

EFL Learners' Perception about Integrating Blended Learning in ELT

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Abstract

The study highlights English a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' perceptions about integrating Blended Learning (BL) to facilitate them completing their foundation year English courses at a Saudi university. The focus of the study was to investigate "the EFL learners' perception about integrating blended learning in their English Language Teaching (ELT) process". For this purpose, a survey was constructed in three subsections investigating the learners' viewpoints about BL as a platform: a) to improve learners' interaction, b) to increase their interests, and c) to provide autonomous learning. A mixed approach was adopted for the study to be conducted in one of the largest universities in Saudi Arabia. The participants (n=120) taken as sample were studying intensive English courses at four different levels as per the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) during their first year at university. The data was collected by using the designed survey consisting sixteen closed and an open-ended question to investigate the learners' perceptions in depth. The results indicate an overall positive attitude of the learners towards BL integration. ANOVA analysis of the variables shows insignificant effect of the 'level of computer proficiency' and the 'level of learners' language skills' on their perceptions. The results conclude that the learners' perceptions are found in favour of BL. Thus, it is recommended to integrate BL to increase the learners' interest, interaction, and autonomy.

Keywords: blended learning, BL integration, ELT, learners' autonomy

Cite as: Bukhari, S. S. F., & Basaffar, F. M. (2019). EFL Learners' Perception about Integrating Blended Learning in ELT. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on CALL (5)*. 190-205. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/call5.14>

Introduction

An area where technology has had a stronger impact is the area of teaching and learning. Researchers have been trying to find innovative teaching methods that can motivate students, improve their interest in learning, raise their interaction, and boost their learning outcomes. Many recent studies have focused approaches in different ways that lay emphasis on learning through a combination of teaching-learning environments (Francis & Shannon, 2013; Banyen et al., 2016; Hess et al., 2016; Linawati, 2016; Liu, 2016) and the most effective of them is blended learning (BL). Recent investigation has made it obvious that BL is gaining a marked impression in the higher education. It has an impact as the “harbinger of substantial change” at K-12 level (Dziuban et. al., 2018). As Vera (2014) explains:

A purposive dedicated process of acquiring expertise, knowledge and skills through the integration of in-class and extracurricular learning activities of educational process subjects with the auxiliary of mutually complementary traditional, e-learning, distance courses and mobile learning technologies under condition when learning activities' time, place, path and pace are self-controlled by the student (Vera, 2014 p. 209).

Vera (2014) defines the learners' interactive communication through information technology as basic apparatuses that increase the learners' autonomy. BL model is based on combining face-to-face and online teaching. BL was found to offer the learners a better learning environment than that a face-to-face model or an online model (Jeffery et. al., 2014).

Learning becomes an appealing experience when both young and adult learners have a user-friendly environment, a certain level of independence, a collaborative learning experience, interesting material, and challenging tasks (Bukhari, 2015). Learners' learning capacities, differences, and individual Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86) are the most important grounds to know and to reach an individual successfully. According to Bukhari (2016; 2019), the hidden talent can be ignited, and untapped learning potentials can be explored provided that the productive interaction and constructive environment are available for all.

By using an experimental design, Yurdal and Ülkü Eser (2013) investigate the effect of the use of virtual classroom and blended learning on students' achievement and their attitudes compared to the face-to-face method. Results show that the BL method had a statistically significant contribution to the students' achievements and their attitudes towards the course when compared to the face-to-face method. BL was also found to be an effective way to avoid monotony in teaching by providing collaborative learning to enhance student's performance (Saltan, 2017) in an interesting, stimulating, and productive way if well planned pedagogically and socially.

Literature Review

An investigation through a pilot study (Banados, 2006) concludes that the implementation of the BL model proved to be successful after the team strived for four years. The results of the study show a remarkable improvement of the learners' linguistic competence by using an online interactive interface. The researcher investigates the learners' satisfaction via a survey at the end of the pilot study and it showed a high level of satisfaction ratio. The study highlights that only 32% students wanted to have more time to finish.

