

Understanding Blended Learning from Students' Perspectives: Challenges and Opportunities in Saudi Undergraduate Settings

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Received: November 29, 2023

Accepted: March 9, 2024

Online Published: March 13, 2024

doi: 10.5539/elt.v17n4p1

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v17n4p1>

Abstract

This study explores Saudi EFL students' perceptions on the implementation of blended learning (BL) at a Saudi university context. The study highlights two key aspects of BL in terms of challenges and benefits that influence BL in EFL classrooms. In other words, how do students recognize the impact of BL quality from their perspectives. Two main instruments were used: questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The data were collected from (N=32) Saudi male and female students from a Saudi university. The results of this study indicate that students show a positive attitude towards the BL approach. However, the findings reveal that students in their classrooms perceived many challenges in terms of implementing approach. Two main sources of difficulties were constantly identified: challenges initiated by students in terms of lack of technology competence to learn in BL environment and challenges initiated by the educational system in terms of teachers' lack of suitable training. These issues were most significant in the results in relation to implementing BL in Saudi contexts.

Keywords: blended learning, challenges, benefits, dynamic, training, technology

1. Introduction

Blended learning (BL) incorporates various devices for instance, digital media, and traditional in-person teacher-led classroom activities (Baquero & Escortell, 2022). This dynamic pedagogical model has become well-known in the field of education because it provides a flexible and adaptable framework that can be customised to meet the various needs of students and make the most of both face- to- face and online learning (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). The historical development of BL, its modern applications, and the guiding principles that handle its conception and execution are all covered in this introduction. In recent years, for instance, BL has evolved significantly in response to advancements in technology and changing educational paradigms. The proliferation of Learning Management Systems (LMS), the rise of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and the development of personalised learning platforms have further enriched the possibilities of BL (Horn & Staker, 2015).

Today, it encompasses a wide spectrum of approaches, from the rotation model, where students rotate between online and a traditional face- to- face (F2F) sessions, to the flex model, which allows learners to choose their learning pathways and pace (Horn & Staker, 2015). In the Saudi Arabian context, the use of information technology (IT) has extensively impacted the educational process of English language teaching and learning developments. Decision makers are also looking at many tools to improve language learners' performance and one of them is blended learning (Alebaikan, 2010; Alwaheebi & Al-Qahtani, 2022). Regarding the English as a foreign language (EFL) context, many studies indicated variety of factors hindered instructors from effective implementation of blended learning (BL) application in the EFL context (Ibiloye, 2021; Rianto, 2020). Of these studies, many of them noticed the following factors to have the most substantial impact on the application of blended learning in language classroom: students' perception of BL, challenges they faced during the application of BL in their learning process, and level of EFL students' technology competence to learn in BL environment. To the researcher's knowledge, no research has so far explored the Saudi EFL students' perceptions with respect to the challenges and benefits of BL in EFL classrooms. Therefore, the current study is seeking to identify the challenges and benefits of BL from students' perspectives in the Saudi EFL context.

1.1 The Statement of the Problem

The integration of blended approach with the traditional face to face teaching process requires an appropriate educational organization, resources such as technological tools and students' training to support the educational system, which are not always taken seriously in the current situation. The Saudi context, the central focus of this study, is experiencing rapid changes and developments across the country's different sectors aiming to meet its strategic plan, the Saudi Vision 2030, locally and globally (Alghamdi, 2022). Furthermore, Baquero & Escortell (2022) explained that BL is one of the core learning approaches that are essential to survive in the academic context. As an EFL instructor based on my regular classroom observation and the students in person and on-line performance created a personal interest in identifying what sorts of benefits and challenges can be explored from implementing a BL approach where this study was conducted. Although the influence of blended teaching on learning procedure has been accepted as a key issue on better teaching and learning practices. This gave rise to some challenges and limitations, but also to opportunities that needed to be studied. For instance, one issue that arose was the extent to which Saudi EFL students perceived BL approach was appropriate in gathering their language learning needs in specific platform which is the BL approach. Thus, exploring students' perceptions concerning their BL experiences, specifically focusing on the benefits they gained and challenges they encountered, would help to tackle some problems, and design appropriate applications of BL approach.

