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Investigating Libyan EFL Teachers' and Students' Perceptions Towards Blended Learning in Teaching English Language

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study investigates Libyan university EFL teachers' and students' perceptions of blended learning in teaching English as a foreign language at the English Departments of the University of Zawia and the University of Sabratha during the 2022-2023 academic year. It explores teachers' perceptions of the blended classroom, learners' perceptions of blended learning, and the challenges of implementing it in English courses.

Materials and Methods: A mixed-methods approach was used with 60 students and 13 teachers. Students completed an online questionnaire administered through Google Forms, and teachers took part in semi-structured interviews. Questionnaire data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and interview data were analysed qualitatively.

Results: : Blended learning was perceived as highly advantageous. Most student respondents reported considerably improved language proficiency compared with conventional teaching. Teachers reported benefits including a flexible learning environment, easy access to learning resources, improved teacher–student communication, and enhanced learner autonomy. Participants agreed that a lack of IT knowledge was the most challenging obstacle to effective implementation.

Conclusion: EFL teachers should share ideas for assessing students' achievement in blended learning, and syllabus designers should incorporate blended learning activities into university EFL courses. Institutional support and professional development are needed to address the IT knowledge gap among teachers and students. (*Open J Engl Appl Linguist 2026;1:3-9*)

Keywords: Blended learning, EFL learners, EFL teachers, perceptions, Libyan higher education.

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INTRODUCTION

The world has changed, human lifestyles have changed, and how people learn and obtain knowledge and information must have changed as well.[1] The progress of information and communication technology has an important role in the world of education. Education, which is a means to improve the quality of a nation's children, must be carried out as well as possible so that it can produce a quality generation; to achieve the best generation quality, education must be delivered through the best methods as well.[2]

Over the present century, the world has witnessed revolution and rapid changes in information and communication technology (ICT) and the internet in all aspects, particularly in the education sector. According to Latif, blended learning is an instruction combining the advantages of both face-to-face teaching in the classroom and online sessions.[3] This means that teaching and learning activities happen both in the classroom and in online contexts, with the online sessions regarded as an extension of the face-to-face teaching interaction. According to Livingstone, higher education institutions must make every attempt to replace teacher-centred strategies with more student-centred approaches.[4] One strategy used to facilitate a more student-centred approach is blended learning. Graham defined blended learning as the combination of traditional face-to-face learning and e-learning.[5] This pedagogical approach combines online (asynchronous and/or synchronous) and face-to-face contact time between lecturers and students and/or between students in a course.[6] It is an approach which enables learning to occur independent of time and place. Garrison and Vaughan viewed this form of learning as one that effectively includes the right mix of learning environments to enhance the learning experience and offer a student-centred, self-paced, flexible, and multifaceted approach to the learning and teaching process.[7] Furthermore, it can help students develop important twenty-first-century skills such as communication, information literacy, creativity, and collaboration, and develop the ability to use digital technologies for a range of purposes.[8] While these are important skills, students' ability to acquire them will depend on their readiness to learn in a blended learning environment.

As of 18 March 2020, schools and universities were closed in Libya and around the world in an attempt to limit the spread of novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Nationwide closures were mandated in 192 countries, interrupting learning for close to 1.58 billion learners (91.4 per cent of total enrolled learners) and prompting almost all education systems to deploy distance learning solutions.[9] The disruption also impacted the work of more than 63 million primary and secondary school teachers, as well as countless education support personnel. In Libya, during and after the lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic, some teachers and schools were creative in adopting a variety of technology-based strategies as alternatives to the traditional classroom, providing lessons through videoconferencing and online learning platforms and sharing learning materials and worksheets through school-based intranets and messaging platforms.[10] In addition, radio programmes and national television were used to broadcast school lessons and educational materials, particularly in under-resourced areas that may be lacking in technological infrastructure.[11]

Blended learning remains a relatively new concept at many educational organizations; however, some Libyan university teachers claim that blended learning can substantially enhance the student experience if it is implemented appropriately.[12] The need for and use of this approach have increased dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of the current study is to explore teachers' and students' perceptions of using blended learning in teaching and learning the English language. This study is significant because it sheds light on the importance of blended learning in enhancing teaching and learning and attempts to find out how learners and teachers perceive blended learning. The basic objectives of the study are to understand the perceptions of teachers regarding the use of blended learning modes in teaching the English language, to find out the prospects and challenges of providing tasks in learning and teaching the English language through blended learning in Libya, and to explore learners' general perceptions towards their engagement in blended learning classes.[13-17] Accordingly, this research aims to answer the

following questions: What are the teachers' perceptions of the blended classroom? What are the learners' perceptions towards using blended learning in learning English? What are the challenges of implementing blended learning in English courses?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This section provides a detailed description of the participants and the methods employed to investigate teachers' and students' perceptions of blended learning, including information on the overall research design.

