

EFL Students' Attitudes Towards Blended Learning-Based Instruction in Saudi and Jordanian EFL Classrooms

Abdullah Nijr Alotaibi

Department of English, College of Education, Majmaah University, Al-Majmaah, 11952, Saudi Arabia

Mohammad Alzu'bi

Department of English and Literature, Ajloun University College, Al-Balqa Applied University, Salt, Jordan

Abstract—This study aimed to explore EFL students' attitudes towards blended learning strategies in Saudi Arabian and Jordanian EFL classrooms. The sample of the study consisted of 200 EFL university students at Majmaah University in Saudi Arabia and Al-Balqa Applied University in Jordan. To fulfill the purpose of the study, the researchers designed a questionnaire of 24 items to gather information about students' attitudes towards blended learning in EFL classrooms. The data were analyzed statistically. The result of the study showed positive responses from both Saudi and Jordanian participants when it came to using blended learning in their classrooms. Nonetheless, there were some students who faced some difficulties while using blended learning strategies in their classrooms. This research is expected to be of great benefit to lecturers, students, and stakeholders in developing English language skills in either Saudi Arabian or Jordanian EFL classrooms. In light of the findings of the study, the researchers also made some suggestions on how blended learning can be improved.

Index Terms—blended learning strategy, EFL classrooms, attitude, Majmaah University, Al-Balqa Applied University

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Overview

In the years since the COVID-19 pandemic, e-learning has become vital to education. As a result, many educational institutions have made the transition from conventional face-to-face classroom teaching and learning to modern e-learning, where teaching and learning are done online in virtual classrooms. However, the transition from conventional learning to e-learning was not as easy as it sounds. When e-learning first started being used during the COVID-19 pandemic, both teachers and students faced several problems adapting to it, such as a shortage of financial and human resources, for example. Thus, a hybrid of online instruction and traditional methods of teaching and learning strategies became necessary, otherwise known as blended learning.

In the language context, using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has positive effects on language learning. It allows interaction and collaboration among the students and makes language learning more flexible and accessible to any student than the traditional face-to-face way. On the other hand, there are many benefits to face-to-face learning, such as facilitating deeper language learning, promoting in-context learning, and taking advantage of body language and cultural nuances. In sum, there is no perfect method; thus, there is a need to combine traditional teaching methods with those of online instruction to make use of the advantages of both methods, like blended learning strategies. Currently, many universities in both Saudi Arabia and Jordan are shifting from e-learning to blended learning, such as Majmaah University in Saudi Arabia and Al-Balqa Applied University in Jordan, which have adapted many English courses for blended learning.

Blended learning is unique and important for EFL classrooms, as it combines the advantages of online and conventional methods. Thus, students can control the time, place, and pace of learning, while the teacher also participates in the learning process. The students can, therefore, reap the benefits of the integration of the learning experience with conventional learning from the teacher and using the more modern technological methods to learn online. Moreover, blended learning is based on a student-centered approach, so it motivates EFL learners actively, and they can learn freely. Furthermore, the teachers are free to present teaching materials, monitor, and evaluate. For example, they can save time by testing their students online. Although the role of the teacher is very important in the blended strategy, the teacher concentrates on the needs of his or her students. Thus, he or she plays the roles of both an adviser and a tutor.

Many researchers, like, for example, Shahrokni and Talaeizadeh (2013); Schechter et al. (2015); Banditvilai (2012); Alzu'bi (2020); Liu (2013); and Al Bataineh et al. (2019), have shown that blended learning improves student learning in EFL classrooms. Thus, in the Jordanian and Saudi contexts, blended learning has become a trend at the university level nowadays, especially in EFL classrooms. Nevertheless, a study is still needed to measure the students' attitudes towards

blended learning. Therefore, the researchers conducted the current study to learn more about blended learning in Jordanian and Saudi Arabian EFL classrooms.

