

ATTITUDE TOWARDS E-LEARNING DURING THE COVID19 PANDEMIC

ATTITUDE ENVERS L'APPRENTISSAGE EN LIGNE PENDANT LA PANDÉMIE COVID 19

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Abstract: *The emergence of the new pandemic, Covid 19, prohibited any type of teacher-student face-to-face meetings. Consequently, on March 12, the Algerian government took an exceptional decision of closing all universities, and substitute the traditional classroom with e-learning as a last solution to save the academic year. This study sought to find out the attitude of students towards E-learning. The sample of this study was 73 third-year students of English at Belhadj Bouchaib University. The research tool employed in this study was a questionnaire. Results indicated that the attitude towards E-learning was negative. Results also revealed that the lack of materials and problem in accessing the platform "Moodle" were the main reasons behind this negative attitude.*

Keywords: *Algeria, Attitude, E-Learning, ICT, learning, Moodle, teaching.*

Résumé : *L'émergence de la nouvelle pandémie, Covid 19, a interdit tout type de rencontres en face-à-face enseignant-étudiant. Par conséquent, le 12 Mars, le gouvernement algérien a pris une décision exceptionnelle de fermer toutes les universités, et la remplacer Enseignement traditionnel avec l'apprentissage en ligne comme une dernière solution pour sauver l'année scolaire. Cette étude visait à connaître l'attitude des étudiants à l'égard de l'apprentissage en ligne. L'échantillon de cette étude était de 73 étudiants de troisième année d'anglais à l'Université Belhadj Bouchaib. L'outil de recherche utilisé dans cette étude était un questionnaire. Les résultats ont indiqué que l'attitude envers l'apprentissage en ligne était négative. Les résultats ont également révélé que le manque de matériel et problème pour accéder à la plate-forme « Moodle » ont été les principales raisons de cette attitude négative.*

Mots-clés : *Algérie, apprentissage, attitude, enseignement, e-learning, TIC, Moodle.*

* * *

1. Introduction

The traditional classroom plays a fundamental role in the teaching /learning process. Scholars and researchers immersed in such a field of study are perseveringly looking for the best ways to maintain its value and effectiveness. However, the explosion in technology doubled the student's needs with the state of being not content with what they learn in the classroom, and a large number of students were seeking another source of learning. This was one of the major factors that highly contributed to the innovation of a more fashionable system of learning, frequently known as "e-learning». The facilitation, and ease of accessibility that this new system offers, with the use of different developed ICT tools from social networks, emails, applications, chat rooms...etc., increased its popularity.

As a result, a considerable amount of universities, and higher education institutions gave great attention to e-learning, and they started gradually to enrol it in the teaching/learning process as additional support. Nevertheless, the rise of the new pandemic, Covid 19, led to universities closing on the 12th of March. A shift from the traditional classroom to e-learning was seen as a solution to save the academic year. In this regard, different attitudes were noticed toward this implementation from oppositionists to supporters, particularly among English students. Hence, the current study attempts to investigate the attitude of third-year students of English toward e-learning at Belhadj Bouchaib University, and if those students are with the idea of shifting from traditional learning to e-learning. Accordingly, our research questions would be as following:

- What is the English students' attitude toward e-learning?
- What is the main factor that influences students' attitude toward e-learning at Belhadj Bouchaib university?

To answer these research questions, the following hypotheses are put forward:

- Third-year students of English have a negative attitude towards e-learning.
- The lack of materials has a direct link to students' negative attitude.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Attitude

Attitude is an interdisciplinary concept that captivates the attention of various researchers from different disciplines psychology, sociology, politics, communication, and anthropology. Attitude is defined as "a complex of feelings, desires, fears, convictions, prejudices or other tendencies that have given a set of readiness to act because of varied experience." (Thomas, 1971). Hills (1982) asserts that in education, the importance of attitudes as a factor influencing the learning process.

2.2 E-learning in Algeria

The advancement in technology with the emergence of distinctive ICT tools contributed to the creation of a new type of learning commonly known as "e-learning" or "electronic learning. As a result, learning is no longer the same; leading to the appearance of a new learning theory "Connectivism".

According to Siemens (2005), the typical learning theories "behaviourism", "cognitivism" and "constructivism" could not keep up with technology. Hence, there is a need for a new learning theory. Siemens (2006) defines Connectivism as a conceptual framework in which individuals learn through a network that is impacted by technology and interacting with each other, and he refers that to learning that happens outside of people, and within organizations, which according to him behaviourism, cognitivism, and constructivism didn't give attention to it, and were limited only to the internal learning.

