

EFL Instructors' and Students' Perceptions and Satisfaction of Using Blended Learning Approach: A Case Study of Arab Open University, Saudi Branch, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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Abstract:

Blended learning approach in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) has become a matter of substantial interest to language instructors all over the world. Blended learning supplements traditional face-to-face teaching and learning setting with different types of technology-based instruction. Enclosed by the constructivism and social constructivism theories, this case study, directed to investigate the EFL instructors' and undergraduate students' perceptions and satisfaction of employing (BL) approach at Arab Open University (AOU), Saudi Branch. The study designed to explore the efficiency of the Moodle features as a learning management system (LMS). Besides that, this study examined the aspects that effect both instructors' and students' perceptions while implementing (BL). The study implemented the analytical descriptive methods such as, Percentages, Means (M), Standard Deviations and Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). For data collection, questionnaires and interviews were utilized. The sample which was randomly chosen consisted of (90) students and (10) instructors at Arab Open University, Saudi Branch. For qualitative data, interviews were conducted with (4) EFL instructors at AOU. Data were analyzed by using The findings reveal positive perception of EFL students (56%) whereas (60%) of them show considerable satisfaction of using BL Approach. On the other hand, (87%) of EFL instructors at AOU, reveal positive perceptions of using BL approach. It is also found that (79%) of the instructors and (60.9%) of the students appreciate Moodle as a learning management System (LMS). The most considerable factors and challenges at AOU, reported by (81%) of the instructors and (63%) of the students, are technical support and training. Besides, (80%) of the instructors and (56.9%) of the students indicate the effect of the time constraints. The study recommends that EFL instructors, decision makers and EFL curriculum designers should take steps to implement this approach. The study suggests many topics to be researched in the future. Most important topics include: EFL teachers' training procedures and programs for EFL, ESL for teaching with (BL).

Keywords: Blended learning – E-learning – Moodle- LMS – Web-based learning

INTRODUCTION

Blended learning for English Language Teaching (ELT) is considered one of the modern trends based upon employing information technology (IT) in designing new learning situations which increase active learning and learner-centered strategies. Blended learning combines the advantages of face-to-face and online instructions to satisfy individual differences (Bersin and Associate, 2003:88). Despite the global push for (BL) in ELT it is still a new concept in Sudan and Arab World higher education. In addition, there is a lack of research investigating the effectiveness of online collaborative learning environments that examine social interaction between students and

instructors in EFL contexts. Therefore, the researcher in this thesis, will investigate English as Foreign Language (EFL) instructors' and learners' perception and satisfaction of using Blended Learning (BL) for teaching a general English program at the Arab Open University (AOU) –Saudi Branches in Jeddah and Riyadh and Sudan University for Science and Technology-Faculty of Education. It is studied as a new learning pedagogy. Arab Open University (AOU) is a pan-Arab non-profit institution established as an open easy accessible university providing higher education; targeting the different traits and needs of students such as the underprivileged irrespective of gender, ethnicity, disability, and socioeconomic status. The AOU has twelve different branches and centers distributed in eight different Arab countries. With near ten years of practicing blended learning, the AOU has earned much experience in e-learning, from the development of a learning management system (LMS) to the development of e-courses (or blended courses). All branches use Moodle as an LMS and adopt a 25% face-to-face instruction and 75% online instruction. (AOU- website, 2014). To the knowledge of the researcher, no studies were conducted in the AOU –Saudi Branch to measure EFL learners' perceptions, attitudes, or satisfaction towards the blended learning approach in particular. Recent developments of acquiring English as a foreign language (EFL) through Blended Learning (BL) have led to the essential questions of why blend, what to blend, and how to blend. Regarding BL in certain EFL contexts, there is a persistent need to considerate issues such as why blends Web-based interaction into F2F classroom-based learning, what is added to the experience that could not be achieved in the traditional classroom, and how to blend Web-based collaboration into F2F learning effectively.

Statement of the Problem

The researchers' own experience plays a fundamental role in choosing this topic of research. As an FEL lecturer at Jazan University, the researcher, implemented the BL approach at Jazan University – Community College for Female, during the academic year 2010/ 2011(first semester). Following the implementation of (BL), the researcher carried out a study for measuring the EFL students' perceptions and satisfaction regarding (BL). The findings reached are that: firstly, students revealed great satisfaction and positive perception with respect to this new learning style. Secondly, it is also found that, the general English course which had been taught to the students does not assign sufficient classroom time to facilitate the effective learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), nor does it expose the students to language real life. Based on these findings, the researcher has found that *Blended Learning (BL)* approach may contribute to the solution of the problems that arise from traditional methods.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed at:

1. measuring both EFL students' and instructors' perceptions of implementing *blended learning*.
2. investigating both EFL students' and instructors' satisfaction of implementing *blended learning*.
3. exploring the students' and instructors' views of using Moodle as a learning management system (LMS) at the OAU - Saudi branch and SUST.

4. Identifying the factors influencing EFL students' and instructors' satisfaction and perceptions of using (BL).
5. Investigating obstacles and challenges that EFL students and instructors encounter when using the (BL) approach

Questions of the Study

1. How do EFL undergraduate at the AOU students perceive *Blended Learning* and to what extent are they satisfied with this new approach?
2. How do EFL instructors at the AOU and SUST perceive blended learning and to what extent they are satisfied with this new approach?
3. What are the students' and instructors' views of using Moodle as a learning management system (LMS) at the OAU -Sudan branch
4. What are the factors influencing both EFL instructors and students at the AOU satisfaction and perceptions of using (BL)?

