pick up on physical cues and body language. Knowledge is transferred from the teacher to the student who sits and takes notes. This process includes different methods, such as discussions, assignments, reading requirements, group work, etc. These methods are very teacher-centered in which he does the whole work. However, modern approaches enable students to interact more and experience the target language and give them opportunities to practice in real situations.

The face-to-face element refers to the traditional way of learning inside a classroom and depends on the teacher who interacts, synthesizes materials, brings ideas together, discusses topics for learners, and then practices them in real life. As Collopy and Arnold (2009) stated, traditional learning provides a deeper understanding for learners through interaction.

Theoretically, face-to-face instruction enables instructors and students to meet together in the exact location simultaneously (The World Bank Institute, 2008). Face-to-face learning is a teaching approach in which a group of students is taught course content and material in person, enabling learners and instructors to engage in real-time. Additionally, it is beneficial for students to increase their engagement with their peers. Students are held responsible for their success in face-to-face learning when the class meets at a set time and day. Face-to-face learning allows students to connect while also ensuring a more excellent knowledge and retention of course content.

1.3.2 Online Learning

Online learning, often referred to as technology-based learning or digital learning, allows students to choose adequate resources from online platforms based on their requirements (Horn & Staker, 2015).

It is based on electronic media such as academic platforms for recorded lectures and seminars, online meetings instead of FTF, dynamic assessments and assignments, etc. In addition, technology allows professors to stay in touch with their students, readily exchange courses, and facilitate students' learning management (Ardi, 2017; Metzger, 2014). Both synchronous and asynchronous delivery methods can be used based on the provided activity in online learning. Naidu (2003) points out that online learning would include all individual or group activities working online or offline, synchronously or asynchronously, via different networked or standalone devices.

The definition of online learning differs from one researcher to another; as an example, the most popular definition given by Rosenberg (2001), who stated that online learning depends on the massive use of the internet to deliver solutions that develop knowledge and performance. On the other hand, other specialists believe that teaching/learning can be done using any form of technology.

Rosenberg (2001) proposed the most widely accepted definition of online Learning, which claims that it is the use of Internet technology to offer a wide range of solutions that improve knowledge and performance. According to Roffe (2002), E-Learning, often known as online learning, is a communication method and learning that has recently emerged as a crucial source of competitive advantage in the digital world.

Online learning is networked, and it emphasizes primarily learning enhancement and flexibility in space and time. According to Salmon (2005), online learning includes art, craft, science, and technology.

Online Learning is centered on three fundamental principles, according to Rosenberg (2001), which are as follows:

1. It can update, store/retrieve, disseminate, and communicate instructions or information in real-time since it is networked.
2. It is distributed to the end-user via standard Internet technologies through a computer.
3. It emphasizes a broad view of learning-learning solutions beyond typical training paradigms.

1.4 Blended Learning Model Component

Blended learning is organized into four models. They are technology-based designs that combine different instruction in the classroom (Tucker et al., 2017). The blended learning paradigm allows students to study at their own pace while enhancing their creativity through individualized courses that help them flourish in a technology-driven environment (Tucker et al., 2017).

Blended learning theorists categorized a practical classification of the most common models as follows:

First, the rotation model, which is the most centralized model, enables students to rotate between traditional and online learning portions equally. Rotation model of blended learning: A course in which groups of students alternate between learning modes such as group activities, projects, and assignments, and at least only one of them is online learning, according to a set timetable (Clayton Christensen Institute for Disruptive Innovation, 2012). The four divisions under this category are station, lab, flipped, and individual rotation.

Moreover, the station rotation model gives a clear path for traditional schools and teachers to incorporate online learning into the classroom, develop challenging activities that suit different ability levels, and spend more time educating students one-on-one (Tucker et al., 2017).

The methodology produces individualized education to increase students' understanding, retention, and capacity to apply what they have learned. In addition, the station rotation model has the advantages of forming smaller cooperative learning groups, using a range of activities to boost student participation, and making learning more meaningful by allowing instructors to work directly on improving education (Dringus & Seagull, 2015; Tucker et al., 2017).

In addition, lab Rotation: Within a particular course, students rotate among places within the brick-and-mortar campus on a predefined timetable or at the teacher's discretion (e.g., math). At least one is a learning lab primarily for online learning, with other learning modalities housed in the other classroom(s). Besides establishing a computer lab and adjusting the block schedule, it requires a relatively minor change to teacher contracts, facility design, or the classroom as a whole.

Also, individual rotation: Within a specific subject, students rotate among learning modes on an individually designed, defined timetable, at least one of which is online learning.

In addition, teachers create individual student timetables. Unlike the other Rotation models, students do not have to rotate to every accessible station or modality under the Individual Rotation model. Instead, it allows each student to study at their level with a personalized playlist and choose the optimal method for each concept.

Furthermore, flipped Classroom: Students alternate between face-to-face teacher-guided practice on campus during the regular school day and online delivery of the same subject's content from home on a fixed timetable after school. A Flipped Classroom differs from students who are only conducting homework practice online at night since the major education topic takes place online. It frees up time in class for professors to assist with problem sets and more open-ended projects because students have previously viewed the lectures at home; it also assists students who find it challenging to complete assignments on their own at night. They can now obtain help with tasks from a teacher at school. Furthermore, students can watch lectures at home and repeat them if necessary. It also does not necessitate any changes to teacher contracts, facilities, or schedules.

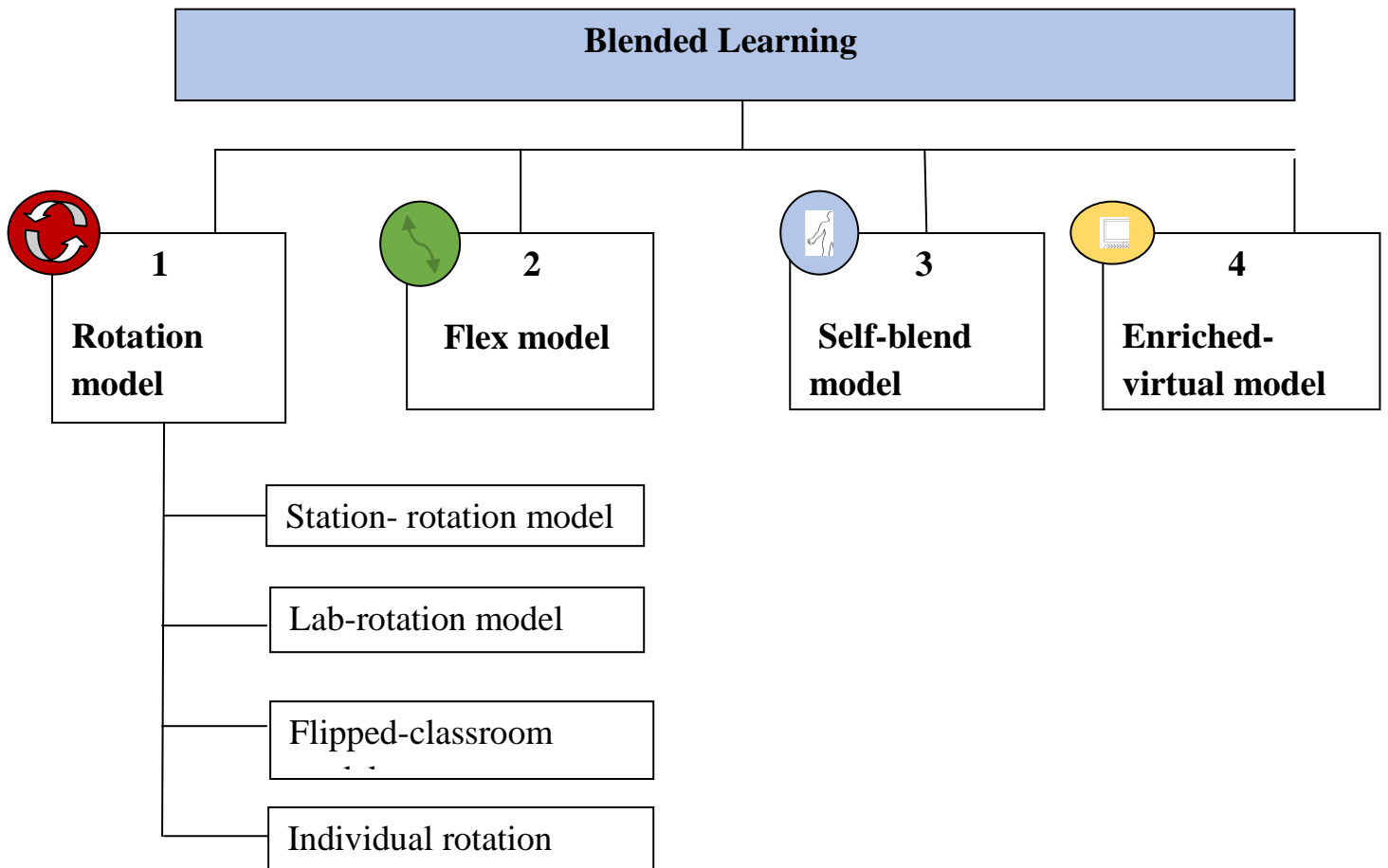
Second, the flexible model, courses are delivered entirely online. It supports self-directed learning in which students demonstrate prioritization skills, the ability to manage time, and a capacity for independent learning, with the collaborative learning activities that need a physical presence of the teacher. According to Garrison and Vaughan (2008), as referenced in Pearce (2011), reflection in a way that is not achievable in the face-to-face classroom where linguistic flexibility, originality, and ability to express oneself in a group context is possible in the online learning environment. This benefit is particularly for introverted students who are afraid of losing face while responding in public and being chastised by their peers if they make a mistake. According to Sethy, gender, race, and financial status tend to fade away in online conversations. In the flexible model, students are not restricted to one form of learning activity or another in terms of time.

