

Towards a Wider Perspective on the Institutional Adoption of Blended Learning in Saudi Higher Education: Challenges and Benefits

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Abstract

The twenty-first century has been defined as the era of technology in which the notion of digital natives has evolved. However, despite the fact that technology appears to be the current way of teaching and learning worldwide, academic institutions in Saudi Arabia still have challenges and dilemmas in integrating technology in their teaching practices. Since the end of the restrictions due to Covid-19, a blended learning (BL) approach has been adopted by several universities in Saudi Arabia in which undergraduates have equal portions of in-class learning and synchronous online learning on a weekly basis. Hence, Saudi universities have arguably a humble experience and recent history toward BL approach. This research stems from an urgent need to transform EFL teaching and learning styles and enhance the English learning experience of university students. It is conceptually informed by two frameworks which are the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework proposed by Koehler and Mishra (2005) as well as the e-moderator" introduced by Salmon (2011). This exploratory and qualitative research study aims to explore the views and attitudes of EFL instructors and undergraduates towards the impact of BL approach in their teaching and learning experience and investigate the factors that might impede or promote its implementation. Thus, in-depth qualitative data were obtained from semi-structured interviews from 11 academic EFL instructors and 12 undergraduates. The study is currently in progress, but it provides some initial findings. Outcomes of this study contribute to education research and, particularly, TESOL future research on integrating innovative learning approaches and techniques in EFL/ESL pedagogies with regards to its impact on students' English language proficiency as well as its role on their learning experience.

Keywords: Digital Learning, English Language Teaching, Academic Learning, Sociocultural Factors, Language Acquisition