Hypotheses of the Study

H1: The majority of EFL students display satisfaction for using (BL) in learning EFL courses rather than traditional approaches.

H2: The majority of EFL students display positive perceptions for using (BL) in learning EFL courses rather than traditional approaches.

H3: Students' views on using Moodle as a learning management system (LMS) at the OAU- Saudi branch are positive.

H4: The majority of EFL instructors at AOU and SUST display positive perceptions and for using (BL) in learning EFL courses rather than traditional approaches.

Significance of the Study

The research findings are expected to be beneficial for the EFL instructors and experts who want to apply (BL) and virtual learning environment (VLE) to their teaching and learning activities and who want to incorporate learning management systems (LMSs) in their online Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries universities. As *blended learning* is in its early stage in Saudi Arabia, this study may be a contribution to research field through identifying causes and themes that influence (BL) as a means of delivering English Language curricula in KSA universities. The study is expected to provide great knowledge of (BL) theoretically and practically. A theoretical framework derived from the study, provides guidance for the implementation of (BL) which is hoped to address the major challenges encountered in Higher Education in KSA and the need for integrating web-based instruction with traditional instructions. It is hoped that this study may help provide a vision and potential values for the decision-makers, syllabus designers, EFL instructors and academic administrators throughout Higher Education in KSA.

Limits of the Study

This study is limited to investigate EFL students' and instructors' perceptions and satisfaction of using (BL) approach. The sample was chosen from AOU- Saudi branch. The participants were selected from the male branch only, this was due to Saudi segregation culture in Saudi Higher Education institutions. Therefore, female students, might have responded quite differently. This might affect the generalizability of the results. A further limitation of the study is that, the sample used, which is from the

first implementation of blended learning in Saudi universities, limits the results of the perceptions to a particular group of students and lecturers. Another limitation regarding the sample, was the small group of interviewees at AOU only.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this paper study is to investigate EFL students' and teachers perceptions and satisfaction of using a blended learning environment that addresses the values, priorities and needs of students in an intensive English course at Arab Open University (AOU), Saudi Branches in Jeddah and Riyadh. A review of previous research and theories relevant to this study can provide a foundation for understanding how using this approach may affect the pedagogical qualities and learner outcomes of a blended language learning environment.

Definition of the term *Blended Learning (BL)*

Blended learning has been described as the “third generation” of distance learning (Phipps and Merisotis, 1999: 45; Francescato, Porcelli, Mebane, Cuddetta, Klobas, and Renzi, 2006: 21-22-2). The first generation was one-way correspondence education, including mail, radio and television. The second generation used a single medium, such as computer-based, online or web-based learning (So and Brush, 2008: 66).

Blended learning, in its basic sense, refers to a design which combines self-paced learning generally through web based applications and face to face classroom teaching (Alonso, Lopez, Manrique, and Vioes, 2005: 70; Oliver and Trigwell, 2005:45). Although there is a huge body of literature on face-to-face instruction and an extensive body of research about learning in fully online environments, blended designs in higher education is still a developing area (Stacey and Gerbic, 2008:23-24). In the emergent body of research, the efficacy of blended courses has been studied across various disciplines ranging from computer science (Govender, 2010: 12-13), physics (Martin-Blas and Serrano-Fernandez, 2009: 55-56), communication science (Campbell, 2010: 77) to biology (Riffell and Sibley, 2005: 80). However, with regard to the field of English language teaching, there is still a relatively limited amount of research exploring blended environments (Daniels, 2008:34; Grgurovic, 2011: 24; Jia, Y. Chen, Ding and Ruan, 2012: 12; Klemsen and Seong, 2013: 23; Snodin, 2013: 57; Wu and Liu, 2013: 22).

The significant presence of web-based instruction over the last few years has led to the emergence of the term *Blended Learning*, which is also called *hybrid learning* or *mixed mode learning*. *Blended learning* has been identified by the American Society for Training and Development as one of the top ten trends to emerge in the knowledge delivery industry (Rooney, 2003:98). Significantly, there is no existing universally agreed definition of *blended learning* (Sharpe *et al.* 2006: 44) while the most common definition refers to an integration of online learning and traditional face-to-face learning. Graham, (2006: 13) indicates that online (web-based) learning and face-to-face learning have remained largely separate in the past due to the differences in their methods and audience needs. He points out that 100% online learning, or distance learning, refers to an integration of online learning and traditional face-to-face learning.

The pictorial representation of Education struggling to keep up with an impersonal and disinterested Technology draws parallels from the perspectives of

teachers’ experiences at all levels. Some of the questions which this raises are: Is pedagogy always struggling to keep up with technology? Should pedagogy, care about keeping up with technology? Is technology *insouciant* of pedagogy’s concerns? The perception that technology needs to be kept under control by pedagogy was perpetuated by the choice of a title for the Department for Education and Science paper, ‘Harnessing technology’, which demonstrated how technology might be used fruitfully in the school classroom, although its primary aim was more conciliatory:

Additionally, the definition of *blended learning* varies considerably. For example, corporate *blended learning* could be a mixture of face-to-face, instructor led and self-paced online learning (Graham, 2005: 78-90). Some educational researchers believe blended learning should include the use of mixed media as a definition (Osguthorpe and Graham, 2003: 60-71). Another generic example is, a course which uses a website or a course management system plus a classroom experience would be blended learning. However, a significant group of educational scholars seem to prefer defining blended as simply the combination of online (mostly asynchronous) learning with face-to-face learning environments.