The third is the Self-Blended Model, which enables students to work independently. Students are self-directed and engage in selecting courses and working on them; however, teachers and other students are co-present in the same setting. Also, students learn to be self-regulatory in a BL setting by mastering the skill of time management. They figure out how to rearrange their schedules to make it to the virtual session on time. Using emails as a pedagogical tool, for example, encourages students to be on time by requiring them to check for any new announcements from the teacher. By citing a student, Harding, Kaczynski, and Wood (2005) emphasize how BL develops student responsibility which any student needs to

go every day and verify and make sure he is updated by choice rather than absorbing what the professor gives; furthermore, employing self-paced learning objects in BL improves students' self-reliance and self-confidence because they force students to cope with them autonomously at any time.

The last model, called the Enriched-virtual Model, includes using technology to enrich the quality of students' learning experience by utilizing virtual experiences after receiving face-to-face instruction. Although (Stacey,1998, as referenced in Gerbic, 2006) states that the lack of visual, social, and communicative signals seen in regular conversation makes it harder to create trust in an online context and leads to misconceptions. Yus (2011) demonstrates the reverse. Yus (2011) notes that Internet-Mediated Communication (IMC), primarily in the virtual domain "Facebook," contains attitudinal and informal clues that not only aid in the interpretation of the message but also serve a pragmatic purpose of understanding interlocutors' emotions and attitudes. When using text deformation (capital letters and letter repetition for stress, such as "I DIDN'T UNDERRRSTAND"), punctuation marks like "!!!", "???" and emotions.

Figure 1.2 Blended Learning Models.



Source: Classifying K–12 Blended Learning.

1.5 Benefits of Blended Learning

As John Dewey (1938) argues, any educational institution aims to help students reach the level they could be starting from where they are; thus, it is imperative to make sure they find success.

There are several approaches to why many benefits can be gained from BL. Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) stated six benefits: acquiring knowledge, Pedagogical effectiveness, Socialization, Personal agency, and the ability to revise efficiently.

Blended learning touches on everything, students, teachers, administration, and faculty. Niemiec and Otte (2009)

- It offers a method of controlling costs by decreasing face-to-face time.

- BL allows all face-to-face learning channels to be blended with rich media, permitting channels that combine both platforms.
- It helps students to understand and control their own best learning methods.
- It allows students to get individualized support online and go through complex concepts and unclear areas outside classroom instruction.
- BL helps to enhance students to acquire the four skills in addition to other life skills such as discipline, time management, and exposure to technology.
- It motivates students to participate in group work with other students, other schools, and even globally. I.e., it opens a doorway for students to change their learning and performance.
- It reduces the number of overcrowded classrooms. (Gould, 2003).
- In BL, all course documents are available to the students on the course website, which reduces paper costs.
- BL offers students multiple opportunities for individuality, complexity, creativity, and depth in a given subject matter.

Many researchers confirmed the benefits of blended learning. For example, Gamble (2005) proved that blended learning improves learning experiences, and the results of Milheim's study (2006) stated some benefits of BL like; receiving immediate feedback, the ability to interact with the teacher face to face, and the flexibility of controlling different content subjects according to the available circumstances. Same for Oblender's (2002) study showed that blended learning increased punctuality, i.e., the number of students who attend their lectures increased.

Esani (2010) determined that another important benefit of BL is that it saves time. Moreover, McCarthy & Murphy (2010) said that programs would be completed in less time. On the other side, both face-to-face and online teaching environments have their benefits; the most efficient to support students to learn is a blend of teaching and learning methods because only then will discussion, adaptation, interaction, and reflection be embraced, which are essential for academic learning. (Towndrow & Cheers, 2003).

Because most EFL learners are above the age of 25 and working, Wingard (2004) expands on the concept of accessibility, stating that students appreciate the convenience and flexibility of accessing course materials at any time and from any location. As a result,

blended learning courses give individuals the flexibility to combine work, education, and family obligations. As a result, many students have developed a preference for these courses.

In addition, blended learning makes education more accessible for learners since it can stir students' motivation for critical thinking, improve self-achievement, save time and effort, and work on learners' differences and needs. Wade (2003) emphasizes that blended learning helps in making learning accessible to everyone rapidly, keeps them all satisfied, and enables them to reach their needs.

Also, blended learning makes it possible to lean in a way that facilitates traditional learning methods and adds opportunities provided by technology. In this regard, the adoption of blended learning in teaching and learning is advantageous in managing educational outcomes and providing a complete learning experience.

1.6 Student's Attitude toward Blended Learning

A term that refers to the way of expressing a positive or negative feeling or a view towards something, in this concept, the use of blended learning.

1.6.1 Attitude

Affective emotions of liking or disliking toward a person or an object (which might be anything) that impact behaviour are referred to as attitude (Psychology Glossary, 2011).

Allport emphasizes two separate parts of attitude in this complicated definition: "psychological readiness" and "attitude stimulation." The first is the mental ability to respond to items and situations. The second indicates that attitudes are shaped not just by primary outcomes and experiences but also by diverse stimuli, as described by Allport in his description of "exercising a directive and active impact" (Hana, 2010). According to Jzan (1988), attitudes are a disposition to react favourably or unfavourably to something. He went on to say that attitude is a complex concept similar to personality characteristics since it is difficult to see directly and must be derived from quantifiable answers (Ajzen, 2005). Attitude is also a reaction to a state positively or negatively (Christo-Baker, 2004).

1.6.2 Student's Attitude toward BL

It is imperative to take students' perspectives as a part of the learning environment into account during the adoption of blended learning. When incorporating such a system into educational institutions, learners' attitudes about networked learning are significant (Tselios, Daskalakis, Papadopoulou, 2011).

Monteiro and Morrison (2014) indicate that students change their opinions about their experience before, during, and after working in the blended learning environment.

According to Yilmaz-Soylu (2008), the efficiency of blended learning is determined by the learner's level of satisfaction with the courses.

Students' perceptions of the Blended Learning environment were explored by Akkoyunlu and Soylu (2006). The study's findings demonstrated that the more students participated in online discussions, the more positive attitudes regarding BL became (Wing & Khe, 2011). Edwards and Fritz (1997) take a similar perspective, aiming to discover the opinions of undergraduate students. The study's findings revealed that the outcomes of BL materials were better than the traditional ones, in addition to the improvement of students' learning and application of the educational concepts.

Interviews conducted to gauge students' experience with the perception of blended learning revealed that students found working with others was more manageable, and the ability to exchange ideas was better. It also taught them the value of patience, listening, and understanding others' opinions (Monteiro & Morrison, 2014). Aside from working with others, students also reported that this method prepared them to face the world work, allowing them to control their time, and cooperate. (Monteiro & Morrison, 2014).

The students even described how this learning process enables them to learn deeper about the content (Monteiro & Morrison, 2014). Tselios, Daskalakis, and Papadopoulou (2011) discuss the perceptions of their students in a blended learning environment. They point out that considering students' perceptions about the methodology is essential before and after working in the environment.

Students' and teachers' attitudes toward the course can either help or inhibit the implementation of the learning environment. On the other hand, the attitude of teachers towards the learning environment can be compared to the attitude of the learners. Therefore, if the designers do not know the value and importance of the learning environment, the learners

will not, and the university's mission will fail. Thus, it is important to be careful about making assumptions about learners' perception and participation based on incomplete facts.