Several studies have investigated the effect of integrating BL in teaching. Waha and Davis (2014) explore students' ideas on combining online and face-to-face activities in a master's program in library and information science through a quantitative and qualitative study. Twenty-three students' responses to 40 open-ended and closed questions were used to collect data. The information was gathered to know about the effectiveness and frequency of the model. Students responded in favor of the blended learning model, showed interest in the flexibility and convenience of the model.

Kuo et al. (2014) also find a high level of satisfaction among young students when integrating BL especially among students with an extroverted personality. Participants were master students enrolled in a BL course at university level. 22 students volunteered to respond to a survey designed for the study. Findings indicate that the students were satisfied with their BL course. Moreover, students with extroverted personality showed a higher level of satisfaction. They perceived interaction as an important part of their learning experience. Thus, BL was found more engaging than the general method of delivering a course.

In 2017, Wichadee implements a BL model using Edmodo as a tool in language learning. The study aimed at examining the effectiveness of the model in relation to oral proficiency, motivation, and attitude. A quasi-experimental design was employed to collect the data using tests and questionnaires distributed among 84 Intermediate students taking English course. Findings indicated that BL was effective. Students in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group in oral proficiency and were highly motivated. The researcher concluded that the blended learning model implemented in this study proved to be useful for learners for its ability to promote content connectivity and student interaction.

In contrast, different results related to attendance, attitude, and confidence have been revealed through a case study conducted by Saltan's (2017). He investigates the learning experience of students studying pedagogic formation in a blended design. Although Saltan (2017) found BL as highly promising regarding professional development, learners indicated that face-to-face learning was more applicable, authentic, and effective than the online part.

Based on a crucial idea to "bridge the gap" (Bukhari, 2019 p. 127) between learners and teachers, Neumeier (2005) investigates a flexible BL design by combining modes and using parameters' framework. To make BL as a better experience for all, the study focused on designing and implementing 'Jobline LMU'. Neumeier's study concludes that the BL design and the modes with face-to-face phases in combination with computer assisted language learning (CALL) are very important to make BL a useful experience for all.

Sagarra & Zapata (2008) highlight some suggestions to have the benefits of using online workbooks, materials, feedback method etc. to make online learning a 'user-friendly' experience for most learners. They tested 245 Spanish class learners in class and via electronic workbook and distributed a questionnaire to have the participants' perceptions concerning the e-book, the experience of blended modes. The study concludes that the students found CALL as helpful in improving linguistic areas. The study also concludes that 74.2% found the online homework as interesting and 43.4% enjoyed doing it.

Another study used an observation and a survey to conclude that the use of technology in a BL environment intensifies the language learning by “forming deep and reliable skills” (Lyulyaeva & Shapiro, 2018). Learner centered strategies combined with information technology make a blend that proves to be a highly effective tool in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) specially when it comes to teaching EFL learners (Arkhipova et. al. 2017). According to Bonk & Graham (2012), learners perceive BL as an opportunity and conceive it a convenient source where they can be more expressive and independent with the flexibility of time and hours.

Research Problem

In the Arabian Peninsula, ELT has faced many challenges (Bukhari, 2016) specifically because English is a foreign language in the region (Moskovsky & Picard, 2018; Mahboob, & Elyas, 2014; Kachru, 2006). Although, students follow intensive courses taught by highly qualified staff consisting of very structured classes for 18 hours a week, the results are not always satisfactory. Students starting the program with a low level of language skills, show below expected progress during lessons (classes) conducted in face-to-face mode for about four months spent at one level. Depending on the schedule, all learners spend extensive face-to-face sessions per week. Due to the course intensity and long hours of daily scheduled lessons, many students lose interest which results in dropdown of the attendance (Alkaff, 2013). Implementing an interactive course material, running assignments, conducting skill-based learning activities, and launching students centered activities face a lot of challenges either due to fluctuating attendance or lack of energy exhibited by the learners during face-to-face language sessions. Such situations compel EL teachers to make timely adjustments, be vigilant to opt alternatives, and have innovative ideas to ignite the learners' interest to have a successful completion of the English language course (Bukhari, 2019 p. 127).