Whereas, (Krause, 2007: 50-80) states that Blended learning is realized in teaching and learning environments where there is an effective integration of different modes of delivery, models of teaching and styles of learning as a result of adopting a strategic and systematic approach to the use of technology combined with the best features of face to face interaction.

Another research that is from an in-depth study by Oliver and Trigwell, (2005:99) identified a number of varied definitions of *blended learning*. They categorize them into the following seven areas: 1. Mixing e-learning with traditional learning, 2. Mixing e-learning with face-to-face instructions, 3. Mixing media, 4. Mixing contexts, 5. Mixing theories of learning, 6. Mixed learning objectives and 7. Mixed pedagogies.

To sum up, *blended learning* is a modern strategy that blends the advantages of both face-to-face method and the e-learning. The researcher will adopt this definition in this study to investigate EFL learners’ and instructors’ views at AOU Saudi Branches of using this new learning style. BL approach shifts from teaching to learning, and from teacher-centered class to student-centered class. This leads to developing the teaching learning process quality, improving its outputs, opening new potentials for self-learning as well as long life, learning, and raising students’ achievement level in English. In the following sections, the various features and possibilities of BL will be treated fully.

Blended Learning in Second Language Acquisition

When one examines the issue of BL implementation for language learning one soon notices the interesting fact that using computers for language learning is nothing new at all. In fact, the field of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has been extensively researched since its inception in the 1960s. Since then, the field has expanded and matured while the technology used for language learning has developed from large text-based main frame computers to personal computers and handheld devices with internet connections (Hubbard, 2009: 50-52). The 2009 Modern Language Journal Focus Issue on the “most salient themes and controversies” (Lafford, 2009: 73) in CALL today provides an overview of the breadth and depth of the field. In this issue various authors discuss topics and issues such as CALL research (Chapelle, 2009:11; Egbert et al, 2009: 16), CALL technology use and authorship (Levy, 2009:65; Otto and

Pusack, 2009:73), and the need for teacher training (Blake,2009:59; Cummins and Davesne, 2009:2-5; Garrett, 2009:100; Levy, 2009:74; Otto and Pusack, 2009:15). These researchers conclude that CALL is very much alive and well as an independent field of research and together they provide a good overview of the history and development of CALL while also suggesting numerous avenues for future research.

Blended Learning Changes Teaching Paradigm

There are multiple roles in blended or online teaching (Yuksel, 2009: 726-729), and the inadequate clarification of these roles in blended courses confuses both teachers and students (Ocak, 2011:89-99). Even though students must conscientiously self-regulate their own learning, instructor monitoring of online work proves essential to the effective and seamless delivery of educational resources in support of F2F teaching and the enhancement of online participation by learners (Knight, 2010:67-76; Kupczynski, Stallone Brown, and Davis, 2008:6-11). The external guidance on the part of instructors who actively engage with their students in the online portion of a course shows particular importance if students are to succeed (Artino, 2008:37-45). The way that instructors choose to conduct this guidance can take many forms (tutoring, coaching, managing, facilitating). In each case, the teachers' own particular role will often be a reflection of their F2F demeanor, interaction, and connectivity with students as well as their particular technical and technological skills and competencies (Senior, 2010: 137-147; Vlachopoulos and Cowan, 2010:213-224; Yuksel, 2009:726-729). The findings of this study show this tendency to hold true for LEP teachers as well.

In conclusion, This part also outlined the conceptual framework for this study, which is based on a set of pedagogical theories.. Next, the literature on the use of BL environments for foreign language instruction is reviewed. Then, several studies on the use of blended language learning environments were discussed and a number of different variables that may affect the effectiveness of these environments are identified. Some of these variables center on the students and include students' perception, attitude, experience, and computer literacy skills. Other variables center on the teacher and include teacher attitude, pedagogical and technical training, and support.

3. METHODOLOGY

Sampling

The participants of this study were (90) EFL undergraduate students enrolled in EFL courses and at AOU- Saudi branches in Jeddah and Riyadh. All students participated in this study were male due to the gender-segregation in Saudi Arabia institutions. In addition, (10) instructors, who teach EFL courses for preparatory year undergraduate students also participated. Moreover, the sample included (4) EFL instructors at AOU as well as Sudan University for Science and Technology –Faculty of Education. The first sample of this study was selected randomly from the target population, who were the undergraduate learners at AOU- Saudi branch in Jeddah and Riyadh enrolled in the first semester of the academic year 1434/1435 / (2014- 2015). The choice of the sample for this study was convenient and without obstacles. All students and instructors at AOU were engaged in EFL courses using (BL) approach.

Data Collection

The data for this study were collected in two phases: the initial part required bureaucratic negotiations to access the case study field and lasted from early August 2021 to early July 2022. This included discussing the plan and the design of the research with the heads of the English Department at Hantoob Faculty of Education- Gazeera University. The second phase of data collection ran from July 2014 to August 2015. During this phase questionnaires were distributed and interviews were conducted.