Nakayama, Matsuura, and Yamamoto (2016) also studied student perceptions of the blended learning process. The researchers concluded with a questionnaire that while most of the responses were positive, however; there were some issues with the insufficiency of time while learning outside the class. (Nakayama, Matsuura & Yamamoto, 2016).

The researchers do not believe that students spend more time outside of the face-to-face courses to succeed in the BL environment. However, the researchers also admit that it is impossible to know how much time students spend studying outside of class (Nakayama et al., 2016).

Moreover, Stracke (2007), in her study about why three students quit the BL environment at a university in Germany. She found that three obstacles were the reason behind their decision: FTF and online modes were not adequately integrated, the inflexible use of technology and lack of paper used materials, and the negative efficiency of computers for language learning. However, in this study, the data were collected in the latter half of the 1990s. Thus, the technology factor was a self-study utterly different from today's online materials. Also, students were adults, not today's learners, who grew up using technology from a young age. For example, Coryell & Chlup (2007) described how age can affect BL learning and that it can be difficult for older students. Nonetheless, similar perceptions were identified by Sagarra and Zapata (2008), who studied the attitudes of second language learners of Spanish towards using an online workbook in a BL environment. In their study, most students had a positive view but also remarked that online materials were not in the course content management system.

These students recognized the common relationship between class content and online materials (Sagarra & Zapata, 2008), which confirmed that linking the two was a good idea. In Cartner's (2009) study, she explored BL strategies for providing online access to academic word lists for learners of English. She found that learners developed positive attitudes and commented positively on the learning environment that followed understanding students' needs for more flexible access to the course materials.

Several studies also proved that students' satisfaction increased after using the BL learning environment. For instance, Collopy and Arnold (2009) looked at the work of undergraduate instructors who took part in modules offered in three distinct ways: online,

50% blended, and completely blended. According to their findings, students in both types of BL felt competent and at ease applying what they had learned. They also found that working in groups satisfies learners more than working only online.

Also, a study conducted by Fulkerth (2010) described some undergraduate and graduate courses that focused on law, tax, and business at the University of Golden Gate and switched to BL courses. In the process, the university tried to shorten courses' weeks.

Fulkerth reports that students maintained their satisfaction although the new courses contain the same amount of student work. He states that the redesign was beneficial for all of the students, participants, and the overall look of the courses.

According to Bendania (2011), Students have good perceptions of mixed learning environments, and critical factors involve competence, trust, satisfaction, effectiveness, desire to use, ambition, and whether or not students have ICT abilities. The positive attitude was also documented in research by Akkoyunlu and Yilmaz (2006), and it was discovered to be linked to students' involvement in an online discussion forum. Students' favourable opinions regarding the mixed learning environment were also shown in other research (e.g., Dziuban et al., 2006; Owston et al., 2006). The satisfaction might be linked to flexibility and convenience, decreased travel time, and face-to-face interaction.

However, many researchers have found that blended learning has certain negative connotations. The findings of research by Smyth et al. (2012), for example, revealed that delayed instructor response and inadequate internet access were viewed as important environmental negatives. In another research published by Stracke (2007), The lack of mutual recognition between traditional and online modes, the absence of reading and writing materials, and the use of the computer as a teaching medium were all emphasized as significant elements for learners dropping out of the mixed course. These data suggest that students' unfavourable feelings regarding mixed learning environments stem mostly from poor design (Sagarra and Zapata, 2008).

Students' satisfaction with blended learning course design might be crucial for the system's effectiveness. As a result, students should adopt and absorb the strategy they use. If they feel supported and encouraged by a proper course design to continue studying, most learners' desire to achieve learning goals will likely grow, and they will put in more effort to obtain a degree. It is likely to state that the learning process proceeds primarily in response to the demands of the learners; thus, to meet the needs of all learner types, the designed course

with a blended system should be planned in detail and checked regularly to address any potential issues that may arise, as well as to ensure that the system operates efficiently. Instructors' inefficient engagement with learners/learners' weak interaction with instructors, instructors' lousy direction, or technological shortcomings should never be a barrier to correctly operating the system. As measured by student satisfaction, blended learning allows students to practice course material in a more flexible and relaxed environment outside of the regular classroom.

1.7 Blended Learning at Belhadj Bouchaib University

There has to be a change in designing educational experiences, especially during the pandemic of COVID 19; this change aims to improve education and its strategies to raise learning efficiency. It is not reasonable that education remains based on the initial foundations of previous eras because what fits a certain period is not necessarily commensurate with the current era. Educational values that have been developed over different periods have to be preserved, at the same time taking into account the importance of integrating technology in education.

Ain Temouchent is an Algerian University that follows a traditional way of learning, but with the pandemic of COVID 19, a lockdown was imposed for the whole world, which stopped all activities and affected all sectors, including the educational sector. The first wave started in 2019; all schools have closed their doors, until the decision on the 26th of August 2020, as part of the implementation of the plan of the higher education and scientific research sector aimed at reviving pedagogical activities in light of the Covid-19 crisis, mainly by completing the university year 2019-2020. This decision aims for distance learning and a non-obligatory presence for students (Mesrs, 2020).

On the 21st of January 2021, another decision concerned with the adoption of blended learning or mixed education pattern that combines face-to-face instruction and distance learning and the non-compulsory attendance of students for various educational activities (Mesrs, 2021).

For the third academic year in a row and according to the decision of the 11th of August 2021, the basic and methodological units of education are taught in the hybrid/blended educational style; however, students' presence is obligatory by following the procedures established in the health and pedagogical protocol (Mesrs, 2021).

1.8 Conclusion

In fact, to accommodate the evolving needs and habits of the Digital generations and keep up-to-date with the current teaching/learning methods. Blended learning is the last expansion of online teaching pedagogies, promising education practitioners striking benefits. However, we must bear in mind that the concept is still at its inception, and it requires much practice to be addressed, just like any other method of teaching and learning. Therefore, despite the confusion surrounding its applications, one must take advantage of the suggested principles, guidelines, and models to reach a strategy that guarantees the students' acquisition and understanding of learning objectives.

Chapter two:

Methodology

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2.1 Introduction

The methodology used in this dissertation is outlined in detail in this chapter. Notably, the objectives of this study are summarized and clarified, in addition to the Informative descriptions of the procedures that were conducted to create reliable instruments for this research, consisting of a questionnaire and an interview targeted at students and teachers. Also, it explains the choice to gather data using a mixed-methods approach that includes both qualitative and quantitative components of the study—followed by the target participants and data analysis. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary.

2.2 The Research Objectives

This research aims to evaluate learners' ability to effectively carry on with blended learning during the COVID 19 pandemic. It also tends to examine students' attitudes towards this transition from a “traditional” classroom model to a “blended” classroom model. The major goal of this study is to collect participants' various perspectives and analyze the phenomena under investigation from many aspects and viewpoints.

2.3 The Research Design

According to McCombes (2019), a research design, also known as a research strategy, is a plan to resolve a series of questions. It is a group of structured techniques for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data. The specific research methodology allows for the most comprehensive collection of rich, precise data on student participants' perceptions of learning in a blended learning environment. It also describes the steps involved in developing the design for this action research project. This dissertation study predominantly uses a mixed-methods approach, which, according to Creswell (2009), is a concurrent embedding technique characterized by utilizing a single data collection period during which both quantitative and qualitative data are gathered simultaneously.

The student questionnaire, which consists of several questions that capture student perceptions of blended learning and attitudes towards learning in the environment, was used to obtain quantitative data. Teachers' interview and classroom observations were used to acquire qualitative data for this study. It was required to blend qualitative and quantitative methods to fully grasp data from diverse sources, observe matters from different perspectives, and provide several possibilities for combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. In this

sense, Creswell (2009) claims that pairing qualitative and quantitative research yields greater understanding than either approach separately.

2.4 The Target Population

The student participants for this study that was conducted at the beginning of spring 2021 were master two students of English didactics and applied languages at the Department of Letters and English Language, Faculty of Letters, Languages, and Social Sciences, Belhadj Bouchaib University, Ain Temouchent, in the academic year 2021/2022. Precisely, there are (69) students of didactics and applied languages; however, (51) students participated in this research work, divided between (33) females and (18) males. They were selected at random among the whole number of English didactics and applied linguistics students to answer the online questionnaire, and five teachers were chosen purposefully for the interview.

The participants were chosen for this study based on their enrolment in the learning environments once the COVID 19 pandemic began, as well as their knowledge and experience with how both environments impact their learning process. Having varied blended courses beforehand was determined as the main criteria for the selection process, who have actively used both environments by sharing the lessons, answering weekly quizzes assessments online, and receiving their grades, communicating the detailed information gained about the courses in face-to-face classes by exchanging ideas in groups, and they have practised about the lectures in the class. Concerning the five teachers selected for the interview, the objective behind choosing them is the ability to contact them easily. The current respondents guarantee the complete research results, and they are the basis upon which the research study is developed.