2. Literature Review

The need for flexibility in language teaching and learning and the affordances of technology provided the impetus for the rise of BL across higher education institutions. It is widely used around the world particularly in teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings (Alghamdi, 2022). In the Saudi Arabian context, decision makers are constantly looking at various formats of learning and teaching integrating educational technology, including online/blended learning aiming to improve English language learners' performance (Alebaikan, 2010; Alwaheebi & Al-Qahtani, 2022). In literature, the interest of BL in advancing EFL teaching and learning process has been on the rise (Alwaheebi & Al-Qahtani, 2022). Many educational environments have shown their increasing curiosity in the BL educational model around the world (Alebaikan, 2010). Regarding the English as a foreign language (EFL) context, several studies discussed the role of different considerations that hindered an effective application of BL approach in the EFL context (Ibiloje, 2021; Rianto, 2020). To understand the theoretical background of blended teaching and learning approach, an investigation of various aspects, such challenges, benefits, and factors influencing BL successful implementation are presented. The researcher then focuses to an in-depth emphasis on BL, considering definitions, a review of related studies and various implementation of BL in EFL contexts to generate better understanding of BL application. This study aims to explore the challenges and benefits that occur throughout the application of BL based on the EFL learners' perceptions in a Saudi university context.

2.1 Benefits of BL

Numerous studies discussed many potential benefits which can be listed here. Of these benefits: flexibility, accessibility, learner autonomy, better learning outcomes, cost effectiveness a higher level of interaction, a better knowledge of the subject matter (Bonk & Graham, 2006). Wu & Luo (2022) for example showed that "BL is an instructional approach that students can complete the online component at a pace conforming to their learning style" (p.3). In addition, BL known as a tool to expand study hours, improving language learners' access to learning, offering them more flexibility, increasing their motivation and engagement; and improving learning environment (Zhang & Zhu, 2018). In accordance with the benefits of BL in teaching reading skills Yang (2012) showed that BL application can help college students to control some of the English language difficulties. Another study conducted by Yang & Kuo (2021) emphasised the role of BL in developing knowledge in terms of cross-cultural communication by developing online interactions with English language teachers in various settings. Furthermore, in a study conducted in a Saudi Arabian context Alkhaleel (2019) discussed the benefits of the implementation of blended learning regarding the advantages of using BL in studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at the Female's section of the English Language Centre at the University of Tabuk in Saudi Arabia for the class of 2018/2019.

The objectives of the study were highlighted through the research questions (a) to examine the advantages of using BL in teaching EFL and (b); to investigate the extent in which the use of BL in teaching EFL can help develop female students' language proficiency level (Alkhaleel, 2019: 3). To eventually reach the targets of the research, a sample comprising of 60 Female medical preparatory year students at the ELC were selected to undergo a questionnaire. The findings illustrated that indeed, the implementation of BL at the University of Tabuk has shown to be highly effective according to the 60 female students. 84% of the participants expressed that their language

competence has improved with the addition implementation of BL in comparison to the orthodox classroom teaching methods. In similar study, Owston et al., (2013) indicated that BL encourages instructor-student and student-students classroom interaction (p.277). The above-mentioned studies shown that BL provide several benefits to educational institutes and could be used as an approach to learn English depending on how EFL teachers and learners control the teaching and learning process.

2.2 Challenges of BL

Education has undoubtedly undergone a revolution in recent years with the introduction of BL, which combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online components. This method promises greater flexibility and involvement, but it also comes with several difficulties that educators, students, and institutions must deal with (Rasheed, et al. 2020). For example, types of challenges that different educational institutions face in terms of lack of support for designing a course. This in turn, showed that in order to use a successful BL application all instructors, students, and decision makers must support institutions, in the way that may include deciding what course purposes can be done through online learning activities, how students improve their language learning proficiency within the given classroom time, and how to blend a face to face and online BL process (Rasheed, et al. 2020:4). In a study conducted by Rasheed et al (2020) identified five challenges that students face during the implementation of BL. For example, the following challenges: self-regulation, technological literacy and competency, students' isolation, technological sufficiency, and technological complexity were identified. However, challenges in terms of lack of technological skills are the key challenges that students face in implementing the blended learning approach. In a recent study conducted by Wu & Luo (2022) explored how students and instructors perceived the incorporation of Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)s in students' BL experience and the challenges they encountered. In this study, the findings revealed that there were discrepancies among the stakeholders in relation to the use of BL. Instructors for instance, showed that BL has a positive impact on the course, although it has increased the proportion of their time that they devoted to online learning and teaching process. However, the data revealed that the student's lack of awareness and taking the English language learning process carelessly seemed to be highly impacted their motivation and this needs to be taken into consideration when BL approach is implemented. The authors concluded with recommendation that sufficient supervision, support, and encouragements should be given to instructors to manage the increasing workload associated with blended learning approach. Poon (2013) also explained that using BL approach provide benefits for educational institutions and language learners. The successful usage of BL application may facilitate and improve learners learning outcomes. In addition, contribute access flexibility, and gives a sense of community, the effective use of resources, and student satisfaction (p.274). Poon (2013) summarised the benefits and challenges associated with BL.