The massive open online course (MOOC) originated from the connectivist theory (Downes, 2012). It is accessible free with its open software where learners can share and download lectures and even interact yet they are guided by their online teachers (Downes, 2012). Moreover, Negash and Wilcox (2008) have outspread the classification of e-learning into six types:

- E-learning with presence, and without e-communication (face-to-face).
- E-learning without presence, and e-communication.

- E-learning without presence, and with e-communication “asynchronous”.
- E-learning with virtual presence, and with e-communication “synchronous”.
- E-learning with occasional presence, and with e-communication: “blended/hybrid asynchronous”.
- E-learning with presence, and e-communication: “blended/hybrid synchronous”

The real starting point of e-learning in Algeria with the use of internet networks starts in 2006 with a partnership with two companies “Microsoft” and “Thompson”, this service provides 4.000 courses and lectures for teaching ICTs and communication skills (Guemide and Benachaiba, 2012)

The Pandemic of covid-19 has flipped the balance and imposed on the Algerian universities to include e-learning models not only ICTs. At the beginning of the pandemic, Ain Temouchent University uses an asynchronous model of e-learning which allows teachers and students to interact via video chats in Google classroom, or zoom to finish the last year curriculums. At the beginning new university year the administration uses another model of e-learning which is hybrid/blended learning by making a fusion between non-traditional classes (electronic) and traditional classes (physical presence). Yet, still the university struggle with e-learning and face difficulties because of a set of problems that appears each time, the can be summarized as follows:

- Poor internet, according to statistics Algeria is among the weakest in the world. Also, this internet does not cover all of Algeria some places do not have any internet connection (WIFI, 4G, 3G).
- Weak university sites, all Algerian universities suffer from that problem, and the lack of periodic programming and organization, the lack of specialists that makes it difficult to reach.
- Some teachers are indifferent to this type of learning either because of the lack of information, experience it or because it was not official as a tool of education in Algeria.
- Some students do not have a computer.
- The students’ lack of interest in e-learning.

3. Methodology

To collect data from students concerning their attitude towards E-learning, the study was based on a quantitative model. The research tool used in this study was a closed-form questionnaire.

The participants of the study were 73 LMD third-year students of English at BelhadjBouchaib University. Those participants were already exposed to E-learning during the second semester of the academic year 2019-2020 and the new school year 2020-2021.

The questionnaire was composed of three parts. The first part includes gender while the second part focused on the tools used while studying online besides an evaluation of the internet connection and Moodle. The final part composed of 7 items addressed to figure out the attitude towards E-learning. five-point Likert scale was used in this part (5= strongly agree, 4= agree, 3= neutral ,2 = disagree , 1= agree) .

The questionnaire was initially run through two steps. The first step was to test its clarity and it was sent for two students. Their feedback was positive so it was published online for all students of the third year. It was published online for 4 weeks (from the 2nd of

November until the 2nd of December). Despite the total number of third-year students, which is 125 students, only 73 answered.

4. Results and Discussions

The results of the questionnaire revealed that 90.41% of the participants were females while 9.59% were males. However, gender was not considered in the study.

Table 1: Gender of the Participants

	Number	Percentage
Female	66	90.41%
Male	7	9.59%
	Total = 73	100%

The following section was addressed to students of English at Belhadj Bouchaib University to find out their attitude towards e-learning.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on the Attitude towards E-learning

	N	Minimum	Maximum	mean	Standard deviation
I prefer studying online rather than studying in the traditional classroom	73	1	4	2,47	1,119
lessons provided by teachers through e-learning better than in the traditional classroom	73	1	4	1,32	,780
I am for e-learning	73	1	4	1,34	,853
I am against E-learning	73	2	4	3,84	,553
E-learning is important during this pandemic	73	1	5	3,07	1,097
E-learning can replace traditional classroom after the pandemic.	73	1	4	1,95	,468
E-learning is an addition to the traditional classroom	73	1	4	3,08	1,024
(total)	73				

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 is 2.47, which means the participants were neutral. The mean of the second statement indicated that it is 1.32 which mean the majority of participants were against the idea that lessons provided by teachers through e-learning better than in the traditional classroom. Moreover, the mean third and the fourth statements were found to be (mean= 1.34) and (mean= 3.84) respectively which indicated that the majority of students were against e-learning.