2.5 The Research Instruments

The data collecting procedures used in this investigation, and the individual instruments used to collect the data, are described in this section. The questionnaire, then the interview, and classroom observation will be discussed. Robson and McCartan (2016) explain that questionnaires and interviews are highly extensively employed in social research to collect data from and about individuals. A real-world researcher can be presumed to be skilled in the competence of planning and evaluation of both (Robson and McCartan, 2016). The present work was developed using a questionnaire shared with Master two EFL students of didactics and applied languages and an interview for teachers.

2.5.1 Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a research tool that consists of a series of questions used to collect data. Questionnaires are similar to written interviews in that they collect help from respondents. They can be done in person, over the phone, on a computer, or through the mail. Questionnaires are a low-cost, fast, and effective way to gather high quantities of data from multiple sources (Saul McLeod, 2018).

The questionnaire in this study was designed to gather information regarding students' perceptions of blended learning and their attitudes about its adoption in EFL classrooms. The questionnaire, entitled "the effectiveness of blended learning," begins with a brief, systematic, and clear introduction to the study's overall objective before moving on to the arranged questions. There were two types of questions; close-ended questions and open-ended questions divided into four sections; the question in the first part was designed to identify the respondents' gender as general information. The second section consists of 10 open-ended questions with five options (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree). It was designed to identify faculty experiences with studying in both environments during the COVID-19 pandemic, aiming at understanding their reflection on the effect of using BL and their level of satisfaction. The next section includes one closed-ended question with four different choices about the most difficult problems encountered with face-to-face instruction. The last part, which contains a close-ended question with four responses, revolves around the issues faced with the online environment COVID-19 pandemic.

The questionnaire was shared online with two groups of didactics and applied languages via a Face book group because it was impossible to gather them face to face again; they took some time to fill it in, around four days, and that ended with the reception of 51 respondents out of 69.

2.5.2 Interview

According to McNamara (1999), interviews can be used to pursue with individual participants after they have completed surveys, for example, to examine their replies further. In qualitative research, interviews are conducted when researchers ask participants open-ended questions and record their feedback. Audiotapes are frequently used to ensure more reliable transcription (Creswell, 2012). Understanding the interviewers' significance is the most important role in interviewing (McNamara, 2009). For health procedure, the interview for this research study was successfully conducted online in real-time via Google Meet and

face to face. (5) Teachers were questioned one-on-one; they were chosen on purpose since the other teachers were unreachable. The interview consisted of (7) structured questions regarding the students' attitudes toward blended learning during the pandemic and the primary issues encountered while studying in both environments. The interview session enabled participants to better express their experiences through examples, allowing them to understand the individuals' viewpoints.

2.5.3 Classroom Observation

According to Hyman (1975), a classroom observation is a planned, methodical, and largely focused procedure. It entails more than just seeing, as it necessitates the observer's undivided attention and the readiness to record what occurs in the observational environment accurately. The primary goal of the classroom observation is to demonstrate and witness how students engage in face-to-face instruction and practice what they have learned online by actively participating in classroom activities, as well as whether they had any difficulties with the restricted time allotted for lectures. It was only possible to observe the whole members of master two didactics and applied languages students since both groups were studying together in different modules in addition to online classroom observation done through zoom meeting sessions.

2.6 Data Collection Procedure

The process of obtaining, analyzing, and exploring specific experiences for research using established accepted procedures are defined as data collection (Joop, 2005).

Data collection is the attempt to systematically collect and evaluate measuring information on targeted variables that allows researchers to answer research questions, test hypotheses, and assess outcomes. Both quantitative and qualitative data were obtained in this research work using a closed-ended questionnaire administered to master two EFL respondents at the department of English, faculty of letters and foreign languages, Belhadj Bouchaib. It was the appropriate research tool for the study and an interview with teachers, which helped to broaden exegesis and ask different questions, in addition to the third research instrument, which is classroom observation and online classroom observation done in multiple attendances, with both groups of master two didactics and applied languages.

2.6.1 The Administration of the Questionnaire

The survey was designed as the initial research instrument to gather data, and when it was structured and arranged, it was forwarded to the supervisor via email to be reviewed and corrected before being delivered to the sample population. First, a pilot study was conducted on two randomly selected participants to evaluate the questionnaire's clarity and appropriateness. Both participants were able to answer the questions without any issue. After that, the questionnaire was sent to the master two didactics and applied languages via the Facebook group at different times to be answered by the majority. Respondents were requested to send a message after submitting their replies regarding the anonymous responses; it took them around four days to answer the questionnaire.

2.6.2 The Administration of the Interview

A well-structured interview with five teachers of didactics and applied languages followed the questionnaire to add more validity authenticity and receive additional details and a deeper understanding of the study. It was conducted individually through zoom meetings and another in-person meeting with only one of the professors at the university. Open-ended questions were given to each teacher; the time was not specified since the interviewees were asked to give suggestions and extra information, and the teachers' responses were notes taken.

2.7 Data Analysis

In order to attain the work's objective and answer the research question, data should be analyzed. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), data analysis is the process of providing structure and significance to the mass of data obtained. As a qualitative method for data analysis, a quantitative study aims to create findings, while qualitative methods employ words, concepts, symbols, and other symbols.

Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis was used to obtain the data for this research study. According to Kreuger & Neuman (2006), the great diversity of approaches to qualitative research is mirrored by the different approaches to data analysis in qualitative data analysis, whereas quantitative researchers select from a specific set of data analysis methodologies. Quantitative data analysis uses the language of statistical nodes, whereas qualitative data analysis uses vague words and is context-based (Kreuger & Neuman, 2006). Data from the questionnaire was numerically calculated, i.e., quantitatively, as it consists of closed-ended questions, as well as data from the classroom observation. The researcher used

IBM Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 25, which is a highly used statistical analysis program in social science, while qualitative data analysis was used for the interview, which was manually analyzed and grouped in the form of quotes depending on the data that should be included.

2.8 Validity and Reliability

Validity is concerned with how far a piece of study explores what the researcher claims to investigate (Nunan, 1992). If the phenomenon is well-chosen as part of the problem area and the individual is permitted to talk openly, the comprehension of the phenomenon is valid. Furthermore, validity refers to how the researchers persuade their audience that their interpretation is nearly equal to the respondents' intended meaning (Hammersley, 1991). Reliability refers to measurement stability under various circumstances where equivalent findings must be attained (Nunnally, 1978 in Drost, 2011). It is concerned with how measurements can be repeated by various people and under varied situations.

Multiple data analysis methods, known as triangulation, were employed to strengthen the study's validity and reliability, namely quantitative and qualitative methods, and classroom observation. Triangulation emphasizes employing several techniques and theoretical concepts to bring research clarity, richness, and depth (Guba, 1990, Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Triangulation has been described as a near-talismanic approach for combining qualitative and quantitative (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Moreover, a veritable magical term in mixed methods research (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003).

2.9 Conclusion

The research methodology used for this study is presented in this chapter. This study adopted a contemporary mixed-methods approach centered on a quantitative questionnaire backed by qualitative data from teachers' interview and classroom observations. It covers various research topics and subtopics, including research design, data collection procedures, participants, the purpose of study, reliability, and validity, and data analysis, all of which will be discussed in-depth in the next chapter.

Chapter Three:
Data Analysis and
Suggestions

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3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher provides findings obtained from the questionnaire and the interview. The first part of chapter three deals with the results and discussion of students' questionnaire targeted to Master two EFL students of Didactics and Applied Languages, while the second part deals with the results and discussion of teachers' interview that was targeted to 05 EFL teachers, followed by classroom observation in the third section. The final section discusses the main results and recommendations made to improve blended learning for both teachers and students, and this chapter ends with the study's limitations and a summary.