Table 1. Summary of the benefits and challenges of BL

Benefits of Blended Learning	Challenges of Blended Learning
Enhanced student learning outcomes	Unrealistic student expectations
Greater flexibility for students and teachers	Student-perceived isolation and lack of support for course redesign
Improved autonomy, reflection, and research skills	Technological problems for students
Reduced student withdrawal rate	Invasiveness into other areas of life
Ability to foster a professional learning environment.	Time commitment and difficulty in acquiring new teaching and technology skills
Potential cost and resource savings	Technological problems for institutions

Adopted from (Poon, 2013,276)

2.3 Research Questions

The overall purpose of this study is to investigate Saudi EFL students' perceptions on the implementation of BL at a Saudi university context. This research aims to answer the following overarching question:

What are the Saudi EFL students' perceptions with respect to the challenges and benefits of BL in EFL classroom?

The following sub-questions were used to address the main research question:

- (1) What are the challenges that Saudi EFL students encounter when they use BL application in their classroom?
- (2) What are the benefits that Saudi EFL students receive when they use BL application in their classroom?

Table 2. Presentation of research objectives and data resources

	Research questions	Objectives	Data Resources
RQ1	What are the challenges that Saudi EFL students encounter when they use BL application in their classroom?	The purpose was to identify and articulate the challenges that Saudi EFL students encounter when they use BL application in EFL classroom.	Interviews Questionnaire
RQ2	What are the benefits that Saudi EFL students receive when they use BL application in their classroom?	The purpose was to identify and articulate the benefits that Saudi students collect during the application of BL in EFL classroom.	Interviews Questionnaire

3. Methodology

In this paper, the research methods employed in this study to evaluate the perceptions of Saudi EFL students on the current BL implementation English language programme at ELI are discussed. The research implements a mixed methods research design, which refers to the use of qualitative (semi-structured interviews, open-ended questionnaire items) and quantitative (a questionnaire with close ended question items will be used) data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research under study (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

3.1 Research Design

In this study, I adopted a mixed methods research approach that was implemented by using an online questionnaire and semi- structured interviews. According to (Creswell & Clark, 2018), the employment of both qualitative and quantitative data in a single research project combines quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to capitalize on the advantages of both methodologies while minimising the drawbacks associated with a single methodological approach. To accomplish the aim of this study, a pattern designed questionnaire with eighteen items was designed. These items were categorized into three sections with the main construct having a 4-point Likert items questionnaire, ranging from: “Strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” then was distributed among the study participants.

3.2 Participants

In this study, a basic mixed methods sampling approach which takes a random sample of a small number of students from a much substantial target people. The participants in this study will include Saudi EFL male and female students (n = 32) from a Saudi university English Language Institute (ELI). Then, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants who showed willingness to participate (n = 3) students to gain in-depth information using a blackboard meeting room (Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Questionnaire

In this study, two instruments (an online questionnaire and semi- structured interviews) were designed for the participants. The questionnaire was developed based on literature. The items of the questionnaire were adapted and modified from numerous studies of an instrument created by (Alebaikan, 2010; Alwaheebi, & Al-Qahtani, 2022) The statements in the questionnaire were stimulated from their studies and reconstructed as per the need of the current study. The questionnaire was divided into three key sections with the following: The first section focuses on collection personal information of the research participants (i.e., age, qualification, nationality, and level of education, the second section focuses on their perceptions of major challenges that they face in EFL classroom using BL approach, and the third section focuses on their perceptions of major benefits of BL approach in EFL classroom. The questionnaire consists of 14 items using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Furthermore, as Dörnyei (2007) explained that by delivering questions in the students’ native language, the language barrier is removed, making it more likely for students to fully understand the questions asked of them, hence providing more meaningful responses and insights (p.28). Therefore, as the pool of participants involved Arab speaking students, the wording of the student questionnaire was prepared bilingually to assure their understanding.