Considering the drop of learners' interests, loss of teachers' efforts, and increased challenges on both sides, the researcher hypothesized to work out the students' perception on integrating blended learning in ELT. The study aimed at collecting the learners' perspectives which is crucial to scrutinize further, whether the idea motivated the students, excited positivity towards BL as an opportunity to increase their interaction, and sense of being independent learners, which is highly desirable in such a situation.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Considering the effectiveness of the blended learning environment, the aim of the present study is to investigate learners' perception about implementing such a model in their context. The research is an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What are the EFL learners' perception about integrating blended learning in ELT process?
 - a. Do the learners find the integration of BL more interesting?
 - b. Do the learners believe that the integration of BL will increase their interaction?
 - c. Do the learners think that the BL environment will boost their autonomy?

The hypotheses to be tested are:

1. Learners show a positive attitude towards integrating BL in English Language Teaching
2. Learners believe that implementation of BL can increase their interaction
3. Learners believe that BL can help them become more independent

Methodology

This study is a mixed method research mainly focusing on EFL learners' perceptions about Blended Learning in ELT. The aim of the study was to investigate the learners' point of view about the effect of blended learning on learners' motivation, interaction, and learning autonomy. The study was conducted in one of the largest universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Foundation year female students studying an intensive English course at the English Language Institute (ELI), Women Colleges Campus at King Abdulaziz University, were the participants of the study.

Participants: Sample of the Study

The students enrolled for the foundation year course with structured classes for 18 hours a week was the convenient sample of this study. Chosen convenient sample size consisted 120 female learners studying at four different Levels of English (A1, A2, B1, and B2) according to Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) criteria. The data collection phase initially started by taking students' consent to respond to the survey. 120 female students willingly answered the questionnaire. Table 1 shows the distribution and the size of sample of the study comprised of participants from four levels whose identity was kept anonymous. A consent was taken before the data was gathered on a questionnaire designed and distributed among the participants.

Table 1
Sample size of the Study

			Overall GPA	Learners' Computer Literacy
Level 101	N =19 (13.4%)	M	3.32	4.16
		Median	4	4
		Mode	4	5
		Std. D	.82	.96
Level 102	N=6 (4.2%)	M	3.67	3
		Median	4	3
		Mode	4	2 ^a
		Std. D	.52	1.55
Level 103	N=51 (35.9%)	M	3.37	4.25
		Median	4	4
		Mode	4	5
		Std. D	.80	.87
Level 104	N=66 (46.5%)	M	3.65	4.35
		Median	4	5
		Mode	4	5
		Std. D	.59	.85

Note. N=Number, % =Percentage, Std. D= Standard Deviation, M=Mean

Research instrument

The data was collected using the survey designed by the researchers. The researchers prepared an electronic survey consisted of 20 variables, out of which 16 statements directly led to investigating the students' perceptions about teaching English through blended learning environment. The survey was developed in three major sections probing the learners' perceptions in relation to the

BL environment (Al Zumor, et al., 2013). Each of the sections contained a certain number of statements focusing on: a) Blended Learning is Advantageous and Interesting (statements 1-5); b. Blended Learning is Interactive (statements 6-10); and c. Blended Learning as Convenient and Independent Learning (statements 11-15). Statement no. 16 (“I find that the proper way of learning depends on...”) was used to investigate the learners’ overall perception.

Last open-ended question was about “suggestions and/or comments”. It was used to have the learners reveal their suggestions or in-depth opinions about the blended learning environment. The data collected through the open-ended question was to have the qualitative analysis. The researchers first prepared the survey in English then translated it into Arabic to facilitate the learners to understand without any confusion or difficulty. To answer the question about “Learners’ perception about integrating blended learning in their EFL learning process”, the data was analyzed for the 15 main statements divided into three sections covering the learners’ perceptions and ideas of integrating blended learning in the English course. The responses on the questionnaire were collected within a two months’ period.