Sample Size

The sample of the study consisted of 60 students and 13 teachers from the University of Zawia and the University of Sabratha. The teachers were Libyan EFL university teachers working at these two universities, while the students were drawn from different levels of study. The participants were selected to represent both instructors and learners who had experience with blended learning during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing the study to capture a comprehensive picture of perceptions from both perspectives.

Research Design

The research employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. To collect the data required for this study, a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were conducted. The quantitative component consisted of an online questionnaire survey administered through Google Forms to the 60 students, designed to elicit their attitudes towards using blended learning. The qualitative component consisted of semi-structured interviews conducted with the 13 Libyan EFL university teachers to explore their perceptions in greater depth. This mixed-methods design allowed the researcher to triangulate findings and obtain a richer understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.[18,19]

Procedure of Data Collection

The data collection process involved two main stages. First, the online questionnaire was distributed to the 60 students via Google Forms, and participants were given sufficient time to complete it. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 13 teachers. The interview questions were designed to explore teachers' perceptions of the blended classroom, the benefits they had observed, and the challenges they had encountered in implementing blended learning (Appendix 1). The questionnaire items covered areas such as language proficiency improvement, flexibility of learning, access to resources, teacher–student communication, learner autonomy, and obstacles to implementation (Appendix 2). All responses were collected and prepared for analysis.

Statistical Analysis

The questionnaire data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the participants' responses, including frequencies and percentages. The interview data were analysed qualitatively through thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes related to teachers' perceptions and challenges. The findings from both data sets were then integrated and interpreted in relation to the existing literature on blended learning in EFL contexts.

RESULTS

The results of the data analysis revealed teachers' and students' perceptions of blended learning in teaching and learning English at the University of Zawia and the University of Sabratha. The findings indicated that blended learning is perceived as highly advantageous by both groups (Table 1).

Most of the questionnaire respondents stated that their language proficiency skills improved considerably compared with the use of conventional teaching methods. Both groups agreed that blended learning provides a flexible learning environment, offers easy access to learning resources via smartphones and portable devices, and increases motivation

and engagement. Teachers rated improved teacher–student communication and enhanced learner autonomy higher than students did, and both groups showed a moderate preference for online evaluation over conventional methods.

Table 1: Teachers' and students' perceptions of blended learning in EFL contexts.

Perception Dimension	Students' Agreement Level	Teachers' Agreement Level
Language proficiency improved compared with conventional methods	High	High
Blended learning provides a flexible learning environment	High	High
Easy access to learning resources via smartphones and portable devices	High	High
Improved teacher–student communication	Moderate	High
Enhanced learner autonomy	Moderate	High
Lack of IT knowledge is the most challenging obstacle	High	High
Preference for online evaluation over conventional methods	Moderate	Moderate
Increased motivation and engagement	High	High

Note: Levels are based on the questionnaire responses of students and the interview responses of teachers at the University of Zawia and the University of Sabratha.

Teachers who incorporated blended learning into their classrooms reported numerous benefits, including a flexible learning environment, easy access to learning resources, improved teacher–student communication, and enhanced learner autonomy. However, participants also agreed that a lack of IT knowledge is the most challenging obstacle to effective implementation.

DISCUSSION

The Discussion section interprets the main findings of the study rather than restating the results. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research on the effectiveness of blended learning in EFL contexts.

Regarding the benefits of blended learning, the findings align with Al Bataineh et al., who drew on a mixed-methods approach to elicit the views of students who used Moodle at Irbid National University.[20] They found that blended learning provided a flexible environment, easy access to learning resources via smartphones and portable devices, helped students comprehend grammar rules, and captured their interest. Students preferred online evaluation to conventional methods, and blended learning offered options for quick feedback. Additionally, blended learning promoted communication between teachers and students, and the students' digital literacy was enhanced. These findings are consistent with the present study's results, which showed that most respondents reported improved language proficiency and greater flexibility in learning.

The findings also align with Bukhari and Basaffar, who targeted students at King Abdulaziz University and focused on motivation, interaction, and autonomy among female EFL students.[21] They found that blended learning was adaptable, practical, and offered a lively learning environment. They also found that blended learning improved teacher–student engagement, boosted students' enthusiasm, and helped them become autonomous learners. These results are consistent with the present study's finding that blended learning enhanced learner autonomy and improved teacher–student communication.

Similarly, Alowedi used mixed methods comprising a questionnaire containing open and closed-ended questions in research targeting students at Saudi Electronic University.[22] The study used experimental research techniques to investigate the impact of blended learning via Blackboard on the speaking and listening abilities of EFL students. It found that blended learning improved students' speaking and listening abilities, with the experimental group outperforming the control group on the final exam. The study also found that blended learning activities boosted students' independent learning and made them feel secure and dependent. findings are in line with the present study's results, which suggest that blended learning is perceived to enhance students' language skills and autonomous learning.