3.2 Results of Students' Questionnaire

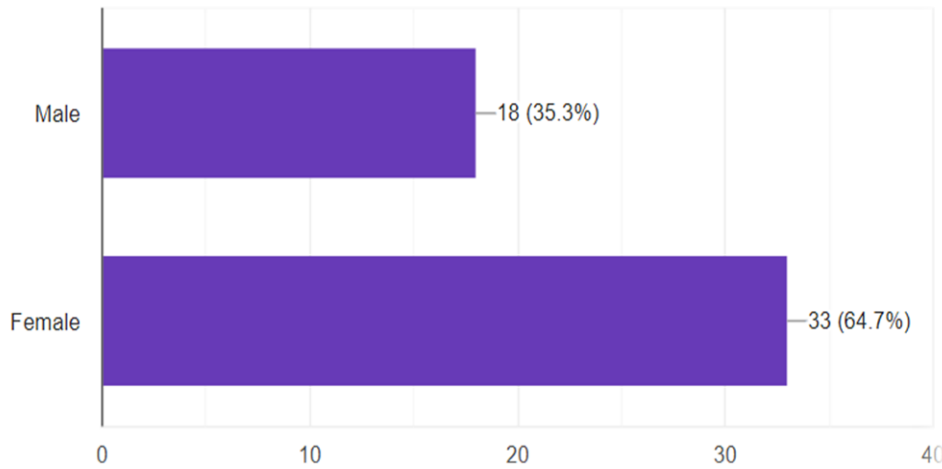
The first quantitative data collected was through a questionnaire answered by 51 Master two EEL students of Didactics and Applied languages at the department of English language, Institute of letters and foreign languages, Belhadj Bouchaib University, Ain Temouchent. Results of the questionnaire were divided into three sections, and the second section is subdivided into three parts: e-learning and face-to-face instruction and statements related to blended learning.

Section I: General Information

Table 3.1: Students' Gender

Options	Frequences	Percentages (%)
Male	18	34%
Female	33	66%
Total	51	100%

Figure 3.1 Students' Gender



To answer Q1, the results from Table 3.1 reveal that the number of female respondents (33) was higher than that of male respondents (18); this explains that females were more willing to engage in the research than males.

Section II:

It consists of ten questions divided into three subcategories. The first one concerns two questions about e-learning, followed by two questions about face-to-face instruction, and the last part includes six questions about blended learning.

3.2.1 E-learning

On the one hand, e-learning technologies are utilized in synchronous learning to facilitate communication among participants. On the other hand, e-learning techniques are employed in asynchronous e-learning to offer easier access to resources and information at any time (Obasa et al., McGreal & Elliott, as cited in Mamattah, 2016) using platforms that support students and teachers in introducing courses in an effective manner (Aljawarneh et al., 2010).

Table 3.2 Descriptive Statistics of Students' Attitude towards E-learning

Statement 1	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
I prefer online learning than face to face learning	51	1	5	2,22	1,205

Note: 1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, 5 strongly agree

The five-point Likert scale is considered an interval scale. Hence, from 1 to 1.8, this means strongly disagree. From 1.81 to 2.60, this means to disagree. From 2.61 to 3.40, this means neutral. moreover, from 3.41-4.20, this means to agree, and finally, from 4.21 to 5 means strongly agree.

The mean of the first statement, "I prefer online learning than face-to-face learning", is (mean= 2, 22), which shows that participants of the study disagreed with this statement.

Table 3.3 Descriptive Statistics of Students' Attitude towards E-learning

Statement 2	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Online learning is enough to obtain information	51	1	5	2,18	1,053

Note: 1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, 5 strongly agree

The five-point Likert scale is considered an interval scale. Hence, from 1 to 1.8, this means strongly disagree. From 1.81 to 2.60, this means to disagree. From 2.61 to 3.40, this

means neutral .moreover, from 3.41-4.20, this means to agree, and finally, from 4.21 to 5 means strongly agree.

The mean of the statement “Online learning is enough to obtain information” is (mean= 2, 18), which had the lowest mean rating, and it indicates that respondents of the study disagreed with this statement.

3.2.2 Face to face instruction

FTF is a long-standing teaching approach with just a few digital interactive. It provides real-time contact with resources and others and new strategies. It is now much more student-centered than teacher-centered.

Table 3.4 Descriptive Statistics of Students’ Attitude towards Face-to-Face Instruction

Statement 1	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
I prefer face to face learning than online learning	51	1	5	2,94	1,515

Note: 1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, 5 strongly agree

The five-point Likert scale is considered an interval scale. Hence, from 1 to 1.8, this means strongly disagree. From 1.81to 2.60, this means to disagree. From 2.61 to 3.40, this means neutral .moreover, from 3.41-4.20, this means to agree, and finally, from 4.21 to 5 means strongly agree.

An overall mean of (mean= 2, 94) for the first statement, “I prefer face-to-face learning than online learning,” reveals that respondents of the study were neutral with this statement.

Table 3.5 Descriptive Statistics of Students' Attitude towards Face-to-Face Instruction

Statement 2	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Face to face instruction is enough to obtain information	51	1	5	2,88	1,423

Note: 1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, 5 strongly agree

The five-point Likert scale is considered an interval scale. Hence, from 1 to 1.8, this means strongly disagree. From 1.81 to 2.60, this means to disagree. From 2.61 to 3.40, this means neutral .moreover, from 3.41-4.20, this means to agree, and finally, from 4.21 to 5 means strongly agree.

The mean of the second statement, “Face to face instruction is enough to obtain information,” is (mean= 2, 88), which shows that students of the study were neutral with this statement.

3.2.3 Statements Related to Blended Learning

The mixed learning technique was suggested to create effective learning and teaching experiences. Thorne (2003) stated that bl is an effective solution to the difficulties of adapting learning and development to the needs of the individuals, combining the innovative and technological innovations afforded by online learning with the engagement and participation provided in the best of traditional learning.

Table 3.6 Descriptive Statistics of Students' Attitude towards Blended Learning

Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
The information is obtained by more than one way with blended learning	51	1	5	3,37	1,183
Blended learning improves my learning skills	51	1	5	3,20	1,184
Blended learning reinforces interaction between teacher and students	51	1	5	3,41	1,186
Blended learning provides me enough time for performing tasks	51	1	5	3,45	1,205
Combination of an online class learning and traditional in- class learning is more effective than using one way of delivering information	51	1	5	3,39	1,250
I enjoy mixing online learning with face to face learning	51	1	5	3,22	1,331

Note: 1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, 5 strongly agree

The five-point Likert scale is considered an interval scale. Hence, from 1 to 1.8, this means strongly disagree. From 1.81 to 2.60, this means to disagree. From 2.61 to 3.40, this means neutral. Moreover, from 3.41-4.20, this means to agree, and finally, from 4.21 to 5 means strongly agree.

The mean of the first statement, “The information is obtained by more than one way with blended learning,” is (mean= 3, 37), which shows that students took a neutral position with this statement.

In response to the second statement “Blended learning improves my learning skills,” is (mean= 3, 20), which demonstrates that respondents of the study were neutral with the statement.

In the third statement, “Blended learning reinforces interaction between teacher and students,” is (mean= 3, 41), which means that students of the study agreed with this statement.

The mean rating of the fourth statement, “Blended learning provides me enough time for performing tasks,” is (mean=3, 45), which has the highest mean responses, and respondents of the study took a neutral position.

Concerning the fifth statement, “Combination of an online class learning and traditional in-class learning is more effective than using one way of delivering information,” the mean is (mean=3.39), which shows that participants of the study were neutral with the statement.

In the last statement, “I enjoy mixing online learning with face-to-face learning,” the mean is (mean=3, 22); this mean rating likely reflects the fact that respondents took a neutral position.

Section III:

It includes two questions about the difficulties faced by the learners in the face to face instruction and the online environment.

Q1: what is the most difficult issue you encounter in face-to-face instruction?

Figure 3.2 The Difficulties Faced by Students in Face-to-Face instruction



Table 3.7: The Difficulties Faced by Students in Face-to-Face Instruction

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
Lack of motivation	10	19,6%
The allocated time devoted to a lecture	07	13,7%
The fast pace of teachers to move through lectures	29	56,9%
The assessment method	05	9,8%

To answer Q11, the results from Table 3.7 show that (56,9%) of the students report having problems with the teachers' fast pace in moving through lectures. Followed by (19,6%) of students who assumed to be unmotivated to learn in face-to-face instruction, 13,7% of participants reported that the time spent in the sessions is insufficient, i.e., teachers are unable to manage the time, and (9.8%) suffered from the methods chosen for assessments. This indicated that most students having problems with the insufficient explanation of lectures provided is taken to be the primary issue faced in face-to-face instruction which explains the students' choice of "the fast pace of teachers to move through lectures" in affecting their learning in this environment.

Q2: what is the most difficult issue you face in online learning?