The mean following statement "E-learning is important during this pandemic was found (mean=3.07) which revealed that students were aware of the importance of e-learning during this pandemic. However, results revealed that e-learning cannot replace traditional classroom after the pandemic as the mean of this statement was (mean= 1.95) which shows that students were against this idea. However, their answers concerning the last

statement revealed that e-learning can be an addition to the traditional classroom as the mean of this item was found (mean= 3.08).

The overall results show that third-year students of English at Belhadj Bouchaib University had a negative attitude towards E-learning during this pandemic, which proves the first hypothesis. These results are incompatible with the study Allegue (2019) which revealed that students of Guelma University have a positive attitude towards E-learning.

To discover the factors influencing attitude towards e-learning, students were asked several questions concerning different aspects of e-learning: tools, quality of internet connection and even accessibility of Moodle.

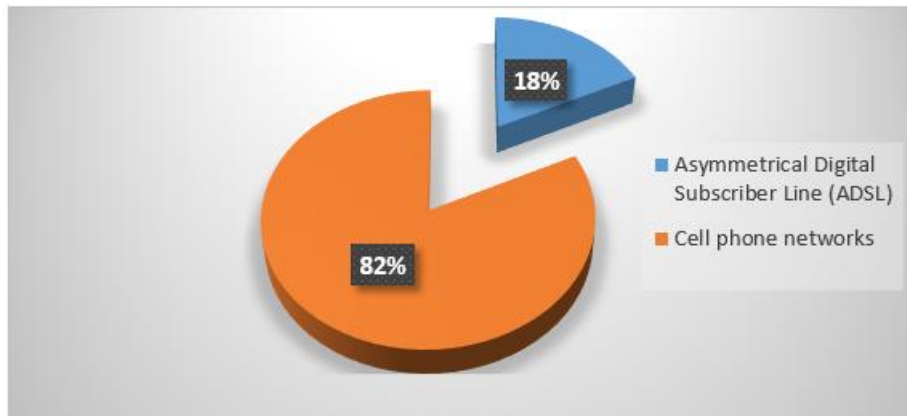
The first question was addressed to figure out which tool students used to study online at home. Results indicated that not all students study online at home, as 43.83% of students do not study online while 56.17% divided between 39.73% who used their smartphones and 16.44% who used their computer.

Table 3: Different Tools Used to Study Online among Belhadj Bouchaib University Students

	Smart phone		Computer		None	
Which tool do you use at home to study online	29	39,73%	12	16,44%	32	43,83%

The second question was addressed to find out which type of internet connection students used. Results showed that the majority of students used cell phone networks (82%) while 18% of students used the Asymmetrical Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL).

Graphic 1: The Different Types of Internet Connection Used at Home among Belhadj Bouchaib University Students



The following question was related to the previous question as students were asked to evaluate the quality of their internet connection.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on the Quality of Internet in Algeria

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Evaluate your internet connections	73	1	5	2,85	1,244
(total)	73				

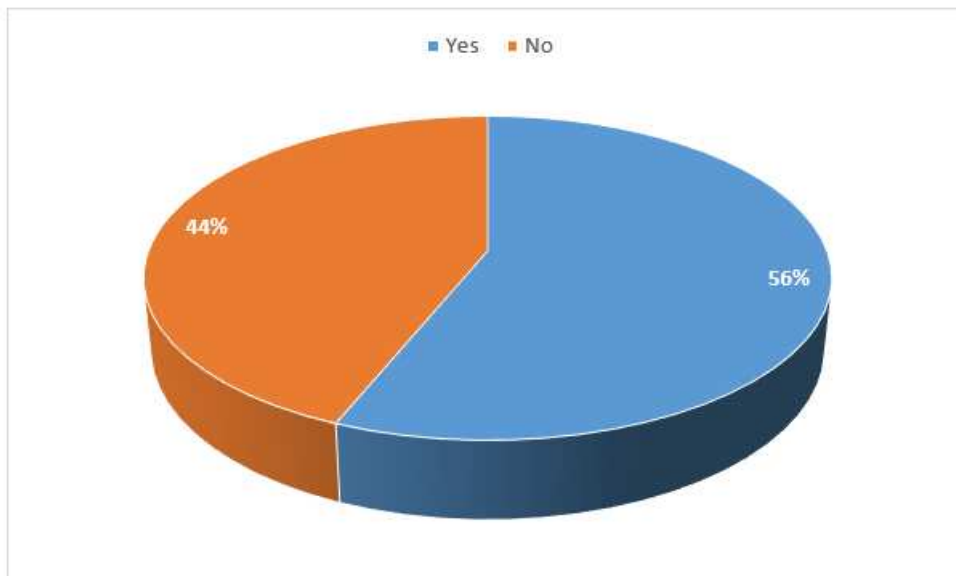
Note: 1 very dissatisfied, 2 dissatisfied, 3 neutral, 4 satisfied, 5 very satisfied

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

Students were asked to evaluate their internet connection whether cell phone networks or Asymmetrical Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL). The mean of this item is found (mean= 2.85) which indicated that students were neutral.