Tools of Data Collection

Data collection is a process of gathering information from research participants. In order to carry out this descriptive study, the researcher employed three tools of data collection:

- (1) EFL Students' Questionnaires
- (2) EFL Instructors' Questionnaires
- (3) EFL Instructors' Interviews at AOU

Questionnaire Construction

Students' questionnaire for this study sought learners' and instructors' perception and satisfaction of using (BL) approach for teaching and learning EFL courses. To collect data, which responded to the research questions, the students' and instructors' questionnaires were adapted from the original Web-Based Learning Environment Instruction (WEBLEI) which sought to elicit students' experiences of the (BL) environments on a variety of parameters and aspects. WEBLEI questionnaire is discussed in details in the following section.

Web-Based Learning Environment Instruction (WEBLEI)

The original WEBLEI questionnaire was created by Chang and Fisher (1999: 2-5) based on Tobin's framework (1998:12) for investigating online learning environments in university settings. More specifically, WEBLEI aims at capturing "students' perception of web-based learning environment"(Chang and fisher, 2003, p.9). Chang and fisher subsequently had modified the original questionnaire from 1999. This new version will be used in this study. There are four scales of WEBLEI model. Chang and fisher, (2003) explain that scale I: "satisfaction" is a necessary prerequisite for studying online. Scale II: " Interaction" covers students' interaction with one another for the purpose achieving the stated learning outcomes. Scale III: "Response" students' perception of the learning environment is elicited with the a focus on how they feel about using it and whether they believe they have accomplished any learning objectives.

Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to collect data from both EFL male students regarding their perception and satisfaction of using (BL) approach at AOU- Saudi Branches at Jeddah and Riyadh. The questionnaire used a three-point Likert scale with " Agree", " Disagree" " Not Sure" choices. The instrument contained four sections:; The first section concerned with the students' demographic information. The information obtained from these data allowed the researcher to contextualize the field of the research and to establish different relationships and differences towards the personal and professional traits of the instructors and students. Whereas, the Second section

concerned with students' technology knowledge. The third part, which consisted of (6) items concerns with Students' satisfaction of using *Blended learning*. The fourth section deals with Students' perceptions of using *blended learning* approach. The fifth section, which consists of (5) items, deals with the students' perceptions of the implementation of BL by using the Moodle as LMS. The sixth section, which consists of (5) items, concerns with students' perceptions on the Moodle features. The last section consists of four open-ended questions.

Instructors' Questionnaire

The questionnaires was designed for both male and female EFL instructors at AOU. It was administered to (10) instructors at AOU- Saudi Branches at Jeddah and Riyadh. The questionnaires used a three-point Likert scale with “ Agree”, “ Disagree” “ Not Sure” choices. The questionnaires consisted of five sections: The first section was to elicit instructors' demographic information. The second section concern with instructors' technology knowledge. The third section consisted of (4) items concern with instructors' satisfaction of using Blended learning. The fourth section deals with instructors' perceptions of the implementation of BL by using the Moodle as an LMS. This part consists of (4) items. The last section consisted of four open-ended questions.

Interview Design and Content

In this study, individual interviews, were an appropriate means to gather data from EFL instructors. The qualitative data selected for this study was semi-instructed interviews which were undertaken to elicit EFL instructors' perceptions and satisfaction in using (BL). These were, then, compared with the EFL students' views. In these interviews, the researcher posed open-ended questions to the participants that corresponded to the data required to answer the research questions. The open-ended questions broadly followed by sub-questions. The interview questions included:

- 1) Teachers' perceptions of using *blended learning*
- 2) Teachers' satisfaction of using (BL).
- 3) The benefits of the blended learning on teaching and learning EFL courses
- 4) The effectiveness of the Moodle as an LMS.
- 5) Challenges and obstacles encountered both EFL teachers' and students while using (BL).

Tools of Data Analysis

In research the data analysis is considered the most meaningful in which analytical procedure converts the raw data into meaningful information to answer the research questions. As this study involve quantitative and qualitative data , the analytical procedure will be selected to be consistent with the nature of this study. Descriptive statistics such as, frequency, percentage (%), means (M) and standard deviation (SD) were used in analyzing the quantitative data. The researcher adopted Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel as software analytical programs.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Several statistics were used in this study, in order to test the hypotheses and answer the questions developed by the researcher, such as; Descriptive statistic (to describe the characteristics of the sample), Pearson correlation (to find the relationship between each statement and the total score of each Axis the belong to, i.e. to find the internal consistency) , Cronbach's Alpha coefficients to test the reliability of the study tool, the

descriptive statistics (weighted means, standard deviations and aggregated frequencies) to study the perceptions and satisfaction of the respondents towards each statement and each Axis, and One –Way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to find the differences between some demographic Axis, and One –Way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to find the differences between some demographic data and Axes.

Students’ Nationalities

Table (1): Frequency Distribution of the Respondents According to Nationality

Nationality	Frequency	Percent
Sudanese	8	3.3%
Egyptian	10	11.1%
Saudi	10	10.0%
Yemeni	14	15.6%
Palestinian	13	14.4%
Total	90	100.0%

Table (1) above shows the nationality frequency of the respondents. The majority of the participants, 15.6% are from Yemen. Students from Palestine are 14.4% Students from Egypt are 11.1%. Students from Jordan are 7.8%. From Sudan, Indonesia and Pakistan are 4.4%.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of the Respondents According to Major, access to Network, Devices students use

English Proficiency	Frequency	Percent
Major		
Business Administration	8	8.9%
IT	7	7.7%
English	75	83.3%
Total	90	100.0%
Access to Network		
Everyday	85	94.4%
A few times a week	3	3.3%
Occasionally	2	2.2%
Total	90	100.0%
Devices Students Use		
Mobile phone +Laptop	40	44.4%
Mobile phone + iPod + Laptop	29	32.2%
Mobile phone + iPod + Laptop + Digital camera	7	7.8%
Total	90	100.0%

1. Students' proficiency

As can be seen in table (2) above, (43.3%) of the respondents are good at English, (40.0%) are very good, (10.0%) are advance in English, and only (6.7%) of the students are weak in English

2. Students' Majors

The table above, shows that the majority of the respondents (83.3%) are studying English language, while (7.7%) of the students studying Information Technology and (8.9%) studying Business Administration.