Data Results and Interpretations

The data gathered through the questionnaire was checked for reliability using SPSS v. 17.0.

Table 2

Instrument Reliability Test

		N	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Cases	Valid	142	.86	19
	Excluded ^a	0		
	Total	142		

Note: N= Number.

Table 2 shows an Alpha value (= .86) that confirms the internal consistency of the scale.

Table 3

Learners' Perception: "Blended Learning is advantageous and interesting"

	1. BL - more interesting.		2. BL - more useful.		3. BL - more convenient and flexible.		4. BL - more effective.		5. Confident when using English online.	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
SA	37	26.1	31	21.8	44	31	45	31.7	46	32.4
A	58	40.8	66	46.5	68	47.9	57	40.1	46	32.4
N	34	23.9	28	19.7	16	11.3	27	19	30	21.1
D	8	5.6	14	9.9	12	8.5	12	8.5	18	12.7
SD	5	3.5	3	2.1	2	1.4	1	0.7	2	1.4
Total	142	100	142	100	142	100	142	100	142	100

Note: SA= Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

The data in Table 3 represents the frequency and percentages of the respondents’ perception to the first section of the survey. The results show that 66.9% (SA37+ A58 = 95) learners overall agreed

to the statement no.1 that blended learning is more interesting. However, 9.1% learners disagreed (D8 + SD5=13) and 23.9% (N=34) stayed neutral to the statement. 97 (68.3%) learners agreed to the statement no.2 “Blended learning is more useful”, while 17 (12%) learners disagreed to it and 28 (19.7%) were neutral. Learners' perception about the blended learning as convenient and flexible learning investigated through the statement no.3 is positive as 78.9% learners (A44 + SA68 =112) agreed to the statement. The table also highlights that 71.8% of the learners (102) responded as ‘agreed’ for the effectiveness of blended learning (the statement no.4), which is more than the percentage of the learners (9.2%) who overall disagreed. About 64.8% learners responded in favor of the statement no.5 that learners feel more confident when they use English online (BL), however 21.1% remained neutral and 14.1% disagreed to that.

Conclusively, it can be inferred that the Blended Learning English course is considered as advantageous and interesting by the learners and they find it more flexible, convenient, and a useful way to improve confidence by practicing online along with the face to face sessions.

Table 4

Learners' Perception: “Blended Learning is Interactive”

	6. BL improves S-S communication		7. BL- benefit S-S communication		8. BL- improves S-T communication		9. Benefits of teachers' feedback.		10. Benefits of peers' comments/ suggestions	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
SA	30	21.1	40	28.2	51	35.9	48	33.8	42	29.6
A	60	42.3	77	54.2	58	40.8	71	50	74	52.1
N	33	23.2	20	14.1	27	19	18	12.7	21	14.8
D	17	12	5	3.5	6	4.2	5	3.5	5	3.5
SD	2	1.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	142	100	142	100	142	100	142	100	142	100

Note: SA= Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

To gauge the learners' response on BL as an interactive learning, the questionnaire comprised variables to explore multidimensions. Statement no. 6 about the learners' ideas on BL (as a supportive platform to improve communication between students) received 63.4% (SA 21.1% + A 42.3%) responses in agreement, 23.2% responses were neutral, and 13.4% (D 12%+ SD 1.4%) disagreed to it. Whereas, the statement no.7 about the learners' perception on BL as a platform to benefit the students from other students' communication received the second highest percentage proving that BL is an Interactive platform of learning. A total 117 learners (SA 40 + A 77) responded in agreement. 5 learners (3.5%) disagreed and 20 (14.1%) remained neutral. 83.8 recorded as the highest percentage (48+71=119) that indicates stronger agreement of learners towards the statement no.9, however, 3.5% disagreed and 12.7% responded neutral. It exhibits a strong inclination towards the perspective that BL benefits the learners with teachers' feedback. Therefore, it can be interpreted that majority of the learners perceive blended learning as providing an effective interactive environment, where they can not only benefit themselves from the peer-feedback and peer-interaction but also get teachers' feedback, teacher/students' suggestions, others' comments to improve, and enjoy multiple patterns of interaction.