3.3.2 Interviews

This section is concerned with the principles and strategies of another method of data generation and collection, which the researcher is going to use in her study. This involves interviewing or questioning participants in a face-to-face manner to enhance effectiveness of outcomes. Thus, to triangulate the findings of the questionnaire and for further in- depth analysis of participants' views, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the students. Interview questions and procedure were prepared and conducted in Arabic for the same justifications as illustrated above and to encourage them to express their ideas more easily and undoubtedly.

3.4 Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

To ensure the reliability and validity of this study, various procedures were implemented. As suggested by Oppenheim (2000), it is essential to thoroughly assess each aspect of the research to confirm its functionality. Therefore, conducting a pilot study was employed to gauge the effectiveness and consistency of the research instruments. In this study, the initial questionnaire draft was tested with three PhD students and two EFL instructors, and their feedback led to several question rephrasing. Similarly, interview protocols were subjected to a pilot phase, with the questions initially tried out on three EFL instructors to ensure their relevance.

4. Results

This section presents the findings of learners' questionnaires and interviews. The topics arising from both the qualitative and quantitative findings are set out in two categories: (a) students' perceptions concerning the challenges in BL classes and (b) students' perceptions of benefits in BL classes. An incorporated approach was adopted in the presentation of the questionnaire and the findings of interviews. Thus, results are presented according to each of the two categories stated above for the sake of clarity.

4.1 Challenges of BL

To identify students' perceptions seven Items (1-7) in the questionnaire explored the students' perceptions of challenges they face during the application of BL approach in EFL classes.

Table 3. Illustrates the results obtained from analysis of the participants' questionnaire; the total number of the participants is (N=32)

No	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?	SA		A		N		D		SD	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	I lack skills in using educational technology in terms of applying the BL approach.	8	25	10	31	9	28	3	9	2	6
2	In class, I suffer from shortage of laptops and computers to use in classes implementing the BL approach.	13	41	10	31	5	16	3	9	1	3
3	I find it difficult to switch from traditional learning to BL approach	12	37	10	31	5	16	2	6	3	9
4	Learning in larger face- to- face classes cause difficulties for learning.	10	31	8	25	7	22	4	12	3	9
5	Learning in larger online classes causes difficulties for learning.	9	28	11	34	6	19	4	12	2	6
6	I lack awareness about the implementation of the BL approach.	11	34	9	28	6	19	2	6	4	12
7	My lack of awareness about the BL approach makes BL challenging for me.	10	31	13	41	3	9	5	16	1	3

As can be seen from Table 3, The frequencies, and percentages of the students' perception to the highest rated challenge was the statement number (6) in the students' questionnaire. The results show that out of 32 participants most students 72% (SA 41% + A31%) strongly agreed and agreed with the statement "In class, I suffer from shortage of laptops and computers to use in classes implementing the BL learning approach." Furthermore, 16% (N=5) stayed neutral to the statement and 9% (N=3) of students disagree, however, only 3% (N=1) student strongly disagree with the statement. The second highest challenge according to the students' perception was the statement no (11) "My lack of awareness about the BL approach makes BL challenging for me." With 66% (SA 25%+ A 41%)

strongly agreed and agreed to the statement, 9% (N=3) stayed neutral 16% (N=5) disagreed and 9% (N=3) students responded strongly disagree.

Whereas Item number (5) “ I lack skills in using educational technology in terms of implementing the BL approach” was the lowest percentage 56% (SA25%+A31%) among the rest of statements that students stated their perceptions. The table also shows that learning in larger online classes causes difficulties for learning. A total 20 out of 32 students (SA 28%+34%) strongly agreed and agreed with the statement, 19% (N=6) stayed neutral, 12% (N=4) disagreed and 6% (N=2) students only responded strongly disagree. This in turn indicates stronger agreement of students towards enormous number of students attending in one session would cause challenges and difficulties in blended learning and teaching context.

4.2 Students' Interviews Responses

To elicit students' perceptions of challenges in implementing BL in EFL classes, question 1 in the students' interviews format was formulated as follows: In your opinion, what are the challenges that hinder you from the successful use of BL in your classes? one of the students clearly indicated that his challenge is related to his own lack of awareness in dealing with such an approach. He stated that:

“ I used to study based on the traditional face to face lecture-based classroom and now with my limited skills of dealing with technology in BL classes caused challenges and negatively affected my learning outcome’ (Student 1).

Another student highlighted the importance of providing well designed training in which students could use the online language learning process properly. He explains that:

“ Based on my previous language learning experience, I have very poor online language learning experience, I did use it to some extent but still not professional’. Therefore, students need continuous training on technological based learning approach (Student 2).