3. Students' Access to the Network

As shown in the table above show that the majority of the respondents (94.4%) stated that they have access to network and computer every day, (3.3%) of the students have the access a few times a week, and (2.2%) of the students do have access to network computer occasionally.

4. Students' Use of Devices

The table above shows that a considerable percentage of the respondents (44.4%) stated that they own and use a mobile phone and laptop, (32.2%) of the students own mobile phone, iPad and laptop. (15.5%) own and use a mobile phone and iPad. The rest of the respondents (7.8%) own and use more than on the device that is: Mobile phone, iPod, Laptop, and Digital camera.

Table (3): Students' Satisfaction of Using Blended learning

Statements	Agree		Not Sure		Disagree		Mean	Std.	Acceptance level	Order
	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%				
1/I'm satisfied with blended learning system	55	61.1	24	26.7	11	12.2	2.49	0.707	Agree	1
2/I have experienced a new learning environment through BL	56	62.3	21	23.3	13	14.4	2.48	0.738	Agree	2
3/I feel that this course served my needs well	52	57.8	27	30.0	11	12.2	2.46	0.706	Agree	3
4/I believe I would learn more in less time with BL	54	60.0	19	21.1	17	18.9	2.41	0.792	Agree	4
5/Overall, the BL method met my learning expectations and needs	38	42.2	32	35.6	20	22.2	2.20	0.782	Not sure	6
Total							2.39		Agree	

As shown in table (3) above, in accordance with the mean of each statement, the statements have been ordered in descending order from the highest mean to the lowest mean, so, it was found that, the statement (*I'm satisfied with blended learning system for delivering my English courses.*) gathered the highest mean (2.49) and level of response (Agree), then the statement (*I have experienced a new learning environment through Blended Learning*) came in the second order with mean (2.48) and level of

response (Agree), then the statement (*I feel that this English courses served my needs well*) came in the third order with mean (2.46) and level of response (Agree), then in the fourth order the statement (*I believe I would learn more EFL courses in less time with blended learning*) with mean (2.41) and level of response (Agree), then the statement (*Blended learning enables me to take more EFL courses than the traditional learning methodology in a year*) came fifthly with mean (2.32) and level of response (Agree), while the statement (*Overall, the blended learning method met my learning expectations and needs in EFL contexts*) came lastly in the sixth order with the lowest mean (2.20) and level of response (Not sure).

Table (4): Students' Perception of Using Blended learning

Statements	Agree		Not Sure		Disagree		Mean	Std.	Acceptance level	Order
	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%				
1/Blended learning enhances my confidence to use the Internet communication tools	58	64.4	17	18.9	15	16.7	2.48	0.768	Agree	1
2/Blended learning allows me to engage in the learning activities	54	60.0	21	23.3	15	16.7	2.43	0.765	Agree	2
3/Blended learning facilitates my revision of previously learned material	51	56.7	26	28.9	13	14.4	2.42	0.734	Agree	3
4/Blended learning improves my learning achievement in this course	46	51.1	27	30.0	17	18.9	2.32	0.776	Agree	4
Total							2.37		Agree	

Table (4) above, indicates the frequency of each statement of the second axis (*Students' Perception of Using Blended learning*). It has been noticed that, the mean of the whole axis which is (2.37) lay in the range (2.34 – 3) – according to three-level Likert scale, which indicates that the respondents agree to the statements of the second axis – in general. In accordance with the mean of each statement, the statements have been ordered in descending order from the highest mean to the lowest mean, so, it was found that, the statement (*Blended learning enhances my confidence to use the Internet communication tools*) came firstly with the highest mean (2.48) and level of response (Agree), whereas in the second order the statement (*Blended learning allows me to engage in the learning activities*) came with mean (2.43) and level of response (Agree), whereas the statement (*Blended learning facilitates my revision of previously learned material*) came in the third order with mean (2.42) and level of response (Agree), then the statement (*Blended learning improves my learning achievement in this course*) came fourthly with mean (2.32) and level of response (Agree), then the two statements (*Blended learning reduces the cost of education for me (e.g., no need to purchase printed references, books, etc.)* and (*Blended learning enables the instructor to address individual student's needs effectively*) came in the fifth order with mean (2.28) and level of response (Not sure).