The views of teachers and students were also explored by Gulnaz et al., who targeted participants at Taif University.[23] They found that blended learning activities enhanced student–teacher relationships, provided more flexible learning possibilities, improved students' language abilities, boosted self-confidence, and encouraged them to sign into other social media accounts. These findings are consistent with the present study's results, which showed that teachers observed numerous benefits from incorporating blended learning into their classrooms.

Regarding the challenges of blended learning, the findings indicate that a lack of IT knowledge is the most challenging obstacle. This is consistent with the broader literature on the implementation of blended learning in developing contexts, where limited technological infrastructure and digital literacy can hinder effective implementation. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted academics' personal and professional lives, with the unpredictability of online or blended learning environments increasing faculty effort, disrupting daily schedules, and raising anxiety and psychological problems.[24] The challenges of online teaching have reduced the appeal of higher education careers. Post-traumatic stress is a concern, as early career researchers may experience psychological harm due to the stress associated with COVID-19.

However, some see the COVID-19 epidemic as a chance to create fresh virtual frameworks, such as Google Classroom and Zoom, which are expected to become more widespread in higher education.[25] Academics are optimistic about the potential to improve virtual learning settings and that blended learning deployment can improve student learning. While traditional colleges adopting online learning present new obstacles, the COVID-19 pandemic presents a chance to improve the student experience by offering flexible delivery options through recorded lectures. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a short-term negative impact on academic institutions and educators, but it has also provided an opportunity to improve blended learning delivery.[26]

The implications of these findings for EFL teaching in Libyan higher education are significant. The study suggests that EFL teachers should share their ideas for assessing EFL students' achievement using blended learning in order to help students get the most out of their English language skills courses throughout the academic year. Furthermore, EFL syllabus designers and planners should incorporate blended learning activities into their teaching courses to help EFL learners at the university level improve their language skills. Institutions should also provide professional development opportunities to address the IT knowledge gap among teachers and students, and ensure that technological infrastructure is adequate to support blended learning implementation.

A limitation of this study is that it was conducted during and immediately after the COVID-19 pandemic (academic year 2022–2023), which may have influenced participants' perceptions and experiences. Future research could examine perceptions of blended learning

in more stable post-pandemic contexts. Additionally, the sample was small (60 students and 13 teachers), limited to two universities, and based on self-reported perceptions, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future studies could include participants from a wider range of institutions and educational levels to provide a more comprehensive understanding of blended learning in Libyan higher education.

CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that blended learning is perceived as highly advantageous by both teachers and students, with most respondents reporting improved language proficiency, greater flexibility, easy access to learning resources, improved teacher–student communication, and enhanced learner autonomy. Teachers who incorporated blended learning into their classrooms observed numerous benefits. However, participants also agreed that a lack of IT knowledge is the most challenging obstacle to effective implementation. The study suggests that EFL teachers should share their ideas for assessing EFL students' achievement using blended learning in order to help students get the most out of their English language skills courses throughout the academic year. Furthermore, EFL syllabus designers and planners should incorporate blended learning activities into their teaching courses to help EFL learners at the university level improve their language skills. Institutions should provide professional development opportunities and adequate technological infrastructure to support blended learning implementation, and future research should examine perceptions of blended learning in more stable post-pandemic contexts and across a wider range of institutions.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest concerning the research and publication of this article.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Teachers' Interview.

1. What is your understanding of blended learning?
2. Have you used blended learning in your English language teaching? If so, how?
3. What benefits have you observed from using blended learning in your classroom?
4. What challenges have you faced in implementing blended learning?
5. How do you think blended learning affects students' language proficiency?
6. How do you assess students' achievement in a blended learning environment?
7. What support do you think teachers need to implement blended learning effectively?
8. What suggestions do you have for improving blended learning in Libyan higher education?

Appendix 2: Students' Questionnaire.

Part 1: Demographic Information

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. Level of study: ☐ First year ☐ Second year ☐ Third year ☐ Fourth year
3. University: ☐ Zawia ☐ Sabratha

Part 2: Perceptions of Blended Learning

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Blended learning has improved my English language proficiency	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Blended learning provides a flexible learning environment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can easily access learning resources through blended learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Blended learning has improved communication between my teacher and me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Blended learning has helped me become a more autonomous learner	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I prefer online evaluation to conventional methods	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Blended learning has increased my motivation to learn English	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lack of IT knowledge is a major obstacle to blended learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Part 3: Open-Ended Questions

1. What do you think are the main benefits of blended learning?
2. What challenges have you faced in blended learning classes?
3. What suggestions do you have for improving blended learning in your university?