

Exploring EFL Students' Attitudes and Challenges Toward Autonomous Learning: Algerian Higher Education Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, educational institutions worldwide particularly in developing countries like Algeria faced significant challenges with the sudden and unplanned shift from face-to-face learning to online learning. This rapid transition resulted in a heightened dependence on technology and online platforms, leading to increased expectations for student learning autonomy. Within this context, this study investigates students' attitudes toward learning autonomy and explores the primary challenges they encounter in becoming autonomous learners. This research adopts a descriptive design and employs a quantitative approach to analyze collected data. The primary measurement tool is a questionnaire, administered to twenty-two (22) second-year EFL students in Algeria. Findings reveal that students show positive attitudes toward autonomous learning during the pandemic period. However, teacher support and peer collaboration are also emphasized. Moreover, several obstacles to autonomy in the EFL context emerged, including internet distractions, lack of social interaction, and diminished motivation. Based on these findings, this study recommends that Algerian EFL students' readiness for autonomous learning be carefully considered. To foster greater autonomy, training programs and appropriate pedagogical tools should be introduced to support and guide students in developing autonomy.

Keywords: Attitudes ; Autonomy ; COVID-19 pandemic ; EFL students