Table (5): Students' Perceptions for Implementation of BL by Using the Moodle as LMs

Statements	Agree		Not Sure		Disagree		Mean	Std.	Acceptance level	Order
	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%				
1/The use of Moodle provides me with more options that complemented my learning style	58	64.4	17	18.9	15	16.7	2.48	0.768	Agree	1
2/Moodle encourages me to collaborate and share ideas	54	60.0	21	23.3	15	16.7	2.43	0.765	Agree	2
3/The use of Moodle helps to provide for more timely feedback on my learning	51	56.7	26	28.9	13	14.4	2.42	0.734	Agree	3
4/Blended learning improves my learning achievement in this course	46	51.1	27	30.0	17	18.9	2.32	0.776	Agree	4
Total							2.37		Agree	

As can be seen in Table (5) above, It is found that the majority of the respondents (students) with aggregated sum of agreement (positive opinion) (329) (60.9%) show positive views towards Students' perceptions towards the implementation of BL by using the Moodle as an LMS. *The use of Moodle provides me with more options that complemented my learning style*) came firstly with the highest mean (2.42) and level of response (Agree), then the statement (*Moodle encourages me to collaborate and share ideas*) came in the second order with mean (2.36) and level of response (Agree), then the statement (*The use of Moodle helps to provide for more timely feedback on my learning*) came thirdly with mean (2.32) and level of response (Agree), then the statement (*I believe that using Moodle helps to improve the four English skills writing, reading, listening, speaking*) came in the fourth order with mean (2.28) and level of response (Not sure).

Quantitative Data Analysis Regarding EFL Instructors at AOU

This section displays the analysis of students' responses to three open ended questions to explore their views on. What they think of Blended Learning, obstacles they encounter while they are using *blended learning* approach, the advantages of *Blended Learning* approach and their suggestions and comments. As expected, not all questionnaire respondents commented on these issues. A thematic technique was used for analysis.

Table (6): Instructors' Perception of using Blended learning

Statements	Agree		Not Sure		Disagree		Mean	Std.	Acceptance level	Order
	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%				
1/I have experienced a new learning paradigm through Blended Learning	10	100	0	0.0	0	0.0	3.0	0	Agree	1
2/Blended learning enables me to give more courses than the traditional learning methodology in a year	10	100	0	0.0	0	0.0	3.0	0	Agree	1
3/Overall, the blended learning method met my students' learning expectations	10	100	0	0.0	0	0.0	3.0	0	Agree	1
4/Believe I can teach more in less time with blended learning	9	90	0	0.0	1	10	2.8	0.63		4
Total							2.95		Agree	

The data presented in table (6) above show the frequency distribution of each statement of the first axis (*Instructors' Satisfaction and Perception of using Blended learning*). It is found that, the mean of the whole axis (2.95) lay in the range (2.34 – 3).

According to three-level Likert scale, which indicates that the teachers agree to the statements of the first axis – in general. And also they agree to all statements of the axis, which denote their satisfaction and positive perception of using *blended learning*.

Table (7) : Teachers' perceptions of implementation of BL by using the Moodle as LMS

Statements	Agree		Not Sure		Disagree		Mean	Std.	Acceptance level	Order
	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%				
1/I can assess students' progress in the course by using Moodle	10	100	0	0.0	0	0.0	3.0	0	Agree	1
2I /believe I can teach more in less time with blended learning	10	100	0	0.0	0	0.0	3.0	0	Agree	1
3/The use of Moodle helps to feel more connected with learners	10	100	0	0.0	0	0.0	3.0	0	Agree	1
4/The use of Moodle helps students to feel more challenged in the coursework and activities.	5	50	0	0.0	5	50	2.0	1.05	Not sure	4
Total							2.75		Agree	

Table (7) above, shows the descriptive statistics and the frequency distribution of each statement of the second axis (*Teachers' perceptions towards the implementation of BL by using the Moodle as an LMS*). It is found that the mean of the whole axis (2.75) lay in the range (2.34 – 3) – according to three-level Likert scale, which indicates that the teachers agree to the statements of the second axis – in general. Moreover, instructors agree to almost all the statements of the axis, which denote their satisfaction of using *blended learning*.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Open-Ended Questions

Qualitative data include open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaires and interviews with EFL instructors at AOU and SUST. Through the open-ended questions in the questionnaire, the instructors and students indicated factors that influenced their satisfaction with BL which were discussed in details in the following sections. These factors were categorized as follows:

- 1/Factors Influencing Instructors’ and students’ Satisfaction for Using BL
- 2/Teachers’ Suggestions for improvement of BL at AOU.

Factors Influencing Instructors’ and Students’ Satisfaction at AOU

Table: (8) Percentage of Factors Influencing Instructors’ and Students’ Satisfaction

Factors	Students’ Response% Total =90	Instructors’ Response% Total=10
1/Technical Support and Training	63.3%(N=57)	81% (N=9)
2/ Communication	54.4%(N=49)	72% (N=8)
3/ Time Constraints	56.6%(N=51)	90% (N=10)

Table (8) above illustrates the factors that has great impact on both EFL instructors’ and learners’ satisfaction when using BL. The technology used for online courses often causes problems for students and instructors, either because they are unfamiliar with the tools or because technological glitches make accessing the course or its components difficult or impossible. While some students can overcome these problems, others become very frustrated with the technology, which then affects their class performance, participation, and overall experience.

In this section, both instructors and students reported many challenges and barriers they faced them when using BL at AOU. They were categorized in the following section:

EFL Instructors’ and Students’ at AOU Comments

In this section EFL students at AOU reported a number of comments concerning the challenges that facing them during their learning in the BL environment. These comments as follow:

1/ Lack of immediate feedback, lack of interaction with the instructors, Internet connection is sometimes weak, lack of time for training, need for substantial study and time management skills and Adjustment to synchronous and asynchronous learning activities.