Another student suggested that:

“ I believe the university needs to provide a continues training on how students use technology-based learning methods to ensure the best language teaching and learning outcomes’ (Students 3).

Item no 2 in students' interviews format students were asked to answer the following question: To what extent do you think the blended learning activities you do outside the classroom are useful for you to learn English? Please explain. Answering this question was a bit challenging for the interviewees, but one of them attempts to explain his experience. He said that:

“ regarding all the activities are very useful and they are well-organized and useful in terms of enhancing my English language learning process” (Student no, 1).

Another student added:

“ most of these activities are beneficial but at the same time they require a lot of time and effort to understand the content. I feel they are above our language ability (Student, no, 2).

Item no 3 in students' interviews format students were asked the following question: To what extent do you think the BL activities you do outside the classroom are useful for you to learn English? Please explain. One of the students stated that:

“As the first-year student at the university, I have never been exposed to the online environment, and this makes my BL experience very difficult (student No, 2).

The second interviewee added that:

“ I lack awareness about the BL approach, and this is one of the major challenges for me that I lacked basic technological skills that would help me to understand basic to learn in in online modes of learning’ (Student No, 3).

4.3 Benefits of BL

To identify students' perceptions seven Items (8-14) in the questionnaire explored the students' perceptions of benefits of English language learning through blended learning approach.

Table 4. Illustrates the results obtained from analysis of the participants' questionnaire; the total number of the participants is (N=32)

No	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?	SA		A		N		D		SD	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
8	Using a blended learning approach in the classroom is helping to develop my English.	12	37	12	37	5	16	3	9	0	0
9	The BL approach is crucial for English language learning in online classes.	11	34	12	37	5	16	3	9	1	3
10	In blended learning, the activities provided in online classes are efficient.	12	37	10	31	1	3	5	16	4	12
11	In BL, the activities provided in the classroom are more effective in learning the English language.	6	19	12	37	4	12	5	16	5	16
12	I believe that the blended learning approach provides students with the opportunity of self-learning.	8	25	12	37	5	16	3	9	4	12
13	I believe that the implementation of the blended learning approach saves time.	10	31	14	43	4	12	2	6	2	6
14	I believe that the implementation of the blended learning approach saves effort.	7	22	9	28	5	16	4	12	7	22

Table 4 presents the frequencies, and percentages of the students' responses on the benefits of BL approach. Statement number (17) about the implementation of the blended learning approach saves time received the highest rated benefit in the students' questionnaire. The results show that out of 32 participants most students 74% (SA 31% + A 43%) strongly agreed and agreed with the statement. Furthermore, 12% (N=4) of students stayed neutral, whereas 6% (N=2) students expressed respectively strongly disagreed and disagree with the statement. The second highest benefits according to the students' perception was statement number (13) about the BL as crucial approach for English language learning in online classes. The results show that 71% (SA 34%+ A 37%) strongly agreed and agreed to the statement and 16% (N=5) students responded disagree, 9% (N=3) disagreed and only 3% (N=1) student was strongly disagreed with the statement. The table also highlights that statement number (15) about the activities provided in the classroom are more effective in learning the English language, received the lowest percentage based on students' responses. The results show that only 56% (SA 19%+A 37%) of the students strongly agreed and agreed to the statement, while 12% (N=4) stayed neutral and 16% (N=5) respectively responded strongly disagree and disagreed with the statement. This in turn shows that the activities used in blended learning teaching classes did not provide sufficient knowledge for English language learners.

4.4 Students' Interviews Responses

Item no 5 in students' interviews format students were asked to answer the following question: How do you interact with your teachers during the activities in the BL EFL classroom? And how do you interact with other students as a benefit of using BL in EFL classroom?

One of the students described his daily based routine in BL classroom as follows:

“As sort of teacher-students interact activities and according to the BL procedure the teacher presents the lesson according to the chapter that is supposed to be learned on that day. For example, chapter four or five takes place inside the classroom. My role is following teachers' instruction and answering any questions that might be raised by other colleagues” (Student no, 2).

Another student added that:

“Outside of the classroom we are usually required to submit the reading or writing assignment online. There are various types of online assignments and I need to answer all the questions before the deadline otherwise we are not able to submit once the due date has been passed and this was very frustrating for me” (Student no, 3).