Figure 3.3 The Difficulties Faced by Students in Online Learning

what is the most difficult issue you face in online learning

51 responses

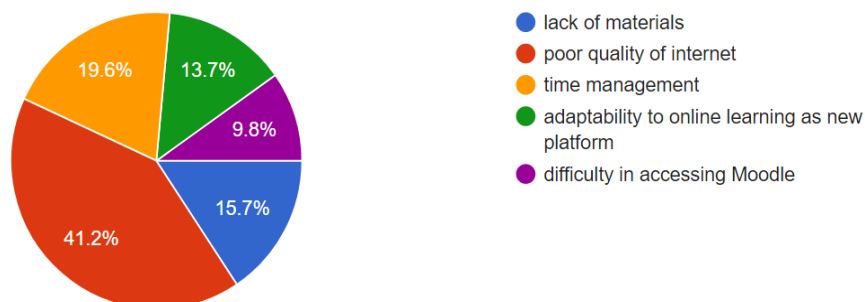


Table 3.8: The Difficulties Faced by Students in Online Environment

Options	Number	Percentage (%)
Lack of materials	08	15,7%
Poor quality of internet	21	41,2%
Time management	10	19,6%
Adaptability to online learning	07	13,7%
Difficulty in accessing Moodle	05	9,8%

The results of table 3.8 above showed that 41,2% had issues with internet quality, 15,7% had a problem with the lack of materials, 19,6% faced a problem with time management, 13,7% could not adapt to online learning, and 9,8% had difficulty in accessing Moodle. This indicates that most of the students were suffering from the poor quality of the

internet; their answers demonstrate the reasons behind their low participation in online learning.

3.4 The Teachers' Interview Results

The researcher in this research work established an interview set up with 05 selected teachers of Ain Temouchent University. It was conducted online due to the outbreak of covid 19 to explore EFL teachers' perspectives on students' attitudes toward blended learning and their valuable suggestions that may lead blended learning in Algerian universities to success. This interview consists of seven questions that seek teachers' viewpoints on blended learning during the COVID 19 pandemic. One of the teachers answered all questions in one general response mentioned at the beginning of the interview results. The following are the answers to the interview questions:

The General answer of teacher 05: “So my answer will be general, BL is advantageous if appropriately integrated, and this is mainly due to the fact that BL gathers mixed methods from face to face and online learning.

Unfortunately, neither in-person courses are done correctly nor online ones in our case. So I think it is quite irrelevant to ask about the efficiency of BL in a context where BL is not really applied”.

Question 01: Do you think that blended learning is equivalent to the traditional classroom in terms of students' outcomes?

Teacher 01: “The blended learning classroom is a mix of traditional teaching with the newest digital technologies. Studies have shown that blended learning is just as effective as the traditional classroom for measuring students' academic outcomes.”

Teacher 02: “No, the results are better in the traditional classroom”.

Teacher 03: “I believe that it is somehow difficult to confirm that Blended learning and the traditional one are equivalents; our educational institutions did not use this method long enough to collect detailed and accurate data about this matter. All we have so far is mainly the faculty member's observations. As for my case, some of my students adjusted well and maintained their usual academic scoring while others faced difficulties”.

Teacher 04: “Although blended learning combines face-to-face and online learning environments, students’ outcomes have been completely affected. Therefore it is impossible to say that both environments are similar in terms of students' outcomes”.

In response to the first question, the interviewees' answers were nearly different from one to another. Most of the teachers assured that it is impossible to compare students’ outcomes in blended learning and traditional learning since BL was not fully applied in the faculty of Belhadj Bouchaib, Ain Temouchent.

Question 02: What are the challenges or frustrations you think your students faced while learning in BL?

Teacher 01: “One key problem is the resistance of students to any new changes, students mainly do not like to get out of their comfort zone, and due to the covid 19 pandemic, BL was inevitable, and there was no time to adjust.”

Teacher 02:” The main challenge is that they can lose their attention or focus on the lecture. Sometimes the teacher's presence is very important to attract the attention of his learners”.

Teacher 03: “I assume the majority of the obstacles were related to preserving a balance in terms of time management and organising their lectures, which is understandable given the abrupt nature of the shift.”

Teacher 04: “The whole change in the method and the learning environment is considered a challenge; following the teacher's guides and maintaining the same energy was difficult for the students who have already refused the change.”

As a reply to the second question, all the interviewees assured that they faced many problems. The most common problem faced among the four teachers is students’ disability to adapt to the changes and other difficulties such as lack of focus and motivation, time management, etc.

Question 03: In which environment do students engage more (online or face to face)?

Teacher 01: “I have interacted with students at both levels (online and face to face), and many students did not mind this change since they already used social media platforms to exchange lectures before the pandemic.”

Teacher 02: “In my opinion, in face-to-face instruction, students engage more.”

Teacher 03: “Students, in my observation, interact more in the former classical setting; nevertheless, I feel that the more they become accustomed to online learning, the more they feel open to the idea of participating; so, I suppose it is only a matter of time.”

Teacher 04: “I believe that students engage more when they are interested in the module, or the lecture presented, be it online or in presence. Their engagement differs in both environments depending on how motivated they feel about participating”.

Concerning the third question, the participants' answers were nearly different from one another, and each teacher answered the question differently according to their experience in teaching the students. In some responses, teachers noticed that some students preferred face-to-face instruction and participated more, while others became adapted to online learning and found it easy to engage in it since they were already familiar with learning using social media platforms.

Question 04: Do you feel that blended learning course has any disadvantages for the students?

Teacher 01: “A blended learning environment is an educational model developed to address the challenges in today’s education system. Therefore, I think the pros defeat the cons”.

Teacher 02: “Not that much. It may make the learners feel bored. This is why they need something to interact with”.

Teacher 03: “Not at all; as I previously stated, it is simply a matter of organizing and being more willing to ask questions.”

Teacher 04: “It is beneficial for the growth and development of the educational system though it is challenging if not well applied, and it is not considered a disadvantage.”

Regarding the fourth question, The responses were approximately similar, and most of the interviewees agreed that BL is more beneficial than disadvantageous for learners.

Question 05: If you are given the choice to change the negative attitude of students towards blended learning, what will be your suggestions?

Teacher 01: “As I previously stated, humans generally do not like to be out of their comfort zone. So, students should be encouraged more to get involved and accept the changes but teachers play a key role in this”.

Teacher 02: If they want to learn, they need to focus on getting the correct and clear information.

Teacher 03: “Logging in on time for the lecture is an issue; there are often latecomers, and the blame is on the network connection. I also think it will be much more helpful for me if the students are more flexible about the idea of turning on their cameras since it will be easier for me to observe their interaction. In addition, as a teacher, I can see if they need more explanations based on their physical expressions, As well as to oversee if they are paying attention”.

Teacher 04: “Students' negative attitudes are a result of the wrong application of the educational model in general. My suggestion will be first ‘awareness,’ making students aware of the changes they will face in the learning environment”.

By asking this question, the researcher could determine the most beneficial recommendation that could help teachers change students' negative attitudes towards the BL environment. Each teacher answered differently; two interviewees mentioned awareness and acceptance of the changes. On the other hand, one teacher insisted on taking the situation seriously. He indicated “they need to focus,” while another teacher suggested turning cameras during zoom meetings to distinguish their interaction.

Question 06: Do you think that learners will easily go back to traditional classroom learning when the pandemic ends? If not, how will it affect their learning process?

Teacher 01: “Many students did not adjust well to these changes, so the logical prediction is that students will not have a problem going back to how things used to be.”

Teacher 02: “Well, actually not that easy. But we as teachers should deal with new methods to make them feel good. i.e., use new methods to teach and work on the psychological side of the students”.

Teacher 03: “I imagine it will vary from student to student; some of them have become adjusted to a lot more flexible schedule, and it will be difficult for them to return to the usual way; they might struggle to find their way again.”

Teacher 04: “It will differ from one student to another since some of them found that online learning is a total failure and waste of time, especially since most students were complaining about the slow network.”

In the sixth question, two teachers stated that each student would react differently depending on their preference, whereas; the other teachers agreed that it would be easy for students to go back to the traditional learning instruction since they could not adapt the switch to the new environment.

Question 07: Do you support the continuation of using blended learning after the pandemic ends? Is it beneficial for students to learn better?

Teacher 01: “It should be integrated slowly. First, policymakers should provide the right settings and cover all aspects for the success of bl (from providing the tools to the proper training for both teachers and students”.

Teacher 02: “Well, no, I do not support this. Nothing can replace the presence of teachers with the learners”.

Teacher 03: “One hundred percent I encourage blended learning because, as previously stated, it provides more flexibility in learning, which means that learners would not become bored with the regular routine of the traditional technique. I, too, believe that some modules should be taught online in order to inspire students to learn by themselves”.

Teacher 04: “Yes, I believe it will be very beneficial and helpful to improve the learning process if better training, materials, and types of equipment are available to both teachers and students; as a teacher, I noticed that using both environments reduced students’ pressure and anxiety and helped them to maintain their motivation to learn.”