On the other hand, EFL instructors a AOU provide the following comments: 1/ Time for face-to-face interaction is not enough, especially for EFL learners. 2// Students lack English proficiency. 3/ Some students are not serious because of the physical absence of the teacher. 3/ Some students are not serious because of the physical absence of the teacher. 4/ Students are not competent in computer skills 5/Slow Internet connection often hampers the effectiveness of the approach.

Instructors’ Suggestions for improvement of BL at AOU

Instructors at AOU offer the following suggestions for enhancement of BL approach:

1. Students have to improve their level in English language and they have to take training in computer by conducting extensive courses in English and computer skills.
2. Identify the BL course objectives, and compile lists of courses.

This learning system could become better if there are additions classes in every subject to support the students' needs and to improve the access to the internet

Interview Analysis for EFL Instructors at AOU

Table (9) Demographic Information of the AOU Interviewees

Interviewee	Qualification	Experience	Position
Dr. Samih	PHD	3 years	Associate Prof
Dr. Waleed	PHD	12 Years	Assistant Prof
Dr. Mahfooth	PHD	5 years	Lecturer
Miss Dalya	MA	3Years	Instructor

Table (9) above, illustrates the demographic information of the interviewees Four EFL instructors at the AOU agreed to participate in this study and answered the interview questions and further agreed to the use of a digital audio recorder. Notes were made during the interviews to identify emerging themes and pursue interesting responses. The records were transcribed as soon as possible after the interviews together with the interview notes. A thematic technique was adopted to analyze and code the data so that five main themes emerged. The data were examined on the basis of keywords and linking phrases. These themes were: 1/ Instructors’ Perceptions of using BL approach. 2/ Factors that influence EFL students’ and instructors’ satisfaction with BL3/EFL Instructors’ satisfaction with BL approach4/ Advice for implementing BL in EFL context.

DISCUSSION

The results from the descriptive statistics revealed that EFL students showed great satisfaction for implementing BL approach. According to the data analysis students showed high satisfaction with (BL) approach (Table 3). The majority of the respondents (55.4%) were in agreement with the first hypothesis that stated “*The majority of EFL students display great satisfaction for using (BL) in learning EFL courses rather than traditional approaches*”. Hence, this hypothesis is verified, This finding supports claims by Garrison and Kanuka (2004:22) that satisfaction with blended learning approaches can largely be attributed to the interaction and communication features of the internet.

The results from the descriptive statistics (Table 4) reveal that more than half of the EFL students (54.6%) reported positive perceptions of implementing *blended learning* for EFL courses. The majority of the Participants (60%) agreed that (BL) enhances their confidence for using the internet tools. Moreover, more than half of the respondents (56.7%) agreed with the advantages of BL as a supplementary instructional resource, enhancement of course delivery, flexibility, cost-effectiveness,

and offering practice in using technology. It is notable that the majority of the students were in agreement with the hypothesis two that stated “*EFL Students' at AOU display positive perceptions for using BL*”. Thus, the second hypothesis was completely accepted and supported by this finding. From the literature, this finding was in agreement with Vaughan (2007:33) and Lin, Q. (2008:42) who found that the majority of students who had experience with blended courses were positive about their learning environment, particularly citing time flexibility. The results from the descriptive statistics (Table 5), exposed that the majority of EFL students (60.9%) showed positive perceptions for the application of the Moodle as LMS at AOU. The majority of the participants found Moodle effective to use .AOU uses Moodle, an open source learning management system (LMS). It is defined as a comprehensive, integrated software that supports the development, delivery, assessment, and administration of courses in traditional face-to-face, blended, or online learning environments. Thus, hypothesis three that states: “*Students' perceptions of using Moodle as a learning management system (LMS) at the OAU- Saudi branch are positive*” was accepted because the majority of the participants were in agreement of using Moodle in the BL environment.

The results from the descriptive statistics (Tables 6) revealed that the majority of EFL Instructors (97.5%) show positive perceptions for the implementation of BL at AOU. The majority of instructors in this study indicated that the use of BL has enhanced teaching, learning, interactions and communications in their EFL courses. Additionally, the interview results of the EFL instructors at (AOU) raised important issues and provided insight about the implementation BL learning approach in a traditional EFL courses. Interviewees perceptions of BL were consistent with instructors' responses to the questionnaire questions.

On the other hand, The four interviewees at AOU (Table 7) reported that BL is a very effective approach for the EFL context. They believe that BL is the method that can enhance students' proficiency in English. These perspectives proved hypothesis (5) that states: “*Instructors at AOU display positive perceptions for using (BL) in learning EFL courses rather than traditional approaches*”. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis was validated. This finding supported the research findings of Bonk et al. (2006), Knight (2010), Shroff and Vogel (2010), and Vaughan (2007) who assert that faculty who delivered blended courses were positive regarding their experiences. Moreover, all interviewees, reported that the use of online motivated AOU students to participate, engage and collaborate. Remarkably, Three interviewees of four (90%) asserted that, BL is an effective new teaching paradigm. Nonetheless, it still needs more orientation and training. It is beneficial for EFL learners and instructors because it utilizes innovative tools and strategies. Moreover, the interviewees expressed great satisfaction with BL. For instance, Dr. Samih, associate professor at AOU reported that, “*To some extent I like the idea, but it is far away from theory to practice*”. This indicate that there still need for more training for both EFL teachers and students. Other interviewees agreed that, BL. Additionally, almost all he interviewees indicated that, the philosophy of the **BL** approach is excellent in creating independent learners and facilitating learning for those busy ones. Furthermore, instructors reported some challenges and barriers that affected their performance in the BL environment which included: 1/ Time for face-to-face interaction is not enough, especially for EFL learners, 2/ Students lack English proficiency. The courses are weak 3/ lack of Internet access in the colleges. 4/Some students are not serious because of the physical absence of the

teacher. 5/ Students are not competent in computer skills. 6/Slow Internet connection often hampers the effectiveness of the approach.