B. The Questions of the Study

The present study aims to answer the following main question:

What is the EFL students' attitude towards the implementation of blended learning-based instruction in Saudi Arabian and Jordanian EFL classrooms?

C. Importance of the Study

In Jordanian and Saudi Arabian universities, most instructors use both the lecture method and the online method for teaching English. The findings of the study help the teachers and the students bring about positive change in the practices in the EFL classroom. Based on the results of the study, the students liked using blended learning strategies for learning English. As a result, English instructors should change their methods and use blended learning strategies to improve the students' attitudes when it comes to learning English and help students become more successful at learning the language. Moreover, the study provides other researchers with some procedures and findings for use in future research. Furthermore, the researchers selected their sample from two different universities in Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Thus, to the best of their knowledge, there are no comprehensive studies that have investigated these two countries together.

D. Operational Definitions

1. Blended learning: The blended learning strategy means combining online technology and face-to-face, traditional lecturing methods in teaching EFL.
2. Online learning: Online learning is a kind of learning that is carried out on a computer linked to the Internet.
3. Traditional method: A traditional method is a lecture method where the instructor gives information and knowledge inside EFL classrooms, and students continue developing their knowledge by doing homework.
4. Attitude: In the present study, attitude is defined as an evaluative judgment to make a decision about whether EFL students tend to like or dislike using blended learning strategies in the EFL classroom (Haddock & Maio, 2008).

E. Limitations of the Study

The study is limited by the number of participants (200) and the areas (Majmaah University and Al-Balqa Applied University) in which it took place.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have been conducted around the world about students' attitudes towards blended learning, and many have shown the positive effects that the blending learning approach has had on learning English. First, Munir et al. (2021) carried out a study that aimed to explore students' attitudes toward blended learning-based instruction in Indonesian EFL classrooms. The researchers selected 34 EFL university students and designed a scale to learn their attitudes towards blended learning strategies. The result of the study indicated that blended learning developed language skills and proficiency and helped lecturers, students, and stakeholders enrich their knowledge.

Ali (2021) conducted another study about students' attitudes toward blended learning at the University of Calcutta. The main purpose of the study was to learn about the students' attitudes towards blended learning. The general result of the study indicated that most students believe that blended teaching benefits them in learning and the teacher in teaching. Still, some students responded that they will face difficulties when they use blended learning.

Das and Barman (2023) conducted a study aimed at determining student attitudes towards the blended learning approach. The sample of the study included 313 post-graduate-level students from West Bengal. To measure the students' attitudes, the researchers used a questionnaire as the instrument of the study. The result of the study indicated that most students showed a moderate attitude towards the blended learning approach.

In the Arab context, there were two studies conducted in Palestine by Adas and Shmais (2011) and Dweikat and Amer (2016), and two studies conducted in Jordan by Aladwan et al. (2018) and Aburayash (2021). In the Palestinian context, Adas and Shmais (2011) conducted a study that aimed at investigating An-Najah National University students' perceptions towards using blended learning for improving the four English language skills. The sample of the study included 92 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The researchers designed two instruments - a questionnaire and an interview - to measure the students' attitudes towards blended learning. The study concluded that the students' attitudes towards blended learning were positive.

Moreover, Dweikat and Amer (2016) carried out a study on students' attitudes towards blended learning strategies at Al-Quds Open University. The researchers selected a purposeful sample of 42 English language students and used a questionnaire consisting of 42 items to gather information about the attitudes of students towards blended learning. After analyzing data through ANOVA and ANCOVA, the findings of the study showed a great number of students had positive attitudes towards blended learning.

In the Jordanian context, there is a study by Aladwan et al. (2018) aimed at examining students' attitudes towards blended learning at Jordan University. The study included 250 students and used a questionnaire to gather information

about the students' attitudes towards blended learning strategies. In general, the study showed positive attitudes towards blended learning.

Finally, Aburayash (2021) conducted a study aimed at identifying the attitudes of students towards the flipped class strategy. Sixty male and female students from the Arab Open University in Amman, Jordan, responded to a designed scale. The results of the study showed a positive attitude towards education in the opposite grade.

