An Investigation of Perceptions and Challenges of Instructors and Cadets at Saudi Military Academy (KFNA): Towards the uses of a blended learning approach

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the perceptions and attitudes of military cadets toward studying English in a blended learning approach and using a digital tool called "TLO" in English learning. The context of the study is unique because cadets live at the Academy's campus for five days a week experiencing a regimented learning environment without internet access or use of their phones. Moreover, the Academy specifies for cadets when and where to study after school according to a strict daily schedule full of military training and different activities. Consequently, this study aims to investigate the impact of such challenging environment on learners' achievement and perception and to what extent does the blended learning setting enhances their achievement and engagement. The study follows a mixed-method sequential explanatory design: QUAN→qual started with investigating the attitudes of 20 cadets through a 4-point Likert scale questionnaire followed by a semi-structured interview with 2 instructors to provide support and clarification for the quantitative data. The results show that the use of TLO in teaching English enhances cadets' engagement and interaction in class. Also, the tool has a positive influence on learners' vocabulary knowledge and retention and cadets favored the BL approach over the pure traditional approach. The findings, however, revealed some limitations in studying in BL environment concerning the time that the Academy offer for pre-class preparation, the assessment procedure and lack of internet access.

Keywords: Blended learning; Digital learning; military environment; self-directed learning; vocabulary teaching.