The results of the descriptive statistics (Table 9) revealed that the majority of EFL instructors (87.5%) showed positive perceptions towards the application of the Moodle at AOU. All the interviewees attended a workshop on the benefits and usages of the Moodle. They pointed out that, the workshop highlighted the advantages of using Moodle as a free, open-source software program that not only provides a set of features similar to those of its proprietary competitors, but also it is often easier to use. Therefore, hypothesis six “*Instructors’ Perception on using Moodle as a learning management system (LMS) at the OAU - Saudi branch and SUST are positive*”, is verified. According to the majority of the respondents (87%-100%), Moodle helps teachers implement teaching objectives, finish tasks and motivate EFL learners. It is clear that all variables measuring EFL Instructors’ perceptions for using Moodle were scored highly.

Factors Influencing Instructors’ and students’ Satisfaction for Using BL

There are some significant factors reported by both EFL instructors’ and students’ and influencing their satisfaction and perceptions of using (BL).

1. Technical Support and Training
2. Time Constraints
3. Communication:

Instructors Suggestions for Improving BL at AOU

As indicated by the results of the instructors comments, to enhance BL environment, they mentioned the following:

1/Selecting appropriate technology tools is very important because it gives teachers an opportunity to build students’ conceptual knowledge and connect their learning to problem found in the world. The technology tools such as Moodle and other social media allow students to employ a variety of strategies such as inquiry, problem-solving, creative thinking, visual imagery, critical thinking, and hands-on activity in ways that enable students to conduct inquiries and engage in collaborative activities.

2/ The feedback of students who are among the key stakeholders is absolutely essential to ensure a successful implementation of any teaching-learning methodology.

3/ Support for students and faculty is a key component of BL. Technology training and support should be available for students and faculty.

4/ Tailored *blended learning* provides teachers with a clear path to meet and measure student learning outcomes. Student assessments are built in; however, these assessments can be modified to meet specific programmatic goals. These assessments allow instructors and administrators to have a clear picture of student success that can be used in both accreditation and program review processes.

Both Quantitative and qualitative analysis of this study, were in agreement with the literature, supported the hypotheses and answer the research questions. Both EFL students and instructors at AOU showed greater satisfaction and positive perceptions for using *blended learning approach* in EFL courses than in traditional instruction. Learners represented different generations, different personality types, and different learning styles. BL offers variety in delivery methods, ranging from experiential to instructional and structured to unstructured-provide variety of educational opportunities to promote involvement. In the following chapter, the conclusions, implications, recommendations and suggestions for future research will be presented.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed at investigating EFL instructors’ and students’ satisfaction and perceptions of using BL approach at AOU-Saudi branch and SUST-. Faculty of Education. Other objectives of this study were to explore, the participants’ views on using Moodle as a Learning Management System (LMS) were. Besides, the factors that influence EFL students and instructors satisfaction when using the (BL) approach were discussed. The study utilized two tools for data collection. First, questionnaires were administered for (91) EFL students and (10) instructors at AOU-Saudi branch. Second, for qualitative data, open-ended questions and interviews with (4) instructors at AOU as well as (4) instructors at SUS- Faculty of Education were employed. The gathered data were analyzed and interpreted through descriptive statistics. The statistical analysis of the obtained data, confirm the six hypothesis of the study. Based on the results of the data which were discussed comprehensively in chapter (4), the following findings are attained.

Recommendations

In the light of previous mentioned findings the researcher recommends the following:

1. The present study further suggests that stakeholders, administrators, EFL curriculum designer and decision makers should adopt Blended learning approach as a new teaching paradigm for students of the current generation which described as “digital generation”.
2. It is highly recommended that high education institutions should maintain sufficient teaching materials and IT infrastructure to change from teacher – centered to student-centered role by implementing BL approach. The instructors should have sufficient knowledge in how to develop online content, presentation, and monitoring of activities online.
3. Consideration needs to be given to the challenges of blended EFL courses design and deriving a framework for blended course implementation by using effective platforms
4. It is suggested that, decision makers and educationalists should provide an integral part in the EFL curriculum. Focus should be drawn to use Learning Management Systems (LMSs) E-learning should be taken into account as a mean to develop oral communication and English language skills along with traditional learning.

Suggestions for Future Studies

The line of research following the present study needs to continue and expand upon it in order to achieve a better knowledge of this new paradigm in EFL teaching and learning. BL opens up new scenarios in teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Still a lot of research remains to be done. On the basis of the promising findings presented in this study, here are some suggested topics for future research:

1. This study emphasizes the need for further research to address issues that create resistance and negatively impact on EFL students’ engagement in BL environment.

2. More research can be done to investigate the effectiveness of using different Learning Management Systems (LMSs) such as, Moodle and other social media in EFL contexts.
3. Future studies should attempt to investigate the effect of EFL learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, age, gender, maturity, language proficiency and prior college experience on Blended learning environment.

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