In response to the final question, the majority of the interviews supported the continuation of using blended learning under solving some problems and expressed their optimism towards incorporating bl in learning, in contrast to one teacher who disagreed with the other interviewees in which he preferred the traditional face to face instruction.

3.5 Classroom Observation Results

Classroom observation was conducted with groups one and two of master two didactics and applied languages at the University of Belhadj Bouchaib, Ain Temouchent. The researcher's purpose was to observe students' attitudes in the traditional environment, in which he attended two sessions of two different modules. The following tables give courses information in detail.

Table 3.9: Classroom Observation Information of the First Session

<p>Date of observation: Wednesday, October 13th, 2021</p> <p>Time: 10:00-11:00</p> <p>University name: Belhadj Bouchaib</p> <p>Location: Ain Temouchent</p> <p>Level: Master two/ first and second group</p> <p>Module: Discourse analysis</p> <p>Number of students: 15 students</p> <p>Instruments used to record data: Pen and copybook/phone</p> <p>Materials used in the classroom: data show, laptop</p>

Making classroom observations during this session aimed to observe students' interaction and participation with the teacher. Unfortunately, only 15 students attended, and the majority was from group one. Both groups were gathered in one session since there were many absences in the second group. The teacher used the laptop and data show to explain the

lesson, and the students were focused on her. Then few students started participating and asking questions. After finishing with the explanation of “Elipsis,” the teacher gave her students a task about Elipsis types to motivate them to engage in the lecture. The session ended after correcting the task. Due to the insufficient time, the teacher shared the lesson with her students to further read the lesson presented in the classroom.

Table 3.10: Classroom Observation Information of the Second Session

<p>Date of observation: Monday, December 13th, 2021</p> <p>Time: 10:00-11:00/ 11:00-12:00</p> <p>University name: Belhadj Bouchaib</p> <p>Location: Ain Temouchent</p> <p>Level: Master two/ first and second group</p> <p>Module: Advanced linguistics</p> <p>Number of students: 12 students</p> <p>Instruments used to record data: Laptop</p> <p>Materials used in the classroom: data show, laptop</p>
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During these sessions, students presented their topics. The researcher noticed that students sitting at the back were not paying attention to their classmates, and most of them were revising to present next. Ten students from both groups presented in two hours, all of them used the laptop and data show to present their work. At the end of each presentation, the teacher tried to open debates and discussions for students to share their opinions to create an enjoyable and good atmosphere. As a result, students succeeded in presenting their topics in time. The teacher proposed to present online, but the students declined. However, time was not enough, so they went with online presentations as a last resort.

3.6 Online Classroom Observation Results

Online classroom observation was conducted with groups one and two of master two didactics and applied languages via Google meet and Zoom meeting. The researcher aimed to observe students' attitudes in the online environment, in which he attended one session of the same face-to-face module, whereas; the other session was with another teacher and a different module since some online modules were asynchronous.

Table 3.11: Online Classroom Observation Information of the First Session

<p>Date of observation: Thursday, November 9th, 2021</p> <p>Time: 2 pm</p> <p>Location: Google meet</p> <p>Level: Master two/ first and second group</p> <p>Module: Advanced linguistics</p> <p>Number of students: 20 students</p> <p>Instruments used to record data: Laptop, phone</p> <p>Materials used in The classroom: Laptop, phone</p>
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In order to join the session, the teacher sent the link to the meeting via email. Students kept sending joining requests after the time was fixed, and because of the poor quality of the internet, students were connecting and disconnecting. The teacher asked all students to mute their micros to explain the lesson. After that, they were allowed to ask questions and participate in the lecture. Some students claimed they could not join the meeting and others left it before it ended. Some of the students were not using their real names, which was hard for the teacher to recognize them. The cameras were turned off except the teacher's camera. In this session, the researcher noticed that the students were not focusing, they were noisy and spoke together, and the number of participants decreased during the lecture, and because the cameras were off, the teacher could not see if they were paying attention or taking notes.

Table 3.12: Online Classroom Observation Information of the Second Session

<p>Date of observation: Tuesday, November 4th, 2021</p> <p>Time: 9:30 pm</p> <p>Location: Zoom meeting</p> <p>Level: Master two/ first and second group</p> <p>Module: Informatique</p> <p>Number of students: 15 students</p> <p>Instruments used to record data: Laptop, phone</p> <p>Materials used in the classroom: Laptop, phone</p>

Making online classroom observation in the second session was different from the previous one, in which the researcher has experienced various things that could enrich this research work. At the beginning of the session, students joined at different times. The teacher shared his screen with the students. However, during the explanation, students played with the screen sharing, writing, and drawing things which showed their disrespect and unconcerned about the lecture. Students complained about the time chosen for the session. Some of them left the meeting before it ended. The researcher noticed that the students were not interested in the lecture.

3.7 Discussion and Interpretation of the Main Results

This research work investigates EFL students' attitudes toward blended learning. After tackling data analysis of students' questionnaire, results were undecided; students seemed somewhat uncertain about their feelings of satisfaction, achievement, and interest in the blended learning since the majority took a neutral position in bl questions. While; results based on teachers' interviews showed that neither teachers nor students favored blended, and teachers claimed that students are not ready to learn in bl environment. In addition to that; Classroom observation backed up the results, in which results reflect that the majority of students were not satisfied due to different factors; besides, it was detected

that the number of attendances in classroom and online classroom observation was one of the factors that confirm that student refused to study in both environments.

The researcher in this research work proposed two hypotheses. The first hypothesis suggested that students have a positive attitude towards blended learning. However, this hypothesis is not confirmed based on data collected from students' questionnaires, teachers' interviews, and classroom observation; the researcher found that students have a negative attitude towards blended learning.

Furthermore, based on data analysis of the questionnaire, the researcher revealed that many difficulties made bl a challenge for most EFL learners. For example, the poor quality of the internet was one of the significant difficulties faced in online learning, which is considered a technical issue that hinders the success of blended learning. However, the fast pace at which teachers moved through lectures is an understandable problem in traditional learning since teachers were restricted to a short period for a lecture, which proved that the second hypothesis, "Students focus on face to face instruction," is confirmed.

This study's finding is different from other results (Donnelly, 2010; Poon, 2012), showing that the students are satisfied with the blended learning process. In Poon's (2012) research, the students have also stated that they want to maintain face-to-face interaction with their teachers in any case.

Similar perceptions were identified by Sagarra and Zapata (2008), who examined the attitudes of 245-second language learners of Spanish towards using an online workbook in a BL environment. Most student participants had a positive view of the BL environment in their study. Furthermore, these students acknowledged the "mutual relationship between class content and online materials" (Sagarra & Zapata, 2008, p. 218), which infers that teachers did a satisfactory job linking the two.

Nazarenko (2015) states that the new generation is quite sensitive and enthusiastic about new technologies, so the learners need to be motivated by new technologies. Furthermore, Cartner (2009) explored BL strategies for providing online access to academic word lists for 52 learners of English. BL was adopted to meet student needs for more flexible access to the course materials. She found that this environment appealed to a cross-section of the learners who developed positive attitudes and commented favorably on the learning benefits that followed the flexibility of online access to the learning materials.

3.8 Recommendations and Suggestions

Students of Belhadj Bouchaib University are opposed to the use of blended learning. However, this does not abolish the benefits of bl or the importance of having technology in EFL classes. Several practical recommendations concerning the probable consequences of blended learning for EFL teachers and learners and policymakers may be made based on the findings of this study.

3.8.1 Recommendations for Teachers

For the aim of enhancing blended learning at Belhadj Bouchaib University, teachers should:

- Educate students about the reasons for using BL and ensure that they gain the necessary technical skills to fully benefit from the environment.
- Develop a technological infrastructure in the classrooms to enable learners to prepare for blended learning courses.
- Teachers must consider the circumstances of their students, as some lack technological tools such as smart phones, computers, and other devices, and they should find alternate options.
- Teachers should manage the time of online courses.
- Choose methods of assessment suitable to all students.
- Teachers should experience and discover the online learning environment at their own pace and control the pace of their application of various technical tools, such as different features of the content management system.

3.8.2 Recommendations for Students

The researcher sought to provide students with some valuable recommendations listed as follows:

- Students must consider blended learning as an essential rather than a complementary process.
- Students should turn on their cameras since it will be easier for the teacher to observe their interaction.
- Students must take the online course seriously and respect the teachers' instructions.

- Students must respect the time of presentations and homework in order to have an organised process of bl.
- Students should get out of their comfort zone and try new learning methods.
- Students should consider autonomous learning as an effective way to enhance their skills and challenge themselves.