All previous studies indicated that the attitudes of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) students towards blended learning strategies were positive either at the university level or secondary school level, so the current study agreed with them. However, there are few studies conducted about measuring EFL or ESL students' attitudes towards blended learning in either Saudi Arabian or Jordanian EFL classrooms.

III. METHODS OF THE STUDY

A. Population and Sample of the Study

The population of the study consisted of 200 EFL students, with 100 chosen from Majmaah University in Saudi Arabia and 100 chosen from Al-Balqa Applied University in Jordan. The participants of the study were bachelor's degree students from both universities in their 2023-2024 academic years.

B. Instrument of the Study

The researchers surveyed the theoretical literature that related to the topic of the study to design a scale of 24 items that measured the attitudes of Saudi and Jordanian EFL students towards blended learning at Majmaah University and Al-Balqa Applied University. To assess the agree level of students' attitudes towards blended learning, the researchers used a five-level Likert Scale, with 1 being "Strongly Agree"; 2 being "Agree"; 3 being "Neutral"; 4 being "Disagree"; and 5 being "Strongly Disagree". Choosing 1 means that the student strongly agrees with the blended learning strategy; 2 means that the student agrees with the blended learning strategy; 3 means that a student is not sure of his attitude towards blended learning; 4 means that the student disagrees with the strategy of blended learning; and 5 means that the student strongly disagrees with blended learning.

The statements in the questionnaire were designed carefully so that they correctly identify the students' attitudes towards the role of blended learning in learning English, address the students' attitudes toward blended learning content and process, and investigate the challenges of using blended learning that are faced by students. All of the items were written in positive form, except one.

The questionnaire was validated by six experts who specialize in TEFL, measurement, and curricula. Based on their comments, the researchers added some items and excluded others. When the researchers used Cronbach's alpha, the value of the questionnaire ($n=24$) was 0.942, which means good consistency.

C. Data Collection and Analysis Method

To collect data, the researchers used a questionnaire method. Two hundred questionnaires were filled out by the participants who were enrolled in blended learning courses. The results of the questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program.

D. Procedures of the Study

The researchers adopted the following procedures to achieve the study:

1. *Study Population and Its Sample*: The researchers used a population of 200 English as a Foreign Language and English as a Second Language students in the second semester of the 2023-2024 academic year in the English Departments of Majmaah University, Saudi Arabia, and Al-Balqa Applied University, Jordan.
2. *The Literature Review and Related Studies*: The researchers used theoretical and related studies about blended learning to write the first and second sections of the study and design the instrument of the study.
3. *Preparation of the Study Instrument*: The researchers designed the scale of the study and established its validity and reliability.
4. *Application of the Study*: The researchers distributed the questionnaires to the sample of the study and then gathered them once they were completed.
5. *Data Analysis*: After filling out the students' responses, the researchers used SPSS, standard deviations, and mean scores to obtain the results.
6. *The Result and Discussion*: To answer the main question of the study, the researchers organized the findings of the study and discussed them.
7. *Conclusion and Recommendations*: At the end of the study, the researchers produced a summarized conclusion and suggested some important implications.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the findings of the scale, it was corrected by using the category below to judge the estimation of the items. The researchers adopted this method after showing it to a group of judges and experts. The highest mean scores denote that the students had high positive attitudes towards blended learning strategies.