Table 5

Learners' Perception on "Blended Learning as Convenient and Independent Learning"

	11. BL- own pace of work		12. BL- effective time management		13. BL - independent task-work environment		14. BL - my own way of learning		15. Interest in joining - BL course at university	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%
SA	47	33.1	40	28.2	49	34.5	42	29.6	31	21.8
A	60	42.3	48	33.8	59	41.5	65	45.8	48	33.8
N	20	14.1	36	25.4	25	17.6	29	20.4	41	28.9
D	12	8.5	15	10.6	9	6.3	5	3.5	13	9.2
SD	3	2.1	3	2.1	0	0	1	0.7	9	6.3
Total	142	100	142	100	142	100	142	100	142	100

Note: SA= Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

Table 5 represents the analysis of the learners' perceptions on the variables investigating BL as convenient and independent learning (statements no. 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15). The response on statement no.11, BL as a platform for learners to work according to their own pace, received 75.4% learners' agreement (SA 33.1% + A 42.3%), 14.1% as neutral, and 10.6% (D 8.5% + SD 2.1%) disagreed to it. The statement no.12 regarding the learners' perceptions on blended learning environment being supportive for effective time management received 88 learners in agreement, 36 responded neutral, and 18 disagreed. About 76% learners (SA 34.5% + A 41.5%) agreed to 'BL as an independent task work environment' (statement no. 13), however, a minimal ratio (9%) 'disagreed' and 17.6% learners responded neutrally. Statement no.14, investigating the learners' perceptions on 'Through Blended Learning, I can learn the way I like to learn' received 75.4% (SA 29.6% + A 45.8%) responses as 'agreed', 20.4% as 'neutral', and 4.2% (D 3.5% + SD 0.7%) disagreed. The learners' interest in BL at university and finding it convenient (statement no. 15). was recorded as 55.6% (SA 21.8% + A 33.8%) in agreement, but 28.9% responded neutral and 13.5% disagreed. To infer, it can be stated that most learners perceive BL as convenient and independent learning where they can work autonomously on their own pace.

Table 6

Learners' Perception about Integration of Online and Face-to-Face Sessions in BL

		Mean			<i>F</i>	%
		Statistic	Std. Error	Std. D		
	Other				7	4.9
	40% face to face and 60% online				15	10.6
Valid	50% face to face and 50% online	3.58	.09	1.06	34	23.9
	60% face to face and 40% online				60	42.3
	100% face to face				26	18.3
	Total				142	100

Note: *f*=frequency, %=Percentage, Std. D=Std. Deviation

To explore more about the amalgamation of the face-to-face sessions integrated with the online sessions in a BL setting, the questionnaire included statement no.16 to investigate the learners' perception on the ratio of the amalgamation of face-to-face combined with the online sessions. Table 6 shows that 60 learners favored the design of the BL having integration of '60% face-to-face and 40% online' sessions. 34 (23.9%) learners chose the '50% face-to-face and 50% online session' 26 (18.3%) learners favored the idea of integrating '100% face-to-face session', and 15 (10.6%) learners chose the '40% face-to-face and 60% online' integration. Largely, it can be deduced that the majority of the learners chose for the combination of the '60% face to face and 40% online' sessions.

Considering the scattered size of the participating learners as the sample of study and the learners' enrolled at four different levels at the ELI English courses, the variable 'Level of English' was tested through ANOVA for its effect on the dependent variables. The number of learners at Level-104 was the highest [66 (46.5%)] among the participants who responded to the questionnaire, in comparison with the learners from Level-101 [19 (13.4%)] Level 102 [6 (4.2%)], and Level-103 [51 (35.9%)] who took part in the study.