Students were also asked to elaborate on some of the benefits that they gain from using the BL approach. For example, Item no 6 in students’ interviews format students were asked to answer the following question: Does the BL approach, in other words carrying out some activities outside the classroom, encourage you to learn the English language?

One of the students stated that:

“According to the BL procedure in our institution we need to do the online writing assignment every 3 weeks. There is a deadline to submit the final draft and it needs to be uploaded through the blackboard. I have found this method is helpful and pushed me to accomplish my assignment on time” (Student No 1).

Another student added that:

“There are also various activities which I believe help me to improve my English language skills throughout the semester and each question has a one-point bonus at the end of the final exam”. (Student No 2).

In general, the findings of this study paint a vivid picture of the opportunities and challenges inherent in the integration of blended learning into the Saudi EFL educational context. One key revelation stem from the responses of students, where a significant 72% (comprising 41% strongly agreeing and 31% agreeing) expressed their concern over a scarcity of laptops and computers during classes that implemented the blended learning approach. This shortfall represents a substantial challenge, as it impacts the seamless execution of blended learning initiatives within the classroom.

In addition, based on the students’ perspectives it seemed that there are many challenges that students face during the implementation of BL procedures. However, among these challenges it appeared that lack of students’ awareness and lack of taking the English language learning process seriously seemed to be highly impacted their motivation.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This section addresses the experiences of Saudi EFL students concerning the challenges they face in using blended learning approach. The data analysis reveals that the challenges are divided into two main categories: First, students' lack of awareness about the BL approach. The data analysis indicated that one of the major challenges for students that they lacked basic skills to learn in online modes of learning. According to the students’ interview data specifically first year students at the university never been exposed to the online environment and this made their BL experience even more difficult. The second highest rated item in student’s questionnaire confirmed that students find it difficult to switch from traditional learning to blended learning approach. As per results, 68% of the students believed that switching between traditional and online teaching approach was difficult for them. The data from students’ interviews also shown that students faced challenges in terms of lack of technological skills to use BL approach. This finding is in line with the study conducted by Rasheed et al, (2020) that lack of technological skills could be the key challenges for students in blended learning classes. Moreover, lack of basic English language skills could be the obstruction for students’ self-study in online learning mode. For instance, prior to the university, students were used to attend in the traditional face to face lecture-based classes where they rarely exposed to online based teaching approach. In addition, teachers also mentioned during their interviews that students do not take online instruction more seriously unless during their mid and final examination session and this need to be taken into consideration when blended learning approach is implemented. Therefore, the results of this study in agreement with those of earlier discussed research (Poon, 2013; Wu & Luo, 2022) Which stated that students’ challenges need to be considered for the successful usage of BL application which facilitate and improve learners learning outcomes.

Furthermore, based on the questionnaire analysis, the students stated great attitudes towards their usage of blended learning approach. As per results, item (no.12) 68% of the students think that BL approach improves them to progress in their English language skills. Another two important aspects that students believe beneficial in using blended learning approach were saving their time and efforts. The data from students’ interviews also support this view as students said that they had previously spent not less than three hours travelling however, attending part of the online classes saved their efforts and expenses which very beneficial aspect from students point of views. Likewise, during the interviews students were asked to explain on the usefulness of blended learning approach in terms using appropriate activities which enhanced their English language learning. The interviewees show a

positive attitude towards the question and state that blended learning helps them in developing their language skills. This result is in line with the finding obtained from the questionnaire data as 74% of the students believe that the BL approach is crucial for English language learning and online classes are cost-effective. In addition, the findings therefore agreed with Poon (2013) who stated that among several benefits which motivate participants through blended learning approach is that BL has potential cost and resource savings.

6. Recommendation for Further Research

There are several recommendations for future research to consider. Future research should consider two key avenues for enhancing the depth of understanding regarding blended learning in the Saudi EFL context. Firstly, expanding the research scope is advised, involving a more extensive and diverse sampling of EFL instructors and learners across multiple educational institutions in Saudi Arabia. This approach seeks to offer a more holistic and comprehensive comprehension of the multifaceted perceptions and challenges associated with blended learning, encompassing the diverse nuances that different institutions and cohorts may present. Secondly, future studies are encouraged to adopt a longitudinal research design. This entails the continuous tracking of participants' perceptions and experiences over an extended duration. In doing so, they stand to provide valuable insights that can inform the decision-making processes of educators, institutions, and policymakers, thereby contributing to the enhancement of EFL education quality within the Kingdom.

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