TABLE 1
QUESTIONNAIRE CORRECTING METHOD

Estimation	Means
Strong	3.67 - 5
Medium	2.34 - 3.66
Weak	1 - 2.33

As shown in Table 2, to answer the main question of the study, frequencies, means scores, and standard deviations were found. Next, the researchers ordered the ranks of the items chronologically from highest to lowest, and the rates were found based on the method used above in Table 1. Table 2 also shows the findings about EFL students' attitudes towards the blended learning strategy in Saudi Arabian and Jordanian EFL classrooms, as follows:

TABLE 2
RESULTS OF STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

No	Items	Mean	Std.	Rate	rank
20	In blended learning, I learn English effectively because I use a variety of materials (videos, audio, discussion, mobile, tablets, social networks, and different computer programs).	4.84	.535	High	1
14	I prefer learning English via blended learning because it uses the digital exam form.	4.76	.682	High	2
10	In blended learning, I enjoy English learning because it reduces anxiety.	4.73	.456	High	3
11	I like blended learning because I can gain experience from the instructor and by working in groups.	4.67	.620	High	4
16	Blended learning helped me develop my ability to use technology.	4.61	.722	High	5
7	Blended learning helped me learn English more freely and with more flexibility.	4.56	.590	High	6
17	Blended learning makes classroom activities more relevant and real because it offers simulations.	4.50	.687	High	7
1	Blended learning improves students' written language skills.	4.49	.730	High	8
2	Blended learning improves students' spoken language.	4.48	.729	High	9
4	Blended learning helped me learn a large amount of English vocabulary.	4.43	.726	High	10
23	When it comes to blended learning, I need to be trained and professional.	4.43	.787	High	10
13	I like blended learning because it provides me with different interactions (teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction).	4.41	.833	High	11
3	Blended learning improves my pronunciation.	4.39	.584	High	13
9	Blended learning enhances students' desire to learn in class.	4.39	.763	High	12
21	In blended learning, I sometimes face problems like low-speed internet.	4.38	.806	High	14
12	Blended learning helped me discuss lessons inside the classroom and give me feedback.	4.37	.674	High	15
8	Blended learning corresponds to my needs.	4.36	.751	High	16
22	In blended learning, I feel socially isolated.	4.35	.843	High	17
19	The instructor provides feedback on time when I do the assignments.	4.34	.846	High	18
5	Blended learning encourages students to learn independently.	4.33	.744	High	19
18	I like combining online and face-to-face models in English language learning.	4.31	.865	High	20
15	Blended learning helped me facilitate learning difficulties by using supplementary materials, links, and homework.	4.27	.694	High	21
6	Blended learning helped me manage my roles as a student, my place for studying, and the time of the learning process.	4.22	.881	High	22
24	I don't have internet access at home.	2.86	.418	Moderate	23
Total		4.39	.470	High	

Based on the data above in Table 2, the total mean scores of students' responses towards blended learning were at a high level (4.39), which means a high level of positive attitudes. All items of the questionnaire recorded high values except Item 24. This means that, in general, students' responses to blended learning strategies are highly positive. The result of the study agrees with previous studies conducted in the Middle Eastern region, such as Adas and Shmais (2011), Dweikat and Amer (2016), Aladwan et al. (2018), and Aburayash (2021), who found that students' attitudes towards blended learning strategies were positive overall.

However, the questionnaire revealed a problem that the students faced regarding their internet availability at home. It can be observed from the main score of Item 24 that 57.2% of the sample do not have internet access at home. This result agrees with Ali (2021), who found that some students will face difficulties when they use blended learning.

Based on the results of the scale used in the study, students have positive attitudes towards blended learning strategies for several reasons. First, it combines both online and face-to-face methods of learning English. As a result, it offers more learning opportunities, and it uses a wider variety of materials and interactions. Second, they can learn English with more flexibility, more independently, and more freely. Third, blended learning enhances the students' desire to learn in class because it decreases anxiety and corresponds to their needs. Fourth, most students think that blended learning strategies provide more time for self-study and a more suitable place for learning. Fifth, most students think that they can learn from the experiences of their instructors. Sixth, they prefer learning English via blended learning because it uses the digital exam form and gives them feedback in their classrooms. Finally, it helps them increase their computer literacy. For the above advantages, the blended learning strategy improved the learning of the students in EFL and ESL classrooms.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the study was to explore the attitudes of EFL and ESL students towards using blended learning strategies in Saudi and Jordanian university EFL classrooms. The result of the study indicated that EFL students' attitudes towards

blended learning strategies in Saudi and Jordanian EFL classrooms are highly positive because of the benefits of blended learning strategies.