It is clear from the Table 7 that there was no significant effect *level* on the learners' perception of blended learning environment and its integration in EFL classes. Thus, it can be interpreted that learners' perceptions are strongly in favour of the integration of BL in the English course at university.

Table 7

ANOVA - Effect of Level of English on Learners' Perception of BL

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	<i>f</i>	Sig.
1. BL- more interesting.	Between Groups	2.64	3	.88	.87	.46
	Within Groups	139.84	138	1.01		
	Total	142.48	141			
2. BL-more useful.	Between Groups	2.25	3	.75	.78	.50
	Within Groups	131.61	138	.95		
	Total	133.86	141			
3. BL-more convenient & flexible.	Between Groups	1.44	3	.48	.53	.66
	Within Groups	124.53	138	.90		
	Total	125.97	141			
4. BL more effective.	Between Groups	1.12	3	.37	.41	.75
	Within Groups	127.30	138	.92		
	Total	128.43	141			
5. Confident when using English online.	Between Groups	3.18	3	1.06	.92	.43
	Within Groups	158.06	138	1.15		
	Total	161.24	141			
6. BL improves S-S communication	Between Groups	1.57	3	.52	.54	.66
	Within Groups	134.41	138	.97		
	Total	135.98	141			
7. Benefit S-S communication	Between Groups	.77	3	.26	.45	.72
	Within Groups	78.53	138	.57		

	Total	79.30	141			
8. Improves communication between S-T.	Between Groups	3.44	3	1.15	1.62	.19
	Within Groups	97.55	138	.71		
	Total	100.99	141			
9. Benefits of Teachers' feedback.	Between Groups	1.21	3	.40	.68	.57
	Within Groups	81.97	138	.59		
	Total	83.18	141			
10. Benefits of peers' comments/suggestions	Between Groups	2.43	3	.81	1.40	.24
	Within Groups	79.71	138	.58		
	Total	82.15	141			
11. BL- Own pace of work	Between Groups	5.25	3	1.75	1.77	.16
	Within Groups	136.50	138	.99		
	Total	141.75	141			
12. BL- Effective time management	Between Groups	3.39	3	1.13	1.03	.38
	Within Groups	150.99	138	1.09		
	Total	154.37	141			
13. BL independent task-work environment	Between Groups	1.56	3	.52	.66	.58
	Within Groups	108.19	138	.78		
	Total	109.75	141			
14. BL - my own way of learning	Between Groups	1.40	3	.47	.65	.58
	Within Groups	98.60	138	.71		
	Total	100.00	141			
15. Interest in joining - BL course at university	Between Groups	3.57	3	1.19	.95	.42
	Within Groups	173.48	138	1.26		
	Total	177.05	141			
16. BL- Integrating F2F and online learning	Between Groups	3.72	3	1.24	1.11	.35
	Within Groups	154.77	138	1.12		
	Total	158.49	141			

Note: df =degrees of freedom, *f*=frequency, Sig.= Significance

Table 8

ANOVA - Effect of Computer Literacy Level on Learners' Perception of BL

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	<i>f</i>	Sig.
1. BL - more interesting.	Between Groups	8.23	4	2.06	2.10	.08
	Within Groups	134.25	137	.98		
	Total	142.48	141			
2. BL - more useful.	Between Groups	4.36	4	1.09	1.15	.33
	Within Groups	129.50	137	.95		
	Total	133.86	141			