3.8.3 Suggestions to Decision Makers

During the blended learning process, both students and teachers experience different problems. As a result, a set of suggestions are made to decision-makers for a better bl experience.

- Decision-makers need to take COVID-19 as the starting point to include a university module to teach students what blended learning is and how to use it effectively.
- Decision-makers should solve the problems that students face while using MOODLE platform, particularly the problem of accessing and registration or replace it with a more straightforward and accessible platform.
- Decision-makers should allow students to access the internet at the university.
- Decision-makers should provide universities with the required materials used in bl.

3.9 Limitations

Like most studies, this study also encountered a few limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. Among the limitations that the researcher struggled with is the limited number of participants in the questionnaire in which the majority of participants were requested each time to respond. Moreover, summarizing the results was difficult since students' answers to the questionnaire were not helpful (neutral). In addition, conducting the interview took longer since several professors did not respond to their emails.

3.10 Conclusion

This action research study aimed to test the effectiveness of a blended learning teaching methodology on student achievement and gauge their perspectives on the method. This chapter summarized the main conclusions reached by researchers after analyzing the research instruments, which included students' questionnaire, teachers' interview, and classroom observation analyses. In addition, useful recommendations were proposed by the researcher to improve the process of blended learning at the Algerian universities, and this chapter was concluded with limitations that obstructed conducting this research.

General conclusion

Universities worldwide enrolled in blended Learning with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic as an inevitable solution to maintain the teaching/learning process. Despite the huge gap between the application of bl in Algeria and developed countries, it was implemented in Algerian universities. Therefore, the primary goal of this study was to investigate factors that affect students' attitudes toward the adoption of technology-rich blended Learning at Belhadj Bouchaib University in Ain Temouchent. In addition, the study also discovered some challenges that might prevent the adoption of blended Learning and some advantages of blended Learning that could encourage the adoption of Blended Learning. It has been hypothesized that students have a positive attitude toward blended Learning. The other complementary question was related to students' bl components, and the researcher predicted that face-to-face instruction would be the preferred environment.

The researcher conducted both qualitative and quantitative methods of investigation to check the research hypotheses. However, by comparing the student's answers to the questionnaire, it was difficult to reach valid results since students seemed somewhat uncertain about their satisfaction, achievement, and interest in the blended learning courses. Thus, it was important to gain insight into the teachers' point of view concerning their students' attitudes towards adopting BL at Belhadj Bouchaib University and classroom observation and online classroom observation.

The findings of this study conclude that there was not a good balance between online and classroom activities, As a result; the use of a blended learning methodology creates a negative attitude among students because methods of investigation revealed that there were distinctive factors that affected students' attitude toward blended Learning negatively. Furthermore, most students would prefer to learn in regular face-to-face classroom courses.

All in all, we can deduce that blended Learning is challenging for learners in the teaching and learning process. However, it could provide them with an enjoyable environment that increases their interaction if properly implemented.

It is essential to highlight that some factors limited the researcher's ability to accomplish the research work; therefore, she encourages further research on the effectiveness of blended learning.

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Appendices

Appendices

Appendix 01

Students' Questionnaire

Blended Learning combines face to face instruction and online learning. The following questions aim to know if BL is effective to learners during the pandemic of Covid 19. please, answer the following questions and thank you in advance for taking the time to complete it.

Section one : general information

1- What is your gender ?

Male Female

Section Two: Students' attitudes towards Blended Learning

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
The information is obtained by more than one way with blended learning					
Blended learning improves my learning skills					
Blended learning reinforces interaction between teacher and students					
Blended learning provides me enough time for performing tasks					
Combination of an online class learning and					

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traditional in-class learning is more effective than using one way of delivering information					
I enjoy mixing online learning with face to face learning					
I prefer face to face learning than online learning					
I prefer online learning than face to face learning					
Face to face learning is enough to obtain information					
Online learning is enough to obtain information					

Section three: The difficulties encountered in face-to-face instruction and online learning.

Q1: what is the most difficult issue you encounter in face-to-face instruction?

- The allocated time devoted to a lecture
- The fast pace of teachers to move through lectures
- The assessment method

Q2: what is the most difficult issue you face in online learning?

- Lack of materials
- Poor quality of internet
- Time management

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- Adaptability to online learning as new platform
- Time management

Appendix 02

Teachers' Interview

Dear teachers, i hope you are doing well. Iam Dounia Mekranter group 2 didactics

Please, I am sending you my interview questions and I would like to see if we can meet either online or at university to conduct the interview if you are busy, you can simply answer the questions in a word document.

Questions:

1. Do you think that blended learning is equivalent to the traditional classroom in terms of students' outcomes?
.....
2. What are the challenges or frustrations you think your students faced while learning in BL?
.....
.....
3. In which environment do students engage more (online or face to face)?
.....
4. Do you feel that blended learning course has any disadvantages for the students?
.....
5. If you are given the choice to change the negative attitude of students towards blended learning, what will be your suggestions?
.....

Appendices

6. Do you think that learners will easily go back to traditional classroom learning when the pandemic ends? If not, how it will affect their learning process?

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7. Do you support the continuation of using blended learning after the pandemic ends? Is it beneficial for students to learn better?

.....

Appendix 03

Classroom Observation

Date of bservation:

Time:

University name:

Location:

Level:

Module:

Number of students:

Instruments used to record data:

Materials used in the classroom:

Online Classroom Observation

Date of observation:

Time:

Location:

Level:

Module:

Number of students:

Instruments used to record data:

Materials used in the classroom:

Résumé :

La pandémie de COVID-19 a provoqué une crise inattendue dans tous les domaines, en particulier dans le domaine de l'éducation. Il y a eu une fermeture massive des activités en présentiel depuis que les universités étaient dans des conditions d'urgence. Les universités du monde entier adoptent l'apprentissage mixte, dans lequel la technologie est utilisée pour soutenir et améliorer l'enseignement traditionnel. Cette recherche vise à déterminer les effets de l'apprentissage mixte sur l'attitude des étudiants et examine dans quelle mesure les stratégies d'apprentissage mixte sont acceptées et adoptées dans les universités algériennes en menant une étude de cas sur les étudiants du département d'anglais de l'Université Belhadj Bouchaib, Ain Temouchent. Cette étude s'est principalement appuyée sur trois outils académiques ; un questionnaire bien structuré pour les étudiants en master 2 et des observations en classe, et un entretien avec les enseignants. Les résultats ont montré une perception négative de la méthode d'apprentissage pour les élèves qui ont rencontré de nombreuses difficultés d'apprentissage pendant la pandémie, et cela est dû à de nombreuses raisons mentionnées dans les résultats obtenus à la fois par le questionnaire et les observations en classe. Les résultats indiquent également que les enseignants et les étudiants avaient besoin d'une formation pédagogique et technique pour employer le BL avec succès. Par conséquent, les enseignants et les étudiants devraient tirer parti des technologies modernes pour suivre l'évolution des méthodes modernes d'enseignement et d'apprentissage utilisant les technologies de l'information et de la communication pour un apprentissage efficace.

ملخص:

تسببت جائحة كوفيد 19 في أزمة غير متوقعة في جميع المجالات وخاصة في مجال التعليم حيث أعلنت الجامعات حالة طوارئ نتج عنها إغلاق واسع النطاق للأنشطة المباشرة. تعتمد الجامعات في جميع أنحاء العالم التعلم المختلط حيث تُستخدم التكنولوجيا لدعم وتحسين التعليم التقليدي. يسعى هذا العمل البحثي إلى تحديد آثار التعلم المدمج (التعلم المختلط) على موقف الطلاب والتحقيق في مدى قبول استراتيجيات التعلم المختلط واعتمادها في الجامعات الجزائرية من خلال إجراء دراسة حول موقف الطلاب من التعلم المختلط في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة بلحاج بوشعيب ، عين تموشنت. اعتمدت هذه الدراسة بشكل أساسي على ثلاث أدوات البحث؛ استبيان موجه لطلاب السنة الثانية ماستر وأداة بحث ثنائية تتمثل في مراقبة قسم دراسي، ومقابلة مع المعلمين. أظهرت النتائج تصورًا سلبيًا لطريقة التعلم لدى الطلاب الذين واجهوا العديد من الصعوبات في التعلم أثناء الجائحة. تشير النتائج أيضًا إلى أن المعلمين والطلاب بحاجة إلى تدريب تربوي وتقني لتوظيف التعلم المختلط بنجاح كما يجب على كل من المعلمين والطلاب الاستفادة من التقنيات الحديثة لمواكبة التطورات في طرق التدريس والتعلم الحديثة باستخدام تكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات للتعلم الفعال.