

Decision-Making between Online and Frontal EFL Courses

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University students' perceptions of course delivery formats

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Abstract.

This research provides an understanding of how Western Galilee College (WGC) students decided which course delivery format to take i.e., online self-access learning vs. face-to-face (F2F) for a mandatory academic English course. The current study investigated the compatibility or incompatibility of the online course initiatives to the students' decision-making behaviours. For the study, interviews as well as a questionnaire before the final department-wide exam were utilized. Moreover, information concerning learning outcomes (final course grades) for all students registered in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses was received from the WGC IT department. In general, the study found that WGC students emphasized the technical aspects (price, convenience, flexibility) instead of the essential aspects of the course (personalization, quality of learning, success in the course) in choosing a virtual course over a F2F format. Additionally, in the selection process, these students did not consider the uniqueness of an English course (as a language course) and its relative lack of suitability in the virtual format. Moreover, the students did not rely on professional consultation to weigh the suitability of the online course for them. Finally, students' grades at the end of the English course were remarkably lower in the online course than in the traditional courses. Based on the evidence presented, it can be concluded that language classes are not always suitable for an online delivery platform. The results of this research will have ramifications as to how to tailor future English courses to the students' learning needs.

Keywords. Decision-making, online courses, F2F courses, EAP, EFL