3. BL - more convenient and flexible.	Between	6.73	4	1.68	1.93	.11
	Groups					
	Within	119.24	137	.87		
4. BL - more effective.	Groups					
	Total	125.97	141			
	Between	3.93	4	.98	1.08	.37
5. Confident when using English online.	Groups					
	Within	124.49	137	.91		
	Groups					
6. BL - improves S-S communication	Total	128.43	141			
	Between	4.38	4	1.10	.96	.43
	Groups					
7. Benefit S-S communication	Within	156.86	137	1.14		
	Groups					
	Total	161.24	141			
8. Improves communication between S-T.	Between	8.87	4	2.22	2.39	.05
	Groups					
	Within	127.11	137	.93		
9. Benefits of Teachers' feedback.	Groups					
	Total	135.98	141			
	Between	1.63	4	.41	.72	.58
10. Benefits of peers' comments/suggestions	Groups					
	Within	77.66	137	.57		
	Groups					
11. BL-Own pace of work	Total	79.30	141			
	Between	1.10	4	.28	.38	.82
	Groups					
9. Benefits of Teachers' feedback.	Within	99.88	137	.73		
	Groups					
	Total	100.99	141			
10. Benefits of peers' comments/suggestions	Between	.12	4	.03	.05	1.00
	Groups					
	Within	83.07	137	.61		
11. BL-Own pace of work	Groups					
	Total	83.18	141			
	Between	3.79	4	.95	1.66	.16
11. BL-Own pace of work	Groups					
	Within	78.36	137	.57		
	Groups					
11. BL-Own pace of work	Total	82.15	141			
	Between	.61	4	.15	.15	.96
	Groups					
11. BL-Own pace of work	Within	141.14	137	1.03		
	Groups					
	Total	141.75	141			

12. BL- Effective time management	Between	4.64	4	1.16	1.06	.38
	Groups					
	Within	149.74	137	1.09		
13. BL - independent task-work environment	Between	1.60	4	.40	.51	.73
	Groups					
	Within	108.14	137	.79		
14. BL - my own way of learning	Between	3.69	4	.92	1.31	.27
	Groups					
	Within	96.31	137	.70		
15. Interest in joining - BL course at university	Between	1.84	4	.46	.36	.84
	Groups					
	Within	175.21	137	1.28		
16. BL- Integrating F2F and online learning	Between	1.84	4	.46	.40	.81
	Groups					
	Within	156.64	137	1.14		
	Total	158.49	141			

Note: df =degrees of freedom, f =frequency, Sig.= Significance

Table 8 shows the variables (16 statements) tested against the learners' computer literacy skills have not proved to be significant (no values are less than the $p=0.05$ value). The table also shows insignificant statistical correlation found between the learners' perceptions about BL and their level of computer literacy skills. As shown through the Table 1, there were differences among the learners' level of computer literacy skills. However, the learners' response in agreement to the statements used to measure their perceptions about BL integration was in favour. Therefore, it can be deduced that the learners' level of computer literacy skills didn't affect much their perceptions about integration of the BL in English course. When tested through ANOVA, all the values calculated are nonsignificant (none of them found below the p -value =.05).

The open-ended question was about learners' *suggestions or comments*. The students mentioned that online learning should be integrated when needed, especially when face-to-face classes are not possible. Most learners expressed their strong inclination towards joining BL classes not only in their English language courses but in different subjects as well. They expressed their interest in joining BL classes as an alternative instead of staying long hours in the classroom. However, they specified the fact that it is possible through the existence of planning and strong internet server.

Findings and Discussion

Findings obtained from study strongly supports the literature, see for example (Hess et al., 2016; Linawati, 2016; Banyen et al., 2016; Lyulyaeva & Shapiro, 2018). Participants of the study showed

a positive attitude towards integrating blended learning in English language teaching. The data revealed an above average percentage of interest found among learners for the online courses to be taught along with the face-to-face sessions, i.e., 67% as compared to 9% learners who did not find blended learning more interesting than face-to-face. Moreover, 68% of the participants believed that blended learning is more useful, leaving 12% learners who disagreed with the statement, and 20% were not sure about it. However, the element of enjoyment and friendly-user effect was recognized by the respondents who favored the BL environment. Majority of learners, 79%, agreed to the fact that BL is a more convenient and flexible way of learning with a percentage of 72% who responded that it is an effective way of learning. Findings, therefore, confirms the first hypothesis that students have a positive attitude towards BL as the other studies reported the positive perceptions of the learners (Sagarra & Zapata, 2008).