Depending on the previous findings, some recommendations can be suggested as follows:

1. The decision-makers in Middle Eastern universities should encourage the use of blended learning strategies because they help meet the students' needs.
2. The government must provide more services to the students and assist them in overcoming the obstacles they face when implementing blended learning strategies.
3. The researchers suggest that more research should be carried out in different universities and fields.
4. The researchers encourage further research to explore the attitudes of both instructors and teachers towards blended learning in schools and universities.
5. The study recommends further research to study the obstacles that students face when using blended learning strategies and find solutions for overcoming them.

APPENDIX A QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ADDRESSING EFL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS BLENDED LEARNING STRATEGIES USED AT MAJMAAH UNIVERSITY AND AL-BALQA APPLIED UNIVERSITY.

This questionnaire aims at addressing EFL students' attitudes towards the blended learning strategies used at Majmaah University, Saudi Arabia, and Al-Balqa Applied University, Jordan. The researchers are grateful to you for your participation, and they assure you of the confidentiality of your responses.

Please fill in the following background information:

Name (Optional) _____
 Name of College or University _____
 Year of Study _____

The questionnaire measures students' attitudes towards blended learning in the EFL classroom in the English Departments of Majmaah University and Al-Balqa Applied University by responding to the degree of agreement as follows:

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

No	Item	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
1.	Blended learning improves students' written language skills.					
2.	Blended learning improves students' spoken language.					
3.	Blended learning improves my pronunciation.					
4.	Blended learning helped me learn a large amount of English vocabulary.					
5.	Blended learning encourages students to learn independently.					
6.	Blended learning helped me manage my roles as a student, my place for studying, and the time of the learning process.					
7.	Blended learning helped me learn English more freely and with more flexibility.					
8.	Blended learning corresponds to my needs.					
9.	Blended learning enhances students' desire to learn in class.					
10.	In blended learning, I enjoy English learning because it reduces anxiety.					
11.	I like blended learning because I can gain experience from the instructor and by working in groups.					
12.	Blended learning helped me discuss lessons inside the classroom and give me feedback.					
13.	I like blended learning because it provides me with different interactions (teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction).					

14.	I prefer learning English via blended learning because it uses the digital exam form.					
15.	Blended learning helped me facilitate learning difficulties by using supplementary materials, links, and homework.					
16.	Blended learning helped me develop my ability to use technology.					
17.	Blended learning makes classroom activities more relevant and real because it offers simulations.					
18.	I like combining online and face-to-face models in English language learning.					
19.	The instructor provides feedback on time when I do the assignments.					
20.	In blended learning, I learn English effectively because I use a variety of materials (videos, audio, discussion, mobile, tablets, social networks, and different computer programs).					
21.	Blended learning improves students' written language skills.					
22.	Blended learning improves students' spoken language.					
23.	Blended learning improves my pronunciation.					
24.	Blended learning helped me learn a large amount of English vocabulary.					

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Abdullah Nijr Alotaibi is an Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics in the Department of English at the College of Education at Majmaah University in Al-Majmaah, Saudi Arabia. His research interests are second language learning, e-learning, L2 phonetics and phonology, and developmental speech perception. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1597-9480>

Mohammad Akram Alzu'bi is a professor at Al-Balqa Applied University in Jordan and got his PhD in Applied Linguistics, TEFL, and curricula. His main research interests lie in the four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), grammar and vocabulary strategies, second language acquisition and learning, translation, CALL, TEFL, and TESL. He is also an expert in analyzing and designing curricula for primary and secondary schools. He has published several studies and attended several conferences. Finally, he is recognized as one of the best researchers at Al-Balqa Applied University and is an active member of many thesis and dissertation discussion committees. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5566-5446>