Students were asked if they had a Moodle account and results revealed that more than half the target population had an account as 56.17% said yes while 43.83% said no.

Graphic 2: Participants Usage of Moodle among Students of English at Belhadj Bouchaib University



The last item was addressed only to students with Moodle account as they were asked if they faced problems while accessing Moodle. Those without Moodle account refrained from answering.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics on the frequency of Moodle problems

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
If yes, How often do you have problems accessing Moodle?	41	2	5	4,12	,714
N (total)	41				

Note: 1 never, 2 rarely, 3 sometimes, 4 often, 5 always

The five-point Likert scale is considered an interval scale. Hence, from 1 to 1.8, this means never. From 1.81 to 2.60, this means rarely. From 2.61 to 3.40, this means sometimes. Moreover, from 3.41-4.20, this means often and finally from 4.21 to 5 means always.

The mean of this question about the frequency of problems faced while accessing Moodle is found to be (mean= 4.12) which indicated that students often faced problems while accessing Moodle.

Overall, different factors are influencing the attitudes of learners towards E-learning. Results revealed that 43.83 % do not use smartphones nor computers to study online. In addition to that, the results of students' satisfaction level concerning the quality of the internet revealed that they were neutral as the mean of this item is found (mean= 2.85). finally, while 44% of students did not have an account in Moodle, students with Moodle account stated that they often faced problems while accessing Moodle as the mean of this item is to be found (mean=4.12).

These results indicated that the lack of materials (tools, internet quality, and Moodle accessibility) had a direct link to the negative attitude towards e-learning in BelhadjBouchaib University students of English which proves the second hypothesis. These results are compatible with the study by Benharzallah(2019) which revealed the weakness and quality of the materials obstructing the progress of E-learning in Algeria.

5. Conclusion

Attitude as human perception is an important factor in the success of e-learning (Aviram& Tami, 2004). Hence, this study aimed to investigate the attitude of students towards E-learning among third-year students of English at BelhadjBouchaib University. Results revealed that even though BelhadjBouchaib University has used Moodle as a platform where students can still learn despite the pandemic, the attitude of learners towards e-learning was negative. Different factors contributed to this negative attitude as BelhadjBouchaib third-year students of English revealed that lack of materials including the quality of the internet, the difficulties with the platform itself as well as students who owned neither a computer nor even a smartphone were among the main factors hindering the success of e-learning.

Despite the efforts of the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education to implement e-learning as a measurement during the pandemic. Blended learning in Algerian universities is still under development as students focused more on face-to-face instruction (synchronous

communication) while e-learning is mostly neglected. This calls for a serious view on how to ensure the success of E-learning in the future.

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Annexes

Annex I

Learners' Attitude towards E-learning

This questionnaire is a part of the study investigating the attitude of Third year students of English at Belhadj Bouchaib Univeristy towards E-learning During the Pandemic of Covid 19.

you are kindly requested to read carefully the questions and answer them.

* Required

1. what is your gender *

Mark only one oval.

Male

Female

2. Which tool do you use at home to study online *

Mark only one oval.

Smart phone

Computer

None

3. Which type of internet connections do you use at home? *

Mark only one oval.

Asymmetrical Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL)

Cell phone networks

4. Evaluate your internet connections *

Mark only one oval.

- very disastified
 dissatisfied,
 neutral,
 satisfied,
 very satisfied

5. Do you have an account in Moodle? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

6. If yes, How often do you have problems accessing Moodle? *

Do not answer this question if you do not have an account in Moodle!

Mark only one oval.

- never
 rarely
 sometimes
 Often
 always

7. tick the box based on your level of agreement. *

Check all that apply.

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
I prefer studying online rather than studying in the traditional classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
lessons provided by teachers through e-learning better than in the traditional classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am for e-learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am against E-learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E-learning is important during this pandemic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E-learning can replace traditional classroom after the pandemic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E-learning is an addition to the classical classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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