Considering the second hypothesis, the results established that the learners believe in the implementation of BL to increase their interaction. As per results, an above average, 63% of the participants, believe that blended learning enhances teacher-students' interaction. They also believe that online platforms are a good way for students' communication and can serve for the purpose of the informal or formal feedback sessions. Overall, participant learners in this study strongly believe that BL can create an interactive learning environment in EFL courses which can raise the chances of self-learning experiences for the students as reported by Garrison & Kanuka (2004). As per third hypothesis, learners believe that the blended learning can help them become more independent, it is interesting to see through the responses that 75% of the participants perceive it a convenient source providing more independent learning environment with flexible timing (Bonk & Graham, 2012).

Conclusion

To sum up, participants in this study positively perceived blended learning as an interesting, interactive and independent learning environment for EFL courses regardless of their English language level or computer literacy. The highest percentage of learners were in favor of incorporating 40% of online learning leaving 60% for face-to-face learning. The open-ended survey question revealed opinions in depth. Learners' expression of their strong interest in BL classes was found in favour of English courses. They find it as an alternative for long hours in class sessions. It is also evident that the learners are aware of the fact that BL prerequisites a good planning and a strong internet connectivity. However, some are of the opinion that online learning should only be integrated when needed, i.e. if face to face learning is not possible.

Finally, the study exposes the learners' inclination towards the BL integration as recorded through the method applied during investigation. Certain factors analyzed through learners' responses determine that there is a need for "substantial change" and BL integration since the mode of study at K12 level has transformed with the incorporation of technology (Dziuban et. al., 2018). BL is becoming a center of interests and achieving a significant impact at certain levels in Higher Education (Waha & Davis, 2014).

Clearly, the derived results of the study are encouraging, and the voice of the learners support the idea of BL seen as an effective mode to enhance the learners' interaction, autonomy, and interest, and beneficial to cause reduction in the long hours study mode. As for the course studied for about a whole year spending long hour in class-sessions, there is need to have BL. The

learners' interest more into face-to-face learning hours is clear through the results (Table 7) that signify clear ration of (42.3%) n=60 learners in favor of having integration of '60% face-to-face and 40% online' sessions' (Saltan, 2017). The learners perceive that BL platform has potential to improve the teaching and learning process in an educational environment and it can be a convenient way of ELT and learning (Neumeier, 2005). Eventually, we can assume that the contemporary study-hours have increased the pressure which is mostly challenging and exhausting for both the teachers and learners (Alkaff, 2013) therefore, BL environment can provide convenient and independent learning which can enhance interaction among learners.

Recommendation

The perception about integrating BL and creating an environment with a combination of the online and face-to-face learning was investigated in the study. An overall positive attitude was found indicating Saudi female learners' belief that BL can boost their interest, increase interaction, and help the learners to become more independent. Based on these results, it is strongly recommended that at least 40% of the curriculum should be designed to be presented online. Learners should avail online learning platforms, since the computer age has raised up its usage at all spheres of life. The research recommends that the institutes should arrange for platforms like LMS, Blackboard etc. ready with online materials to incite interest of the learners and BL to be used to reduce the long face-to-face hours for learners as not to lose interest in the L2 course throughout the foundation year. Moreover, the online part should be pedagogically appropriate and well planned. Including interactive platforms where learners can post and discuss their ideas with their teachers as well as with their peers should be part of the online course.

Since feedback functions as an essential part of the learning process, the teachers should regularly provide it using both modes the online and the face-to-face sessions. The sample size of the study is a nook to hook the problem at smaller scale, conducted on 120 female students as study sample. It leaves a ground to focus a larger sample size including male learners. Teachers' perception can also be a part of an investigation as teachers play a noteworthy role in ELT. Conducting individual interviews and focus groups can give a more in-depth understanding on how learners perceive integrating BL in their curriculum. Other streams of investigation can explore the types and usefulness of the BL materials, measuring learners' level of interests and interaction during BL courses, BL in contrast with the only face-to-face sessions etc.

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